

Case study of the jewish museum, berlin



The Jewish Museum Berlin incorporates the social and cultural history of Germany after World War 2 and aspired to correspond to the effects of the Holocaust on Jews in Germany. In his design, Libeskind claimed to combine three main concepts; the incapability to comprehend the historical agendas of Germany without the knowledge of the civilizational, academic and economic contribution that was made by the Jewish people in Berlin. Secondly he wanted to capture the bodily and spiritual journey in correlation to the experience of the Holocaust and its repercussions the society of Jews and finally he wanted to make amends by the acknowledgment, removal and the incorporation of voids, through which Berlin can move but this time with humanitarian existence. When the construction ended in 1999, the Director Michael Blumenthal declared that, "the chief aim of the museum will be to bring a sense of the richness of Jewish cultural life in Germany before the Holocaust" LIBESKINDS BOOK However, the Holocaust infuses the museum so strongly the museum has been called by reviewers and critics both "didactic" and "pedagogical" that the message is one for the present and, more importantly, for the future (BOOK MAKE UP). Because the context of the Holocaust remains such a strong thread in this space, it warrants examination as a unique addition to genres memorializing the Holocaust. Additionally, the museum's triumph in its massive turnout rates particularly with young people, over the last decade calls for an analysis of its complexity of design and content to understand how the space performs to change the way we see things. WHY HE WON? For Libeskind, who was born in Poland, a couple of hundred kilometers from Berlin and whose family devastated during the Holocaust, the project presented a chance to reconnect to his past. Both of his parents were arrested by Soviet officials

when the Red Army and upon their return home and have spend some time in concentration camp. Upon their return they learned that 85 members of families had died at the hands of the Nazis. These experiences made Libeskind design extremely personal and in a sence biased. In an nterview to " Jewish Currents", a Jewish on-line magazine that deals with activism, politics and art Libeskind explains his approach;

" I would first point out that it's not a project that I had to research in a library or study in the archives because it is part of my background, including my immediate background in every sense. My parents were Holocaust survivors and my uncle Nathan was one of the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. I myself grew up as a Jew in post war Poland under quite anti-Semitic circumstances. And I've lived in Israel and New York. Certainly that museum is speaking, both backwards and forwards, to many issues that are part of my Jewish sensibility". Jewish Currents

Just by observing the form of the structure, already the sense of pragmatic effect is playing a large role. The building is recognisable by its gleaming zinc walls, asymmetrical shape of the zigzag form with daylight penetrating through asymmetric cuts suggestive of the vile stabs on Jewish presence in Germany.

Berliners immediately dubbed it blitz or the lighting. For Libeskind this tormented form represents all the brutality, all the ruptures in the history of the Jews in Germany. This could b a case of Libeskinds over-collaboration with the structure, as this lighting, zig-zag this design of the structure is

developed from the disjointed Star of David which is only noticeable from the air “ an image only seen by an angel”(BOOK BY DANILEI.

The building, for example, proposes that the horrified, broken world of the Holocaust is best evoked by shatter, broken space. The entrance to the exhibition is by a descending lobby staircase that leads into a world twisted geometry where floors are off centre and twisted. And instead of feeling something philosophical, you almost anticipate platforms moving as in a luna park’s house of terror.

The basement of the museum is made of three axes representing three certainties in the history of Jews in Germany. The first is Axis of Continuity and it is the longest one. It joins the Old Building with the central stairway which escorts up to the exhibition levels. To Libeskind is a representation of continuation of Jews in Berlin’s history and culture. Second, Axis of Emigration guides visitors outside to sunshine of the Garden of Exile. here the walls are to some extent skewed and distorted. A gigantic door must be opened before one can step into the garden. There is not much information about history and once again Libeskind heavily relies on the architecture, our imagination and experiences to construct the history. dead end is at the Axis of the Holocaust which is even more narrower becomes and darker and finishes at the Holocaust Tower. Unlike in Axis of Emigration there is bit more information about the holocaust. On the way glass case, documents and other personal possessions are displayed, confirming of a private life of their owners who were murdered. Underground, all three axes traverse, representing the link between the three certainties of Jewish life in Germany.

One aspect of the museum that had an effect on me are Libeskind's so called Voids which symbolise the fundamental structural element of the New Building and its association with the Old Building. Here a staircase guides visitors down to the basement and all the way to the voids of exposed concrete which connects two buildings.

These are indeed empty spaces, some of which you can peek into, and they're supposed to symbolize the "voids" left by those Jews and Jewish communities that have been wiped out during the Holocaust. While this is certainly a very dark aspect of the building's intent, it is rather an abstract one and again a pre-acquired knowledge had to exist in order to understand architect's intentions. While observing the images of Voids the feeling of bareness, confusion and loss are strong and almost agonizing. Here, an installation by the Israeli sculptor, Menasche Kadishman of over 10,000 circular iron disc faces is spread along the concrete floor. It represents the suffering that could be seen on the faces of Jews murdered in Nazi Germany. Although these discs were left there intentionally as is usually not the case with the punctum they are my "prick". Ten thousand faces look at you from the cold concrete floor and their wide open mouth appears to be screaming. The fact that visitors are invited to walk all over those faces seems as if it somehow desecrates the installation. Maybe one of those faces was my grandfather's friend.

In summation, the motive for the museum can influence the architectural form and become its source of inspiration. However, architecture could never have the specificity of meaning of written or verbal communication. The ways in which a building might thus express its newly anointed role in the

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framing of history seem partial, and burdened with pitfalls. I very often think that contemporary culture has more style over matter, and it could be argued that the Jewish Museum is a case in point. People expecting to leave building and gain a much better perspective of what life was like for the German Jewish population, will be disappointed, but if they are prepared to let their mind follow Daniel Libeskind's interpretation of events then they'll leave distressed and puzzled . However, if come with certain acquaintances and their own experiences from the holocaust, they will notice their punctum and leave wounded and tormented.