

5th lecture

Failure of Modern Architecture

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"Happily, it is possible to date the death of Modern Architecture to a precise moment in time. Modern Architecture died in St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3:32pm."

Charles Jencks



Between the 19th and 20th century, cities began to change drastically. In United States, people began to migrate and work in the city, hoping to begin an urban way of living.

These cities began to see an influx of people from rural areas, mostly immigrants with little or no skills. A large portion of these were African American. The urban city core is losing its population due to suburban growth. As the urban population grew, the rise of blighted and slum community also increased.

City planner and officials agreed that public housing is the solution. Public housing has been done before but in a smaller scale. The concept of multiple, high rise public housing was never been attempted before. The American federal government decided to address these overcrowded cities by implementing the Housing Act of 1949. This was part of President Harry Truman's decision. Basically, the Act allowed the developers to expand into the suburbs and additionally encouraged the city dwellers to move to the suburbs as well. When the large portion of capital and tax base relocating to the suburbs, this resulted in decay and deterioration which resulted in the slums taking a large portion of the city. St. Louis was just one of the many northern industrial cities that was experiencing this housing crisis.

Modernism first emerged in the early twentieth century, and by the 1920s, the prominent figures of the movement – Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe – had established their reputations.

However it was not until after the Second World War that it gained mass popularity, after modernist planning was implemented as a solution to the previous failure of architecture and design to meet basic social needs.

Students at the Bauhaus school of design were taught purity of form and to design for a better world by Walter Gropius. The phrase 'form follows function' is often used when discussing the principles of modernism. It asserts that forms should be simplified – architectural designs should bear no more ornament than is necessary to function. Modernists believe that ornament should follow the structure and purpose of the building. Family life and social interaction was at the centre of the modernist dream for a planned environment.

However not all modernist social housing projects were as successful: many were demolished from the 1970s due to large-scale failure. The ultimate example of the failure of the modernist utopia is the now infamous Pruitt Igoe urban housing development in St. Louis, Missouri, completed in 1955. The development was planned according to the modernist principles of Le Corbusier, and comprised of 33 11 storey high rise blocks made up of small individual apartments. There were communal areas including large corridors, outdoor spaces around the blocks, and communal rooms for activities such as laundry, intended to increase the social interaction amongst the community.



Form and Function



Louis Sullivan
1896

*"Form and function are
one ..."*

Guarantee Building, Buffalo New York, 1895

Modernism

USE should determine the **FORM** of an object

If an object is made to **function well** it will by definition be **beautiful**
(also referred to as **Functionalism**)

Rules of Modernist Design

Objects should be:

- simple, honest and direct
- Well adapted to their purpose
- No ornament

Rules of Modernist Design

- Standardised
- Machine-made
- Reasonably priced
- Expressive of their structure and materials

Modernism

A term used to refer to the principle that nothing is included in a design **that does not enhance the object's purpose**

The failure of modern movement

1-Modernism came out of an age of mass production and unease after the war. It was designed to be formidable, and stable.

2- people don't want to be treated like machines... if you look at things designed by British designers around the time of modernism they were all ugly functional boxes.

3-It was all about the future and a total disconnection from the past gigantic shadow.



The failure of modern movement

4-It destroyed people's souls. Everything that came before was suddenly worthless and meaningless.

5- Modernism shows no respect for the past, either for the physical structures of the past or for the collective shared memories that those structures represented. There's no proportion, no symmetry, no charm, no decoration, no sense of human scale

6- Modernism's only aim was to seek

- to destroy the human spirit,
- to dislocate people from their shared history,
- to dominate the environment,
- to make people feel like *nothing* in their gigantic shadow.

