



Post-modern Style in Spatial Design

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to illustrate and explore the planning and design of “post-modern” interior spaces, concentrating on the use and traces of postmodernism in interior design. This dissertation is important to study the direction of the historical development of art space, which reflects the future development of this industry to a certain extent. This report investigates three renowned designers and their work, namely the Mother's House designed by Robert Venturi, the Eat Darling Eat designed by NCDA, and the Sydney Opera House designed by Jorn Utzon. Postmodernism is different from the basic laws and order of architecture laid down since the Industrial Age. It defies the formalities of spatial design but with more irregular geometry, rich colors, and a blended integrated environment. Design is a mirror that always shows the avant-garde and progressive views of society; At the same time, it reveals the deepest reflection, the most urgent dilemma. Truth is not a purely rational existence, and concepts are constantly being subverted. With the rapid changes in society and the gradual narrowing of the world, the design direction of the future construction industry must be more and more diversified.

Keywords

Post-modernism, Space, Interior Design, Constructure History and Development, Diversity, Robert Venturi

1. Concept and history of Post-modern

The concept of post-modernism lacks clarity and a precise definition. It is generally regarded as the critique and transcendence of modernism in scholarly discourse. Modernism is founded upon the principle of "rationality," which places great emphasis on the objective and absolute nature of truth. According to this perspective, truth can only be ascertained through objective and rational discourse. However, postmodern scholars have raised inquiries regarding these fundamental concepts or even outright dismissed them. Postmodern theorists believe the notion that all "truths" are subjective and contingent, asserting that the scientific enterprise is incapable of fully eliminating the potential impact of researchers' personal preferences and biases. Consequently, proponents of this perspective reject the notion of absolute truth, instead placing emphasis on pluralism and advocating for the exploration of truth through subjective and perceptual means (Mikhailova et al., 2022).

When engaging in a discourse on post-modernism, it is essential to acknowledge the indissoluble connection between this movement and the prominent American architect Robert Venturi (June 25, 1925-September 18, 2018), widely recognized as the trailblazer of post-modernism. He published *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1966, the earliest manifesto of post-modernism and one of the most critical theories in the field of architecture.

He came up with new ideas and perspectives, challenging the architectural principle of "less is more" espoused by Mies van der Rohe. This counterargument, encapsulated by the phrase "less is a bore", Keskeys (2022) has since engendered an enduring discourse within the field of architecture. The objective of this article is to examine the utilization of post-modernism within the field of interior design and provide a concise overview of the distinctive features exhibited by spaces designed in the postmodern style (Mikhailova et al., 2022).

2. Differences in geometry

Symmetry and squareness in modernism are symbols of rationality and science. However, postmodern design explores alternative avenues for deviating from traditional layout conventions, thereby expanding the range of possibilities for creative expression. Curves, sloping contours, and asymmetrical designs are frequently observed within the realm of postmodernist spatial aesthetics.

The particular geometric design is one of the most common features of postmodernist architecture, expressing the fragmentation and negation of inherent laws. The utilization of various shapes and lines serves to disrupt the rigid structure, thereby reinstating the ornamental discourse that has been eroded by contemporary architectural practices. This approach also serves to highlight the intricate nature of distortion and deformation. The Vanna Venturi House, also known as the Mother's House, was constructed by architect Robert Venturi in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, specifically in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood. This architectural endeavor coincided with Venturi's authorship of the influential publication titled "The Complexity and Contradiction of Architecture" (Frearson, 2015). The house appears to be full of modern style, with fluent lines; however, a pediment was built for decoration on its facade, which is contrary to the modernist proposition that all decoration is discarded. The classical pediment is a solemn, grand symbol, but it is contradictory and exciting in a small dwelling. This house has a very pronounced pitched roof, showing a difference from the flat roofs commonly used in modernist houses (Stierli, 2017). The dwelling exhibits a prevalent modern aesthetic characterized by sleek and flowing architectural lines. Nevertheless, an ornamental pediment was incorporated into its facade, contradicting the modernist principle of eschewing all forms of embellishment. The classical pediment, known for its solemn and grand nature, presents a paradoxical and intriguing presence when incorporated into a modest residential structure. The architectural design of this house prominently features a steeply sloped roof, thereby distinguishing it from the prevalent use of flat roofs in modernist residential structures (Frearson, 2015).

The structure exhibits a predominantly symmetrical arrangement. Nevertheless, numerous elements exhibit irregularities, including the substantial, asymmetrical chimney situated on the roof and the asymmetrical windows adorning the walls. The architectural elements, such as the recess at the door, the asymmetrical windows, and the arcs, combine to create a cohesive spatial composition. This composition evokes a sense of warmth and anticipation, reminiscent of a nurturing mother seated on a bench by the entrance, eagerly awaiting the reunion of her family. Triangles, arcs, and squares are commonly employed within the interior (Frearson, 2015). The entrance foyer is a curved wall flanked by a slanted axis and a steep staircase. Make use of visual experience and start with people to create a porch. Use the arc to buffer people's inner feelings about the small size. The entrance design exhibits avant-garde characteristics and features an open layout, departing from traditional screen-based designs. The entrance exhibits a relatively narrow configuration, however, upon entering the restaurant, the spatial layout expands considerably, resulting in a visually striking and internally stimulating experience. Within a confined area, expansive lines are employed to convey the architectural tension (Frearson, 2015).

Vanna Venturi House highlights the notion of refusing to be defined through geometric languages. The entirety of the design does not conform strictly to either rebellious or traditional aesthetics but rather incorporates numerous ambiguous elements, including both symmetrical and asymmetrical designs, as well as simple and intricate motifs. These design choices effectively convey the inherent Contradiction and Complexity within the spatial composition. Architect Peter Eisenman described it as "The first American building to propose an abstraction with Modern abstraction at the same time that it is shared in this tradition."

3. Color scheme in space

In addition to its distinctive proportions and architectural lines, it is evident that the Vanna Venturi House deviates from the prevailing trend of modern buildings by featuring a vibrant blue color scheme, as opposed to the conventional white aesthetic. The utilization of color frequently serves as a means to counterbalance the pervasive monotony of the "all-white" aesthetic prevalent in modernism.

Postmodern interior design commonly incorporates vibrant colors, representing diversity and individuality and giving unique life to space. The seemingly frivolous, ornate design is a counterattack against the formality and lack of character of modern architecture, bringing an unforeseen sense of energy and impact to the building. Eat Darling Eat is a dessert laboratory that has been meticulously crafted by NCDA (NC Design & Architecture), situated in the vibrant city of Hong Kong, China. The selection of this building was based on its notable success and colorful

aesthetic as a commercial space (White, 2020). The main colors are yellow, pink, red, and gray, which are employed in a captivating and distinctive color scheme that serves to enhance the appetite and pique the interest of customers.

The entirety of the project encompasses a variety of colors and textures, including ceramic, tile, concrete, and glass, drawing inspiration from the playful and diverse characteristics of the postmodern era. The interior of the space is adorned with imaginative installations and furnishings, exemplified by the presence of chairs in the bar seating area on the ground floor that draw inspiration from jelly and donuts. The upholstery exhibits a pale and yellow hue, while the legs are adorned with a combination of yellow, blue, and pink colors, further enhanced by acrylic embellishments (White, 2020). Yellow glass separates the two floors and follows the red handrails to reach the upper floors. The upper floor lounge area features a dining table with a distinctive gradient of purple and green, evoking a futuristic ambiance. The walls and floors exhibit a pink hue, accompanied by vibrant patterns adorning the walls (White, 2020).

In the end, this departure from the conventional color scheme shows the ornamental and innovative aspects of post-modernism, thereby engendering an immersive experience for individuals. The utilization of intricate and vibrant hues does not result in a cluttered visual impact. Instead, it is rather like a work of art, leaving people in a hallucinatory and beautiful world akin to a utopia.

4. Understanding of background and environment

If the initial two characteristics solely pertain to the visual aspects, the designer's treatment of the environment demonstrates a more profound comprehension of the postmodern space. According to American architect Robert Stern, post-modernism can be encapsulated by the principles of "Contextualism," "Allusions," and "Ornamentation". The theory posits that post-modernism places significant emphasis on the historical cultural aspects of space, wherein it serves various functions, including the utilization of symbols and metaphors. Post-modernism is characterized by a lesser degree of practicality and functionality compared to modernism, instead prioritizing a heightened regard for the local environment and emphasizing the spiritual significance and purpose of architecture.

The incorporation of the environment is an essential element of post-modernism, signifying the designer's comprehension and reverence for both the natural surroundings and cultural context. Postmodernists espouse the notion that architecture of merit should refrain from causing harm to the surrounding environment, asserting that the conventional modernist paradigm characterized by the "square box" design is no longer adequate to fulfill the aspirations of designers. The incorporation of architecture into the surrounding environment, achieved through the appropriate selection of shapes, materials, and textures, is an essential proficiency for designers. Moreover, this practice signifies a comprehensive examination and contemplation of the indigenous culture.

Jorn Utzon (April 9, 1918-November 29, 2008), a Danish architect, demonstrated a strong dedication to the exploration of organic forms found in nature. His architectural philosophy aimed to establish a closer relationship between buildings and their natural surroundings, while also addressing the issue of buildings' reliance on vertical structures. The Sydney Opera House, situated in the strategically advantageous Long Point of Sydney Harbour in New South Wales, Australia, stands as a testament to his notable achievements. The construction of the project commenced in the month of March in the year 1959 and was subsequently inaugurated for operational use on the 20th of October, 1973. The structure in question is a prominent architectural landmark situated in Australia. Utzon's investigation of the site is thorough and extensive. The individual emphasized the impact of the interwoven texture created by the indoor and outdoor surfaces. To address the lack of sufficient lighting in Sydney, which was predominantly characterized by low red brick houses, millions of pure white tiles were employed for the purpose of splicing. In close proximity, there exists an oversized parabolic steel structure known as the Sydney Harbour Bridge, accompanied by substantial column piers situated on either side. Within this particular setting, a substantial edifice characterized by its expansive white expanse bears a striking resemblance to a colossal white sail amidst the vast sea, exhibiting captivating variations of luminosity and shadow as the sun descends below the horizon. The parabolic shape of the Sydney Harbour Bridge contributes to the overall urban landscape, ensuring that its form does not excessively disrupt the surrounding environment (Bond A & Hurford P, 1983).

The side that is oriented towards the sea exhibits a high population density and extends towards the sea at a slight inclination, resulting in the most prominent reflection of the surrounding environment. The side of the shell that is oriented towards the expansive ocean exhibits a slight unfolding, while the side facing the city appears somewhat closed. This deliberate design choice serves to diminish the overall size of the shell, rendering it more manageable and perceptible for individuals. The undulating contour of the surface exhibits a resemblance to the shape of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, resulting in the formation of two substantial masses that contribute to the overall

composition. In conjunction with the affinity that designer John Utzon held for the ocean and maritime vessels, his initial conceptualization of the project entailed envisioning a scenario wherein a white sailboat gracefully traverses the waters of Sydney, illuminated by subdued lighting. The intention behind this vision was for the curved structure of the sail to serve as a reflective surface, capturing and accentuating the inherent splendor of the ever-shifting interplay between light and shadow. This definition imbues the scheme with a sense of romanticism. The concept of romanticism typically aligns with the prevailing public aesthetics, rendering it highly significant in the context of a vast public domain (Bond A & Hurford P, 1983).

The Sydney Opera House was an exceptional architectural achievement characterized by its innovative organic design during its era. The phenomenon enjoyed a period of sustained popularity spanning fifty years, with its influence extending globally. The space in question represents an optimal setting that successfully fulfills the aesthetic preferences of both the general public and the architect involved. Furthermore, it exhibits a strong level of integration with the surrounding natural and local environment. The enduring memory of the Sydney Opera House is characterized by its resemblance to several pristine white sails, radiating a resplendent glow as they grace the Pacific Ocean during the sunset.

5. Conclusion

Postmodernist space design encompasses various additional attributes, including a pronounced focus on historical and cultural elements, the utilization of metaphorical design elements, and the incorporation of symbolic significance. However, I have chosen three features that I believe to be the most prominent and significant, namely irregular geometry, vibrant colors, and a seamlessly integrated environment. The concept of irregular geometry signifies a departure from conventional norms, while the utilization of rich color highlights the significance placed on ornamental craftsmanship. Furthermore, an integrated environment denotes a reverence for both cultural heritage and the natural world.

Post-modernism, despite its deviant and non-mainstream aesthetic, embodies a greater inclination towards embracing pluralism and employing deconstructionist analyses. In retrospect, the realm once governed by artistic and philosophical endeavors has receded from the forefront of historical prominence, and maybe one day, science will no longer be the absolute authority. By then, it is possible that pluralistic post-modernism or meta-modernism could supplant rational and scientific modernism. Given the significant impact of postmodern thought in challenging long-standing assumptions that have been widely accepted for the past two centuries, it is not surprising that some individuals perceive it as lacking depth and exhibiting elements of absurdity. From an optimistic perspective, post-modernism liberates individuals from the confines of "scientism," thereby removing the limitations imposed by strict adherence to "pure rational exploration" in the pursuit of truth. Postmodernists do not perceive science and faith as mutually exclusive concepts; however, it is deemed irrational to employ scientific principles in an attempt to wholly negate the existence of faith. Post-modernism is characterized by the presence of irony, banter, and a sense of freedom. Although it may initially appear to eschew elegance and seriousness, this perspective ultimately proves to be more emancipatory, all-encompassing, and aligned with the fundamental nature of the world.

Through an examination of the historical trajectory and transformative shifts within the realm of art, it becomes possible to make informed projections regarding the future evolution of the design industry. The future development of the industry will definitely be towards diversification and inclusiveness. The distance between space and people is very close, which also means that the building is not only a sturdy object but also a harbor full of humanistic care. In forthcoming times, it is necessary for designers to prioritize aesthetics, comfort, sustainability, intelligence, and the integration of other fields in order to effectively address the evolving demands of individuals.

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