

What was Frank Gehry's inspiration for Walt Disney concert hall?

Introduction

Frank Gehry is a famous architect, who gained the courage to pursue his unusual designs from a modern architect that gave him inspiration, Frank Lloyd Wright. Gehry is famous for his unusual designs, with elements that provide character within the building, from its unusual shapes, exposed studs, angled windows, and the use unique materials. Due to the unusual style that Frank Gehry puts forward, he was referred to as a postmodern architect, which applies modernism to the 21st century.



Jones, R (2013). *AD Classics: Walt Disney Concert Hall*

Gehry obtains his inspiration from various sources, with his buildings having similarities in the design, though all originating from different inspirations. During this essay I will look at the Walt Disney concert hall and see where his inspiration originated from. This will include the materials, shape, and size of the building. I will research into the building alongside looking into his childhood hobbies, his philosophy, beliefs, and his everyday life to find out where the influences originated from to create the Walt Disney concert hall.

Building

Frank Gehry was an architect that competed with eighty different other architects for the 274-million-dollar contract for designing the concert hall. The client Los Angeles Philharmonic narrowed it down to six different architects and from those final six Gehry and his practice were commissioned for designing Walt Disney concert hall. The contract allowed for Gehry to have free rein on the design with the only condition being, that it met the requirements of a concert hall.

The famous landmark built as a tribute to Walt Disney's devotion to the arts, and to this day it is used for presenting the best performing music players for classical, contemporary, world and jazz music that brings in thousands of people a year to watch and experience the concert hall.

The concert hall located in Los Angeles, California, built between 1999 – 2003, opened to the public in 2003. The steel structured building measures an area of two hundred thousand square feet and designed to seat 2265 guests.

This building design is noticeably one of Frank Gehry's, from the way the building appears fragmented/disjointed by bold use of steel panels, each aspect of the building drawing attention. The concert hall is a large-scale project, containing five levels with multiple entrances, which allowed for entrance to the building from nearly every sidewalk. Once entering the steel panelled building that leads into transparent light filled lobby. Frank Gehry and his architectural practice drew inspiration from the enclosed foyer design in the Dorothy Chandler pavilion located in Los Angeles with concept of separating the identity and serve as symbolic bridge between everyday life and the inner sanctum.

The building contains multiple rooms, which includes founder's rooms, a space with lounge and cafeteria located on the north side of the property, with makeup and dressing rooms. Towards the south side of the building, there are office. East of the building is the lobby and foyer, with the most important space being at the heart of the design, is the auditorium. The building also provides a seven-story car park, that you can directly access the interior of the Walt Disney concert hall through the two escalators.

The auditorium provides 2,265 colourful seats that all have a perfect view of the stage. Frank Gehry designed the seating arrangement at a steeply raked angle, and to surround the stage from every side. This design was carefully considered by Gehry as his aim was to bring the audience closer to the orchestra, creating a more intimate experience for the guests.

The auditorium ceiling attracts the attention of anyone visiting the building. The partitions and curved billowing ceiling, have a function that is more important than its aesthetics. The design and materials for the ceiling plays an important part of the acoustic system.

As a concert hall, Gehry wanted the space to be able project the sound of all the instruments played without the sound becoming echoey or lost with in the space. Gehry's main inspiration for the interior space was, understanding how the musicians would experience the auditorium, he wanted to design a space that would provide confidence for all the performers. To achieve this, Gehry collaborated with acoustician specialist Yasuhisa Toyota and Philharmonic music director Esa-Pekka.

Frank Gehry collaborated with Yasuhisa Toyota and Esa-Pekka and created what is known to be the perfect instrument, the organ. Frank Gehry designed this building to be eye catching and that included the organ, he did not use rows of metal tubing that you would commonly find in a church. He designed the organ stands above the rear of the stage in Walt Disney concert hall, displayed as if it was the heart of the building. The organ contains 6,134 wooden pipes that look like gigantic French fries. The chosen wood for the organ was Douglas Fir, which was the same wood used for the interior of the building.



Jones, R (2013). *AD Classics: Walt Disney Concert Hall*

The interior of the building is just as dramatic as the exterior. Frank Gehry did not want the space to be like when leaving a cinema, where the natural light blinds your eyes. To ensure the room was not dark and constantly using electrical lights, Gehry added big, beautiful skylights that lite the room naturally. Due to shape and purpose of the building he was not able to add as many as he anticipated for. He wanted to capture the light as much as possible within the building, why creating an intimate, warm experience for the guests. Gehry chose materials and a warm colour scheme that created the atmosphere he strived to create. The slightly titled Douglas Fir columns stood out against the white walls and the white levels.

To enter the garden space from the building, there are various pathways and staircases that lead you all around the building, creating a feeling, as if you picked your own path for an adventure. Each path you take, the angles of steel sales continually change with each bend in the path. This captured the movement that Gehry believed was important in his designs for modern day architecture.



Juliano, M. (2020). *Highlight of the garden.*

Gehry created an imitate garden for everyone to feel relaxed in. The small garden had various trees and plants with tables that surrounded them. The steel sales provided the garden with shade. Though Gehry also wanted to design a part of the building to pay tribute to Lillian Disney. Gehry designed a rose fountain made of China. It is located towards the rear of the garden, providing a hidden gem inside for the public.

When Frank Gehry originally designed the concert hall, he decided to use stone cladding. Gehry's changed his design to steel because of all the attention his titanium building for Bilbao received. The changed from stone to steel gave Frank Gehry more design opportunity for the building.

The concert hall was constructed from multiple materials. The building is most famous for 12,500 pieces of stainless-steel panel system. None of the steel panels are identical with pieces expanding to 110 feet in length. Although the structure may be famous for its steel, the exterior of the building contains metal studs, exterior plaster, pre-cast concrete, glazed curtain wall. The interior constructed from Douglas fir wood, chosen by Gehry for multiple reasons, the timber chosen fulfils the acoustic requirements and aesthetically pleasing.



Jones, R (2013). *AD Classics: Walt Disney Concert*

The stainless-steel panels, acts as a one-of-a-kind canvas. The steel captures the reflection of light, from either the surrounding buildings or purposely projected light on to the structure. The colourful light captured by steel, creates its own art, which stands out against the La Angeles skyline, wowing guests and creating lasting memories.

Nevertheless, the steel panels made problems for the surrounding buildings and traffic. The shiny metallic material reflected the sunrays of the surface. This made the surrounding buildings uncomfortably warm. Unfortunately, increasing the price of staying or visiting one of these buildings, as the air conditioning would always have to be on, especially during the spring/summer months, the shiny metal caused an increase into road accidents as the sunlight bounced off the building shinning, on the road and cars, resulting in unclear vision for the passing drivers.

Frank Gehry received a number of awards throughout his architectural career, though he was shortlisted against eighty other architects, and won the commission for the Walt Disney concert hall. Unfortunately, Frank Gehry and the building never won an architectural award, despite the popularity of the building.

Frank Gehry's

The Canadian architect Frank Gehry reflects his beliefs and values through his personal designs and his philosophical beliefs, are that architecture is an art in its own right, used for expressions and emotions to enrich the human experience and beliefs this is essential to all modern-day architecture. He uses materials that question the concept of beauty. Influenced by the materials that surrounded his childhood, for example, corrugated steel, unpainted plywood, and chain-linked fencing.

Frank Gehry's architecture career has influenced and revolutionised modern architecture, with his designs being famous for their iconic usual look. When Frank Gehry has free rein with a design they often appear as fragmented or disjointed, with the Walt Disney musical hall being no exception. Gehry's, architecture that came to fame in 1993, for his unusual design of the Weisman art museum, followed by his architecture in 1996 with the famous dancing house. Most buildings designed by Frank Gehry's are major tourist attraction sites to this day.

Inspiration

Frank Gehry inspiration for the design came from several aspects, which are no doubt that some of them are inspired by his childhood.

Frank Gehry had to design the Walt Disney concert hall in a way that he found appropriate for the contract requirements. To achieve this, he designed the building from the inside out, function over form. The priority was getting the size, shape, and the acoustic right for the auditorium and everything else was secondary. The reason for auditorium to be a priority was because the auditorium is where the orchestra will perform to thousands of people a year.

Frank Gehry, originally inspired to create the Walt Disney concert hall from stone, as stone during the night picks up the ambient light without it being lit creating a warm and soft feeling to the structure.

The stone changed to steel for several reasons, Frank Gehry took time away from the project and when the project continued the shape he was trying to achieve originally, was not meeting up to imaginative expectations. Frank Gehry's client tried to encourage him to use steel as it was five million dollars cheaper. Though originally, he was against the idea, Gehry stood against the idea of using steel because he could not get the same light effect he envisioned from stone. Metal is hard to light during the night, and it looked like a cheap refrigerator.

The attention from his aluminum building inspired the change of the material, inspiring Frank Gehry to achieve what he imagined for the building. With no doubt his inspiration coming from Frank Gehry's childhood as he grew up around corrugated steel and was reminded of the potential aesthetics that were possible to be achieved.

Frank Gehry always tried to design all his buildings to have movement, his designs allowed for the shadow and reflective light to hit the building to show the movement, making the

buildings feel alive. This created the unusual shapes seen in all his designs. This resulted in Gehry's buildings often appearing as fragmented or disjointed, with the Walt Disney concert hall being no exception. Though the shape of the Walt Disney concert hall is more of a personal inspiration to Frank Gehry.

The Walt Disney concert hall ties to the love of Frank Gehry's childhood hobby, which was sailing. The inspiration came from when Gehry was on the water and would look at the sails. Gehry was inspired to catch the beauty of the wind in the sails, to achieve this the building is shaped as if it is, wing on wing forming a beautiful space and when you stand at the entrance, you are on the helm on the ship looking out on to the sails.

When Frank Gehry designed the building in the area, his morals were to respect the buildings that surround the area, even if buildings never meant anything to him. This was the inspiration to cut the building in to sections with the sails, instead of having just one solid steel paneled structure.

Frank Gehry's over the years of being an architect, always looks back at his work and wonders where his designs came from, he takes inspiration from everyday life. His design for this building was to take the risk of doing it for humanity.

Conclusion

Frank Gehry is the perfect example that the inspiration for architecture, not only comes from multiple sources, but they may come from any time in our life. Frank Gehry has shown that inspiration is not only for the shape of the building but can be for, the acoustics, heights, colour scheme, materials, and lighting of the building. Gehry had interviews where he said he did not know where the idea for the shape, and materials he envisioned, originated from at the start of the project, only when he seen a model, or his drawings came to life he could pinpoint where the inspiration originated from and why.

Gehry's ambition of making buildings move and his childhood love of sailing created a building that has influenced younger architects and has revolutionised modern architecture. He has shown that you can provide a face lift to a city with a positive effect, demonstrating his beliefs that architecture is an art that should originate from personal designs that challenge and stride for, advancements in architecture seen today.

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Photos

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