

## **How to Attend an Architecture Lecture: Q&A with Professor Keith Diaz Moore, Architecture, Design and Planning**

### **Attending the Lecture**

#### **Q: What should students expect if they are going to attend an architecture lecture?**

A: Our lectures are normally about an hour long. What students will notice is that it's almost all visual content. Usually if there is verbiage, it will be limited to a word, a phrase on a slide, and usually there's only one thing on the screen at a time. Architects tend to not like visual clutter. Generally, most architecture lectures should be pretty understandable to the general public. Titles are a good giveaway; if the title has words that a student doesn't understand, the person will probably talk in what we call "arche-speak." And that does make it difficult to access. But if the title is clear, then they're probably going to be clear in the presentation.

#### **Q: Is there anything that students should do to prepare for a lecture?**

A: One of the things, if they can do it, is to take a look at whatever work is being discussed before the lecture. So, if it's a particular architect, they can go on their website and just take a look at some of the projects. The architect will try and organize those things by theme, which will likely be reinforced in the lecture.

#### **Q: Is there any basic architecture lingo that people should know before they attend an event? Some basic terms that are going to slip in, even with a more accessible speaker?**

A: You almost always hear about composition in some way. And we're usually looking for some sense of balance; that might be symmetrical or asymmetrical, for instance. One word that's quite popular is transformation. In the end, if you think about architecture, it is a reallocation of natural resources to create a habitat. And so we're taking a site that might have nothing on it, or perhaps we're tearing a building down, but we're transforming it in some way. So that theme will occur quite often in architecture. What's driving that transformation? And some will focus more on formal aspects, others might focus more on process dimensions of that.

Certainly order. In fact, there's a famous book in architecture called "Form, Space, and Order." Those are probably three terms to know as you get into architecture lectures. Order often has to do not only with the order of, let's say, the structure, you know where we have repeating columns, but also order in terms of how are we organizing the spatial relationships, so "what functions are next to what?" "What leads from one thing to another?" "What makes sense?" We organize social life in architecture, and so that's the order aspect.

#### **Q: Is there any special etiquette that students would need to follow at an architecture lecture as opposed to a lecture for some other discipline?**

A: No, I don't think so. Some of the most interesting parts about architecture lectures are the questions at the end. And so one of the ways that might actually enhance note-taking as well is to challenge yourself to come up with a question that could be asked at the end. The architect will always frame their lecture from their own perspective, but they are often quite good at responding to people who are coming from a different perspective and it can clarify what the

architect has actually said. These questions at the end are really critical, and I think if students can challenge themselves to do that, it would really make it a much more engaging lecture.

**Q: Do you have any advice? How should students go about formulating a question?**

A: Here are two suggestions. One is architects will often be focused on the project, so if there's a very specific question about a project or a point that wasn't clear, that would be a good question. If you can remember what the project is and discuss it in that way, that will be an effective prompt to engage the architect. But, second, there are always several running themes that the architect is always trying to hit, and if you can relate your question to one of those themes, then they're going to be able to engage that. So either a project based question or a theme-based question.

**Reflecting on the Lecture**

**Q: What should students be looking for at the event to get the most out of it?**

A: One thing to really think about is – what do they imagine the experience of being in those buildings is like? One of the easiest things to usually access is daylight. The sense of lightness, but also the sense of warmth you might get from that. Or is it about cool and shadows and things of that sort? Then they could reflect on some similar buildings. So if they are seeing something that's a wonderful higher ed building, can they contrast it with something they've seen here at KU?

**Q: If students are taking notes, what should they write down during the lecture?**

A: Architecture lectures are somewhat difficult to take notes in because there's this separation between the verbal content you're going to get and the visual content. It doesn't always necessarily immediately align in your mind. So really you'll want to try and capture some quick notes about the images, quick description, and then what is that architect talking about, which will probably be more conceptual in nature. And then those might create prompts for reflection later on. What was clear? What was innovative about it? What was inspiring about it? Or, what was confusing about it? And that's as likely to happen as anything else.

**Q: Do you have any general tips on relating architecture to students' own disciplines?**

A: I would always come back to how the experiential aspects can be tied together. So if you think about the experience of moving through a piece of architecture, I can imagine that being tied to film in that sense of movement that you might have in a film. What is that climax toward the end, and how do you build towards it? An unfolding narrative is as much a part of good architecture as it is literature. With music it might actually be more on the theoretical end; architects are concerned with issues of harmony and composition. I think if students can think about the core ideas of their own disciplines, they ought to be able to relate it to architecture, because architecture has to deal with the arts, it has to deal with the sciences, it has to deal with business aspects--there are so many different ways of slicing architecture; it's a nice middle-ground for all sorts of different disciplines.

**Q: Any final words of wisdom for students from other disciplines coming to an architecture lecture?**

A: Yes, I hope they do come because architecture is around us all the time, and the more you can learn about architecture, at some point you're probably going to be a client, so why not be more informed about it? Additionally, you are always a user, and so perhaps you might understand how your workspace, how your living space, was designed better if you can see what an architect was intending to do with it. So I think architecture is a great medium for conversation between people because it's something we all share, but it's something that's also distinct from us as people. So it's this thing out there that we can talk about that's an interesting conversation piece, and we all have our personal experience with it. Architecture ought to be wonderfully inspirational.