Power & Memories
Defining monuments and memorials in a fragmented city

by

Chim Tat Wai, David
HD99-1308N

submitted to the Department of Architecture
on 14 December, 2001 in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Abstract

The 'Big Brother' ideology depicted in Orwell's novels is beginning to realise itself in the modern society. In the bid to gain political control, mass audience is necessary and the 'container' for these happenings forms the perimeters of our architecture, both affecting the populace in physical terms and in psychological means. The power to influence necessarily leaves a strong impression in people's minds, and the search of an identity within a memorable past. Berlin, as a city of fragmentation, awaits the re-composition of its historical fragments that forms its story, culminating in a national identity. The search for an identity leads us to studying monuments of power and memorials that preserves the memories of a past. Perhaps these two entities can co-exist as one, a monument-memorial?

Applying Anthony Vidler's classification of the three typologies, we are able to de-compose and re-compose fragments, and using Rodrigo's methodology of analytical extraction, gives a city its meanings by connecting monuments with the fabric of the city. The selection of a few 'fragments' of Berlin shows the vast varieties of possibilities that can culminate in a city's identity. With the end of war and separation, how does a city pick itself up, how can we stitch a previously divided city? These are some of the questions pertinent to this dissertation.

It is not our aim to dictate a new identity for a city, but identifying 'fragments' that can be useful, and letting the fabric, or the society develop upon these to form the story. The Berlin Wall may be the answer for Berlin's identity, despite its controversies and difficulty as it touches upon the uncertainties of psychological attributes. There are always 2 sides to a wall, and 2 sides of a story.

The application of this methodology becomes eminent after the terrorists attacks of the World Trade Centre on 11 September, 2001.