NORTHERN PLAINS
NATIVE AMERICAN ART INSTITUTE
Plenty Star Table-Red Shirt, South Dakota

Patterns - Connections
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Introduction

In the past few centuries, the migration of the white man from Europe to North America forced the “First Nation” peoples from their land, extending the old frontier further west. Eventually, the Indians were gathered together, segregated from the eastern societies, and moved to reservations established by the U.S. Government. Now, the native populations are left with a dream of their ancient heritage and are plagued by drastic modern day social and economic problems.

While the average American may have a brief understanding of Native American culture, the image of the Indians is perhaps one of romanticism and few Americans understand why the native peoples came close to extinction. This project aims to promote a cross-cultural understanding of the enduring legacy of the “The First Nation” peoples of North America. This goal will be sought by planning a Northern Plains Native American Heritage Center to educate visitors and provide them with the opportunity to experience the truth about the American “holocaust”.

Statement of Problem

The study will be affiliated with The Oglala Sioux tribe currently residing on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota which represents the majority of the Lakota dialect of the Northern Plains American Indian a result of the Indian Relocation Act of the 1950s.

The tribes seek to develop an area on Indian land which will draw tourism and promote economic development on and near the Pine Ridge Reservation site: Plenty Star Table. The proposed Northern Plains American Indian Heritage Center will be a place for the Indians to tell their story and to serve primarily to promote an environment to culturally and historically educate its visitors.

Premise

Human beings view their world through categories, concepts and labels that are products of their particular culture. Our perception of things around us, come from the shared meaning within our culture. We use perception to select, evaluate and organize our environment. Perception comes from the impressions left on us by past and present experiences. And meaning we give to these perceptions is influenced by our beliefs, attitudes and values. All of these elements speak to ways in which we view, reflect on, filter and respond to the things in our environment that are important to us. They determine our patterns for living.

This studio will explore a culture that is perhaps, historically, the most sustainable society on the North American continent…..the northern plains Indians. The northern plains first people societies represent a culture which is not exclusive from its environment but connected directly to the land that it exists upon.

A primary symbol that guides all aspects of Indian life is the circle. Unlike conventional western thinking which is linear and treats elements as discrete items, traditional Indian thinking is holistic, recognizing the interconnectedness between all things. No element of life is seen as isolated; all life forms are
interrelated. In concert with this way of life is the relationship between the people and the land. They are connected to the land and grounded by it. The land and its many forms are sacred to The People.

Chief Plenty-Coups, of the Crow nation, said in his 1909 farewell address at the Little Bighorn Council Grounds in Montana: “The ground on which we stand is sacred ground. It is the dust and blood of our ancestors....”

By translating lifestyle patterns and traditional connections the studio will develop a process to design strong, culturally based contemporary architectural form and space. Design principles that should discover and describe the patterns that give life to a community and bring into focus the relationships and boundaries between land, settlements and people.

**Studio Expectations**

The design process will include an emphasis on culturally related research (social and behavioral). Research will be conducted individually and as a studio. The design process will focus heavily on both physical and digital modeling techniques; historical and theoretical designs applications. The scale of the project is expected to relate specifically to the culture and philosophies of the user, i.e., “connection of the culture and nature”. It will be a project combining master-planning/urban design techniques with, primarily, a building design scale of 50,000 square feet or more, dependent on program development during the course of the studio by the individual student. The final studio product will explore exhibition style presentation methodologies, e.g., competition style boards (including digital represented graphics), physical models (including 3D imaging), and digital animation.

**Design Program**

A synoptic program is provided below based on projected user needs. A more detailed program will be developed by the studio:

**Program Description**

- Curation and Collection Management
- Interpretive Public Display
- Administration and Office Functions
- Research and Publication
- Presentation and Conference Functions
- Housing and Recreation

**Site and Precedent Analysis**

Using the synoptic program above, a more detailed program will need to be developed for the entire studio. Key components are the analysis of the site and of precedents related to each element of the program description. The site analysis will document the existing natural formations and will include measured drawings and scaled models. The precedent analysis will include photographs and drawing of all pertinent natural and constructed elements of the site and the culturally significant entities. The
precedent/site analysis will be the basis for developing a detailed program with set of culturally specific guidelines and a set of building design guidelines that can be applied by each project.

Design Teams

Due to the scope of the work you will be allowed to design individually or pair up in small design teams. Each team will be responsible for developing its own concept plan for the site. This concept plan will be the basis for the design buildings by individual team members.

CALENDAR-TBA

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