

Julia Morgan Building Qualities

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I walk around this building most every day. Even though I've lived here for five years, I continue to observe things I've never seen before. Perhaps that is an aspect that makes good architecture captivating.

Overview

- Highly symmetrical
- Tripartite design
- Main entrance centered and expressed but not overly dominant

Note: In my mind, the plate glass door and window added in the 1950s that obscure the original recessed entry way are a major detraction from the original design.

Horizontal Dominance

- Building stretches horizontally
- Continuous roof line
- Three stacked bands brick, parapet and roof
- Parapets of the three bay windows
- Three rows or bands of windows
- Windows sills and horizontal mullions

Vertical Articulation

- The multitude of minor vertical elements
- Symmetry of the windows and their mullions

Color Palette: Muted

- Bricks and terracotta, both a muted red, create a monochromatic effect
- Dark window reflections, dark gray slate roof, and the shadows of the terracotta elements add to the monochromatic effect
- Much more serenity than excitement

Texture: Rich

- Everything has texture, even the leaded glass window sashes

Elements & Details

Sun Rooms: Dominate with two views

Two views of the Julia Morgan dominate as you approach the building.

1. the view from the NW corner of Bay and Laguna
2. The view from the SW and SE corners of Francisco and Laguna

From these two views the primary visual elements are the two sun rooms at each end of the building. (I will try to add photos later.)

Windows: Highly detailed

- Strong mullions both horizontally and vertically
- The depth of inset of the windows
- Strong sills
- Leaded glass sashes
- The decorated terracotta transoms

Terracotta Details + Iconography & Symbolism

- Contain a multitude of delightful aspects
- To be covered in a future document - with images.

Claude Sonnet 4 says

Compositional Balance:

The architecture achieves a classic balance between horizontal stability and vertical interest. The horizontal dominance gives the building a sense of permanence and integration with the landscape, while the vertical elements prevent it from appearing squat or overly earthbound. This creates the dignified, institutional character typical of

Colonial Revival civic architecture - grounded and substantial, yet architecturally dynamic.

The building essentially uses horizontal dominance with vertical articulation - a hallmark of successful institutional design.

Appendix

My hope is one day to write a publishable monograph describing and showing the architectural qualities of the Julia Morgan Building.

I also hope to be able to present aspects of the new designs to residents, friends and neighbors as they are developed.

With these future tasks in mind, your feedback as to what might be missing in my study so far and what new aspects you might like to see covered will be greatly appreciated.