INTIMATE ARCHITECTURE

The Parallels between Architecture and Fashion

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THESIS STATEMENT
THESIS STATEMENT

Architecture and fashion have similarities in objectives and goals. The parallels have been expressed in many ways. These would include the use of color, texture, and light to evoke the varying and changing moods. A similarity of scale with the human body is necessary in both art forms; the construction of architecture regarding positive spaces and voids, and the impact of speed and distance on peoples' perception reflect architectural expression as they correlate to the movement in fashion design. The impact of the commercial strip on the residential and the physical construction demonstrate that architecture, like fashion, are both responsive to the environment.
ARCHITECTURE AND FASHION
INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1982, Massachusetts Institute of Technology had an exhibit of contemporary clothing design titled "Intimate Architecture". It was not a costume show where spectators are meant to gasp at tiaras and brocades, nor was it a fashion show. "Intimate Architecture" was a show of clothing designs determined by dominant and symbolic forms. The show's concern was with architectural matters such as space and structure. There were eight major designers whose work was perceived to have the skills "of builders rather than decorators. The garment is conceived and assembled as a three-dimensional entity, not as a facade for frontal display. As in the paradigms of certain utopian architectural visions, such as those of the Russian Constructivists and the Bauhaus, the structural decisions (cuts, seams, darts, and pleats) compose the decorations".1 Some of those designs, by Giorgio Armani, Krizia, and Claude Montana, were chosen because of the shared orientation which "is their reliance on forms that are deliberately distinguished from the organic curves of human anatomy. This is accomplished not by mannered exaggeration, as with the bustle, wasp waist, or puffed sleeve, but by a geometrizing abstraction with its own justification and integrity."2

Intimate architecture, like architecture, is a visual art. They are both responsive to the people and their environment, society, and culture. A vast majority of the general public have a tendency to separate fashion from the visual arts, and especially from architecture. There are parallels between fashion and architecture, one in fact may lead to the development of the other. I believe the two can be interchangeable.

Domus magazine states that art is like fashion. The model of art is the model of fashion. It obeys the same culture of the model of the project conceived as an object in itself. The motivations and conditions of development of the object/project are the same. Art is consumed like fashion in terms of envy, curiosity, and appetite. In short, the primary motivations that condition what are conventionally called taste or comfort. Unconstraint and eclecticism are the reference
values of the object/project. It is no coincidence that Frank Gehry’s ex-studio-warehouse contains the provisional premises of the Los Angeles Contemporary Art Museum. Postmodern space lends itself to the general flexibility of all stage productions. The time has come when creative dreams of the artist and the fashion designer will be dreamed on the same wavelength.3

I believe art is like architecture and therefore architecture is like fashion. Art, fashion, and architecture resemble one another in the fact that official culture, the criticism and history of taste, start from the moment in which a creation is already finished and has produced a sign or an object.4

ARCHITECTURE LEADS TO FASHION

An example of architecture leading to the development of fashion is the works of Peter Eisenman, of Eisenman-Roberson Architects. He designed an apartment building, as shown below, in Berlin for the IBA’97 Housing Exhibition and was announced the winner. He also designed several artifacts, exploring some of the same aesthetic and philosophical issues as those in the building. The artifacts are fashionable, but also architectural; the building is architectural, but it is also very fashionable.

The apartment building, located at the corner of the block adjacent to Checkpoint Charlie, is part of an architectural design scheme for the total block. The scheme is based on a two grid system as shown below. One grid is parallel to the block. The other grid follows the standard north/south Mercator mapping. This system acknowledges the neighborhood as well as Berlin’s status as a city of the world, "sacrificed on the altar of modern history."5

The east/west Mercator grid line becomes the building’s corridor, and the north/south grid line splits the building in two. The building masses and the surface treatment further expand on these concepts. The large building blocks that follow the local grid holding the street line are faced in a regular, square
-gridded, glass wall system. Out of these masses, the system of walls and surfaces are expressed by color and by relief. This system of walls or layering of materials differentiates the meaning of the building and its functions. Eisenman, like all successful architects, utilizes a unifying element to connect his architecture to the social environment as well as the physical environment.

The L-shape of the Berlin apartments serves to neutralize the concept of scale and unify the artifacts shown on this page. All the artifacts employ the non-structural, unstable L-shapes, which, nested together, allow each shape to be seen as part of a smaller and a larger form. I believe the apartment building and the artifacts of Peter Eisenman are strong examples of the parallels between architecture and fashion because of Eisenman’s design, vocabulary and process as well as the effect of the product’s end on people and their environments. My design attempts to use the same concept. Fiber, color, and shape all become a key to tying the architecture and fashion together. The objective dimension of my project is nothing unless the subjective dimension is there. The simple use of concrete, wood, and metal beams fails to convey the total image if the fashion, feeling of appeal and taste, are lacking. This subjective, feeling, is how fashion extends and becomes a necessary, integrated force in architecture.

Glass Plate

Pendant

Ring

Earring
ARCHITECTURE AND FASHION ARE ONE

An example of architecture and fashion designed simultaneously is the work of the firm A2Z. (office shown above)

The firm A2Z consists of Sheila Klein, an artist, Ries Niemi, an industrial artist, and Norman Millar, an architect. They have collaborative arguments about art, architecture, and design. But their varied interests, abilities, and hands-on approach have enabled them to invent "building jewelry" and inlaid "rugs" of vintage vinyl tile, as seen below. A2Z has literally brought fashion and architecture together as one by combining the aesthetics and functions of both.

FASHION LEADS TO ARCHITECTURE

An example of fashion leading to architecture is Esprit. The president, Doug Tompkins, oversees Esprit's "aura", establishing the company's image through his own, which is a combination hippie/tycoon. "Esprit isn't just fashion it's a way of life", states co-owner Susan Tompkins. "We're not selling clothes, we're selling lifestyle products", adds Doug Tompkins. This is evident with the "real people" advertising blitz. I especially appreciate Esprit's honesty in product and their follow-through with honesty in advertisement. This use of common people rather than professional models does blend more perfectly with the everyday or day-to-day world and natural environment.
Esprit was primarily wholesale but changed three years ago to primarily retail. The motive, in addition to financial, was "to gain total aesthetic control over the environments our products are displayed in." The environment in which their merchandise is displayed is as important to the company's image and staff morale, as each color-coordinated accessory. I agree with this. The total environment, landscape, interior and exterior of the building, and parking are important to the success of the sale of the product.

Doug chose to enlist the assistance of some of the world's most creative architects and designers to build an extraordinary portfolio of retail spaces from the U.S.A. to West Germany. The list includes: Tadao Ando, Antonio Citterio, Joe D'Urso, Norman Foster, Shiro Kuramato, Ettore Sottsass, Harry Teague, and Shigeru Uchido.

Doug has made a difference to interior architecture. He appreciates modern design in all its manifestations from Memphis to high-tech. Critics have noted a fundamental disparity between the cultural environments Tompkins builds and the upper-moderate sportswear he sells. The clothing line is divided into five divisions - Esprit Sports, Esprit/Kids, shoes, accessories, and Esprit. The clothing appeals to a sensibility. Current offerings run to linoleum-print pants, plastic-laminate 'architecture earrings', and 'zolatone swirl shirts'.

Joseph D'Urso, a 42 year-old designer who prefers to work solo, was hired by Tompkins to design the Los Angeles Esprit Store.

The gutsy character of the bowling alley, which existed on the site, was the image D'Urso thought Esprit had so he decided to renovate the structure. D'Urso made a decision between old architecture and valuable architecture. We make the same choice with fashion everyday. He saw the bowling alley as valuable and worthy of renovation. He wrapped the building in a four inch blanket of concrete resulting in a monolithic structure. The original trusses are painted black while the new reinforced ones are red, giving attention to the heavens in addition to differentiating between the past and present. The front door entrance was left due to the psychological importance of the entry's high visibility from the road. This is a minor physical inconvenience, being 112 feet from the parking, but D'Urso believes it's critical to be able to instantly identify the entrance from a moving car. Today, the car is a vital part of the daily lives of people. For successful advertising a consumer must be able to "read" the building at approximately 35 mph.

The building is 15,000 square feet. It has a supermarket effect with carts and a line-up of streamlined checkout counters. This fast-paced society wants things quickly, easy, and convenient. To reinforce the sense of movement from front to back, and the change from sport clothes to formal wear, he reduces the scale from wide open to
salon-like. D'Urso does an excellent job of communicating the variety of images of the different lines of clothing. Dropped soffits, low beams, an intricate series of catwalks, and mezzanine-level lookouts, assist in creating the more human-scale rooms. D'Urso's mastery over the environments he creates is relentless; his control is total. I believe the architecture should be used to enhance and display each different line of clothing.
WALL STUDY
WALL

The architectural characteristics of the wall are similar to the fashion influences upon the human anatomy. Thus it was my intention to explore the following issues:

1) Changes in architectural expression as they correlate to the movement in fashion design.

2) The construction of the wall in architecture regarding positive spaces and voids when layers of materials are pulled apart.

3) The impact of speed and distance from the wall upon peoples' perceptions of change and movement.

As I looked at architecture through the example of the wall and paralleled it to fashion and the human anatomy, I found the wall and the human body have a great deal in common. They both have a skeletal or structural system. Both have functioning organs or mechanical systems. Both have a layer of skin and a facade. Both attempt to sell a product and thus are agents of advertisement. They are both affected by the context or environment in which they are located.

The layers of fashion, as in architecture, reflect a similarity in perception and follow common paths in time, expressing the changing functions as seen by the society in which they exist.

By placing man at the core of any environmental activity, starting from man's body and going on to cosmetics, clothes, room decor, and the city, one can discover an aesthetic synthesis, and the cultural anthropological, sociological, and semiological.
A designer who successfully established the tie between human anatomy and fashion was Chelo Sastre. His use of jewelry as an extension of the human body further convinced me that the wall could serve the purpose of using the product as an extension of the building. Chelo Sastre was the designer of the original jewels of Barcelona. His jewels are clear signs of communication or barrier between one's body and the outside environment.

Sastre’s nervous features, broken lines, ample volutes, luminous fragments, and space-wave creations seem to be anatomical accessories that are extensions of the aesthetic lines of a face, neck, or hand. For some, a second skin, or a way to exploit the aesthetically significant. For others, it is a sort of obstacle or defense between body and environment. So the line of Chelo’s jewels resembles a graphic language. The extremely thin lamiae, fragments of studded silver blend with the meaning of their message; a tension specially created to emphasize the border between the body and exterior, without necessarily embellishing or decorating. Many terminate with points or needles to underline the infinity of a line and its power to join other imaginary external lines.
The Skeleton - A Look at What's Within
Human Anatomy
COMMERCIALISM
COMMERCIALISM

Our society has developed into a highly competitive and commercially oriented one. The struggle to be successful calls for the use of techniques that are new, eye-catching, and appealing to the public. Every tool used must meet this criteria. The successful architect, like all successful designers, must accept this reality. Ann Johnson is a designer who reinforced my use of this concept for my project.

Ann Johnson is the owner of F.B. Fogg. Johnson and her team of eight artists design and manufacture about one hundred pairs of earrings a day for the ready-to-wear customer. Johnson is concerned with materials and the message the jewelry carries. She uses paper and creates the spirit and the element of surprise. The irony of using paper in a way it is not functionally known for is a unique and very eye-catching technique. People are attracted to this and seem to accept this style. "Many of my pieces have a humorous spirit; making something we discard become very precious; something so lightweight, appear so bold! This element of surprise creeps into my work repeatedly. That has been the most interesting part of being a papermaker for the past 25 years - the surfacing of unknown qualities," states Johnson.16

The paper is made by hand from lint and cotton. The fibers are beaten in a vat of water with colored dyes. The dyes are the same as those used in most fabrics today, therefore, it is frequently an Ann Johnson's catalog offers the opportunity to order pieces of jewelry from the choices above. Customers may specify color preference.
exact match. The colors are planned, experimental, and sometimes just instinctive. Johnson follows the major lines in New York, which recently included the 18th century designs out of Paris.17

She says the general public has difficulty visualizing the total design of an outfit. During public showings, Johnson displays her product on herself thus advertising and displaying the product in an honest setting which helps in the success of the jewelry’s sale. Not only do women buy the clothes she models with her jewelry, but shops are buying her sculptures, also made from paper, for display of her products.18

In summary, I strongly believe architecture and fashion can and often are one and the same. The development of architecture can be the result of the design process of fashion, and vice-versa. Intimate architecture, like architecture, is a visual art. It is responsive to people, environment, and society. Its primary motivations condition what is conventionally called taste or comfort. The official culture, the history and criticism of taste, start from the moment a creation is finished thus producing a new object; architecture and fashion become one.

Architecture and fashion have a relationship that parallels this social trend. Whether the function is seen as practical or more aesthetic, its form follows the perceived functions. Both architecture and fashion reflect a similarity in perception and follow common paths in time and express the function and changing functions as seen by the society in which they exist. There is a direct parallel to the handicraft detailing of an art such as dressmaking and the craftsmanship involved in architecture. This type of relationship has been shown and expressed in many ways.

Architecture should acknowledge the qualities of time and the constant environmental changes occurring naturally. Changes are continuously taking place, both social and physical, in all living organisms, such as in plants and animals. The level of recognizable change occurs at different intervals, expressed daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, and yearly. But change also exists in non-living elements, such as fashion, the fine arts, and technology. As this continuous change occurs in fashion, should it be expressed in architecture? Throughout history, building form and function has evolved over long periods of time. But what about hourly or daily change? Does architecture respond to our changing emotions, changing moods, or changing needs? Should architecture be responsive to these types of social and cultural changes?

Architecture can and must be responsive if it is to reflect the attitudes and needs of the society. It can respond through the imaginative and creative uses of artificial and natural lighting to reflect time passage and to evoke emotional settings; through varying color and texture themes to play on emo-
tional and intellectual fac-
tors; by varying physical and
visual barriers/forms to give
illusions and creative images;
by using new and even old
technological inventions to
give new capabilities or
create impressions of older
artistic creations. If ar-
chitecture is to be both
physically functional and
fashionably attractive, these
can and must be used by the
good architect.
SOLUTION
SOLUTION

I began to design by setting up a structural grid. Things, however, did not develop as I had hoped. The answer to my approach came from a short story by Henry James titled "the Real Thing". In this story, the artist attempts to pose a couple, who were genuine and real, as something they were not, an imitation. Everytime he photographs them they come out too tall or too short in proportion to the scale of the setting. At the same time his maid also started to pose. She dressed as a Russian princess, or an Italian woman and was successful in her role. She was nothing until the artist posed her. She was imitation portraying the real thing. Society preferred the photographs of the imitation or fake. This story was written in the late 1900's but the theme can be applied today. Society has turned to commercialization and thus, to imitate.

I wanted my design to evoke truth and honesty; honesty through expression, similar to Esprit's theory created by Doug Thompkins. I feel it accomplished this by a true expression of the layers and components - truth in materials and truth in advertising. The site and building and the product are working together, not competing. The site is used in conjunction with the building to display the product.

SITE

The site, located on the corner of Ethel and Tillotson, has been divided into two parts. This division makes for a strong axis through the site. The axis becomes the pedestrian circulation core starting from the corner, connecting the public parking with the private parking. Thus a visual axis is created through the site. One part relates to the residential surrounding while the other relates to the commercial strip. The site reflects each division. The residential side is more natural, with green grass, trees, and soft slopes. The commercial is hard and the landscape is formed or sculpted. There are two walls on the site. The wall on the commercial side is a built wall which serves as a screen to shield out the back of the Usco and Ross building. The wall also serves as a billboard for advertisement. Lacquered Clothes which are available in the shops are hung from the wall for display. A green wall allows only the display to break through to the residents. The shops are placed perpendicular off the axis, creating voids between them and the wall. Exterior mannequin displays for shoppers inside the stores give honesty to the product by displaying it in the true environment rather than an artificial environment.
CIRCULATION

The automobile circulation cuts through the site for easy access to both streets, connecting the commercial strip with the residential. The parking becomes a meeting place of the hard (commercial) and the soft (residential). This is expressed in the layers of parking wall facing Tillotson. The parking walls are a combination of the two larger walls (built and green). The parking spaces are created by the angle of placement of the wall.

The second parking area is also on axis to the second entry. There are stepping tiles with grass growing through them, alternating with squares of lawn. These, like the layered walls, create the parking spaces. The stepping tiles continue through the shopping plaza to the corner of Tillotson and Ethel, emphasizing the axis and the connection of the hard and soft.

The drive cuts through the green wall. Sculptured mannequin displays can be viewed by the passers-by. A "drive-in" theme was controversial. Some believe it an invasion of entering the "body". Others support the concept, considering its sexual connotations as stimulating. I felt this drive was successful in the connection of landscape, building, product, and consumer. The drive circling around the building to the secondary parking puts the placement of the building on display.
Parking Schematic Designs
Drive-in Schematic Designs
BUILDING

Like the site and the parking, the shops are divided in two parts, one relating to the commercial strip, the other to residential. As the built wall displays laminated products to add color to the highly textured surface, thus emphasizing the fibers of the products, the same happens to the building. The building itself has no color, but is rich in texture and thus enhances the fibers and construction of the product. The product says a lot for the architecture and site just as a clothed person is saying more than a naked person. A clothed person is able to express themselves from within. The product is giving expression to the architecture and landscape. The product brings color to the building and site. The building does not structurally or physically change, but it does change with the product, by using the product. Each shop is unique and offers a variety of experiences as you pass through. Shops are different and you change based on them. They will be change according to seasons and style changes. Therefore, the building is timeless.

The shops facing Ethel use more natural materials such as wood, brick, and stone. The scale of these shops is compatible to the neighborhood. The shops relating to the commercial strip are more radical in appearance, using materials such as large pieces of metal and highly glossed marble. The shops follow the stepping-down pattern of the built wall to Tilotson. As bracelet jewelry is an extension of the arm, the shops and site are extended to Tilotson, thus slowing traffic and drawing attention to the shops.

There are sculptured mannequin displays located on the roof of the tallest shop, the roof of the middle shop and the ground plane in front of the first shop. The middle shop is designed for fashion shows, therefore, the mannequins displayed are live. The displays are used as advertisement for Tilotson Avenue. They are a take-off on Kirk Newman’s theme of the illusion of a “party going on”. Newman is a sculptor whose works create the appearance of people alive and active thus drawing attention to the overall scene and environment. The use of the mannequins would be warmer and would reflect more truly the nature of the activities in the shops.
CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

Architecture and fashion can and often are one and the same. Architectural development can be the result of the design process of fashion; fashion can result from architectural design. They are responsive to the environment and society. The official culture of a society comes to see architecture and fashion as one as they develop a relationship that parallels a common function. Both architecture and fashion reflect a similarity in perception and follow common paths. Art detailing and architectural craftsmanship elicit the same emotional response. Qualities of time, constantly changing environments, and perceptual variations occur in both at different intervals, whether daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly. Both art forms must work together to present the complete picture. One must not forget that fashion and architecture are both visible and emotionally abstract.

"Clothes are inevitable. They are nothing less than the furniture of the mind made visible." (James Laver, Style in Costume)
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 23.


4 "Fashion as Art." Domus (March, 1985), p. 44.


6 Ibid., p. 85.

7 Ibid., p. 90.


9 "Clothes makes the Man." Architectural Record (Mid-September, 1987), p. 120.

10 Ibid., p. 121.


13 Command., p. 111.


17 Ann Johnson. Personal interview (October 27, 1987).

18 Ibid.
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