

Ari Lewkowitz

Architecture, when experienced in person, becomes more than just a visual art form. It captures the sensuality of touch, the understanding of place, and the strength of spatial consciousness. Inherently, therefore, the experience of *being* in a space gives a different reading than extensive research and study through literature and images. Consequently, as an architecture major and a Jewish studies minor, I was immediately attracted to the research seminar JWST409L: Jews in the City, for it allowed me to use literature and research in conjunction with memories of sites that I had previously been to. I have been to Israel on numerous occasions, and have walked alongside the ancient walls of Jerusalem, conversed with local Israelis in Hebrew, and drawn the famous structures still standing from ancient antiquity.

Before my semester had even begun I knew I wanted to write about Jerusalem. It is one of the most captivating cities I have ever visited, and I knew that my prior feelings about it would be a good jumping point for later research. Secondly, I wanted to narrow the topic down to architects that have a philosophy with which I was familiar with on a somewhat personal level. Fortunately, as a high school student I had the wonderful privilege of interning briefly with famed Israeli architect, Moshe Safdie. I had had personal conversations with him during my stay in his Cambridge office, and despite my pre-collegiate age, his wisdom, theories, and encouragement have stayed with me.

Without even realizing it, the paper topics were starting to formulate and fall into place. The professor of the class, Dr. Cooperman, gave me the final push when he mentioned a building by Safdie's first employer, Louis Kahn, which was proposed

Ari Lewkowitz

for Jerusalem in the 1960's and 1970's but never commissioned. Reading about the building through a quick Google search, I realized it would make a perfect comparative study between two buildings of Safdie's in Jerusalem. Here is where the library finally began to play a pivotal role.

Turning to Professor Cooperman, he gave me the names of authors who wrote about the modern history of Jerusalem and the Old City in particular. At McKeldin Library I was able to find multiple books from these authors, and I always made sure to borrow the first two or three books on either side of the one I was looking for. After reading excerpts from these books, I spoke about them with one of my architecture studio professors, Jason Winters. With his assistance, I decided to gear my comparative study to a treatise on monumentality and the role such buildings have in a city's social, cultural, political, and economic context. Moreover, Professor Winter's suggested architectural books that I was able to find in the Art Library, Architecture Library, and McKeldin Library that were visually based. These books allowed me to use the analytical and creative skills taught in my design studios to critique floor plans, site plans, construction details, and photographs of the buildings. I was able to find books that showed initial sketches from the architects, and juxtapose them to perspectives of the buildings in the 1970's up until a couple of years ago. Using the online Research Port, I was able to find even more sketches and photographs that gave me a holistic understanding of the sites to complement my own memories and experiences. These visualizations were of utmost importance to the research, a handful of which are shown in my paper, as

Ari Lewkowitz

they allowed me to evaluate the literature I read. I could formulate my own opinion and use critical judgment to agree, disagree, or more commonly make modifications to other's theories.

As my research continued, the paper began to diversify almost exponentially, while staying focused on the thesis. Reading theoretical essays on urban planning and monumentality, I turned to their bibliography and looked up the resources these authors had turned to. Many of these were older and not found in McKeldin, but I was able to get a majority of them online through Research Port and have others mailed over through Interlibrary Loans. Consequently, my essay began pulling themes from social history, tourism driven economics, political science, archaeology, etc. As this was occurring, Professor Cooperman guided me in evaluating the resources, explaining which were too tangential, which were too biased, and which presented real opportunities for exploration. This particular part of the project taught me the most as it was a facet I did not necessarily expect when the project began. I always knew about the importance of varying references, i.e. finding documents in support as well as against one's thesis, but I had rarely expanded that idea to research subject areas not directly related to the one I was reporting on. Ultimately, this greatly improved the effectiveness of the essay, as it allowed me to carry the reader through a discussion of abstract theories to tangible formulations to conclusive diagrams of experiential architecture.

Ari Lewkowitz

This notion of diversification and cross-pollinating ideas is an area that can always be improved in a scholastic environment. If it is the role of the architect to always be trying to reimagine and reinvent, I can see a reorganization of not only the library stacks, but of the communal spaces they are defined by. Instead of compartmentalizing books by their respective themes, distributing topics with conscious adjacencies that encourages nuanced variations could greatly assist researchers. Finally, this can be coupled with new shared spaces that allow students from various majors to interact and collaborate in a setting that fuses the energy of a natural environment, the conversational pursuit of a seminar, and the inspirational character of a leading public research institution.