INNOVATION and EXPERIMENTATION: POSTMODERN and DECONSTRUCTIVIST ARCHITECTURE : FOCUS (Late Twentieth-Century and Early Twenty-First Global Architecture)
ONLINE ASSIGNMENT: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass_House

TITLE or DESIGNATION: Glass House

ARCHITECT: Philip Johnson

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: International Style

DATE: 1949 C.E.

LOCATION: New Caanan, Connecticut, U.S.
ONLINE ASSIGNMENT:

TITLE or DESIGNATION:
House in Castle County, Delaware

ARCHITECTS: Robert Venturi, John Rauch, and Denise Scott Brown

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD:
Postmodernism

DATE: 1978-83 C.E.

LOCATION: Castle County, Delaware, U.S.
TITLE or DESIGNATION: Pompidou Centre

ARCHITECTS: Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: High-Tech

DATE: 1977 C.E.

LOCATION: Paris, France
TITLE or DESIGNATION: Guggenheim Bilbao Museum

ARCHITECT: Frank Gehry

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: Deconstructivist Architecture

DATE: 1997 C.E.

LOCATION: Bilbao, Spain
TITLE or DESIGNATION: MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts

ARCHITECT: Zaha Hadid

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: Deconstructivist Architecture

DATE: 2009 C.E.

LOCATION: Rome, Italy
INNOVATION and EXPERIMENTATION: POSTMODERN and DECONSTRUCTIVIST ARCHITECTURE : SELECTED TEXT (Late Twentieth-Century and Early Twenty-First Global Architecture)
Philip Johnson’s Glass House, built atop a dramatic hill on a rolling 47-acre estate in New Canaan, Connecticut, is a piece of architecture famous the world over not for what it includes, but for what it leaves out. The dwelling’s transparency and ruthless economy are meant to challenge nearly every conventional definition of domesticity.
The residence Johnson built for himself in 1949 suggests a life pared down to Platonic essentials—and triumphantly ready for fishbowl scrutiny. There is something intimidating to people about the restraint such an existence would demand, as if the house itself were silently judging our own messy choices. Still, the appeal of all that self-control, that rigor, is practically narcotic. Why not banish every bit of clutter? For many of us, Johnson’s masterwork is a powerful fantasy.

Johnson’s design is the architectural equivalent of a brilliantly packed suitcase, with a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and space for dining and entertaining all arranged inside a simple rectangle measuring 32 by 56 feet. Yet the residence was built near the end of his love affair with modernism; if you look closely, you can see signs of his budding restlessness with its dogma.
According to Henry Urbach, director of the Glass House (now operated as a historic house museum by the National Trust for Historic Preservation), that rich sense of contradiction, even paradox, is part of the structure’s continuing appeal. “There’s already a very sophisticated irony at work,” he says, “a kind of wit—as if he’s playing along with modernism, all the while preparing for whatever’s next.” For one thing, the dwelling is far from alone on the property; the same year Johnson built the Glass House, he also erected a brick guest quarters next door, and over time he dotted the estate with outbuildings and follies in a wild diversity of styles.

In the 1970s, architects began to move away from the sleek glass-and-steel boxes of the International Style and reintroduce quotations from past styles into their designs. Architectural historians trace the origins of this new Postmodern style to the work of Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), who wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), as well as to Philadelphia architect Robert Venturi (b. 1925), who rejected the abstract purity of the International Style by incorporating elements drawn from the vernacular (meaning popular, common, or ordinary) sources into his designs.
Venturi parodied Mies van der Rohe’s aphorism, “Less is more,” with his own – “Less is more.” He accused Mies and other Modernist architects of ignoring human needs in their quest for uniformity, purity, and abstraction, and challenged Postmodernism to address the complex, contradictory, and heterogeneous mixture of “high” and “low” architecture that comprised the modern city. Venturi encouraged new architecture to embrace eclecticism, and he reintroduced references to past architectural styles into his own designs, and began to apply decoration to his buildings.
While writing his treatise on Postmodernism—*Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966)—Venturi designed a house for his mother that put many of his new ideas into practice. The shape of the façade returns to the traditional Western “house” shape that Modernists had rejected because of its cliched historical associations. Venturi’s vocabulary of triangles and squares is arranged in a playful asymmetry that skews the staid harmonies of Modernist design, while the curved moldings are a purely decorative flourish—heretical in the strict tenets of the International Style.
But the most disruptive element of the façade is the deep cleavage over the door, which opens to reveal a mysterious upper wall and chimney top. The interior is also complex and contradictory. The irregular floor plan, including an odd stairway leading up to the second floor, is further complicated by irregular ceiling levels that are partially covered by a barrel vault.
Venturi’s next book, *Learning from Las Vegas*, published in 1972, studied the famous Las Vegas Strip, which he felt was “almost all right.” The book lauds the ideas of “decorated sheds,” or structures that have no architectural concept, but are adorned with symbolic images or shaped like familiar forms.

These include 1920s fast food restaurants, such as the Hoot Hoot I Scream stand, which is shaped like an owl. Venturi calls these cartoon-like buildings “ducks,” because his favorite roadside icon is The Big Duck on the south shore of Long Island. Venturi felt the term “decorated shed” also applied to historical buildings, like the Chartres Cathedral and Palazzo Farnese, whose facades use symbolic language. In his own buildings, Venturi focused on the idea of context, creating building that fit into the existing character of the neighborhood. His designs did not simply reproduce the historical style of the area, however: they included elements of exaggeration, playful references to a more traditional period.
The house in New Castle County, Delaware for a family of three has an unusual program. The wife, a musician, required a music room appropriate for small gatherings, and containing an organ, two pianos, and a harpsichord. The family wanted big windows facing the woods for bird-watching and the husband needed a study in a remote part of the house. The house sits in rolling fields at the edge of a valley to the west and woods to the north.

Eighteenth-century Classical barns with generous scale and low horizontal proportions are traditional in northern Delaware where the site is located. The walls of these barns are field stone with wood frame and siding in some upper sections. We based the form and symbolism of the house on this indigenous architecture, to make it look at home in its rural setting and to conform to the easy, generous, yet unpretentious way of living our clients envisioned. The landscaping is cultivated in the immediate vicinity of the house, but natural beyond.
Venturi traced his progressive investigation of flatness in architecture in terms of spatial layerings, the signboard, flat pattern ornament, and appliqué. By appliqué, he means the distribution of architectural elements over the surface of a wall, not as sculptured plastic elements but as flat design flush with its surface.

There is of course a distinguished tradition for such architecture: for example, the cathedral and the baptistery in Florence, or the cathedrals of Siena and Pisa. Recent designs by Venturi derived from Greek temples show stylized porticoes set out in front of the wall of their “cella” on a parallel plane of their own.
In recent designs especially, the appliqué often comes off the wall as a plane with architectural cutouts. This happens with the “portico” for the garden front (which really faces a wood) off a just completed house in Delaware. The portico is straight out of the Greek temple at Paestum. The burly swell of the entasis of the flattened “columns” is topped by the abrupt inverted curve of its “capital,” which looks not unlike the inverted bowl of an Art Deco lighting fixture. The silhouetted portico supports an immense, wheel-like, semicircular fan window. This bloated double sign for “monumentality” screens a low-gabled, cottage-like house. It ironically draws the cottage out of itself into the high realm of architecture.
Philip Johnson and John Burgee. Sony Building (formerly AT&T Building), New York, 1978-84

In the 1970s, Postmodern ideas were also applied to commercial architecture. One of the first examples was the AT&T Corporate Headquarters (now the Sony Building) in New York City by Philip Johnson. This elegant, granite-clad skyscraper has 36 oversized stories, making it as tall as the average 60-story building.

It mimics its International Style neighbors with its smooth uncluttered skin, while its Classical window groupings set between vertical piers also echo nearby skyscrapers from much earlier in the century. But the overall profile of the building bears a whimsical resemblance to the shape of a Chippendale highboy, an eighteenth-century chest of drawers with a long-legged base and angled top. Johnson seems to have intended a pun on the terms “highboy” and “high-rise.”
The 660-foot-high slab of the former AT&T Building is mostly granite. Johnson reduced the window space to some 30 percent of the structure, in contrast to the modernist glass-sheathed skyscrapers.

His design of the exterior elevation is classically tripartite, having an arcaded base and arched portal.

Its crowning pediment is broken by an orbiculum (a disk-like opening). The arrangement refers to the base, column, and entablature system of classical architecture.

The round notch at the top of the building as well as the rounded entryway at its base suggest the coin slot and coin return of an old pay telephone in a clever reference to Johnson’s patron, the AT&T telephone company.
During their short-lived partnership, British architect Richard Rogers (b. 1933) and Italian architect Renzo Piano (b. 1937) used motifs and techniques from ordinary industrial buildings in their design for the Georges Pompidou National Center of Art and Culture in Paris, known popularly as the “Beauborg.”

The architects fully exposed the anatomy of this six-level building, which is a kind of updated version of the Crystal Palace, and made its “metabolism” visible. They color-coded pipes, ducts, tubes, and corridors according to function (red for the movement of people, green for water, blue for air-conditioning, and yellow for electricity), much as in a sophisticated factory.
Critics who deplore the Beauborg’s vernacular qualities disparagingly refer to the complex as a “cultural supermarket” and point out that its exposed entrails require excessive maintenance to protect them from the elements. Nevertheless, the building has been immensely popular with visitors since it opened.

The flexible interior spaces and the colorful structural body provide a festive environment for the crowds flowing through the building and enjoying its art galleries, industrial design center, library, science and music centers, conference rooms, research and archival facilities, movie theaters, rest areas, and restaurant (which looks down and through the building), as well as dramatic panoramas of Paris from its terrace.
The shopping plaza in front of the main entrance has become part of the local scene. Peddlers, street performers, Parisians, and tourists fill this square at almost all hours of the day and night. The kind of secular activity that once occurred in the open spaces in front of the cathedral portals now takes place next to a center for culture and popular entertainment.
The Toronto-born, California-based Frank O. Gehry (b. 1929) creates unstable and Deconstructivist building masses and curved winglike shapes that extend far beyond the building’s mass. One of his most spectacular designs is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. In the 1990s, the designing of art museums became more and more spectacular as they increasingly came to define the visual landscape of cities. Gehry developed his asymmetrical design using a CATIA CAD program that enabled him to create a powerfully organic, sculptural structure.
The complex steel skeleton is covered by a thin skin of silvery titanium that shimmers gold or silver depending on the time of day and the weather conditions. From the north the building resembles a living organism, while from other angles it looks like a giant ship, a reference to the industry on which Bilbao has traditionally depended, thereby identifying the museum with the city. Despite the sculptural beauty of the museum, however, the interior of the notoriously difficult space in which to display art, a characteristic this building shares with Frank Lloyd Wright’s spiraling design of the New York Guggenheim, a notable forebear of Gehry’s explorations of the bold sculptural potential of architecture.
With Bilbao, Gehry presented a long-awaited solution to one of the most vexing problems in architecture at the end of the 20th century. Modernism, especially when deployed in urban settings on a grand scale, was largely loathed by the general public and eventually dropped by the design establishment. The cold, alienating, concrete-glass-and-steel environments imposed on many major cities were finally judged to have destroyed more user-friendly urban plans in the name of “slum clearing” or futuristic redevelopment. Postmodernism, a movement emphasizing a return to decoration, historical references, and fewer desolate urban plazas, which reached its height in the 1980s, seems in hindsight like a frail fig leaf attempting to cover up the sins of what had gone before.
Bilbao—today one of the top tourist destinations in Europe—was such a backwater in the 1990s that, according to Gehry, the 265,000-square-foot museum, beside the Nervión River, went up almost unnoticed by the press. That only contributed to the drop-dead impact it created with its unveiling. “I like to work under the radar as much as I can. It’s been harder since I’ve gotten notorious,” says Gehry. The first photos of the near-complete structure, which resembles a gargantuan bouquet of writhing silver fish, rendered a seismic shift in the global art culture.
The socio-economic impact of the museum has been astounding. During the first three years of operation, almost 4 million tourists visited the museum—generating about 500 million in profit. Furthermore, the money visitors spent on hotels, restaurants, shops and transport collected over 100 million in taxes, which more than offset the cost of the building.

However, the promise of the “Bilbao Effect” also sparked a building boom in “statement” architecture across the globe, one which proved imprudent in the wake of the recent economic crisis. Nevertheless, the Museum remains an iconic structure renowned for its complexity and form.
Overall, the kind of language I’ve developed, which culminated in Bilbao, comes from a reaction to Postmodernism. I was desperate not to go there,” Gehry explains, in his refreshingly plainspoken style. “I was looking for a way to deal with the humanizing qualities of decoration without doing it. I got angry with it—all the historical stuff, the pastiche. I said to myself, If you have to go backward, why not go back 300 million years before man, to fish? And that’s when I started with this fish shtick, as I think of it, and started drawing the damn things, and I realized that they were architectural, conveying motion even when they were not moving. I don’t like to portray it to other people as a complicated intellectual endeavor. Most architects avoid double curves, as I did, because we didn’t have a language for translation into a building that was viable and economical. I think the study of fish allowed me to create a kind of personal language.”
A good example of Deconstructivist architecture is the *Vitra Fire Station* in Weil-am-Rhein, Germany, designed by Baghdad-born architect Zaha Hadid (b. 1950), who studied in London and established her practice there in 1979. Formally influenced by the paintings of Kasimir Malevich, the Vitra Fire Station features reinforced concrete walls that lean into one another, meet at unexpected angles, and jut out dramatically into space, denying a sense of visual unity or structural coherence, but creating a feeling of immediacy, speed, and dynamism appropriate to the building’s function.

In Rome, history flows through every urban artery, providing a strong pulse to obscure outposts and tourist destinations alike. For architects, the Eternal City presents history as inspiration, obstacle, and challenge. With the National Museum of XXI Century Arts (MAXXI), which opened in May in the Flaminio district just outside the city’s historic core, Zaha Hadid treats it as a river — a fluid construct comprising a series of streams — converging, overlapping, then changing course.

In the process, she taps into powerful flows of the Roman past and delivers her most convincing building to date — a sensual piece of construction that works both urbanistically and as a place to view art.
With MAXXI, the architects confronted a site covered by a set of military barracks, some of which they could remove and some they needed to keep. Their design incorporates a military building on Via Guido Reni to the south and carves out a public plaza running the length of the site to Via Masaccio on the north. In addition to opening a pedestrian connection through the city block, the scheme acknowledges the angled street grid beyond Via Masaccio — twisting the museum building to align with a nearby streetcar line. Or, as the architects explain in their tortured project text, “An inferred mass is subverted by vectors of circulation.”
As you approach the museum along Via Guido Reni, you notice only a pair of modest bookends on either side of a restored barracks. So when you walk into the entry plaza, the size and twisting form of MAXXI take you by surprise. But the way it connects to the different city grids on the north and the south and its sinuous allusion to the nearby Tiber river make it feel very much a part of this place.
On both the inside and the outside, the museum works as a series of connected ribbons, a composition that conjures the spirit of Baroque architecture with its play of convex and concave forms. And like buildings designed by Borromini and Bernini, MAXXI manipulates daylight in an almost mystical way — bringing it in from above, through glass roofs shielded by metal grilles, adjustable louvers, and concrete fins.

Fluorescent tubes in the stairs and light boxes on the underside of circulation routes give these elements the appearance of floating and add to the museum’s liquid approach to space.

Reinforcing this fluid character, the architects designed the building as a poured-concrete structure, exposed on the inside and out. To handle the complex geometry, they used self-compacting concrete. And to ensure an continuous supply of concrete, they built a factory on-site. Four expansion joints split the building for seismic reasons.
The MAXXI relates with the urban context within which it is set by renewing the horizontal development of the former military barracks. The geometrical plan of the project aligns itself with the two urban grids that regulate the town planning structure of the area and the new interpretation of these two geometrical plans within the proposal generates the surprising geometrical complexity of the campus.

The two urban grids are mediated by sinuous lines that harmonize the plan and facilitate the flow within the site. The pedestrian walkway that crosses the campus is open to the public and has been reinstated after approximately 100 years of being blocked by the barracks. This walkway follows the soft outline of the museum, sliding below the upper level galleries towards Via Masaccio.

The interior of the MAXXI can be seen by visitors and pedestrians through the numerous openings in the MAXXI’s curvilinear walls that on the one hand, protect its contents, yet beckon the visitor through the broad glazed surface on the ground floor.
“I see the MAXXI as an immersive urban environment for the exchange of ideas, feeding the cultural vitality of the city.

The MAXXI should not be considered just one building - but several. The idea was to move away from the idea of “the museum as an object” and towards the idea of a “field of buildings”. After many studies, our research evolved into the concept of the confluence of lines, where the primary force of the site is the walls that constantly intersect and separate to create both indoor and outdoor spaces. It’s no longer just a museum, but an urban cultural centre where a dense texture of interior and exterior spaces have been intertwined and superimposed over one another. It’s an intriguing mixture of galleries, irrigating a large urban field with linear display surfaces.”

Zaha Hadid
“The walls of the MAXXI create major streams and minor streams. The major streams are the galleries, and the minor streams are the connections and the bridges. The site has a unique L-shaped footprint that meanders between two existing buildings. Rather than seeing this as a limitation, we used it to our advantage, taking it as an opportunity to explore the possibilities of linear structure by bundling, twisting, and building mass in some areas and reducing it in others - threading linearity throughout both interior and exterior or the MAXXI.”

Zaha Hadid
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