

Chapter 11: POSTMODERN ARCHITECTURE

11.1 THE MOVEMENT

Change is another name given to development and change in architecture is brought not in a short period of time but a chain of periods of time. Change occurs due to the need and interest of people and *post modernism* is no exception.

Post modernism as a movement denoted an eclectic mode in architecture started in America during 1960s - 1970s and continues to influence present-day architecture. As the term implies, Postmodernism represents a broad rejection of main stream twentieth century architecture.

People began bored of having the same matchbox houses with plain facade horizontal slabs, cubic shapes and abstract geometry of modernism. Post-Modernists sought to look back to history for inspiration as a way to bring more human elements into architecture. For instance, they might make use of arched windows or columns or interesting rooflines. These historical details might become more simplified in style or "modernized" and more colorful.

Essentially, Post Modernism has been connected with a loss of faith in the features of International modernism (eg. Progress, rationality, science) and with a growing acceptance of a bewildering large palette of images, signs, and products, promoted on a larger scale which welcomed 'complexity' and 'contradiction' in design.

Such as ornaments and decorative motifs to building design, garish colors, and illogical juxtaposition. It is a light-hearted compilation of aesthetic symbols and details, often using arbitrary geometry, with an intentional inconsistency or scale.

11.2 PHILOSOPHIES

-Post-modernism is the end of belief in any such absolute truths; replaced with a sense that everything is relative; there are no universal answers or agreements; culture just fragments into a playful celebration of chaos.

-Postmodernism is iconoclastic, groundless, formless and populist

-Some artistic movements commonly called postmodern are pop art, architectural deconstructivism, magical realism in literature, maximalism, and neo-romanticism.

-Postmodern theorists see postmodern art as a conflation or reversal of well-established modernist systems, such as the roles of artist versus audience, seriousness versus play, or high culture versus kitsch.

11.3 CHARACTERISTICS

- Whimsical shapes and colors
- Reliance on motifs from other styles
- Deliberate placement of incompatible geometries
- Outgoing and colorful character
- References to aspects of historical or vernacular architecture
- Applied ornament: pediments and colonnades
- Variety of wall treatments



M2 Building, Tokyo, Japan, 1991 by Kengo Kuma¹



Museum Garage, Miami, Florida, 2018²

11.4 POST MODERN EXAMPLES

The headquarters of Rogers Communications. Formerly the Rogers AT&T Centre, it was originally built as the headquarters of the insurance company Confederation Life

The facade walls of the postmodern building are light pink, with light green roof and light green window frames. It is also cladded.

It has conical roof above the hexagonal structure on the top



The Rogers Building³

¹ Hopkins Owen, 2020, PostModern Architecture, Phaidon Press Limited p42

² Hopkins Owen, 2020, PostModern Architecture, Phaidon Press Limited p71

³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rogers_Building_\(Toronto\)#/media/File:Rogers_AT&T_Centre.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rogers_Building_(Toronto)#/media/File:Rogers_AT&T_Centre.JPG)

The **Mississauga Civic Centre** is the seat of local government of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. The 37,280 square meter complex is a prominent example of postmodern architecture in Canada, finished in 1987 by **Jones and Kirkland**.

It comprises of many historical elements such as a Rotunda, Central tower with clock, market in an Agora design.

It has clear legible forms such as cylinder, prism, cube, pyramid and shaft.



Mississauga City Hall, Ontario⁴

11.5 NOTED POSTMODERNISTS AND THEIR WORKS

11.5.1 ROBERT VENTURI

He was at the forefront of this movement. He opposed to simple “matchbox architecture” in his book, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (published in 1966), was instrumental in opening readers eyes to new ways of thinking about buildings, as it drew from the entire history of architecture, both high-style and vernacular, both historic and modern and opposed overly simplistic Functional Modernism. The move away from modernism’s functionalism is well illustrated by Venturi’s adaptation of Mies van der Rohe’s famous maxim “Less is more” to "Less is a bore" in his book.

He said that if one follows contradictory aims the result is always exquisite and enjoyable. In his words, “Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern Architecture. I like elements which are hybrid rather than "pure," compromising rather than "clean," distorted rather than "straightforward," ambiguous rather than "articulated," perverse rather than impersonal, boring as well as interesting, conventional rather than designed, accommodating rather than excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississauga_Civic_Centre#/media/File:Mississauga_city_hall_2005.jpg

clear. I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. I include the non sequitur and proclaim the duality.

I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning: for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer “both-and” to “either-or”, black and white and sometimes grey, to black or white. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once.”⁵

His Works:

Chestnut Hill House

The building is both complex and simple, open and closed. The inside spaces of the building are complex and distorted in their shapes and relationships. The front, in its conventional combination of door, windows, chimney and gable, creates an almost symbolic image of a house. (Venturi R, 1966, p 118-119)



Chestnut Hill House, Philadelphia, 1962⁶

11.5.2 MICHEAL GRAVES

Michael Graves is considered as the creator of Post Modernism and he believes that architecture communicate and connect with the users, place, local culture and history.

His architectural style is inextricably tied to its past, addresses needs of present and shapes the future reflecting the continuum of human experience and permits transformation.

His designs are decorative and use natural materials. As a colorist he uses what he terms representational colors, colors that are derived primarily from nature and materials. Colors mostly used are gray, soft blues, green stucco, and terra cotta.

He was interested in the positive lessons of the modern movement in architecture and includes both traditional and modern concepts in his palette.

⁵ Venturi Robert, 1996, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, p 16

⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanna_Venturi_House#/media/File:VVenturi_House_fall_11.jpg

Works: City Council Building, Portland, Oregon (1980-1982)

He designed highly colorful houses with emphasized gables, rustic wall sections and abstract pillar motifs. He won the competition for town administration building for Portland, Oregon (1980-1982), a cubic multi storey building on a square colonnaded base in a symmetrical design. (Gossel P, 2007, p 366)

Some of the features of the building are:

- Fifteen storey skyscraper- 71.40m high
- First major completed postmodern building in North America
- Rejecting less is more, highly decorated; makes numerous references to classical architecture.
- Facade vertically divided into a base, a body and an attic/head.
- A reference to Greek columns
- Green tile- clad arcade runs along three sides of the building
- Most public functions are located at the ground level
- Large decorative columns adorn each side of the building with four storey high trapezoidal capitals above
- North and south sides have garland ribbons draped across the columns-classical gesture of welcome.
- Small windows and low ceiling heights make dark and unpleasant internal environment



City Council Building, Portland, Oregon (1980-1982)⁷

Other Works:

- Humana Building, Louisville
- Team Disney Building in Burbank, California
- Denver Central Library

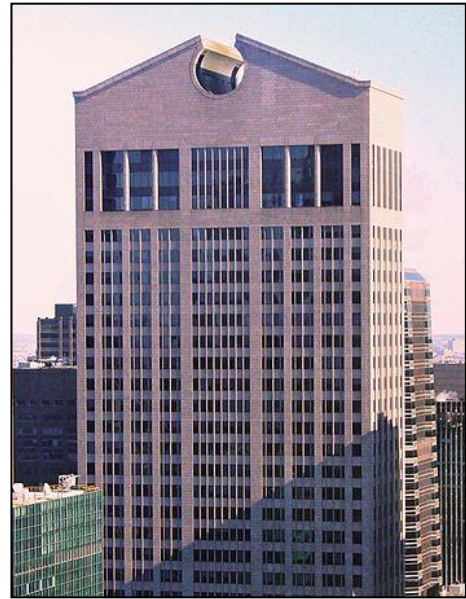
⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Graves#/media/File:Portland_Building_1982.jpg

11.5.3 PHILIP C JOHNSON and JOHN BURGEE AT & T Building, New York City, 1978-82

Works:

This building re established the conventional New York Skyscraper code of an articulated masonry frame culminating in a pitched roof of classical provenance. (Jencks C, 1980, p 20)

It illustrates a "Postmodern" spin with the inclusion of a classical broken pediment on the top which diverged from the boxy functional office towers common in Modern Architecture.



Sony Building (formerly AT&T building) in New York City, 1984⁸

11.5.4 JAMES STIRLING

-Known for his unorthodox, sometimes controversial designs of multiunit housing and public buildings

-Influenced by later design of Le Corbusier.

-His later works evolved a rather playful variant of Postmodernism making use of unconventional building axes, complex geometric shapes and brightly colored decorative elements.



Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany, 1984⁹

References:

1. Gossel P ed., 2007, The A-Z of Modern Architecture, Graves Micheal, TASCHEN, p 366
2. Hopkins Owen, 2020, Post Modern Architecture, Phaidon Press Limited, p42
3. Jencks C, 1980, Late-Modern Architecture, Rizzoli International Publications, NC, p 20
4. Venturi Robert, 1996, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, the Museum of Modern Art, NY, p 16

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Johnson#/media/File:Sony_Building_by_David_Shankbone_crop.jpg

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staatsgalerie_Stuttgart#/media/File:Staatsgalerie1.jpg