

Title: Interpreting Culture Through Architecture

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Architecture by itself is not “culture.” Architecture does, however, feature symbols that represent the ideals of a culture. A building can represent what a culture deems important, how people live, and what institutions are important in their lives. In taking an interpretive approach, anthropologists can use the symbols found within a building to gain a better understanding of a particular culture. Looking at Notre Dame in Paris, this presentation discusses the Cathedral’s symbols in relation to Parisian culture in the 1300’s, when it was designed and built. Jumping forward in time, this presentation demonstrates that the same approach can be used to understand the 2019 Notre Dame fire, in which its famous spire collapsed, as a cultural event for Parisians and around the world.

Works Cited

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