



Aesthetics of Architecture



Erasmus+

Lecture 1. Info about course. Cosmological, ritual, ecological roots of aesthetics

1.0. Info about course.

1.1. Introductory remarks.

1.2. Images of Cosmos and Dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

1.3. Sacral and profane models

1.4. Symbol as basis of cultural and natural motivations of architectural creation. Ecological conditions as aesthetical criterions

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1.0. Info about course

Course structure

Semester 2nd

Form of classes and number of hours in semester:

Hours of lectures 15

Hours of Exercises 15

Hours of laboratory 0

Hours of design 0

Lectures

15hs = 15 lectures

Exercise

Topic selection, bibliography, writing

1.0. Info about course

The purpose and objectives of the course

To get basic knowledge about contemporary aesthetics theories relevant for shaping the urban environment

Understanding of aesthetic background of architectural activity both in the field of heritage protection and in processes creation of innovative modern architecture

Initial requirements in terms of knowledge, skills and other forms of competence

Knowledge related with architectural design, urban planning, protection of monuments and historic towns, theory an history of the city

1.0. Info about course

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

Understanding of key concepts and principles of contemporary aesthetics theories those could be helpful for revealing the positive and negative features of contemporary architectural activity outcomes

Understanding of aesthetic background of architectural activity both in the field of heritage protection and in processes creation of innovative modern architecture

Skills:

Ability to carry out critical metaanalysis of aesthetical qualities of architectural and urban designs

Social competences:

Understands the necessity to evaluate aesthetical qualities of architectural and urban designs in various range of relevant contexts

1.0. Info about course

Course contents. Lectures (1-4)

1. Info about course. Cosmological, ritual, ecological roots of aesthetics (Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture. Sacral and profane models. Symbol as basis of cultural and natural motivations of architectural creation. Ecological conditions as aesthetical criteria) (3h)
2. Aesthetics of architecture on the way into complex of interdisciplinary fields (Issues of sustainability, culture and ecology that have been lost in the era of international modernism. Shifting of architecture aesthetics into complex interdisciplinary fields developing new ideas enriching processes of creative practice) (2h)
3. Globalization and regionalization as processes influencing development of new aesthetic visions, values, and experiences (2h)
4. Nature of architectural expression. Sense and meaning in language of architecture. Essential role of ethics in the development of aesthetic ideas and problem of mass produced kitsch (2h)

1.0. Info about course

Course contents. Lectures (5-7)

5. Architecture and the social: How in architecture we can distinguish the manifestation of social aspect from manifestation of individual, personal moment (2h)

6. Theoretical, aesthetic and philosophical attention transfer from the inner questions of architecture (form, function, spectacularity) to the external i.e. transcendental questions regarding the culture and society (2h)

7. Modern abstraction aesthetics, post-modern critical aesthetics. Phenomenological aesthetics. Intentions and intentionality in architecture (2h)

1.0. Info about course

Form of classes – exercise

Reading of the reference bibliography for the analysis

Critical analysis of the selected case study

Elaboration of an essay

1.0. Info about course

Didactic methods

1. Theoretical classes
2. Practical classes. Exercises
3. Individual activities
4. Group activities

Assessment methods and criteria

Assessment method description: Pass threshold
Written examination of lecture contents: 50%
Exercise elaboration: 50%

1.0. Info about course

Student workload

Contact hours of lectures 30

Including:

Participation in lectures 15

Participation in practical exercises 15

Student's own work 30

Including:

Preparation to examination 15

Preparation to classes 15

Total time of student work 60

Summary number of ECTS credits for the course: 2

1.0. Info about course

Basic literature

1. Berleant, A.; Carlson, A. (2007). *The Aesthetics of Human Environments*. Broadview Press.
2. Frampton, K. (2001). *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
3. Scruton, R. (1979/2013). *The Aesthetics of Architecture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2nd edition.
4. Vesely, D. (2004). *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
5. Zangwill, N. (2001). *The Metaphysics of Beauty*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

1.0. Info about course

Additional literature

1. Currie, G. (1989). *An Ontology of Art*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
2. Heidegger, M. (1975). Building, dwelling, thinking, in: *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Albert Hofstadter (trans.), New York: Harper and Row, pp. 145–161.
3. Pallasmaa, J. (2005). *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. Chichester: Wiley-Academy.
4. Stecker, R. (2010). *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
5. Venturi, R.; Denise Scott Brown, D.; Steven Izenour, S. (1972/1977). *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, revised edition.
6. Winters, E. (2007). *Aesthetics and Architecture*. London and New York: Continuum.

Note: Also see other actual bibliography after lecture sections

1.1. Introductory remarks

A long time, since the 1980s, I actively have been working in the field of cultural heritage protection. A number of new things with theoretical and practical significance have been summed up by me. I have implemented it in the pre-project research of the historical centres of five Lithuanian cities, wrote many articles. Unfortunately, the spread of these my ideas is not wide - because of language problems (the research material and most of articles were written in Lithuanian).

Therefore with help of the new curriculum for the heritage protection professionals, I want to spread knowledge what is crucially important from my point of view and what I have done in this area. It should be emphasized that all my considerations presented here in lectures are related with important aspects of aesthetics.

1.1. Introductory remarks

Here we will talk about roots. The origins and role of aesthetics have been interpreted differently by various teachings and theories. In this lecture we will focus on what we think is the most important thing - the cosmological, ritual and ecological roots of culture and civilization.

This is necessary in order understand the cultural-ecological conditions for the continuity of culture and civilization. To do this, we must master the competency of aesthetic understanding at the instrumental level - to be able to automatically recognize patterns and archetypes relevant to solving this significant problem.

1.1. Introductory remarks

The history of aesthetics testifies that it has promoted an ever broader, deeper understanding of the world. So we have to learn better to understand the evolution of the images of Cosmos (World) and Dwelling, to understand the connections between sacral and profane issues, to know the significance of symbols in architectural activity that can contribute to the knowledge and nurturing of cultural identity both local and global.

In this light, therefore, architecture that justifies ecological conditions can be considered as a successful combination of aesthetic conditions.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

In the archaic era, the images of space were inseparable from the conditions of survival. Individuals and the community itself are constantly threatened.

The community of people understood themselves as a unified structure and found ways to control the behavior, instincts and needs of the members of the collective.

It was then that the forms of primitive spiritual life appeared - magic and totemism.

Human activity has always consisted of utilitarian and non-utilitarian activities. A number of archaeological remains testify to the traces of the magical, ritual activity of a non-utilitarian, but meaningful for collective.

Often animals (sometimes plants) played the role of totems - they were identified with the tribe and its individual representatives.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

Perception became human when the language appeared.

The work of the psychic mechanisms of the primitive people (vision, hearing, touch, etc.) was subordinated to the activities of the people.

The relation of language to reality is characterized by some specificity. Essentially, people perceive not only geometric shapes, but images of things they know from the past.

This means that from the whole range of stimuli we select only those features that help to determine the function of the object, and those features are often not entirely based on the visual qualities.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

By interacting with reality, people from the very beginning - the beginning of human history - created spaces and objects that reflected their worldview, in which an important moment was the pursuit of survival, protection from threats.

The things created by people reflected the images of their world, the "space" (that is, the surrounding environment), the images of their place and role in this world.

Olga Freidenberg believed that the first things appeared to man not so much as to satisfy material (utilitarian) needs.

The first pillars (future columns), tables (in the form of stone slabs) and the gate (the future door) appeared to be a man's ability and ambition to perform mythological creation - to metaphorize all his being, to reflect the main existential contradictions: "self-alien," this (earth world) - the world of heaven“, „life-death“, etc.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

The persistent, long-standing principles of behavior that reflect the universal structure of the mythological space of a dwelling house are expressed in space categories.

In the late Paleolithic (from 40 (or 35 thousand) to 10 thousand B.C.), the image of the cross, the circle and the cross in the circle, in addition to the images associated with the sun, was able to represent own perception (individual or group) as present in the defined center ("I" - in the center, what is always the most important place - the center).

The circle is the boundary of the visible land, the cross is the four main directions of the movement towards the boundary.

Such schematic images illustrate how primitive people saw and understood space.

1.2. *Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture*

The images of the solar movement from east to west were reflected in the direction of burial.

This, apparently, also reflects the more general images of the world as a whole.

The emergence of artistic activity is inextricably linked to the first rational forms of utilitarianism: the time of burning the fire and the place in the living space, the interrelationship of domestic activities and activities with the seasons, the observations of the Sun and the Moon.

The realization of the protective function played a major role in the arising of art. This (essentially magic) function is marked with the Greek word *apotropaic* (magical amulet, mascot).

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

For protection purpose, coded messages were used - they were based on metaphors that could only be understood by the collective members.

Evil spirits understood everything straight. (Let's remember fairy tales about the peasant and the devil).

That coding implies the principle of indirect communication, which helps to protect against "evil spirits" that do not know the content of metaphors.

The tradition of installing a labyrinth before the entrance in China is related to this. Architect Charles Jencks wrote that it was thought that evil spirits were flying only straight, making it very difficult for them to find their way into the maze.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

Architectural ornaments, like tattoos on the human body, are essentially apotropaic - protective signs. The masks also had a protective function.

Naturally, the most important elements of building (doors, windows, etc.).

Not only mythological images were represented in the archaic consciousness structure, but also the elements of adequately known reality.

One of the most important contradictions inherent in archaic consciousness is the confrontation (or opposition) of Chaos (unstructured reality) and certain order (Cosmos).

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

The vision of space was controversial.

On the one hand, the characteristics of the surrounding physical environment are defined very precisely, and on the other hand - operated by abstractions - the center of the visible land, the place where the tribal area was understood as the center of the world.

The far end of the earth was considered to be the "end of the world", but the question of where the earth's connects with the dome of heaven could not be answered by archaic people.

The confrontation of two types of space - cultivated and mythological (which is adjacent to the cultural world) - was associated with many images about the mythical space as an inverted reality.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

It was believed that the social sphere was crossed by the "axis" from east to west following the direction of the solar movement, and it was also believed that this axis was valid not only for physical space but also for mythical images.

People have tried to make their settlements or their own separate homes fit with their imagery of the structure of the world, because only then can a harmonious relationship between a small, inhabited world and the entire Cosmos be guaranteed.

It is no coincidence that you see the symbolic connections of the house elements with planets and constellations of stars.

The physical division of space was carried out according to certain principles.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

The most secure place was the large family micro-world (yard), which was nested to a larger settlement area, which was part of settlements linked by trade and military alliances.

And finally - an unfamiliar, unknown environment (forest and other natural environment in which anyone could have happened and which was basically an area of inverted values).

Family relations played an important role in space differentiation.

It was common for men and women to designate separate territories, to specify special "magic spaces" beyond which spells and magic did not work, their boundaries were not always precisely defined, and so on.

In the primal consciousness, the real space of human being was not separated from the mythological images of it.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

The most important things in such space were items what were related to the images of Cosmos and were understood as part of that Cosmos.

The mythological images of space, the perception of the Cosmos-world structure gradually changed, underwent complex transformations, but remained to a great extent in later religious images.

The repetition of the same visual motifs (solas, astral, cosmic) in different regions of the earth, in different nations, can be explained, on the one hand, by the repetition of what the man has seen in the surrounding environment, on the other hand, by the common qualities of human consciousness.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

The concept of universe height, which is associated with the idea of the world as a unified whole, is also attributed to repetitive visual elements.

The evolution of the universe in the vertical direction (hell - earth - heaven) - one of the most archaic constructions with universality, it appeared in different regions of the earth.

The universe's levels are associated with the "axis mundi" of the world, which has different structures in different cultures and religions, but is always in the center of the universe.

The most widespread "global axis" variant, the so-called "global tree", played the role of a „general semantic complex“.

The World Tree upright reflected the insertion of the emergence and development, vertically down - the idea of fall, horizontally reflecting the principle of quadrilateralism (four spatial directions, four seasons, etc.).

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

The image of the World Tree is found in the culture of many nations (Indians, Egyptians, Balts, Slavs, Germans).

The images of the "World Center", where the world axis passes, and where the World Tree is located, were associated with the idea of creating of the World, and thus with the value of space.

The highest value was in the place where the highest sacral values - the time and place of the act of Creation - coincided.

An important attribute of the world structure, often found in the belief systems of many nations, is the „Cosmic (or World) Mountain", the backbone of the world, the part of the land that first appeared under water after the Creation of World.

Often the form of the Cosmic hill has a pyramid shape. The sides of such a pyramid symbolize 4 sides of the world, or four oceans (according to Indian mythology).

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

The structure of the world was reflected in the structure of its space by the first temples. An Egyptian pyramid also is an image of a World Mountain.

The Egyptian pyramid, like the Babylonian ziggurats, as the „World Mountains" - World (or Cosmos) models, by its construction process symbolized the act of World Creation.

The Universe (Cosmos) was identified with society: the tribal structure served as a scheme for the construction of the Cosmos model, and the structure of the first settlements was the reduced model of the that Cosmos.

These processes were also reflected in the structure of the living space.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

The right illustration is the traditional Mongolian yurt. The inner space of the yurt was divided into 12 parts corresponding to the signs of the Zodiac, which in turn were depicted on the inner surface of the yurt „dome“ as the model of the sky with the constellations.

By the way, in the Mesopotamic temple and also in the dwelling house, the relationship with the signs of the Zodiac were reflected in the decor of interior.

1.2. Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture

References

Stepanov A., Ivanova G., Nechaev N. *Architecture and Psychology*, Moscow: Stroyizdat, 1993, 295 p. [In Russian]
Степанов А., Иванова Г., Нечаев Н. *Архитектура и психология*, Москва: Стройиздат, 1993, 295 с.

Iordanskiy V. *Chaos and harmony*, Moscow: Science, 1984, 343 p. [In Russian] Иорданский В. Г. *Хаос и гармония*, Москва: Наука, 1984. 343 с.

Toporov V.N. Primitive ideas about the world. *Essays on the history of natural science knowledge in antiquity*, Moscow: Science, 1982, p. 8-40.[In Russian] Топоров В. Н. Первобытные представления о мире. *Очерки истории естественнонаучных знаний в древности*, Москва: Наука, 1982, с.8-40.

1.2. *Images of cosmos and dwelling in theories and thinking of architecture*

References (continuation)

Maidar D., Pyurveev D. *From nomadic to mobile architecture*.
Moscow: Stroyizdat, 1980, 250 p. [In Russian] Майдар Д.,
Пюрвеев Д. *От кочевой до мобильной архитектуры*.
Москва: Стройиздат, 1980, 250 с.

1.3. Sacral and profane models

Sacred architecture has always existed. The concept of sacred space has long been synonymous with mythological or religious spaces.

No longer is this solely the case, with a much-expanded notion of the sacred, and an evolution in the areas of religion and spirituality, the idea of sacred space has come to encompass a multitude of ideas.

The manifestation of sacred space is widespread - religious and secular, individualistic and collective, and rational and atmospheric. Program alone no longer dictates the sacred quality of a space.

Sacred architecture and sacred space serves as a sanctuary for a person, group of people, or an idea.

1.3. Sacral and profane models

The concept of sacred initially breaks down into two main categories: religious and secular.

This thesis will choose to explore the less traditional notion of the non-religious, essentially secular or profane, sacred space.

The paradox of the profanely sacred poses an interesting mystery and an equally interesting architectural opportunity. How can one construct a space with no religious affiliation and imbue it with the same devout, ritualistic, and sacred characteristics.

What composes this construct? What role does architecture play in facilitating this? What does it mean to be profanely sacred?

References

Baum, Maxwell K., *What Is Sacred*, 2016,[Accessed 2018-12-01]
https://surface.syr.edu/architecture_tpreps/349

1.4. Symbol as basis of cultural and natural motivations of architectural creation. Ecological conditions as aesthetical criterions

Knowledge about the symbolic potential of the place (for example, city main square) and the form of presentation of such data is very important for better understanding of cultural memory of place.

The symbolic potential of place or any architectural object (also its elements) can be described using specific symbolic code sets.

Code units consists from:

- 1) names of identified easy recognizable objects forming a place or other architectural object, and
- 2) cultural ideas, connotational characteristics of those objects.

1.4. Symbol as basis of cultural and natural motivations of architectural creation. Ecological conditions as aesthetical criterions

Some ideas appear as simple cultural connotations of certain objects and are easily identifiable.

However, the fuller knowledge of local symbolic potential requires using of data that have more complex connotational structure.

Such ideas encourage designers to comprehend the distinctive features of the place more deeply; also they are helping them to take into account personal existential experiences that are essential for the stimulating of original creative design solutions.

Data about the place can help to manage it taking into account the symbolic potential only in case when the connotational characteristics are included into that data set.

1.4. Symbol as basis of cultural and natural motivations of architectural creation. Ecological conditions as aesthetical criterions

To ensure consensus among all relevant actors, data about place (city square, etc) expressed in codes with more complex connotational structures must be presented in explicit form (as some kind of semantic „reference book“) together with the arguments of their significance.

Such codes would help align the positions of all actors involved in the management of certain place. Codes of this kind need to be defined in advance by making the appropriate research activities before and included in the legal documents regulating place management.

Data about the place can help to manage it taking into account the symbolic potential only in case when the connotational characteristics are included into that data set.

1.4. Symbol as basis of cultural and natural motivations of architectural creation. Ecological conditions as aesthetical criterions

To ensure consensus among all relevant actors, data about place (city square, etc) expressed in codes with more complex connotational structures that have symbolic nature must be presented in explicit form (as some kind of semantic „reference book“) together with the arguments of their significance.

Such codes would help align the positions of all actors involved in the management of certain place. Codes of this kind, as ecologically actual symbols, need to be defined in advance by making the appropriate research activities before and included in the legal documents regulating place management.

1.4. Symbol as basis of cultural and natural motivations of architectural creation. Ecological conditions as aesthetical criterions

So we have to learn better to understand the evolution of the images of Cosmos (World) and Dwelling, to understand the connections between sacral and profane issues, to know the significance of symbols in architectural activity that can contribute to the knowledge and nurturing of cultural identity both local and global.

In this light, therefore, architecture that justifies ecological conditions can be considered as a successful combination of aesthetic conditions.

References

Petrušonis V. Symbolic potential of place and its modelling for management needs. *Landscape architecture and art*. Jelgava: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies. ISSN 2255-8632. vol. 13, iss. 13 (2018), p. 39-48.



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