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Rhetorical Architecture: the Bullitt Center and Arguments for Sustainability

Situated on the border of Seattle's Capitol Hill and First Hill neighborhoods, the Bullitt Center – a 6-story, 52,000 square-foot office building – opened its doors in April of 2013. Beyond its practical function, the Bullitt Center has a larger story and purpose. In meeting the Living Building Challenge, the architects of the Bullitt Center designed this space to function as “the greenest office building in the world,” not simply for recognition's sake, but in a concerted effort to embody the possibilities of new sustainable building design and construction practices. While many studies have been done that illustrate the persuasive power of architecture, monuments, and other physical spaces, the Bullitt Center offers a unique case study. Rather than understanding this space as an epideictic celebration of nature, history, or the nation, Homchick will dissect the ways in which the Bullitt Center embodies a deliberative, persuasive message that uniquely offers an argument in favor of changing attitudes and behaviors through its spatial and material design. Ultimately, the Bullitt Center modifies our understanding of the persuasive power of architecture and its role in campaigns for sustainability.