

Architecture safari: An outline for notes

Architecture as visual culture, with a rhetoric all its own

We can see it in its original context. We won't be able to do that for the rest of the semester. Everything else we look at – advertising, cinema, television – all are mediated, and likely copies of copies of copies. These buildings are first iterations, in their own context, not moved, not appropriated, not copied, not printed on a coffee mug or a wall calendar or t-shirt.

As we “listen” to each building:

- What is its vocabulary?
- What is its grammar? Form and Function
- What are these buildings *saying*? How are they saying it?
- What are they NOT saying? What or who are they excluding?
- From what tradition do they come? What *style*? Why **that** style and not another? We are always closely inspecting the choices communicators make.
- What is purely functional (and, therefore, of that grammar), and what is merely form (a different grammar)? What is merely for effect? How did function limit the architect?

This safari introduces us to signs, symbols, iconography, and semiotics.

Let's also talk about visual rhetoric, like any other communication, as a transaction. What do you bring to the communication, to the message. We are not blank slates or canvasses. We have our own experiences, beliefs, likes and dislikes, backgrounds and education.

- How does the building make you feel? Why do you think?
- What do you bring to this transaction?
- How choreographed is the message you are receiving? (How intentional, or indirect?)
- What would be an appropriate reaction? Looking at intentionality here, which is all assumption, interpretation >> We don't KNOW what the architect intended for sure.