A Ball State University Facility for the Celebration of the Work of Franz Kline

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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Abstract

A BALL STATE UNIVERSITY FACILITY FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORK OF FRANZ KLINE

For this section's Cripe Competition design problem, the students were asked to design a multi-use, predominantly gallery-dominated, facility, partially of their own definition focusing on an artist of their own choosing. The artist chosen had to be a practitioner—living or deceased—of one of the visual arts. For the purpose of this project, the visual arts were defined as the art forms of painting, photography, printmaking and filmmaking.

The students were asked to choose how they would represent their artist in the design of the building—in fact they could choose not to assertively represent the artist in their design, but simply provide a functionally and spatially competent design solution for the specified program as a neutral background for the artist's work. They were, however, required to do two things in regard to the functionality of the building: they were asked to torque the functions of the spaces listed in the program to suit their artist and add or subtract spaces to the suggested program so as to better accommodate the activities that would be included in a facility devoted to the work of their artist. The students' choices of artists were: seven painters, two cinematographers, two photographers and one woodcut artist.

The basic programmed spaces—that the students were to adapt and add to or subtract from—were the following:

- Two Galleries, one for the signature artist and one for a traveling artist of the same genre
- A Multi-purpose space: for lectures and multi-media presentations
- Residential/studio accommodation for visiting artists
- A Café
- A Gift shop.
- Outdoor spaces connected as appropriate with the above-listed spaces
- An Administration suite
- An Employee area
- The usual service areas: receiving/dock, mechanical areas, storage, etc.

Also, the site for the project, at the corner of McKinley and University Avenues—essentially in an interstitial space between the University and The Village with an eye to both—and the unusual programmatic content of the project combined to give the students more latitude in material choice and form-making than would have been the case for a building site and function more strongly identified with the university.

Acknowledgements

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In my pursuit for an artist, I tried to search for someone who was rich in their concepts and dramatic in their presentation—I reasoned that, by choosing an artist who possessed these qualities, it would necessarily affect the architecture in a dramatic way. Along with this, I wanted to choose an artist who could easily be "read" through the building so as to pay homage to his or her work. This would therefore become a gallery which would not only acknowledge his or her work by giving it a sufficient gallery space, it would also be an expression of the artist's work, becoming inherently true to the style and values which that artist held dear.

These qualities were found in Franz Kline, an abstract expressionist. His bold, dark lines held power and dynamism that is surprising to find within something so abstract. Through study, I was able to observe that by painting abstractly, Kline could achieve a power that is hard to create by painting from life. I knew that the tension and projection created by his splashing paint strokes were something I wanted to strive to implement within my building. By choosing Kline, I knew that I had an artist of depth and dynamism who could inspire me to create an expression of architecture which was worthwhile and dramatic.

Why Kline?
"While Hadid's separation of vertical circulation from the problems encountered with Wright and seems faster than Meier's approach by artists that high-design architecture art on display probably will not go away with Rosenthal Center does not offer rectilinear loft be easily partitioned depending on the size of the works from providing a variety of differently shaped 25-foot-high galleries to niche-like ones.

Because the museum has no public services Hadid didn't have to design her gallery works of art."

Arch Record, vol. 195, 2003
...the gallery lighting is very conventional; all the more noticeable because of the unconventional angles of the walls. Clearly, Hadid's mission is not to advance the evolution of the museum gallery as a sacred space. In other words, the Rosenthal Center should not be judged as a prototype for design. With changing shows and inconsistent quality of art, it's better to evaluate the museum as a touristic magnet introducing people to the experience of architecture.

Arch Record, vol. 191, no. 8, pp. 86-93, Aug 2003

"... the Rosenthal Center succeeds as both a calm civic gesture and an example of the imaginative possibilities of architecture. It presents an object that provokes, yet also sits comfortably amid its surroundings. As it draws you in and up through the skylit atrium and labyrinthine galleries, it delivers, as few buildings do, the continuous and exhilarating experience of moving through space in time."

Arch Record, vol. 191, no. 8, pp. 86-93, Aug 2003
Two main changes have been made to the original program. First, because the concept was to immerse the viewer into a space resembling a Kline painting, it was decided that space should be given to an atrium, allowing the circulation (stair ramps) to be overlapped and juxtaposed. This eliminated the possibility for much of an outdoor space, although some is still given on the north east side of the building on the first floor.

Secondly, the idea of having a gift shop seemed to go against his ideals of what art should be. Kline was more focused on getting the viewer to feel than getting the viewer to buy. This is shown through his avant guarde style which did not always sell well. He was intentional and deliberate in producing art of which he thought was true and worthwhile. Due to Kline's unyielding persistence to produce art for the benefit of art's sake, it seemed illogical to have a shop which would promote the opposite—art as a consumer product. For these reasons, both the outdoor space and gift shop were omitted from the program requirements.

Program:

- Three Galleries (one for Kline work and two for artists of the same genre)
- A Multi-Purpose Space
- Residential/Studio accommodation
- A Cafe
- An Administration suite
- An Employee Area
- Service areas: receiving/dock, mechanical areas, storage, janitorial, etc.

Adjusted Program
Site Analysis
I NICE, NEW PARKING GARAGE

VIEW OF CAMPUS AND SOME TREES

ASHLAND

NICE, NEW PARKING GARAGE

BLANK STORAGE LOT
WITH SCRUBBY BLACKTOP
AND VARIOUS BUILDING
MATERIALS

UNIVERSITY

PEOPLE ACTIVITY, BUT PARKING LOT
AND BACK OF BUILDINGS

PEOPLE ACTIVITY, STUDENT CENTER,
SOME TREES, BUT MESSY TRAFFIC
LIGHTS AND TRAFFIC

QUAD-LIKE, TALL TREES
GREAT VIEW

PEOPLE ACTIVITY, BUT PARKING LOT
AND SCRUBBY BUILDINGS

Views From Site

Views To Site
Site Analysis

Vehicular Circulation

Man-made Features

ASHLAND

McKINLEY

CAMVERT

LAMP POLES

TRAFFIC LIGHT

3' PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

RETAINING WALL

UNIVERSITY
Franz Kline was an abstract expressionist painter who had a unique style. He would look outside his New York studio window and paint not the "...trees in bloom or mountain laurel," but rather, he would paint the "feelings around in (him) by that looking." Strong, dark lines, large canvases, and a (mostly) black and white palate summed up this artist. For the concept of a museum dedicated to his work, which would house artists of a similar genre, it was important for viewers to "read" or feel like they were experiencing Kline not only through the art but also through the building. By abstracting Kline's lines from Mahoning, an attempt was made to keep Kline within the geometry of the building. Lines from Mohoning were abstracted down to the basic linear elements which were then used as guidelines to organize the plan of the building.
Through pushing and pulling lines within the plan as well as stair ramps which connect levels within the atrium, viewers cannot mistake the fact that while they experience Kline on canvases, they also experience him in the architecture through which they walk.
Kline’s Painting, Andrus (1961) inspired the concept of minimal, accenting color. Kline’s work is predominantly black and white and it wasn’t until much later in his career did he consider himself capable of using color. He claimed that he never wanted to “decorate” a black and white painting by adding color—the color should be intrinsic to the essential nature of the painting. This is why the stair ramps are accented with his cool purple and blue and his warm red. The “stramps” are the most palpable element which re-enforces the concept of sensing or reading Kline’s lines in the building, so they are highlighted with color to make sure the correlation is not missed by the viewer. The colors also work toward effective way-finding and identity within the building. People can relate to the unique colors which will help navigate the space as well as leave an impression.
Ball State University Campus Plan

Location Plan
First and Basement Floor Plan 1/32" = 1'
West Elevation

East Elevation
Vire Hangers
.5" Metal Tracking
.8" Gypsum Board
Steel I-Beam

Corrugated Steel Decking
Bar Joist
Ventilation Shaft
2"x4" Steel C-Channel
Welded Plate Connection
Steel I-Beam
Welded Steel Flange

4" Toe Kick
Expansion Joint
6" Concrete Slab
4" Rigid Insulation
Bolt Connection
Steel Shear Plate
Grout
5'x 2.5' Concrete Footer
Gravel Fill
# 6 Re-Bar Continuous
4" Perforated Drain

Column Section 1/2" = 1'
Detail Section 1" = 1'
Detail Beam Section

- 2 Ply 5/8" Gypsum Fireproofing
- Nail Connection
- Wood 1" x 5"
- Steel I-Beam
- Bolted Connection
- 1" x 2" C-Channel
- Nail Connection
- 1/16" Steel Plate
- (2) #8 Fluorescent Tubes
- Reflector Panels
HVAC Diagrams