Meaning and Monumentality Re-making of the Community?

Issue

Cleveland has enjoyed a rich heritage as a melting pot of diverse cultures. It is celebrated in the cultural gardens that flank East Blvd. However, today like so many other communities around the country, Cleveland has been disrupted by a wave of senseless violence that is dividing the community. How might we consider the question of healing of the community through the design of a place or element that could challenge our thinking and engage our emotions to be better and resilient?

Challenge

Through the application and understanding of meaning and monumentality, how might we consider the development of a place or object that could have an effect on the audience to begin to re-kindle a spirit understanding and tolerance by educating those encountering this intervention to become more open and thoughtful in dealing with the issue.

Process

The process of developing a meaningful approach to addressing the question has several steps. The group will explore these in producing a design solution.

- To begin the process the first step is to identify words that describe the keys to addressing the issue. Then develop a “wordle”, a graphic organization of words into visual summary that describes the response to the issue. Then identify an over-arching organizing design element that depicts the basic concept.

- Over the centuries, there have been many commemorative statements made to remind the public of what has taken place, educate the public on how the situation came about leading to the event being recognized and offering a reflective experience to promote healing and understanding. In this regard, we will look at precedents to explore the response to other social events and how people have produced places for contemplation of the circumstances.

- Dialogue is an important part of the process both amongst the designers to explore thoughts and ideas along with the community stakeholders to gain their understanding and perspective on the role the project can play in the community. We will hold a discussion, charrette session to share our ideas and thoughts about the condition, the events and direction for the solution. This is where we build some consensus on the direction and intentions for the project.

- Framing the question is essential to the development of a design response. What is the raison d’etre (the reason for existence) for this monument. Remember some monuments are not necessarily things, they can just be a place for reflection. Therefore, the development of a
statement of purpose and objective of the experience is an essential step to complete in driving the design and shaping the response. We will work on the creation of such a design statement to shape and direct where the project wants to go.

- Based upon the design statement, the designer often looks for images of objects, places and experiences to illustrate aspects of the concept. In producing reference images, we will create a collage of photos obtained from the internet or magazines along with brief statements that will begin to define the character of the design response.

- Identifying the site where this place or monument will be erected or placed will contribute to our understanding of the response. It is often located in the place where the event occurred. However, it does not necessarily need to be there. It could be somewhere people congregate and such a statement in a location other than the site of the event, particularly where the event took place in a remote location or it has a broader impact than marking the place, can be a source for education and engagement. We will consider sites where the project can be established and erected. The site also offers clues as to how the place might be developed.

- Based upon all of the previous work, we can now begin to more thoughtfully develop design concepts sketching ideas to consider for the project.

- Gaining feedback on our design concepts will lead to refining the idea and closing in on a solution that meets the objectives we set out to achieve. We then can incorporate comments, suggestions and criticism into the design of the project leading to a final design.

- While there may be other steps to follow on the pathway to a final design, we will wrap up based upon the previous steps and move toward generating a presentation package. The presentation package can include drawings, written documents and/or models to communicate the “Big Idea”.

- Present the project.