"Emotion, Materiality and Design"

Two young instructors were discussing a design project that their students were undertaking: the design of a bookstore. As the discussion progressed, they mused about an idealized bookstore and its layout. The bookstore, they agreed, would have a grand vertical circulation. Subjects were organized hierarchically. They agreed that the ground level would contain magazines and manuals. The second floor would contain textbooks, etc. As the multi level structure ascended material would increase in its importance to the human condition. They were delighted to find that they agreed upon the placement of subjects. They became more excited as their musings took them to the penultimate placement of honor. As to the subject, they spoke simultaneously: Poetry, said the one; Philosophy, said the other. They were surprised, but not very, by their disagreement, and so another conversation was begun...

This semester we shall attempt to create projects which speak to both our minds and our hearts.

STUDIO DESCRIPTION

NON-DENOMINATIONAL BURIAL CHAPEL
In our current consumerist culture, the art of architecture is threatened by two opposite processes; it is reduced to mere utility and economy, on the one hand, and to pure representation or aestheticization, on the other. While architecture has been rationalized and instrumentalized through processes of modernization, it has lost its cosmic, metaphysical, symbolic and emotive content.

THE STUDIO TASK
During the modern era, western culture has gradually eliminated the reality of death from our normal human consciousness and emotion. The design of a funeral chapel or funerary object, such as a casket, urn, grave marker and monument, calls for special sensitivity, understanding, tact, and compassion. Funerary architecture and design has to be consoling and dignifying without being sentimental or patronizing. The Studio assignment is to design an intimate non-denominational or ecumenical burial chapel which does not include the technical facilities for cremation.

The project sites are the existing cemeteries adjacent to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The required presentation material at various phases of the project will be determined after the site has been decided.

The Studio focuses on the emotional and spiritual dimensions of architecture. The expressive potential of materiality, light, color and proportionality are especially studied. In order to identify a personal emotive ground for the design of the funerary chapel, the studio process includes special exercises (including the design and construction of a full scale funeral urn), lecture and conversations on the emotional and poetic essence of architecture and the arts.

As other art forms seem to contain stronger emotional meanings than architecture, examples of various arts will be studied for the purpose of identifying how emotion is evoked and suggesting ways in which architectural language could be emotionally intensified.