Chapter 12: **DECONSTRUCTIVISM**

12.1 THE MOVEMENT

This architectural movement arising in the 1980s displays certain parallel with the 20s Constructivism. Deconstructivism wants to create the impression of fragmentation of building form and is characterised by lack of harmony, continuity and symmetry. The French philosopher **Jacques Derrida** is considered to be the father of Deconstructivism. (Gossel P. p235)

It is characterised by ideas of fragmentation, **non-linear** processes of design and **non-Euclidean geometry,** which serve to **distort** and **dislocate** some of the elements of architecture, such as structure and envelope.

The final visual appearance of buildings that exhibit the deconstructivist "styles" are characterized by a stimulating **unpredictability** and a **controlled chaos**. Though similar, the socio-political connotations of Russian constructivism are **de-emphasized** in **Zaha Hadid**'s deconstructivism. **Rem Koolhaas**' projects have recalled the **scaffold** and **crane-like** structures of constructivists.

- Deconstructivism is a branch of Modernism.
- It shares Modernism's lack of applied ornamentation and other aspects of the Modernist vocabulary.
- However, rather than being composed simple forms, Deconstructivist buildings often use abstract and non-geometrical forms.
- They often have no immediately apparent visual logic, often appearing fragmented and having unusual penetrations.
- The advent of 3D computer modeling has enabled the creation of the complex forms in these buildings, which would previously have been very difficult to design, visualize and engineer.
- Earlier, it involved the dismantling of architectural elements and the rearrangement of their constituent parts.
- Rejects the idea of the `perfect form' for a particular activity and rejects the familiar relationship between certain forms and certain activities.
- In conclusion, any form is no longer pure, it’s contaminated.

12.2 ARCHITECTS

- Peter Eisenman
- Frank Gehry
- Zaha Hadid
- Coop Himmelblau

- Rem Koolhaas
- Daniel Libeskind
- Bernard Tschumi

12.2.1 PETER EISENMAN

Born in 1932 in Newark, New Jersey, USA he was one of the foremost practitioners of deconstructivism in American architecture. Eisenman designed a series of houses which he numbered consecutively based on square ground plans and modified by distortions and deviations. (Gossel P. ed, p272)

HIS CONCEPTS

- His architectural ideas attempt to create contextually disconnected architecture.
- His earlier houses were generated from a transformation of forms related to the tenuous relationship of language to an underlying structure.
- His latter works show sympathy with the anti-humanist, the ideas of deconstruction.
- Uses discomfort, shock, abrasion and incongruity to achieve his effects, against the basis comfort and the needs of clients.
- The designs created by Eisenman have columns not touching the ground but suspended in air, stairs not having railings, air condition provided in the northern side, glass exposing the southern side, etc.
- Breaking the continuity and disturbing the relationships between exterior and interior and fracturing connections between them are the main features of his design.

HIS PROJECTS

House VI for Frank family, Cornwall, Connecticut,1972-1975

(Jencks C. 1980) Eisenman's House 6, in its supreme autonomy, does not relate to its woodland setting. The building is unrelated to both site and vernacular setting around. There are concerning design of interior wall, window, column and pilaster. There is solid blank wall interrupted with long thin rectangular slit or window. The way there is column that is present or absent from its proper place is amusing. For instance, there is an absent column hanging in the center of the bed, avoiding the couple to sleep together and even not touching the bed while a present column descends in dining table dividing the meal. There are exterior pilasters hanging cantilevered from a useless wall hanging six inches above ground. (p177)

House VI,[1]

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_VI#/media/File:House_VI_024.JPG

Wexner Center for the Visual Arts for Ohio State University in Columbus (1985-89)

- The site located between two existing auditorium buildings.
- It houses a film and video theatre, a performance space, a film and video postproduction studio, a bookstore, cafe and four galleries.

Wexner Center for the Visual Arts[2]

- The entrance is marked by fragments of brick tower forms recalling the former armory.
- Includes a large white metal grid meant to suggest scaffolding, to give the building a sense of incompleteness in tune with the architect's deconstructivist tastes.[3]
- The famous hanging column showing absent and present columns

Sidewalk in the Wexner Center[4]

12.2.2 COOP HIMMELBLAU

Coop Himmelb(l)au adopted more aggressive idiom in Vienna 1977. In the roof extension for a Law practice in Vienna, has been described as “a writhing, disruptive, animal breaking through the corner”, the elements of which extend beyond the plain façade making the conversion clearly visible. (Gossel P. ed. p216)

Roof Conversion project, Vienna 1983-88 [5]

[2] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/85/Wexner_Center_for_the_Arts_S.jpg

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wexner_Center_for_the_Arts

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wexner_Center_for_the_Arts#/media/File:Wexnercenter.jpg

12.2.3 FRANK OWEN GEHRY

Frank O Gehry in 1970s built a series of houses with broken volume and pre-fabricated industrial components such as his own home in Santa Monica, California (1978), in which the existing building was enveloped in a sheath of pink asbestos panels, corrugated sheeting and wire frames creating the something of unfinished, unstable and home-made. (Gossel P. ed, p338)

Gehry's home in Santa Monica, California (1978)[6]

HIS CONCEPTS

- Perceiving architecture as art, sculpture.
- Part of modern architecture but without ornamentation
- Thought beyond imagination
- No concern with physical law of real world
- Unusual penetration, abstract and non-geometrical form
- Nontraditional geometric form, against harmony, simplicity unity and pure form
- Form follows fantasy
- Used to express his internal feelings through building
- Used material like corrugated metals, glass, titanium and limestone
- Computers simulation of buildings structures made it feasible to build shapes that architects of earlier eras would have found nearly impossible to construct.
- The curves designed to catch maximum light.

HIS PROJECTS

- **Experience Music Project**, at Seattle, Washington, 1999 to 2000
- **Gehry House**, at Santa Monica, California, 1979
- **Guggenheim Museum Bilbao**, at Bilbao, Spain, 1997
- **Venice Beach House**, at Venice, CA, 1986
- **Vitra Design Museum**, at Weil-am-Rhein, Germany, 1987 to 1989
- **Walt Disney Concert Hall**, at Los Angeles, CA, 1989 to 2004

[5]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rooftop_Remodeling_Falkestrasse#/media/File:Rooftop_Remodeling_Falkestrasse.jpg

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Gehry#/media/File:Gehry_House_-_Image02.jpg

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO, at Bilbao, Spain, 1997

-It was built as part of urban renewal project and has Expressionist Modern style

-The composition continues a curvaceous, free-form sculptural style that has become a Gehry signature.

- It is clad in titanium plates, arranged in scales, on a galvanized steel structure.

Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, 1997[7]

It stands as an independent work of art, makes an impression with its plastic forms, which clad in titanium panels, kindle living and zoomorphic associations with the changing lights. (Gossel P. ed, p341). Gehry's works have been criticized for their impracticality, and in some cases, environmental hazards, said could cause serious sunburn to people standing on the street. In winter, snow and ice have been sliding off the long, sloping, stainless-steel roof, bombarding the sidewalk below. And in bright sun, the glint off the steel tiles is so powerful that standing next to the building is like lying on a beach with a tanning mirror.

Dancing House in Prague (1996)

The style is known as deconstructivist ("new-baroque" to the designers) architecture due to its unusual shape. The "dancing" shape is supported by 99 concrete panels, each a different shape and dimension.

The Dancing House has two main parts. The first is a glass tower that narrows at half its height and is supported by curved pillars; the second runs parallel to the river and is characterized by undulating moldings and unaligned windows.

This design was driven mainly by aesthetic considerations: aligned windows would make evident that the building has two more floors, although it is the same height as the two adjacent nineteenth century buildings.

Dancing House in Prague (1996)[8]

[7] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f9/Bilbao_-_Guggenheim_43.jpg

[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Gehry#/media/File:Case_danzanti.jpg

The windows have protruding frames, such as those of paintings, as the designer intended for them to have a three-dimensional effect. The winding moldings on the façade also serve to confuse perspective and diminish contrast with the surrounding buildings.[9]

12.2.3 Bernard Tschumi

Parc de la Villette, Paris

Tschumi's first notable project was the **Parc de la Villette**, a competition project he won in 1983. The structure he designed was deliberately anti- functional, ant -contextual and infinite. He believed that free and rigid form leads to ambiguity, disorder, impurity, imperfection. His approach to design was; first, by exposing the conventionally defined connections between architectural sequences and the spaces, programs, and movement which produce and reiterate these sequences; and second, by inventing new associations between space and the events that 'take place' within it through processes of defamiliarization, de-structuring, superimposition, and cross programming.

Tschumi's design was in partial response to the philosophies of Jacques Derrida, acting as an architectural experiment in space, form, and how those relate a person's ability to recognize and interact. According to Tschumi, the intention of the park was to create space for activity and interaction, rather than adopt the conventional park mantra of ordered relaxation and self-indulgence. The vast expanse of the park allows for visitors to walk about the site with a sense of freedom and opportunity for exploration and discovery.[10]

Parc de la Villette, Paris[11]

Reference Books

1. Gossel P. ed, 2007, The A-Z of Modern Architecture, Deconstructivism, TASCHEN, p235
2. Gossel P. ed. 2007. The A-Z of Modern Architecture, Eisenman Peter, TASCHEN, p272
3. Gossel P. ed. 2007. The A-Z of Modern Architecture, Coop Himmelb(l)au, TASCHEN, p216
4. Gossel P. ed. 2007. The A-Z of Modern Architecture, Gehry Frank Owen, TASCHEN, p338-341
5. Jencks C, 1980, Late-Modern Architecture, Architecture and Morality, Rizzoli International Publications, NC, p 176-179

[9] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dancing_House#cite_note-5

[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parc_de_la_Villette

[11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parc_de_la_Villette#/media/File:Do_pedalar_e_da_ci%C3%AAncia.jpg