2024 NEH Landmark Grant:

A Sense of Place: Architecture, Culture and History in the Arkansas Delta

Nancy Chikaraishi, Professor of Architecture, Drury University in Springfield, Missouri

nchikaraishi@drury.edu

**Questions for a Visual Survey of a Landmark or (Reading a Building Through Observation-based Techniques)**

Physical Cues

1. What is the name and address of the building?
2. What kind of a building is it? (school, library, church, etc.)
3. What kind of functions are in the building? Has the building been repurposed from its original use (adaptively reused)? Why?
4. What materials is the building constructed? (brick, stone, wood, concrete, stucco, glass)
5. Forms are the solid things we can touch. What is the form of the building? Is it a geometric shape, such as a square, rectangle, cube, cone or circle? Or is it an organic (curvy) form? Or a combination of shapes?
6. What patterns or rhythms are repeated in the building?

(window patterns, dormers, brick patterns, columns, bay spacings)

1. What shapes are repeated in the building? (circles, arches, curved lines, straight or angled lines?)
2. Look at the area around the building.
   1. What man-made objects do you see? (buildings, roads, playgrounds, train tracks)
   2. What naturally occurring features do you see? (trees, hills, fields, ponds, lakes, rivers)

Perceptual Cues

1. Is the entry visible and apparent? What does it feel like when you approach the building?
2. Space is the air or emptiness that we cannot touch. It is the space we occupy in a building or room. What is the quality or feeling of the space - inside and outside?
3. What adjectives would you use to describe the building’s personality? (fun, serious, simple, strong, impressive, important, utilitarian, uplifting, etc.) Why do you think it was built this way?
4. Light illuminate shapes, surfaces, forms and textures and can influence our mood; it is what allows us to experience a space. It can be natural light from the sun or artificial light. What kind of openings are used to allow light into the building? (rectangular openings, full wall of glass, high windows, skylights, etc.) What is the quality of light inside the building? (bright, strong light, dim, mysterious light, etc.)
5. Based on the man-made or natural land forms around the building, what do you think this area was like in the past?

Cultural Cues

1. What do the materials used in this building tell you about permanence of the structure or availability of the materials at the time it was built?
2. Who do you think was in charge of building the structure? What does this say about culture at the time?
3. What makes this building different from or similar to other buildings in the neighborhood?
4. Can you identify the architectural style of the building? What clues help you determine the style or age of the building?
5. What do you think the future holds for this building?
6. How would the loss of this building affect the neighborhood and community?

Conceptual Cues

1. Order: Can you identify a system of rules that make up the shape and proportions of the building?

Axis – is there an imaginary line that organizes spaces and runs through the building?

Symmetry – Is the building symmetrical (the same on both sides of an imaginary line)

Hierarchy – Is there a system where particular spaces have more importance than others?

Datum – A form which ties together or organizes all other elements of the design together; it can be a line, such as a road, that all houses are arranged along

Transformation – is the ability to change the architectural idea, structure or organization based on a specific context or set of conditions, through a series of different manipulations, without loss of identity or concept.

Activity

1. On a blank sheet of paper draw a sketch of this building.