

History and Theory Examination 2

M5X01981

Geraint Davies

2003381

Consider the term 'organic architecture'? What is your understanding of this term and does it have any relevance to architecture today? Discuss (25 marks available)

Organic architecture, in the most literal sense can be broken down into two elements. The term organic, meaning relating to or derived from living matter, as well as the word architecture which can be defined as the art of designing and constructing a building. However, the term organic architecture has been interpreted differently by individual architects as expressed throughout the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Antoni Gaudí.

As seen consistently throughout his work Frank Lloyd Wright interpreted the term organic architecture, as the integration of the architecture into the landscape. As suggested by Martina Wrights organic architecture is expressed through the "connection between the building and its surroundings". Arguably, this is seen through the organic nature of Wrights architecture is predominantly shown in Fallingwater, as the layered cantilever of the design mirrors the ledges and shape of the rock below. However, Martina's Depiction of the organic style of Wright's work can also be seen in the materiality of his work, once again shown in Fallingwater. Arguably, the most effective manipulation of the materiality that enhances Fallingwater's organic relationship with the site is shown through the stonework expressed on the building exterior. The stonework façade of the building utilises an uneven surface created through the irregular placement of each stone. This asymmetrical aesthetic allows the building to appear as if it is growing from the landscape in which it is integrated. Furthermore, the term organic architecture was originally coined by Wright and therefore through the analysis of his expression of organic architecture furthers the understanding of the term organic architecture.

However, despite coining the phrase, organic architecture predates Wright and can be seen through the work of Antoni Gaudí. Gaudí's approach to organic architecture varied from that of Wrights as Gaudí expressed organic architecture through the shape and curvature of his buildings. As suggested by "Gaudí was inspired by the organic shapes of nature." As shown through the remodel of the Casa Batlló flats Gaudí used the organic shapes of the human structure to create his interpretation of organic architecture as curvature of the balconies resembles the shape of a pelvis. However, Gaudí's interpretation of organic architecture was not limited to the structure of the human anatomy as the aesthetic of the columns located within the Sagrada Família expands and grows in a similar manner to that of a tree. Gaudí's manipulation of the building structure to resemble the shape and form of nature contrasts Wrights method of integrating buildings into site to create organic architecture, however,

despite the alternate approach to the design style the work of both architects can be considered organic as the expression of organic architecture can be shown in multiple forms.

However, both Gaudi and wright have been deceased for over a century and are seen as the pinnacle of organic architecture, suggesting that the style is slowly becoming obsolete. the aesthetics achieved by Gaudi's building are becoming less and less common, the reasoning behind which is suggested by Juan Lahuerta who states that "the dispensing of good craftsmen" makes these design "economically unaffordable". The implications behind Lahuerta's statement are that as the use of mechanical production increased the skill of tradesmen, that once allows work like the Sagrada Familia to be created, are slowly depleting and becoming unaffordable in the modern world. Furthermore, with the increasing population of cities, an organic approach through the use of the integration of landscape with the architecture is become increasing difficult as the site conditions that allow Fallingwater to achieve a unique harmony with nature are a rare occurrence.

To conclude, the meaning behind the term organic architecture is fluid and expressed differently by each architect through the shape, site and inspiration behind their designs. However, with the pinnacle of organic architecture, achieved by Antoni Gaudi and Frank Lloyd Wright in the early 1900s it could be argued that the organic style of architecture is becoming more difficult to achieve. Either through elevated cost or the unavailable of a site that will allow for a successful integration, it could be argued that the organic style of architecture is becoming increasing obsolete in the modern world.

Referencing

Martina Zbasnik-Senegacnik. Interpretations Of Organic Architecture. Available at:
[INTERPRETATIONS OF ORGANIC ARCHITECTURE: EBSCOhost](#)

Juan Lahuerta. Antoni Gaudi Ornament, Fire and Ashes. Tenov Books. 2016

What does the inclusion of 'ornament' actually signify, in architectural terms? Discuss (25 marks available)

Ornament within architecture is the embellishment or addition of a feature of a building that is often used to enhance the aesthetic of the design. The use of ornament is becoming less and less popular with the development of the modern architectural style however historic building across the globe have used ornamentation for a variety of different purposes. However, as stated by Adolf Loos "Ornamentation is the language in which architecture communicates with the public".

An alternate interpretation is the use of ornamentation within a building is featured to demonstrate the function of a building as demonstrated with Palais Garnier, designed by Charles Garnier. The architectural style used within the design was described by Garnier himself as the Napoleon III style, arguably an assortment of different architectural styles ranging from Baroque to renaissance aspects. The initial aesthetic of the building suggests a sense of grandeur and wealth, however upon further inspection of the ornament a series of people using harps, flutes as well as other musical instruments can be seen. Therefore, this suggests the purpose of ornamentation does not only signify wealth and power but can also act as a representation of the building function for the public to view.

Similarly, the method of communicating with the public through ornamentations can be seen in a more modern approach, as stated by the architecture firm FAT “we regard ornamentation as ... a communicative tool. The firm’s approach to ornamentation can be seen in The Blue House, which depicts a stereotypical house design on the façade of the building. the house ornamentation protrudes from the exterior of the building as a decorative feature that engages with the public in a playful manner. The ornamentation of the building as well as communicating with the public allows the building to become visual captivating to an otherwise boxed design, therefore implying that ornamentation within a design is sometimes necessary to create an aesthetical design without acting as a display of power.

In addition to this, ornamentation can also be used help further the integration of the building into the landscape in which it is situated as apparent through the work of Antoni Gaudi in the Casa Vicens. As stated by Juan Lahuerta Gaudi’s inspiration for the ornamentation located both internally and externally came from the “plants and flowers Gaudi found on the plot”. Gaudi’s use of the wildlife within the building enhances the cohesion between the site and the building, meaning that the use of ornamentation is used to further the buildings integration with site.

Furthermore, an additional interpretation regarding the inclusion of ornamentation within architecture can also signify the direction in which the users of the building should follow. This purpose of ornamentation is utilised in the Natural History Museum and the large entryway. The design uses a large arch within the wall that protrudes into the wall through a series of arches that create a ribbed aesthetic. The ornamentation surrounding the doorway immediately draws the eye as the arch diminishes to its centre in which the main entrance is situated. The manipulation of ornamentation is highly effective and demonstrates the significance of the value of the inclusion of ornamentation within a building.

To conclude, ornamentation, it could be argued is an effective approach in the design of a building façade. Ornamentation can be used so signify a various number of agendas, such as building function as well as key entry points for the public. Furthermore, the use of ornamentation is also a beneficial method in the integration if a building into site as seen through the work of Antoni Gaudi. However, arguably the underlying reasoning behind ornamentation is signify communication with the public.

Referencing

Juan Lahuerta. Antoni Gaudi Ornament, Fire and Ashes. Tenov Books. 2016

Briefly describe the distinctive qualities of the architecture, influences and design approach of the Italian architect Carlo Scarpa. (15 marks available) Give examples of buildings that best display his work. Do you believe the intellectual heritage of his architecture is relevant today? (10 marks available)

As key architect of the 1900s Carlo Scarpa is arguably under appreciated despite the significance of his work that can be identified through the common recurrence of specific features within his work. Firstly, Carlo Scarpa was known for renovation, the work and design of Scarpa were more often than not, used to renovate an existing building rather than demolish and rebuild to his exact image. Scarpa was able to adapt his designs to the original building and create a delicate aesthetical balance of his own renovated features with the existing building structure. Furthermore, it could be argued that through his method of renovation Scarpa was able to repeatedly infuse traditional craft with modern technology, as well as become well known for his ability to “combine a base material with a precious one” as suggested by Arch Daily. Scarpa’s balance between the existing and the new, is perhaps his most notable achievement. However, the buildings of Carlo Scarpa have many key repeated elements that could also be the driving force behind his fame, including his attention to detail. Within his designs Scarpa would focus on everything down to the smallest feature such as the handrails of the Castelvecchio renovation (1954-64). However, Scarpa’s attention to detail was not only limited to the physical structure of the design but also extended to the way in which the light of the building would fall. As seen within the Gipsoteca Canoviana, Scarpa’s corner window design allows for the room to appear brighter as it illuminates every detail of the artwork within. Furthermore, the use of the corner windows within the design creates dramatic shafts of light that run across the floor and walls creating a striking backdrop to the artwork of the interior. Furthermore, the use of light to allow the spaces to appear more open is Scarpa’s interpretation of Japanese architecture. Japanese architecture was a very big influence on the designs of Scarpa as he was fascinated by every aspect the foreign architectural style had to offer. Scarpa’s influence from Japanese architecture is best demonstrated through the aesthetical similarities between the Japanese Shokatei Garden pavilion and the Fondazione Querini Stampalia designed by Scarpa.

The key features that reoccurred in Scarpa’s design were at the time very significant and allowed him to achieve architectural status, despite being under appreciated. However, as time has passed it begs the question has the intellectual heritage Carlo Scarpa become irrelevant.

Arguably, the intellectual heritage of Scarpa has not become irrelevant as seen through the David Chipperfield museum Scarpa’s trademark approach to restoration and the balance

between the old and the new structure is arguably in direct relation to the approach taken on the renovation of the Chipperfield museum in 2009. The concept behind the renovation of the museum was to maintain the existing structure of the building and utilise and expose it within the redesign, furthermore the renovation would emphasize the contrast between the new and existing material of the building in such a way that “the new reflects the lost without imitating it” as suggested by Arch Daily.

Furthermore, an additional similarity between Scarpa’s use of light to create atmosphere within a room, also suggests that the intellectual heritage of Carlo Scarpa has not become irrelevant. In 1999 Tadao Ando Architects constructed the church of light which similar to the Gipsoteca Canoviana manipulates the light that enters the building. within the church of light, a large cross is located at the front of the room which is etched into the concrete façade and allows the light to enter. The concrete façade of the building emphasises and dramatizes the light that enters the space as casts beams across the room. This similar approach is seen in the Gipsoteca Canoviana by Scarpa as the corner windows that enter the space cast shadows and rays of light across the room in the same manner as the Church of Light.

The similarities between these modern-day buildings as and work of Carlo Scarpa in the 1900s suggests that the intellectual heritage of his work has not been lost its relevance in modern architecture as the similar methods that mirror the features of the buildings of Carlo Scarpa allow his influence and intellectual heritage to continue.

Referencing

Arch Daily. Spotlight Carlo Scarpa. 2019.

Arch daily. Neues Museum / David Chipperfield Architects in collaboration with Julian Harrap. 2011