

Urban polemics taken over by life itself
Brasilia is building a subway currently
Niemeyer's buildings still thrive

Lecture 20 | Postmodernism & Popular Culture

Modernism being criticised as failing to make up to its Utopian ideas
What now?

Charles Jencks – the language of post-modern architecture

- Modernism had failed to communicate
- What was needed was an architecture that could communicate to the public in eye-catching ways
- Philip Johnson has rejected the idea of buildings that do not communicate
- Double coding: combination of modern techniques with something else (usually traditional building) in order for architecture to communicate with the public and a concerned minority, usually other architects

Start of post-modernism

- Demolition of Pruitt Igoe housing complex by Minoru Yamasaki
- Ended up as high-rise ghettos in poor states
- Death of modern architecture according to Jencks

1966 [Venturi](#), around same time as Archigram

- “Less is a bore”
- Promoting messy vitality over obvious unity, richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning

[Vanna Venturi House](#), proto post-modernist building

- Complex and contradictions, both complex and simple, open and close
- About the idea of the house and the idea of architecture
- Draws attention to things we expect and challenges those
- Joke(?)
- An arch that cuts through the lintel has no purpose except decoration
- A front door that isn't a front door
- On the left a window that references the idea of a house as drawn by children but on the right hand is the Le Corbusien strip window
- Point of the roof is drawn apart challenging the notion of stability
- The façade seeks to suggest a monumentality but it is a small house
- Staircase that goes nowhere
- Idea of hybridity
- Challenging what you expect
- The way in which we live is not simple and architecture should reflect that complexity
- Venturi questions our expectations

[Guild House](#)

- Speaks to the language of the street, popular culture and pop art
- Idea of super graphics

- This building is built along a street
- Contains a sign commercial in quality
- Referencing typologies that you don't expect in an old folk's home
- Giant TV arrow gilded to celebrate the fact that many old people spend their days watching TV
- Pre-packaged frozen lunch + Palladio
- References to pop culture + enduring expression of historical references

Consider architecture as a **communicative medium**, communicates via signs, elements
 Semiotics – our perception of reality is shaped by the words and signs that we use and how we interpret the words and signs of others

Signifier (form) + Signified (concept)

- Venturi says that architecture should speak the culture it is in, should draw from things around us, don't discriminate, all valid as expressions of our world
- Celebrate what is considered to be 'low art'

The Duck and the Decorated shed

- A building shaped like a duck selling duck products (modernism, functionalism)
- The sign has been reduced so much that the signifier and signified has become the same thing
- The decorated shed is a better way of approaching things
- You don't reduce architecture in a functionalist sense (building that just looks like they are), Enliven them, building that is still functional

Historical styles used because we see them as nostalgic, familiar

Post-modernist art

- Art about art
- Sherrie Levine, Richard prince, authenticity?
- Kitsch and Pastiche
- Shook the design world up, vibrancy, witticism
- Design objects became popular because of their communicative nature
- Graphic design, pastiche, quotation, appropriation (Peter Saville)
- A period where we are used to seeing quotation
- Postmodernism questions notions of authenticity and reality
- "a veneer rather than an expression of content"
- The Truman show, Matrix, questioning what is real
- We live in an age of mirrors, often unaware of what is real and not real
- Fake news? Real news?

Postmodernism becomes the key theme of Venice Biennale

- Drew on references of the past

Gordon Wu Hall, Princeton University, Venturi, Rauch & Scott Brown

- Provide a building that is more familiar
- Quotes Louis Kahn, classicism
- Brings status and familiarity

James Sterling Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart

- References to Egyptian, Greek, Roman architecture, huge drum in the centre (refers to domes)
- Democracy – public can walk through the building without entering the gallery
- I-beams (classical columns of our time)
- Classical ruin that is actually ventilation for the car park
- Recognising the language of architectural history
- Language that relies on the notion of irony

IRONY

Michael Graves Portland building Oregon

- Refers to the language of Art deco
- Questions the notion of structure

Disney Dolphin & Swan Hotel

- Invented a kind of Disney narrative
- 2D forms of dolphins as jokey references

Humana Building

- quoting from what is around
- idea of the streetscape
- planning laws, be sympathetic to a historical environment

Edmonds & Corrigan Ministry of Housing

- refers to the language of the suburbs
- refers to surrounding buildings
- familiar

RMIT Building 8

- language of the suburbs and popular culture, football colours

Fire Station

- refers to popular culture
- refers to idea of suburbs

ARM Holland Court

- quote from Oscar Niemeyer's church of St Francis of Assisi or McDonald's sign

Medical Clinic

- Copy of the Venturi House

National Museum of Australia

- Quoted Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin
- Is that ok??

User-friendly buildings, familiarity

Piazza d'Italia New Orleans by Charles Moore

- Draws on Italian piazzas

Moore and Turnbull

- Village atmosphere

Prince Charles

- Advocate of post-modernism
- Commissions a post-modern village, Poundbury Village
- We don't want modest, inhuman spaces, we want a nostalgic past, familiarity