

THE STUDY ON MEMORIAL PARK AND ITS ROLE AS A SPACE OF
COMMEMORATING HISTORY

By

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Acknowledgement

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Abstract

Memorial parks objectives are to be a reminder or a remembrance of the past. The usage of monuments and sculpture in the memorial parks or as the memorial itself intends to make the people realize the importance of the past for the future generation. This research study aims to understand more about the role of memorial parks, philosophy, characteristics of memorial parks. Commemorating history is not only can be achieved by looking at a sculpture, but to sense or to feel the situation within the site itself. Landscape, literal text or graphics, would represent something beyond itself, and bring great significance for the individual or the society (Buckley, 2002). Therefore, the integration of these elements can enhance the role of memorial parks as the space for commemorating history.

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Memorial parks nowadays perceived as a reminder or a remembrance of the past. The usage of monuments and sculpture in the memorial parks or as the memorial itself intends to make the people realize the importance of the past for the future generations.

In Malaysia however, commemoration of local history or event is noticeably absent. It seems that Malaysian is still lack of appropriate language that would describes them as "patriotic". There are few numbers of memorial park and monument but the concept is still shallow, only introducing Memorial Park as a cemetery. The interaction with nature and its surrounding is still poor and less people concern about memorials and memorial parks.

1.2 Goals

The primary goal of this research study is to understand more about the role, philosophy and characteristics of a memorial park. It also aims to propose possibly appropriate alternative memorial parks that suitable for our nation and our society's culture.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the research are

1. To investigate the function of memorial parks to the society.

2. To study the role of memorial park as a public space.
3. To evaluate the landscape elements used in designing memorial parks.

1.4 Problem statement and issue

One of the main reasons to build a memorial park is to remember and to commemorate historic event. However contradiction with our diversity of culture and history, we are still lacking of memorial parks that could fulfill the need of the users and also the aim of the park itself. Park is a public space, therefore it should fulfilled the needs of the public in the same time convey them with messages and information.

The notion of a memorial park in our society is concentrated on "sculpture" and "monumental design", example Tugu Negara (National Monument) at Jalan Parlimen. The sculpture alone will not capture the essence of patriotism but the its combination with its surrounding, such as the landscape, literal text or graphics, would represent something beyond itself, and bring great significance for the individual or the society (Buckley, 2002).

1.5 Methodology

There are various type of methodology used in this research study. Methods of data collection included some observations, photographs, questionnaires and interviews in order to obtain specific information. References through various types of publication media such as government publications, seminar paper and mostly books are needed for literature reviews, reference studies and case studies. The information from multi

media such as website and the Internet also important to accomplished this research study.

1.5.1 Literature review

The research is conducted based on literature review on any publication, which associated with the study. The references will be list down as bibliography.

1.5.2 Case study

The case study will be conducted at National Monument at Jalan Parlimen and also the Tun Abdul Razak Memorial Park in Kuala Lumpur. Both the area is chosen because of the their differences of criteria and also different type of commemoration.

1.5.3 Data collection

This research can be categorized as a qualitative research design, as its intention is to develop a theory. There are two types of data that could be collected using qualitative method, namely,

- a. In depth/intensive interview
- b. Field observation
- c. Focus group
- d. Case study

1.5.4 Data analysis

The data will be analyzed using a statistics software called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Program. The program can analyze the qualitative analysis by using Descriptive Statistics, and the findings will be presented using, tables, charts, graphs and visuals.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 RESEARCH TOPIC AND REFERENCE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

According to Little Oxford Dictionary 7th Edition, the word *memorial* defines as “object, establish in memory of a person or event”. The word *memorial* derives from the word *memory*, which means “faculty by which things are recalled to or kept in mind; store of things remembered, remembrance”.

Memorials according to Buckley (2002), dealt with central nervous system of a community, dealing with the very essence of a group of individuals or events being commemorated. Landscape is always associated with memory. It transforms memory into seemingly natural experience, hence transporting the past event in to the present (Birksted, 2002). Booth (1990) defines landscape architecture as a professional design discipline that, in the broadest sense, deals with integrating people and the outdoor environment in a manner beneficial to both. Therefore the integration of landscape elements and natural surrounding is still regarded as an important aspect of designing any public open spaces including the Memorial Parks.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 Role of memorial park

Buckley (2002) acknowledges that memorial is a beginning of public awareness to patriotism and not merely a conclusion of history (Buckley, 2002). The society is made aware to patriotism by

experiencing memorials spaces and elements. It shows that memorials are intended for the users to think extensively for the future and beyond. Eventually, memorials are not describing the ending of the history; instead its unfold the impact of the history to the society. The past generation is extending the history for the future generation by using memorials as the mediator.

"Memorials are urbanscape, not landscape, nor architecture"

(Buckley, 2002)

Buckley (2002) is trying to describe the essence of memorial parks through his article by saying memorials are *urbanscape*. Urbanscape is related to urban spaces, which gives a city its character, the spaces within spaces: streets, the plazas the parks and then the private living spaces, the small gardens and private enclosures (Halprin, 1972). These open spaces gives and serve different functions and needs. Urbanscape, or *townscape* is an urban designs which emphasis the visual perception of the urban environment. It is based on the assumption that the visual perception of the urban environment, and consequent improvements to it, can be accomplished in an objective way through an understanding of the emotional effects created by the juxtaposition of its physical element. Thus, memorial parks can be considered as an urbanscape, as it reflects back on the perception of the users the location itself is within the ratio of urban environment.

2.2.2 Memorial as symbolism

The word symbolism means, "use of symbols, artistic movement using symbols to express ideas etc; emotions;" according to Little Oxford Dictionary (7th edition). In landscape architecture, the function is similar to metaphor for generating form but by means of fundamental difference (Dee, 2001). She also explained the difference are that symbolism involves the conscious and careful abstraction of a form which is either directly or indirectly. The design is intended thus the user can understand the meaning of both the meaning and the symbols it selves. However, it has the tendency towards literalness, obviousness and cliché, consequently leave no room for the users interpretation.

Symbols, suggested by theologian Paul Tillich, as quoted by Relph (1976),

"...point to something beyond themselves and open up levels of reality which are otherwise closed; they cannot be produced intentionally but grow and die".

Relph (1976)

It represents something that is beyond itself, which is represent other than the expectation of our visual sense. Although the shape is simple, it elaborates more than one word of descriptions. A little contrary with Dee interpretation, Relph explained that the roles of symbols are deliberately to send non-directional messages to the society. There are mostly related to myths, concepts, and less on the reality (Relphs, 1976).

Memorials are symbolism that resides in places, in nodes, district as well as in landmarks (Greenbie, 1981).

"Every memorial is, in essence, a symbol"

Buckley, 2002

Buckley refers memorials as symbols. He suggested that the role of creating a memorial is to capture the essence and the symbols of patriotism (Buckley, 2002). Symbolism in memorial related with the builds of monuments or structure. The symbolic value used in memorial parks is usually in the shape of statues and monuments. Their symbolic meanings are varies but within the same reason, which is to give information to the users. They deliberately give the chance for the viewers to think, and at the same time has meaning of its own. For example in Rotterdam, the searing screeching figure sculpture by Zadkine was deliberately to symbolize the brutal Nazi bombing of Rotterdam (Halprin, 1972).

2.2.3 Monument and memorial

The word *monument* comes from Latin word *monere*, means, "to remind" (Reynolds, 1996). Concise Oxford Dictionary (10th Edition) defines monument as followings below:

1. *A statue, building, or other structure erected to commemorate a notable person or event.*
2. *A structure or site of historical importance or interest.*

3. *An enduring and memorable or reminder.*

Reynolds (1996) defined monument as, " a tangible, material construction, usually of stone, brick or metal, that serves to remind passersby of some person, event or concept". In other words, he adds, a written record.

In his book, Reynolds (1996) explained about the function of monuments and the concept of monument in the sense of remembering or reminding. Human being has the necessity to remember and to memorialize individuals to the society. History shows that the richer and more powerful the person remembered, the larger the shape of the monument built. The example can be seen on the Egyptian on building of pyramids. Pyramids are built to commemorate the pharaoh, which the more power possessed by the pharaoh during his lifetime, then the bigger the pyramid will be built for him.

The monuments not only remind the good person or events, but also purposely design to remember sad and tragic event. Beautiful monuments and sculpture were built in certain countries to commemorate and honor the unjust, cruel regime. In Rotterdam, a sculpture built by Zadkine, is a memorial to the brutal bombing of Rotterdam during the Nazi invention (Halprin, 1972).



Figure 2.1: Sculpture by Zadkine, commemorating the brutal bombing of Rotterdam by the Nazi.

A structure without a verbal explanation is not a monument. Monument is a written structure. Sometimes, certain monuments achieved their goal as a monument by only using words. Therefore, it is essential that a monument used the method of combining visual objects and words to spread the message.

2.2.4 Public art as memorial

The general conception of public art is as the following: It is an exhibition of "artworks" that are installed at a "site" that is "exposed" to the "public". On the other hand, it indicates artworks that are close to the public. However, such simplified definitions create problems for specialist, who study and exhibit public art. Public art is basically the communication between the "public" and "art". It eventually makes the spaces of the people become more aesthetic and livable.

The concept of a public art is like transforming exhibition gallery from interior to exterior. For example, public buildings, sculptures placed in front of main entrances of office buildings, murals on the walls of churches or schools, and outdoor sculptures or fountain sculptures in public areas such as public parks are all included in this definition. Also, aesthetically beautified benches on streets, trashcans, and street lamps are included in this as well.

Relating public art and memorials are crucial. Public art is part of memorial. Designing a memorial is like building a museum; except for it is outside rather than inside the building. For example Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington. The designer, Lawrence Halprin designed the memorial park with the 'procession through series of outdoor rooms with controlled vistas' (see *Figure 2.2*) (William and Thompson, 2001). The memorial has four rooms arranged in chronological order, each commemorating one of the four terms of FDR's administration. It shows that memorials parks basically give the experiences for the users through varieties of spaces and view.

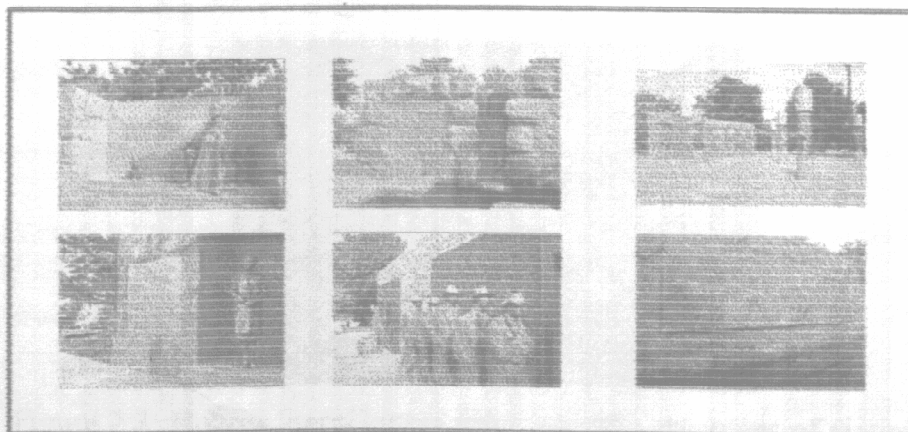


Figure 2.2: Series of outdoor rooms in FDR Memorial.

The significance of using public art as memorials design is that it departs the memorial design from its original and traditional methods, respectively by using one collective vertical structure or statue. The usage of materials such as glass, metal and concrete for alternatives bring out the true quality of the designers. One of the ASLA Award Design 2002 winners, **Congressional Medal of Honor Memorial White River State Park, Indianapolis, Indiana** used glass as the main media of the Memorial park. Because of its transparency, perceived fragility, and ability it can convey an evocative message of hope instead of death.

Presently, designers are trying new alternatives to replace statue or figurative sculpture in memorial designs. The designer of Montreal Massacre Memorial, Rose Marie Goulet, instead of using figure, she used the entire surface of the site to create contemplative space for reflection and remembrance. Literal letter that make up names who died in that incident are absent, or hollow, intended to represents the absentees of the victims now. Her design eventually gives an eerie physical representation of feelings and memory.

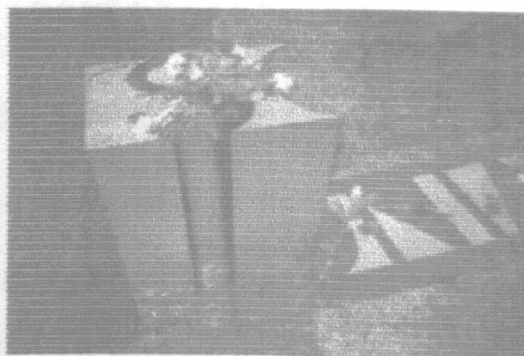


Figure 2.3: Hollow literal letters represents the absentees of victims in Montreal Massacre Memorial design.

In commemorating the tragic incident occurred on 11th September 2001, the National Memorial Programs and Resources have launched a resource website which the designer can design their public art according to what the people really need. It shows that in order to remember an important event, using public art, as the medium to illustrate the emotions and feelings is vital. Public art is the relationship between the public and art; therefore the public perception is needed to be emphasizes in order to have an effective and successful design.

2.3 Reference studies

2.3.1 Oklahoma City National Memorial, Oklahoma City

On April 19, 1995, at 9:02 a.m., a two-ton bomb exploded in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. After six weeks of searching the rubble for the remaining victims, what remained of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was cleared from the site. All totaled, 168 people were killed, including 19 children. Shortly after the bombing, a 350-member task force was created in order to establish criteria, now referred to as the "Mission Statement," to guide the development, selection and construction of an appropriate Memorial to the bombing's victims and survivors. The Mission Statement seeks to honor those who were killed, those who survived, those who helped, and those changed forever. It calls for the preservation of the Survivor tree, and a special place for children. Lastly, it calls for the Memorial

to offer feelings of comfort, strength, peace, hope, and serenity, and ultimately provide an uplifting experience, enriching the spirit of those who visit.

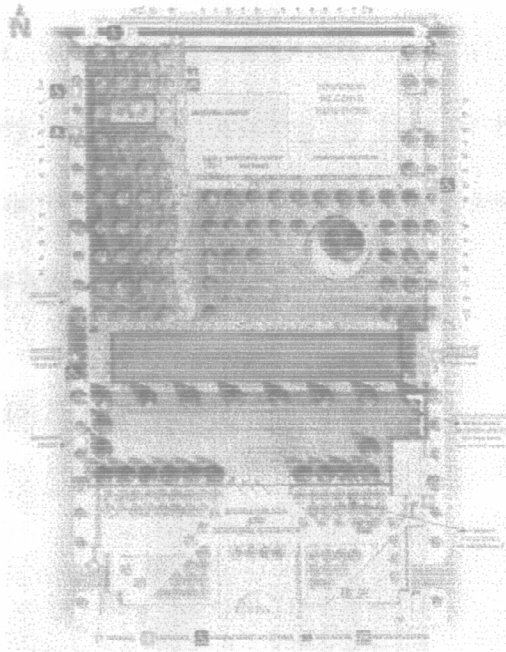


Figure 2.4: The master plan of Oklahoma City National Memorial.

The site for the Oklahoma City National Memorial is located on the northern edge of the downtown business district in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Robinson and Harvey Avenues bound it on the east and West, and by 4th and 6th Streets on the north and south. The 3.3-acre site includes the footprint of the former Alfred P. Murrah building, a portion of 5th Street that has now been permanently closed, and a surviving tree located north of 5th Street. Also included are the sites of a parking lot, the former Water Resources Board building and the former Athenian building.