

Welcome to Architecture in the PostModern Era.

My name is Matthew Schlueb, registered architect, practicing for two decades.
How many took Architecture in the Modern Era last summer?

Continues from last summer, but will make clear **the significance of any references**.

Course syllabus: today's lecture covers the transition from Modern Era.

Each of next four lectures focus on one architect, not because their most important, but because of their **influence** by **challenging** architecture & successful **risk taking**.

Lecture handout: **leitmotifs** & **partis pris** that will be covered today, as well as a listing of key architectural works & bibliography of **sited texts** for further reading.

Thankyou for taking this course, it is a **pleasure to present** this material to you.
Welcome your **feedback to improve** the class, as this is for your benefit.

1:05

As with the start of Modern Era at the end of the 19th century, the PostModern Era has its **roots in Frank Lloyd Wright at the end of the 1950s**, but the transition can be traced back to the Kaufmann house (Fallingwater) completed in 1937.



Organic architecture was one of his last developments, which continued aspects from the Prairie style of his earliest works, the **horizontal lines referent the ground**,



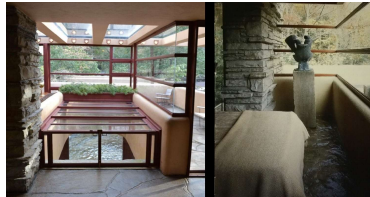
interlocking combinations of material and form in plan and volume,
patterns developing sequentially in **referential play of scale**,



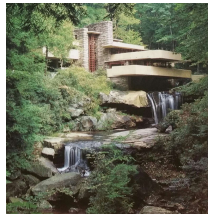
material plasticity, not limited by inherent properties, homogeneity without grain, broad overhangs, exaggerated cantilevers in perpendicular directions,



open floor plan, with continuous ribbon window screens eliminating walls, however, elimination of the corner makes horizontal planes float weightless,



bringing the outdoors inside effortlessly, defining feature of Organic establishing relationship to natural surroundings, symbiotic, as a unified whole.



This was a new departure in design, a shift from object or spatial oriented design to process oriented design, this becoming the 1st parti in the PostModern Era. Architecture was changing, from being thought of as a sculptural object on a ground plane, to something that results from an applied process, in the case of Organic architecture, a design that mimics ordering system of a natural organism.

In 1947, Colin Rowe published an article in the Architectural Review titled the Mathematics of the Ideal Villa, which analyzed architectural form and proportion applying geometric measure to Palladio's Villa Foscari (in Malcontenta, Italy) as compared to Le Corbusier's Villa Stein (in Garches, France).

Universal proportion of Renaissance became a matter of individual sensibility during 18th century Enlightenment, later Corbusier's human Modular system.



Like Wright, the end of Corbusier's career had a marked change in 1954 with the **Chapelle Notre Dame du Haut** in Ronchamp, France. A departure from the mechanistic, universal, adaptable plan per site of his Dom-ino system, this chapel was **conditional**, a **contextual response** to the religious site, a hilltop with a pilgrimage history as extensive as the panoramic setting.



This metaphoric pedestal and organic vocabulary of walls and roof resulted from his intuitive intentions for a meditative and reflective place, evoking an ethereal atmosphere, expressive and emotive in quality. This vernacular approach, **regionally dependent on cultural and historic references** is the 2nd part of the PostModern Era. [photoshop murals by photographer Xavier Delory]

As Walter Gropius stated in his 1955 book, **Scope of Total Architecture**:

“Our common plight of losing control over the vehicle of progress, that our time has created and that is beginning to ride roughshod over our lives. The misuse of machine is creating a soul-flattening mass mind, which levels off individual diversity and independence of thought and action. Diversity is, after all, the very source of (a) true democracy based on the interplay of two contrasting manifestations – diversity of individual minds (and the) common denominator of regional expression, springing from the cumulative experience of successive generations who gradually weed out the merely arbitrary from the essential.”



These two principles, Wright's **process oriented design** and Corbusier's **contextually conditional design**, come together in Frederick Kiesler's 1958 project Endless House.



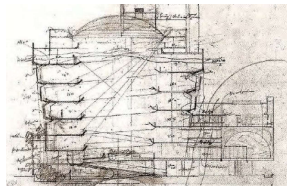
Biotechnique, grown not assembled, a **continuous surface** eliminating distinction between floor, wall, and ceiling, a **Correalism** develops from **interrelationships** between man and environment.



1:30

In 1966, Robert Venturi published **Complexity & Contradiction**, stating “Architecture is necessarily complex & contradictory in commodity, firmness, delight, ...the wants of program, structure, mechanical equipment, (etc.)”

For example, there exists what he called **double functioning elements** that added complexity and contradictions to architecture. Such as Wright’s spiral gallery in the Guggenhiem Museum of 1959. Is it **circulation, assembly, or display**?



Is it a **ramp, cantilever, or beam**?



1:35

With the end of the second World War, the mass production of housing in the 1950s resulting from **G.I. Bill** of 1944 and **Housing Acts** of 1949 (slums) & 1954 (FHA), depressed urban centers were revitalizing after two decades of impoverished existence, along with suburban sprawl at the outskirts of the city.

In response to rapid changes, a landmark book was published (1961) by Jane Jacobs titled the **Death and Life of Great American Cities**. In it, she laid out a model for a **new urbanism** based on **diversity, density, dynamism**. Mixed use, urban living, with a bottom-up economy from the vitality of small communities, neighborhood relationships, all at a human scale. In short, **Place replaced Space**.

Through a grassroots movement in NYC, she managed to stop Robert Moses from **clearing Greenwich Village** in 1961 for redevelopment and in 1968 prevent the construction of the **Lower Manhattan Expressway**, which would have destroyed local communities. By the end of the 1960s, the utopian visions of the Modern Era gave way to the dystopian realities of a PostModern Era.



1:40

The **Vanna Venturi house** completed in 1964, became the poster child for this newfound architecture fumbling to find an identity. The physical manifestation of his written manifesto (Complexity & Contradiction), Robert Venturi illustrated the 4th parti of the PostModern Era – **billboard**, as the primary vehicle for achieving the 3rd parti complexity and contradiction.

A monumental front façade, applied to the house in the same manner as the non-structural broken arch – merely for effect, became the architectural battle cry. “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 ‘clear’, distorted rather than ‘straightforward’. ... I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. I include the non-sequitur and proclaim duality.”



The detailing and scale of the front façade were manipulated for maximum visual effect, punched window openings, sloped roofs and broken pediment, all designed in order to disrupt and contradict formal Modernist aesthetics.



1:45

In 1972, Venturi continued with the publication of **Learning from Las Vegas**, a case study of the Vegas strip as the prototypical American commercial development. He declared, “Billboards are almost right.” **Architecture at the scale of a highway.**

“When cross roads become a cloverleaf, one must turn right to turn left, contradictions. Driver has no time to ponder paradox, must rely on enormous signs in vast spaces, at high speeds.”



“Inclusion of the **everyday in the environment**, sacred & profane, these are what’s lacking in modern architecture.” “The architect should be concerned not with what ought to be, but what is & how to improve it.”



Is the sign the building (architecture) or the building a sign?

Terms were created to keep the Vegas typologies straight. A **duck** was a building used as symbol and a **decorated shed** was when ornament is applied independently of the building’s planned program. 1:50

[10 MINUTE BREAK]



2:00

In 1973, Venturi took his case studies to suburban America, with the publication of **Learning from Levittown**. Houses analyzed as the **Vegas billboards of suburbia**.



Gambrel roofs, board and battens siding, open loft interiors speak to a **rural revival**.



Materialistic manipulations & vapid subcommunication appeal to our deepest drives (a return to the farm), but send only superficial messages.



2:10

In 1978, Colin Rowe's publication **Collage City** claimed "Modern architecture professing to be scientific, displays naïve idealism. Let us be content to replicate things as they are, to observe the world unreconstructed by the arrogance of philosophers, but as the mass of humanity prefers it to be – useful, real, and densely familiar."

He goes on to state, "Disneyworld is nearer to what people want than what architects ever did."



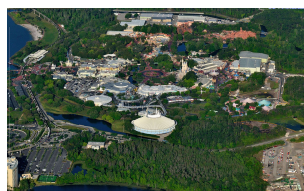
In fact, Disneyworld and the original Disneyland offer insight into the changes in America since the start of the PostModern Era.



2:15

When **Disneyland opened in 1955** it had the setting and **character of the Vegas strip**, restaurants and motels lined the street just outside the park wall. Located within the city limits, development was very much like **an urban renewal** of that time period.

Disneyland was created as a **spectacle**, scaled for the **pedestrian experience**. Amusement rides were faster and longer, Sleeping Beauty's castle a medieval fortification of the **ground**.

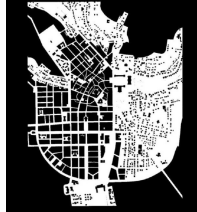


By contrast, when **Disneyworld opened in 1971**, Disneyland could have fit into just one of Disneyworld's parking lots. It was isolated from the city like a **suburban** community, with five lanes of highway leading to the entry. Made for the **masses**, rides were slower and shorter. Staged for the **pictorial view** at a distance, Cinderella's castle a gothic structure reached for the **sky**.



2:20

As the Disney case study reveals, the PostModern city has shifted, resulting from a struggle between **public and private**, **mass transit and the automobile**, the **unplanned and the planned**, the **State and the individual**, the **open Forum and the Acropolis**.



In Rowe's assessment of the PostModern city, he rejects the utopian visions of 'total planning' and 'total design', instead proposes a **city of fragments** - a collage city - looking both forward and backward, balanced between the planned and the unplanned, compromise between scientific reasoning and bricolage architecture.

Rowe's **collage** model for urban planning, establishes the 5th parti principle in the PostModern Era - objects and episodes that are **obtrusively imported**, retaining **overtones of their source**, yet gain a **wholly new impact** from their changed site and context.

2:25