

Community Visual Identity for The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Art Center. AR104

A Problem of Space

A few years from now The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Art Center (hereafter denoted CF) will have vanished from public view. This unfortunate disappearance has begun. CF is flanked on its western, Georgia Avenue, side by the Health Sciences Center, HC. From the northwest, a rapidly rising Cultural Arts Building blocks viewing from East-West Highway, and to some extent, Burlington Avenue to the north. An anticipated West Campus Garage will occlude CF's eastern flank along the Metro tracks. Finally, trees in Jesup Blair obscure southern views of CF. For a center of visual arts, this vanishing presence could be a disconcerting loss. The main objective of this proposal is to restore a vital campus visual identity to CF and its programs.

The CF will be hidden and visually lost to passersby even though it is physically open and accessible. However, a second part element-actually the most important-is air space above CF and its adjacent courts and walkways. Sky is and likely will remain an open avenue of projection. To this end, consider a needle-thin tower or spire rising 150 feet. This height is well above surrounding buildings and trees. A clock will adorn the top of the needle spire to signal the CF location. It is intended that with time, it will become known to the community as the "Art Center Clock". The spire will be thin and delicate. It will be rather unlike traditional clock towers. In this respect it will be very much consonant with the modern architectural motifs of CF and the box-like, somewhat uninspiring He.

The general location of the spire is the courtyard between CF and He. Several spots are workable, although only one is shown in this proposal. There are several accompanying photographs of the courtyard, which is a pleasant semi-open space. One objective of this proposed work is to intrude as little as possible upon pleasantness of the courtyard. The spire has no more footprint than a large flagpole.

Spire with Clock

Towers and their clocks long have been used to give time while advertising locations. Examples include the Great Clock in London's Palace of Westminster ("Big Ben"), Savior's Tower Clock in the Kremlin (face diameter is 6.2m) and the Boston Quincy Market Clock Tower.

Appearance, Design. Design of the tower clock face draws upon modern railway clock practice for easy reading and yet somewhat resembles practices from two centuries ago. Unlike many medieval clocks, this one has two hands and is illuminated from behind. There are three faces, each 5 feet in diameter. ** Because the support spire is only a foot in diameter at the top, the structure resembles a giant artist's tool for shaping clay or working wood. Seen in such a light, the proposal is a giant sculpture that may remind students coming and going what transpires inside CF. The spire could be painted black or charcoal to match handles on common sculpting and painting tools.

Clock Element. The clock mechanism can be obtained commercially from a number of companies. These are often electric, with GPS-time synchronization to assure accurate

performance and reliability. The clock housing should be light but weather resistant. Aluminum is a good choice. The faces are frosted white and should be shatter resistant. Uniform illumination of the three faces is electrical via banks of LEDs.

Installation. The spire of the tower clock is the same as one for cellular phone service or microwave relays in telephony. Called a monopole, this steel structure is 177 feet long and weighs 7 tons. The monopole is inserted into a 27 foot bore hole drilled by a 5 foot auger. Once inserted, the remaining space is filled with aggregate (concrete is not necessary). It will withstand 120 mph winds and tolerate them briefly to 140 mph. The actual footprint at ground level is a 37 inch diameter circle. Cross-section of the pole is not truly circular-it is an eighteen sided polygon. Needless to say, this work is a permanent installation.

Cost. The heavy duty monopole costs \$28,000 plus approximately \$2000 shipping. Clock components would likely be less, but some custom fabrication is necessary. Legal fees would also have to be paid to gain local approvals (Montgomery County is apparently very open to monopoles up to 150 feet tall). A guess budget would \$100,000 plus or minus \$20,000 .

Anticipated Problem. A high monopole is commercially very valuable. MC administrators would soon receive offers from cellular service vendors to rent antenna space on the pole. This would be an aesthetic abomination. Unfortunately, such rentals in a high density area could return enough to fund another junior faculty member (although not full-time), so the offers would be hard to refuse.