

Aesthetics: An Ethos of Architecture Education

¹Prof. Swapna Ashok Dhavale, ²Prof. Vinaya Vaidya

¹Assistant Professor at G.S.Mandal's Marathwada Institute of Technology, Aurangabad

²Assistant Professor at G.S.Mandal's Marathwada Institute of Technology, Aurangabad

Email:swapnaup@gmail.com, arvinayasm@gmail.com

Abstract- *Aesthetics and Architecture are two explicit and inseparable aspects. The aesthetics in architecture differs from that of other types of art, due to the unique characteristics of architecture, with artistic and functional purposes together. In recent years globalization has brought about a number of radical changes in the design process. When the architectural education is discussed, considering all the concerns about aesthetics, the process of aesthetic education seems inevitable. This paper tries to unfold the relationship between aesthetics and architecture in view of architectural education. It further justifies the urge to consider Aesthetics as Ethos and to be inculcated in an initial stage of learning. A conscious perpetual integration of this ethos in the design studio teaching and learning process is needed, so that Aesthetics does not remain to be a presumed aspect of Architecture.*

Keywords –

Aesthetics, Architecture, Architectural Education.

I. Introduction:

Architects shape buildings, buildings shape cities. Architectural forms, shapes, and styles employed, creates environments that have impact on the users visually, mentally and psychologically. Architecture before a building is thinking. The curious mind of an Architect understands the environment using five senses and responds through design: the process of arranging and ordering the functional components and creating the entire physical environment into an expressive efficient and aesthetically pleasing setting for man's comfort and pleasure.

When it comes to Architecture being experienced, it is through the senses that the user appreciates it. One likes to live and work in space which is aesthetically pleasing to eye besides the other features like function and construction.

II. Architecture and Aesthetics:

The word aesthetic comes from the Greek word "aisthetikos", meaning perceiving of things through the senses. The subject of aesthetics is as old as philosophy. The philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten defined it as "the science of how things are known through the senses. " Kant", was the first philosopher to suggest that the sense of beauty is a distinct and independent stipulation of the human mind similar to moral and scientific understanding. Following Kant's work "Critique of Judgment", the term "aesthetics" has placed its position in modern aesthetics. (Reference i)

Aesthetics in Architecture differ from that of other art forms. It's the unique quality of architecture that is the purpose (utility) along with beauty that makes it more fascinating. Aesthetics is considered as one of the main qualities of

architecture according to Roman architect Vitruvius (15 B.C.). His definition of good architecture depends on three criteria as *venustas* (beauty), *utilitas* (utility) and *firmitas* (firmness). Recently, these aspects of architecture were interpreted as form, function and construction (Reference i)

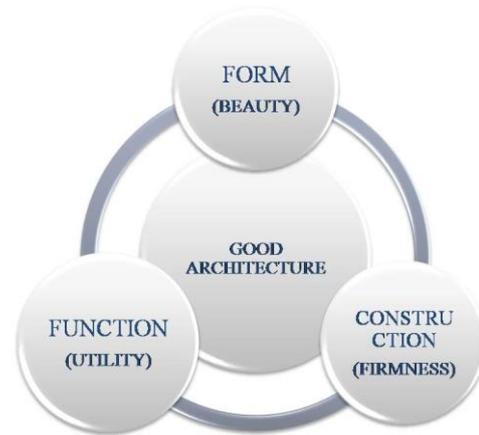


Fig.1. Good Architecture.

Aesthetics, as generally understood, focuses on properties of objects and our emotional responses to those properties. Properties like proportion and scale, unity, variety, balance, rhythm, emphasis, contrast, have large impact on architectural design. Visible appearance has always been considered as a most important factor. Most instantaneous notion of the built environment is mainly due to its appearance. Aesthetics is not only about looks but it is also how the building appeals to our senses. In spite of the importance, Aesthetics have been a more of a presumed aspect than an affirmation in Architecture.

III. Architectural Education:

Speaking of professional careers, education plays an elementary role in preparing students to recognize their responsibility as practitioners. Cognitive development through education establishes better connections with the professional realm. According to UNESCO/UIA Charter for Architectural education, the point "An ability to create architectural designs that satisfy both aesthetic and technical requirements" is included among the objectives of education.

Architectural curriculum in India (govern by CoA minimum standards of Architectural education) focuses on major areas as (1). Core subject – Architectural Design that focus on expanding students' design knowledge and skills, (2) technology-based Subjects – Construction technology and materials, structural systems, services that cover the scientific features of architecture, (3) allied field subjects like Interior, landscape, climatology that develop expressive skills.

IV. Aesthetics as Ethos in Architectural Education:

Today the Architecture practice is influenced by more of technological knowledge and its application. The integration of existing and ever developing tools and techniques has dominance on the designers mind. An expanded vocabulary of environmental impact, energy conservation, sustainability, advanced construction technology imposes an additional responsibility. In the process of this increased complexities the sensitivity and appreciation of aesthetics seems to lose its ground. It is the biggest concern of architectural education to nourish the aesthetic sensitivity and penetrate it deeply in designers mind so that it remains impervious by the dominance of modernizing forces.

V. Recommended Teaching Learning Strategies:

The design studio has been and would be undoubtedly the core of architectural design education. The design studio gives opportunity to the student as well as the teacher to experience and experiment their creativity. Aesthetics is always thought of as a part and partial of design but however a conscious thought or effort lacks in the design process. Aesthetics can be an important link between technology development, design and architecture. The Swiss educationalist Johann Pestalozzi so neatly put it; aesthetic creation links together head, heart and hand.

It is extremely important to bear this link between sensory expression and rational reflection in mind if one wishes to work aesthetically. It is, therefore, not enough for the students working aesthetically to be left to their own creative devices: guidance is necessary, to encourage reflection which can be through effective teaching learning process. The reason for including aesthetics in education is to awaken and develop the aesthetic sensitivity which is common to all human minds. However the process needs to be carried out in a structured manner.

With the said curriculum that is followed, it will not be wrong to say that it is moreover left to the faculty, how aesthetics is introduced and involved right from the first semester of design studio to the concluding dissertation project. The design studio and the pattern of design process that occurs gives the direction in which the architectural creativity is advanced.

The ethos of aesthetics can be inculcated in the overall architectural education, at various stages – introducing & awakening, experiencing & appreciating, and developing & integrating along with appropriate evaluation. At the very first stage of architectural education which is observed to be followed religiously. Students are introduced to aesthetics through elements and principles of design. Experimenting with these elements and principles awakens the aesthetic sensitivity. The further stages are considered obvious where as a conscious efforts are desired. In the next stage, students can be made to experience the aesthetics through other art forms such as painting, music and poetics expanding their perceptive of aesthetics. Appreciation of aesthetics by understanding the relationship between architecture and aesthetics while carrying out the case studies. As case studies are looked upon as threshold in a design process, integrating aesthetic value at this stage will definitely have a reflex in the design outcome.

And this will surely facilitate the developing and integrating stage.

Sr. No.	Stage	Teaching –Learning Activity
I	INTRODUCING AND AWAKENING	Introducing Elements And Principals Of Design
II	EXPERIENCING	In Other Form Of Art as Painting, Music and Poetics.
	APPRECIATING	Understanding The Relationship Between Architecture And Aesthetic While Carrying Out Case Studies
III	DEVELOPING AND INTEGRATING	Effective Instructional Strategies In Terms Of Design Brief Integrating Aesthetic Value
IV	EVALUATION	Evaluation In Terms Of Form, Function And Construction

Table 1 – 4 Stages of Perpetual Integration of Aesthetics in Architectural Education.

The design brief that offers the scope of project and expected outcome from the students is a crucial document channelizing student towards developing and integrating the aesthetic aspects along with functional and technological constraint. The design briefs should discuss and emphasize on the aesthetical value of architectural outcome and also look upon aesthetics as major evaluating criteria. In all design projects, evaluation shall be done by the concepts of “Form”, “Function” and “Construction”, which are basically the evaluation criteria of any architectural design in a universal sense.

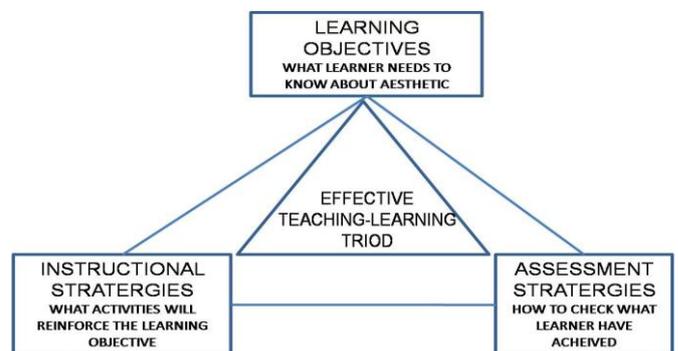


Fig. 2. Effective teaching learning triangle – For Aesthetic Vocabulary

Effective Teaching learning is better achieved by linking the learning objectives (aims and objectives of what learner needs to know) to the concrete instructional methods (design brief that reinforces the learning objectives) and the assessment strategies (evaluating criteria the design outcome).

Formation of effective teaching strategies has to be determined in accordance with the aims and objectives of learning. It becomes vital how design briefs are formulated, integrating aesthetic value, for every subsequent semesters. As the aesthetic preferences changes through each semester with

expanded understanding and knowledge, the effective teaching learning strategy should be complementary.

VI. Conclusion:

Pursuing beauty is one of the goals of architects. This beauty is perceived by the user. Leon Battista Alberti says that: "The architecture affects our eyes and minds like sounds affect our ears". This very well explains aesthetics in architecture. It is a good explanation of how architecture influences the people psychologically. Architectural students should be made to realize that aesthetic decisions have a long-lasting mental and psychological influence on the whole society. Every single building aesthetically influences its environment. A conscious perpetual integration of aesthetics as ethos in the architectural education would help retain the core of design in the phase of globalization.

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