

Aesthetics of the Façade Wall

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Abstract: *The paper aims, to trace the evolution of the façade from the point of view of aesthetics, from Modernism to the present. Different perceptions manifested in terms of design principles , materiality and tectonics will be described through case studies of different facades. Expression in phenomenological terms will be analysed. The paper will put forth that the wall is no longer static or singular in purpose and with new technology ,it is dynamic and as in contemporary life , events ,unpredictability and quick change are key factors and the wall as in the façade has evolved to reflect this.*

Keywords: *wall, aesthetics, façade, surface ,phenomenology, mass.*

1.Introduction

Building facades are the first impressions of a building. From their role as loadbearing walls and security barriers they have become thermal barriers ,media walls ,dynamic walls, "living walls" etc. The façade from representing one orientation of one face of the building has evolved into a part of a larger ,fabric ,or envelope ,which holistically wraps the building performing the role of the wall in controlling ventilation and light and etc. "Technologies are on the move and..." "performance of envelopes."¹

From the beginning of modernity in the eighteenth century facades exhibited tectonics, an expression of construction system and materiality And further in the skyscrapers of Louis Sullivan where form followed function" Subsequently post war manifestos and developments in technology have promulgated followed function"

New directions in architecture, in the form of the rejection of history and by presenting a new theory based on simplicity ,efficiency and the machine age. Architecture in the name of progress ,presents a plain face ,with standardized parts ,at the

Materials provide transparency and give opportunities to lighting. and drama and event in their changing facades through lighting and movement..

II. Method and methodology

A critical analysis will be done by comparing the aesthetics of six façades from the period of modernism till the present. Evolution of the façade in relation to concept,technology, materials and structure will be described .The existential impact will be described in Evensen's terms.

cost of identity and individuality and seen in particular in housing facades and the office block of the 1950's .The aesthetic aspect of a façades are in the hands of architects who combine aesthetics, function and structure in to different stylistic compositions each with their own priorities and theoretical frameworks. Brutalists favoured concrete and strong forms with texture created in light and shade ,produced by projections and recesses. The high tech architects placed structure as their language of architecture converting structure to "ornament" .The Post modernists revived historicism and presented the façade as an embodiment of communication and signs. The de-constructivists tried to dissociate meaning from element and abandon communication and signs. The de-constructivists tried to dissociate meaning from element and abandon rigid order, portrayed in architecture as movement, working from the notion of topological space. Dynamic walls have built into them thermal controlling systems and make the the wall into a "livingorganism" responding to climatic change and thermal comfort .progress ,presents a plain face ,with standardized parts ,at the cost of identity and individuality and seen in particular in housing

This paper attempts to look at the façade wall from an experiential viewpoint, where it uses the framework of Thomas Thiis-Evensen. The paper will also show that ultimately building reflect societal desires and manifest them in their facades. Our psychological perception is in the experience of their physical reality which is shaped by our current world view. Today digital technology has influenced design extensively including the design of building facades. Fragmentation of time and encapsulation of time into brief narratives translate into multiple narratives and encounters with multiple choices and unpredictability. Static form is replaced by flux and seen in de constructive work of Gehry and Eisenman who encapsulate this concept of continuity in the grammar of their work. The user experiences multitude of unprogrammed spatial encounters and surprise .This translates into facades of parts and dynamism Media facades . Six case studies explored will be Hong Kong Shanghai bank by Norman Foster ,nana Venturi house by Venturi, Wexner Centre for the Arts by Peter Eisenman, Gehry's Bilbao Museum and auditorium in Cartagena by luca.

Perception of facades will be described in context of Thiis theory. Thiis -Evensen suggests a theory built on the phenomenon of architecture by looking at key elements such as the wall , the roof and the ground through recognition of universal models based on their grammar of architectural language .He suggests three concepts. "These are motion weight and substance. Motion describes the dynamic nature...expand, contract ..."Weight he says relates to gravity and heaviness and substance relates to the materiality

of the element. they are necessarily used in any architectural description which attempts to suggest a a buildings reality.”as an example he quotes is gothic lightness and verticality. Motion he explains relates to in the case of a wall the way it rises or sinks” The walls architecture .is a concrete realization of the existential struggle between an “attacking exterior and an secure interior and thereby acquires expressive importance”. Curved walls he says ,express nature and are inviting. The massive wall he says lends weight to the spatial boundary while the skeleton wall through its frames invites people, denotes motion and support and is light. Windows through their shapes express motion A façade is delimited by sky and earth and long windows express a horizontality and groundedness .We view buildings in these concepts of motion, weight and substance.

III. Results

By the 1975s curtain wall technology had been replaced by the skin.”The slick skin membrane allows,as we’ve seen, a greater scope for volumetric articulation than the previous curtain wall.’...by destroying the four square morphology...by fragmenting the facades vertically or in both planes”³ Phillip Johnson and John Burgee ID S centre is a glass skyscraper with no weight ,no texture ,lightness and anonymity reflecting the stronghold of real estate.1975 at the same time Venturi in the Nana Venturi house “He insisted that the complexities of contemporary life did not permit simplified architectural programs.”⁴ Venturi reintroduced history and the semantic quality of the façade .He replaced modernist order and universality with complexity and contradiction seen in elements used in especially nana venture house façade. with its broken arch and lintel. Moulding around windows etc, A house with strong existentiality and presence .

“The 1980’s have seen the renewal of interest among patrons both public and private in using architecture in a monumental way”⁵ Norman Fosters Honkong Shanghai bank ,47storeys,is an example of symbolism and monumentalism.

Another architectural movement , but based on a different philosophy that of Derrida was developing in the 1980’s and is currently experiencing its heyday.-De constructivism. Paradigms shifts have brought a redefinition of space from Euclidean space to topological space. Inspired by the mobius strip two dimensional planes were replaced by three dimensional folds. Walls were surfaces .Frank Gehry’s Bilbao museum is an example .”One’s principal impression is of an assemblage of piling and twisting volumes, each created by convergences of independently directed planes that surround.. .Gehry moves space through three dimensions-.....the surface moves in and out of space as it moves through and around it ,stopping and starting(.....ie,as a fold)⁶



Fig 1..Bilbao Museum

It uses a suspension structure ,advance technology in structural engineering to bolster its form and expression. There is a strong presence in its verticality and grammar of exposed structural elements. Tectonics comes into play in the façade. The curved façade is inviting and surfaces of titanium with the light glinting evoke haptic experiences. There is continuous dialogue between outside and inside and architecture is represented in a state of movement and flux. Gehry’s museum scores highest in creating an existential reality. (Fig 2)



Fig 2. Hong Kong Shanghai bank.



Fig 3.Wexner Centre

In the Wexner Centre ,Eisenman deploys the combination of lightness in skeletal frame and weight and substance in the walls to combine to give a strong sense of physical reality. The frames are inviting. Devoid of built in meaning , the building offers multiple encounters in its entry.



Fig4. Auditorium ,Cartagena.

The facade of the auditorium in Cartagena by Lucia Cano uses metal and etfe. Its linear shape is highlighted by its translucency as a material. Walls light up space in the day and at night the building lights up and its form is clearly visible .A strong presence is given by the lighting and a sense of dynamism engulfs the building.

Table 1 ,suggests an evaluative marking for the discussed facades.

		motion	weight	sub stan ce
ID Bldg	Glass Curtain wall	3	3	3
HK Shanghai Bank	Steel suspension Glass curtain wall	7	7	7

Nana Venturi	stucco	7	7	7
Wexner centre	Brick ,concrete	8	8	8
Bilbao Museum	titanium	8	8	8
Auditoriu m cartagena	etfe	7	7	7

Table 1.Evaluating on a scale of 10 , existential reality.

IV Conclusion

The paper thus concludes that buildings through their facades reflect societal desires of rich spaces of multiple experience. Architects read these needs and translate them into buildings where shared experience can happen at an unprogrammed and changing level. Dynamic experience is preferred to the universal gestaltan perception of modernism.

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