Sheldon Friday

English 1101

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                Ancient History, Today’s Picture

Particular types of architecture such as arches have been built around the world to represent a moment from the past. In New York City, there are several arches that have symbolism for an event or icon. John Berger states that, “The true content of a photograph is invisible, for it derives from a play, not with form, but with time. The choice is not about photographing x and y; but between photographing at x moment or at y moment.”(293) Photographs are used to record moments that have value that one may want to keep in mind to remember a special occasion before. The photos are used to capture precise moments of an event, whether it a personal picture to share with friends and relatives, or a historical picture to show future viewers how an event played out. The two picture I took were the historic arcs at Washington Square Park and Grand Army Plaza. I took these picture as I believe they give significance to the history of New York, with the Washington Square Park arch focusing on nonconformity and The Grand Army Plaza’s Soldiers and Sailors arch being a memorial to the soldiers of the Civil War.

    The first picture I taken is called The Grand Army Plaza Historical Soldiers and Sailors Arch. The arch was designed by John H. Duncan as a monument for the fallen soldiers from the Civil War (Brooklyn Public Library: Brooklyn in the Civil War. John H. Duncan also designed the General Grant National Memorial. The arch is located in Brooklyn, New York, north of Prospect Park within a traffic circle, where few people stand near during the day. The arch features statues on the top and side panel with soldiers and winged beings. A dominant impression at the Grand Army Plaza arch would be patriotism as it represent the willpower to fight in a war. The northernmost battle fought during the Civil War happen in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Although the Civil War battles never touched New York soil, the Civil War still had a profound effect on New York and the country as a whole. Even though the arch in Grand Army Plaza was built to honor union soldiers who lost their lives in our country's bloodiest war, it serves more joyous purposes today. The arch is one of New York’s most popular landmarks to take wedding photos. On any given weekend you can see different bridal parties posing in the arch. The fountain in the garden is picturesque. Across the street, there is a farmer market that sells fresh, locally grown produce. During the night, the spotlight shines on the arch, allowing the public to admire the architecture in the dark.

The second photo I’ve taken is called The Washington Square Park Arch. The arch was built in 1892 to commemorate George Washington’s Inauguration for Presidency. The studium of this picture depicts the freedom of America from the British and the start of a fair government. To me, the punctum of this picture is that it a special landmark that represents an event in the past. This arch was designed by Stanford White. This arch has two George Washington Statues on the side columns and a bald eagle within the middle, both which represent nonconformity, meaning not following the general structure of society. The symbolism of the arch is the reason some people in the park tends to act abnormal, even within a crowded group. Another statement by John Berger is “The minimal message of a photograph may be less simple than we first thought. (294)” To John Berger, looking at a photo wouldn't automatically give the meaning of why the photo was taken or why that particular object or moment was chosen by the photographer. The dominant impression for the Washington Square Park Arch would be casual as the statutes are not visible on the inside of the park, thus not giving a political feeling. George Washington became the first President of the United States, making it a memorable change from the monarchy government of England. The arch was built to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of George Washington's inauguration as the first President of the United States. As the United States was based on freedom, the arch represent freedom from the status quo. Today many people visit the parks, with performances by musicians and artwork featured on the ground

Today, many monuments have been constructed to record past events or symbolize a meaning. Picture Number One is called the Grand Army Plaza Soldiers and Sailor Arch, which is a monument dedicated to the soldiers who lost their lives during the Civil War. Picture Number Two is called the Washington Square Park Arch, which was constructed after one hundred years that George Washington's Inauguration as President of the United States took place. The Grand Army Plaza Soldiers and Sailors Arch represent the memories of the casualties of the Civil War, and the Washington Square Park Arch represent freedom from the common normal. Both events mark a turning point in history, which matches the curving shape of the arches. Many wars and historical events have occurred throughout time, and the most significance one’s have statues and memorials to symbolize how the events occurred and how the aftermath affects the future. Events like 9/11 would have a complete change to the United States, and thus the Freedom Tower was built to represent the original twin towers that has fallen. The people would want their descendants to remember a major event that they weren't around to see or hear about and make sure the historical moment would never be forgotten.

Work Cited

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