

THE NOTION OF MULTIVALENCE BY CHARLES JENCKS AND KISHO KUROKAWA – COMPARISON THROUGH METHODS OF ‘ABSTRACT REPRESENTATION’ AND ‘ABSTRACT SYMBOLISM’

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ABSTRACT

One of the solutions presented in response to the various limitations of the Modernist dogma was the notion of ‘Multivalence’. In the 1960’s various methods related to this were debated and suggested with the underlying motives for architecture to counter Modernist’s puritanism and express the plurality and diversity of society. This paper aims to compare different themes discussed on this topic by two of its representative protagonists, Charles Jencks in the West and Kisho Kurokawa in the Far-East. Through a review in particular of their respective methods of ‘Abstract Representation’ and ‘Abstract Symbolism’, it will be argued that despite sharing similar conclusions, both their approach simultaneously illustrate contrasting world views.

Keywords: Multivalence, Abstract Representation, Abstract Symbolism, Post-modern architecture, Charles Jencks, Kisho Kurokawa

INTRODUCTION

Both Charles Jencks and Kisho Kurokawa have been forceful polemicists and creative artists who have embraced their works in wide perspectives. Driven by theory, the written words and buildings, they both met at a Team X gathering in 1966, and became good friends who would work together at numerous occasions ever since (Jencks, 2007). Consequently we read mutual traces in their respective approach, and more specifically the notion of *Multivalence* that came to be central to the architectural debate alongside the growing rejection of Modernism in the 60’s (Kelly, 1998).

It will be argued that Jencks’ own perspective articulates around his obsessions to apply the values of semiotic and rhetoric to architecture. It will also be sustained that his quest for architectural meaning was central to his analysis and that the notion of *Multivalence* was instrumental to his attempt of proposing an alternative to the Modern Movement (Guermazi, 2014). On the other hand it will be suggested that Kurokawa’s own interpretation of this similar notion appeared as an offspring of the Buddhist theories of co-existence and of impermanence, theories that inspired him since early childhood (Kurokawa, 1988).

As such this paper is built around a comparative review of Charles Jencks and Kisho Kurokawa’s writings and built works that are considered most representative of this topic.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are remarkable references concerning Jencks and Kurokawa and the most significant books are written by the architects themselves. Both have been prolific authors, Jencks through his numerous revised editions of his *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (7 editions), and Kurokawa through his personal philosophical quest leading to his *Philosophy of Symbiosis* (6 editions).

They have also collaborated on numerous titles, for example Jencks with write-ups and forewords in many of Kurokawa's own publications, while Kurokawa translated into Japanese three of Jencks' volumes; *Architecture 2000*, 1971, *Le Corbusier and the tragic view of architecture*, 1973, and *Modern movements in architecture*, 1973. He also made many references to Jencks core concepts of 'double coding', 'symbolism', or again 'cosmic metaphors', while Jencks referred to many of Kurokawa's designs to illustrate his argument; spreading from early Metabolist's experiments (the *Odakyu resting area*, 1969 or the *Nakagin Tower*, 1972) throughout to later works (the *Wacoal building*, 1984 or the *Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art*, 1988).

The main sources utilized in the preparation of this paper comprise of Jencks' *The New Paradigm in Architecture*, 2002, a cover of AD on *Abstract Representation*, 1983, *Towards a Symbolic Architecture: The Thematic house*, 1985; and of Kurokawa's *Intercultural Architecture*, 1991, and a cover of *Abstract Symbolism* in l'Arcaedizioni, 1996.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this purpose, firstly the genesis of the notion of *Multivalence* is being addressed through an analysis of the limitations of Modernism as exposed by both architects and this through an extensive literature review of their theoretical writings. Secondly their own perspectives are revisited and compared in cross reference through in particular the methods of '*Abstract Symbolism*' and '*Abstract Representation*'. Both similarities and differences are explored. Thirdly various themes are analyzed in their built works with a review in particular of Jencks's *Thematic House* (London, 1978-1985) and Kurokawa's *Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art* (Hiroshima, 1986-1989). In each set the methods utilized for the application of the notion of *Multivalence* are classified and analyzed in cross reference with the themes previously extracted from their theoretical writings. Thus the methodology at a global scale is of a comparative analysis from theory to practice.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through the crucible of modernism going to the other side

(i) *The fall of Modernism*

According to Jencks (1983) the backbone of Modern architecture turned out to be the philosophy of rationalism, the very same ethos that paved the way for industrial and economic expansions of the Western society (Kurokawa, 1988). Jencks argued further that in such tradition Modern

architects assumed simultaneously the ideology to bring social progress through industrialization (2002). They revered its means of production, the machine aesthetic, and in LeCorbusier's path re-interpreted the house as a 'machine for living'.

But while the Modernists bustled at providing an accurate image of Modernity through the expression of industrial prowess, they at the same time slipped from it in an attempt to offer criticism of its own conditions in the hope for further improvements (Jencks, 2002). And even though the social agenda remained an essential goal for the Modernists, they eventually slowly sunk into purism and exclusivism in their constant search for autonomy. Such tendencies led to isolating and competitive mentalities alongside an overall puritan ideology (Kurokawa, 1988), and the resulting architecture somehow failed to connect and communicate with its audience (Mallgrave, 2012).

Consequently the faith in the Modernist way of thinking became harder to follow by some (Jencks, 1983) and resulted in various sub-movements that emerged from the sixties onward reflecting such a growing criticism.

(ii) *Paradigm shift and the need to express the spirit of the time*

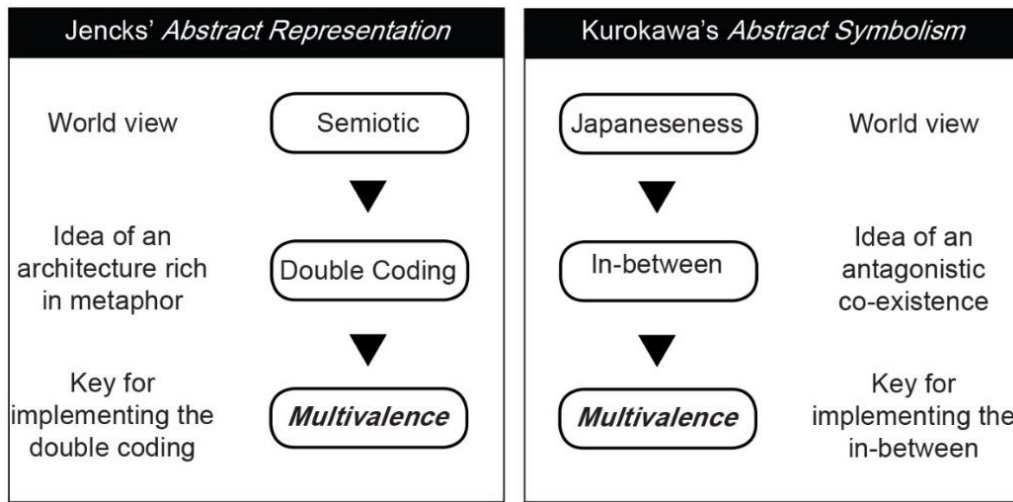
Society also changed profoundly in the 1960's (Kurokawa, 1991). These were a time of uncertainties revealing serious disquiet and confusions over religious, spiritual and public values (Jencks, 2002). These conditions brought to the main debates a loss of predilection for order, unity, the state and the monumental (Jencks, 2002). This phenomenon was also concurrent with a growth of individualism that started to appear into various movements in politics, philosophy, art, and social activism.

Strong from these observations, both Jencks and Kurokawa reached to the conclusions that there was a need to re-identify a 'center of gravity' inherent to the contemporary world. According to Kurokawa architecture finds true expression only through a search of the very foundation of the spirit of the time in which it is created (Kurokawa, 1996). Jencks too believed that no architects can produce buildings which are valid unless they are sensitive to the prevailing conditions and experiences of the spirit of the time (Jencks, 1987). *'And what else could one do? Everybody has to; simply by being alive'* (Jencks, 2013). In sum, the notion of *Multivalence* as advanced by both Jencks and Kurokawa need to be understood in such a context, in the attempt to develop a methodology to restore a certain sense of order and unity amidst the complexities and diversities of contemporary life (Castellano, 1996).

Multivalence in Jencks and Kurokawa's theories

According to the Merriam-Webster the notion of *Multivalence* is defined by the quality or state of having many values, meanings or appeals. Through their own prism both Jencks and Kurokawa came to conclude that *Multivalence* best embraced the core ideas of pluralism and diversity so that to mirror the societal and cultural shift that took place at that time. This notion of *Multivalence* later on further developed into the methods of '*Abstract Representation*' for Jencks and '*Abstract Symbolism*' for Kurokawa. We will review in this section their respective views.

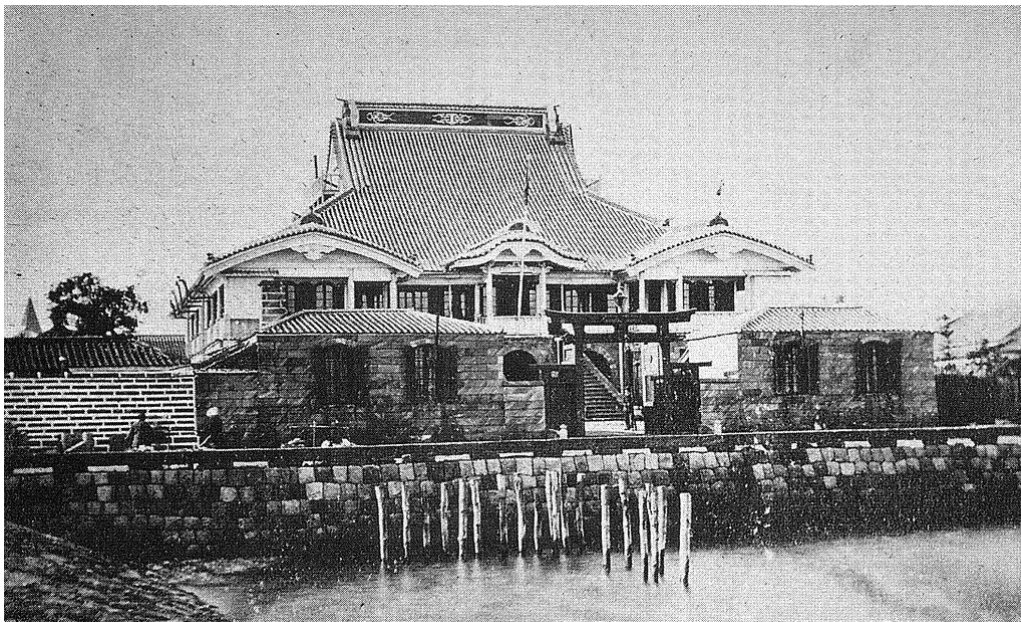
Figure 1: General flows of the theories



(i) *Kurokawa's method of 'Abstract Symbolism'*

Kurokawa belonged to a generation of architects whose point of origin was the defeat and destruction of Japan during World War II. For this reason his generation was sometimes called the 'Charred Ruins School'. In the hearts of all its members were traumatic images of events that took place when they were in their formative childhood illustrated at its worst by the sudden and tragic destructions of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Jencks, 1977).

Figure 2: French naval hospital Yokohama, 1865



When studying architecture at the University of Kyoto (1953-1956), Kurokawa subsequently nurtured a passion for the ancient buildings of Japan (Kurokawa, 2006a). He found in particular the late Edo buildings much more interesting than the later more celebrated 'pure' copies of Western architecture (fig.2). According to him the majority of these buildings were being designed and built by master carpenters who ardently incorporated western details but lacked the skills necessary to copy them exactly. Kurokawa claimed that doing so these builders produced an arresting eclectic combination of heterogeneous cultures (1988). Such technique was to become later a fundamental of Kurokawa's methodology.

Furthermore, Jencks analyzed Japan as a philosophy of 'both-and' rather than 'either-or', a practice of mix-and-match rather than a creation from scratch, and an ethic of inclusion rather than one of exclusion (Jencks, 1976). In this line of thoughts, Kurokawa translated the essence of Japanese culture into his concept of 'antagonistic co-existence', one of his favorite phrases during the 70's (Jencks, 1977). The main characteristic of this approach was that it did not mean the synthesis of antinomic thoughts, but on the contrary did allow for such antinomic thoughts to exist side by side. This particularity of Kurokawa's methodology eventually aimed towards the creation of a mood of 'in-between', an aesthetic he claimed to be most representative of Japanese traditions (Kurokawa, 1988).

While Kurokawa envisioned that the purpose of his generation was to challenge Modern architecture (Kurokawa, 1989) with new architectural styles needed to respond to new life styles, new social demands, new functions and to the emergence of new cultural features in an attempt to express the spirit of the time (Kurokawa, 1995), he simultaneously claimed for his works to also express Japanese culture in an attempt to express the spirit of place. Thus he focused his career through on two main objectives; to eliminate the dominance of the West through an expression of Japaneseness, and to transcend Modernism that had by then proved unsuitable to fulfil people's demands (Kurokawa, 1998).

Furthermore when Kurokawa coined the phrase '*Abstract Symbolism*' in the early 80's, he strongly believed that those two antinomic terms, abstraction and symbolism, when juxtaposed would present a path to accomplish such goals (Kurokawa, 1996). '*Abstract*' in his term meant without symbols. '*Symbol*' by contrast meant something that was without abstraction. According to him the two formed a binary opposition he purposely placed side by side (Kurokawa, 1996). In fact Kurokawa's *Abstract Symbolism* might have been precisely this; a theory that permitted the juxtaposition of aspects usually taken as mutually exclusive such as:

- the local and the global,
- the past and the present,
- the dull and the intense,
- geometric regularities and the irregularities of nature,
- the rational and the irrational,
- the parts and the whole,
- the traditions and latest technologies,
- delicacy and boldness,
- order and disorder,
- ect ...

Kurokawa after all attempted to posit this method in opposition to Western dualism, resulting into architectural hybrids that were very ambiguous, in the positive way Robert Venturi was employing the term (Jencks, 2013). This method of juxtaposition of opposites ultimately allowed also its audience for a plurality of interpretations (Kurokawa, 1996).

In sum Kurokawa's method of 'Abstract Symbolism' appears to be a re-interpretation of the fundamentals of Japanese culture aiming to the creation of new type of environments (Kurokawa, 1996), *Multivalent* environments, he thought would be more suited to the plurality and diversity of contemporary society (Kurokawa, 1996).

(ii) *Jencks' method of 'Abstract Representation'*

Charles Jencks has been described as one of the most well-known popularizing chroniclers and spokesman for Post-modern architecture (Guermazi, 2014). The central importance of Jencks in the construction of the Post-modern discourse in architecture is, at least in part, related to his educational background. Prior to receive a Master of Arts degree in architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design (1965), he has received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature at Harvard University (1961). Thus Jencks brought to architectural practice the love of the possibilities inherent to literary devices (Guermazi, 2014).

In his first publications *Meaning in Architecture*, 1966 and *Rhetoric and Architecture*, 1972, Jencks expressed a serious interest in rhetoric (Guermazi, 2014). Thus Jencks belonged to a group of architects who believed that semiotic presented serious potentials both for the critics and for the designers of architecture. Numerous efforts climaxed in this line of thoughts in the 1970's with the intention to channel meanings of architectural forms into a more rigorous model according to Mallgrave (2012). At the same time semiotic in many ways was the perfect tool to criticize modernism for its wilful sparseness of symbolic meanings.

According to Jencks (1985), the significance of rhetoric and semiotic to architecture was the complexity it could bring to the discipline. Consequently, when defining his new movement in his next publication *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, 1977, he started first by posing Postmodernism as a 'language'; and to make such analogy more complete, he then expressed the fact that the architectural language, like the spoken one, is to make use of known units of meanings. He would call these units architectural "words": doors, windows, columns, partitions, cantilevers, and so forth, and by extension he said, the combination of these words become phrases, sentences and, finally whole novels (Jencks, 2002).

This line of reasoning was further characterized by his interest to the subtle and often veiled means by which authors communicate to their readers. Consequently his preference was for an architecture rich in metaphors (the more the metaphors the more the drama) and embracing rather than exclusive (the more the metaphors are suggestive, the greater the mystery) (Guermazi, 2014). According to him, as every students of Shakespeare knows, a mixed metaphor is strong, but a suggested and mixed one is powerful (Jencks, 2002). In this citation two fundamentals of his main thesis for post-modern architecture can be extracted:

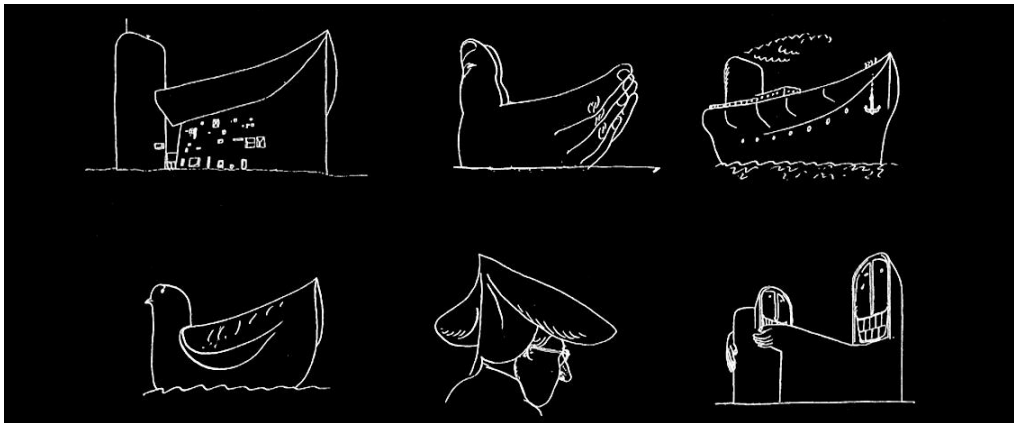
- the need for hybrids,
- the need for connotation.

Furthermore architecture of all arts, must be multi-layered so that to allow different paths to be found through multitudes of meanings according to him. Overall Jencks preferred an

architecture that communicates at various levels and doing so, for architecture to encourage dynamic readings so to allow for an abundance of interpretations (Guermazi, 2014). With such mindset, he crystalized his method of *Abstract Representation* that combines a series of antithesis that makes it particularly powerful he said. From abstraction it gains the virtues to keep references general and abstract, and so to suggest various meanings to appeal to a wider audience. And from representation, it gains simultaneously the virtues of history, of place and of cultural expression using recognizable images while portraying appropriate social and spiritual contents through mimesis (Jencks, 1983).

Ultimately, *Abstract Representation* defines the main principles of Jencks' *Multivalent* architecture and by extension of good Post-modern architecture. He claimed that the type of buildings produced with such a method suggests many things, heightens perception, and allows different taste cultures to read various meanings. Overall one defense for *Multivalent* architecture with its multiplicity of meanings was its interest to the beholder and so that to speak to people at multiple levels simultaneously (Jencks, 1983). According to Jencks (2002), this avenue of exploration had been opened up by the Notre Dame du Haut Chapel in Ronchamp, 1957, where representational themes were abstracted and stylized to the point that their denotations were barely recognizable. And Ronchamp he said, had become the first open-ended architecture of the new era (fig.3). Lastly he argued that this approach re-opened the possibility for architecture to mediate between the present and the eternal, the popular and the esoteric and to reunite the everyday with the cosmic (Jencks, 1985), a series of double codes that underlay all of Jencks' theories.

Figure 3: Jencks multiple interpretations of the Notre Dame du Haut Chapel in Ronchamp, LeCorbusier, 1955

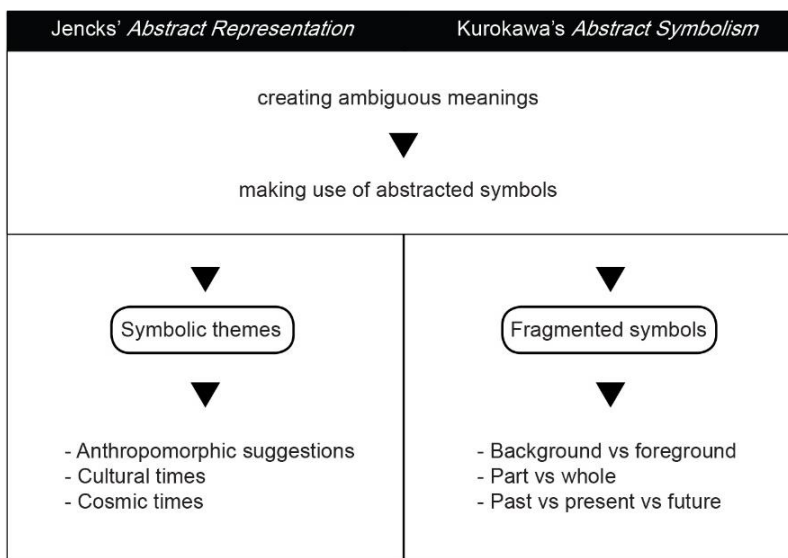


Multivalence as built

The following section focuses on a review of the above theories of *Abstract Representation* and *Abstract Symbolism* through both architects' built works; the *Thematic House*, 1979-1985, for Jencks; and the *Hiroshima City Museum Of Contemporary Art*, 1986 – 1989, for Kurokawa. Both projects are central to their built paradigm. Kurokawa's *Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art* was praised by Jencks an exemplary Post-modern essay (1991); and what more than his own house could best illustrate the theories of Charles Jencks. It is also worth noting that these two

projects were realized at the same period and correspond to a time when both architects had matured their respective theories.

Figure 4: General flows of the theories translating to practice

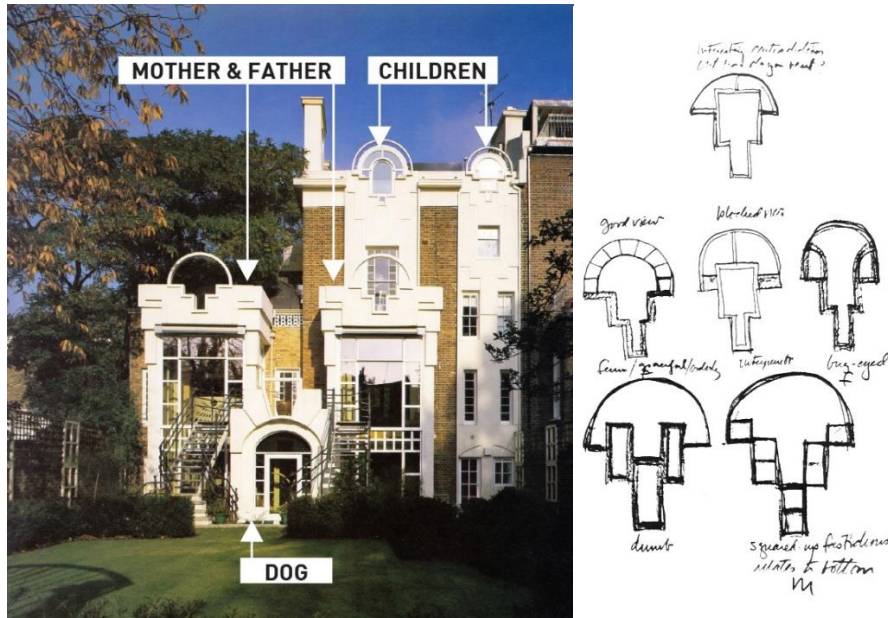


(i) *'Abstract Representation': The Thematic House*

The *Thematic House* was a total reworking of a 1840's Victorian townhouse located in London's Holland Park Charles Jencks designed for his family (Jencks, 1985). Together with his wife, they have both designed many of the alterations themselves with the help of architects Terry Farrell and Michael Graves.

Because of its specific context, the existing grammar of the surrounding buildings had to be respected hence they made only small variations for the house's street facade. But circling around the house, from public street front to semi-public side and to the more private garden's side, the grammar becomes more and more expressive and individual. For instance, the top floor dormer windows at the front, which resemble those of the neighboring houses, are at the back multiplied to express one of the important themes of the house – anthropomorphic suggestions. According to Jencks (1985) five figures crowned by face motifs can be identified at the garden elevation giving focus to the different parts of the building (fig. 5). For instance the two conservatories, the mother and the father - if they are to be read literally - face the lawn with a dog between them. And from there, when the eye shifts upwards and to the right, one finds the two dormer windows where stands the two children. Furthermore the treatment of the windows illustrates in particular Jencks method of *Abstract Representation*. When detailing them, he stylized the salient parts of the images of a face (for example the eyes, nose and mouth), and generalized them into geometric forms to allow for the motifs to be suggestive and for the possibility of endless variations (Jencks, 1985).

Figure 5: Jencks' Abstract Representation methodology is evident in the windows treatments at the garden's elevation, Thematic House, 1985

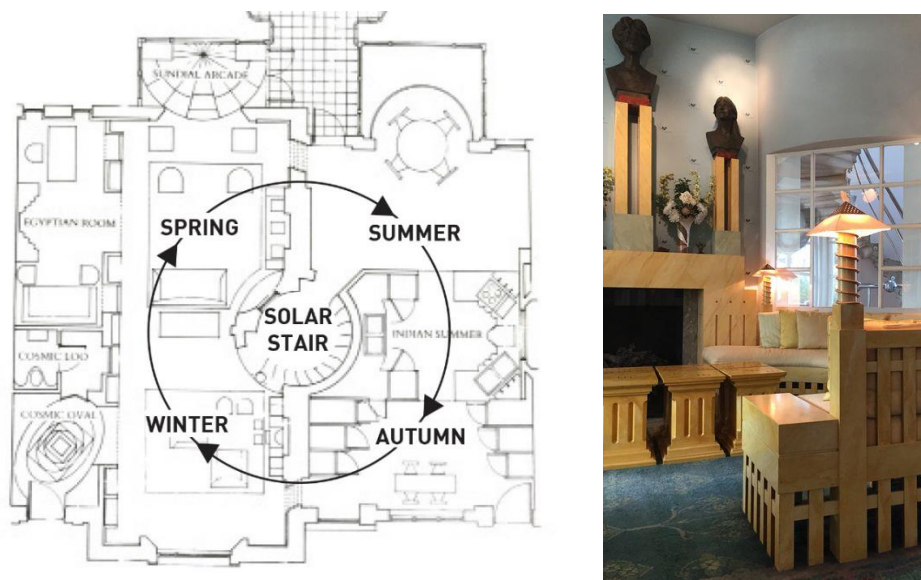


His usage of *Abstract Representation* continues further to the various subsequent themes utilized for the restructuring of all the interiors of the house (Alston, 2018). In addition to the anthropomorphism utilized externally, Jencks used two perennial ideas for organizing and composing the interiors - the ideas of cultural times (including various references to Egypt, the Far East and India as well as to the Western civilization) and of cosmic times (the seasons, the passage of the sun, of the moon and of the galaxies) (Jencks, 1985).

Figure 6: The 'solar' stair designed on the theme of cosmic times, Thematic House, 1985



Figure 7: Space planning at ground floor on the theme of 'cosmic times', Thematic House, 1985



The 'solar' stair for example is expressing the resonance of this method at its best (fig. 6). The stairway is very much the center of any house both in function and as a sign, and one keeps coming back to it hence the significance of the solar metaphor. Jencks' spiraled stair is made of fifty-two steps (for the weeks in the year), each with seven divisions (for the days in the week) and with decorative discs located at the side of each steps to portray the 12 months of the year. A mosaic at the ground floor landing (a representation of a black hole) continues the spiral motion of the handrails, again a literal symbol of time and of motion through time. This symbolism is also reinforced by the pulsations created by the undulating treads while looking up (Jencks, 1985). The same theme extends to the space planning at ground floor that further add on to this metaphor with the four rooms - winter, spring, summer and autumn - arranged around the 'solar' stair (fig.7). One enters the house at the beginning of the year - in January as it were - and, by walking through the rooms, *one* can complete a full cycle of the four seasons.

Jencks overall wanted a building that would express deep layers of meanings in its layout and its details, and everything outside and in contains symbolic meanings (Alston, 2018). This system appears at all levels of finishes from space arrangement, furniture, paintings, sculptures, and even the wall colors, that all further emphasize a combination of functionality and representation that can be found at all rooms (Jencks, 1985). According to him, his house is the apogee of *Multivalent* architecture as the eye can barely rest from spotting and seeking out a multitude of meanings that are spread throughout (Jencks, 2011). Furthermore he says, these are all abstracted to the point one cannot really perceive them immediately.

'I have tried to keep most of the symbols abstract or relatively hidden since, unlike painting or literature, architecture cannot afford to tell a story the whole time.'

Jencks' house is unique in the extent of this method (Jencks, 1985) and has now been recognized with the designation of a Grade I listed status. It was labeled 'A *built manifesto for postmodern architecture*' according to the governing board of the historic buildings of England (Historic England, 2018). According to Farrell (2018) the listing will see the Thematic House indefinitely protected as one of the most significant examples of Postmodernism in the UK (Farrell, 2018).

(ii) '*Abstract Symbolism*': *Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art*

According to Kenneth Frampton (1995) Postmodernism started to dominate Kurokawa's production in the eighties in a whole series of major museums, each one being more emblematic than the next. Kurokawa's *Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art*, 1989 is no exception and was considered by Jencks an exemplary Post-modern essay.

According to him, Kurokawa's method of *Abstract Symbolism* reached its most mature expression in this particular design (Jencks, 1991). It was the first public building in Japan to declare contemporaneity its specialty and this gave it an extra poignancy for the contemporary was virtually all the Hiroshima population had by way of architecture. They had rebuilt their city and lived on the ultimate tabula rasa in consequence of its 1945 nuclear bombing (Jencks, 1989). So how one treats or acknowledges the unwelcome truth of such rationalized mass-killings becomes an essential question for architects as for anyone else. Overstatements or melodrama would have been as obscene as denial, and Jencks (1989) credits Kurokawa to have steered a subtle course between explicit and implicit representations of such a peculiar theme.

Jencks made a lengthy description of this Kurokawa design in his last edition of *The Language of Postmodern Architecture (New Paradigm in Architecture, 2002)*. In his personal analytical method, he dissected it into four multi-layered symbolic themes as follows: 1) digging into the past and the unconscious, 2) symbiosis of parts and wholes, 3) time continuum of past-present-future and 4) the non-existence of a center at the center (Jencks, 2002).

Figure 8: The building becomes in effect the roof of the site, Hiroshima Museum of Contemporary Art, 1989

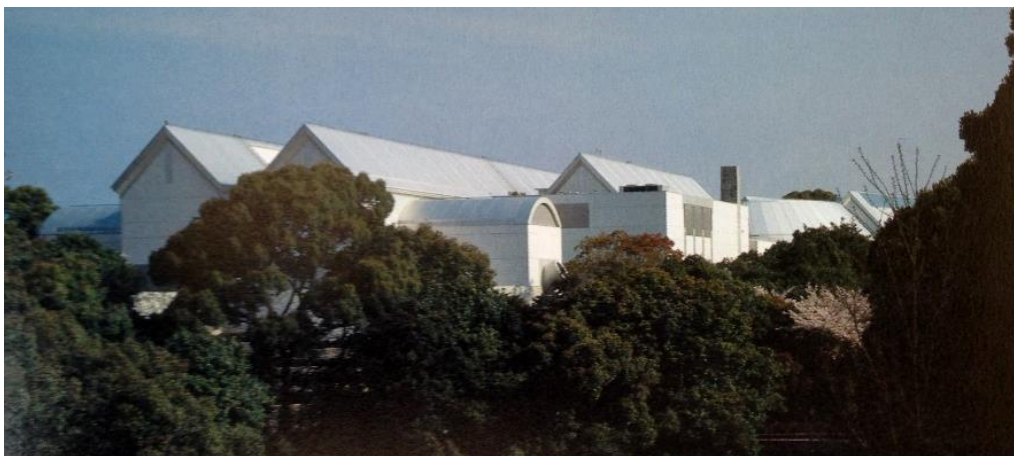
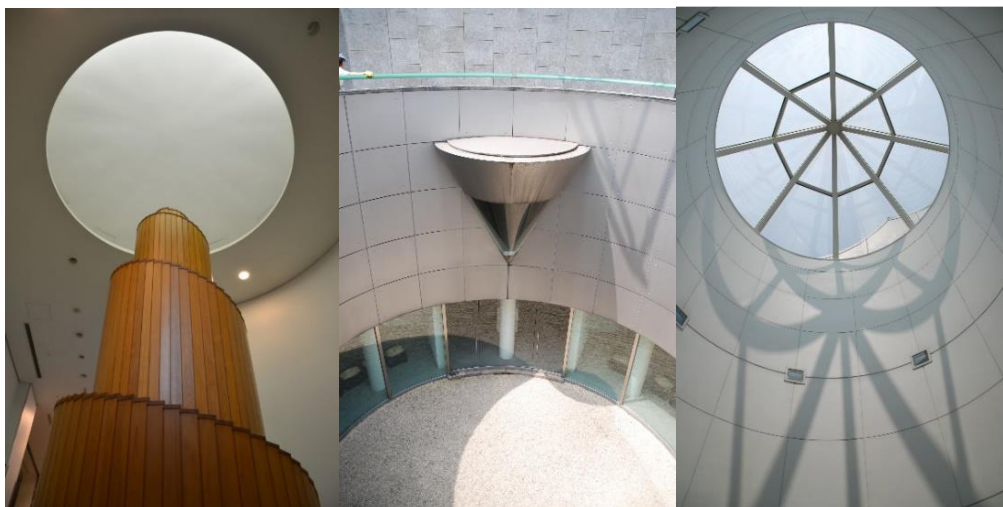


Figure 9: Staircase, sunken garden and skylights, various devices utilized to give further individuality to an otherwise white abstracted background, Hiroshima Museum of Contemporary Art, 1989

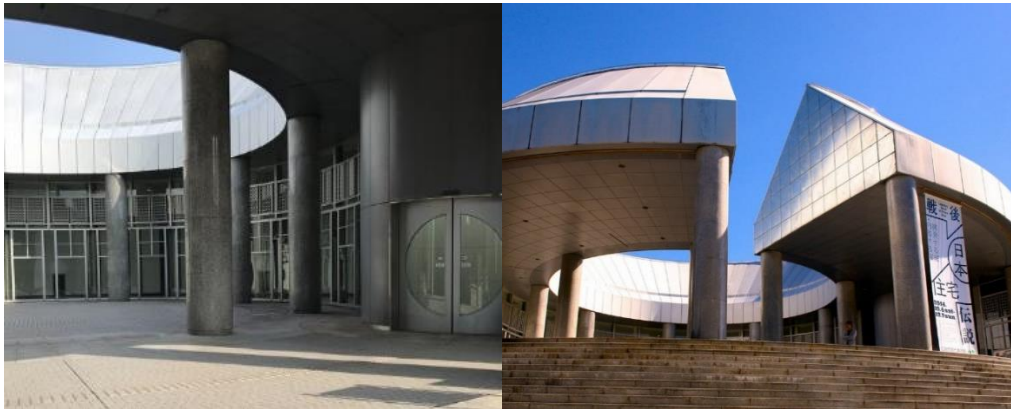


One's first impression of the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art is its modesty and ambiguous understatement. Only a couple of aluminum pitched roofs can be seen hovering above the tree-line because sixty percent of the museum is actually hidden away below ground level. The building which exceeds 220 meters in length becomes in effect the roof of the site (Kurokawa, 1982) (fig. 8). Such approach consequently led Kurokawa to an architecture of excavation, a rhetorical device Peter Eisenman or Emilio Ambasz also utilized in museums to further signify the notion of digging into the past and into the unconscious. According to Jencks, whether or not Kurokawa intended his excavations to signify these meanings is not confirmed, however they seem appropriate since the past is precisely what had been erased at Hiroshima (Jencks, 2002). Internally such method also necessitated various devices such as skylights, sunken gardens, stairways and light wells; all of which that also serves to further emphasize the otherwise white abstracted background of the galleries (fig. 9).

Subsequently, and because the roofs are dominant elements of this design Kurokawa addressed them with great care. Firstly the mute pitched outlines are proportioned the likes of traditional sixteenth-century storehouses, and after a while, as the same shape is used again and again — twelve times in total — it begins to play an iconic role, haunting the memory like an old tune that does not go away (Jencks, 2002). And all together the roofs do participate in the creation of an entity like that of a village that emphasize another of Kurokawa's main theme, the symbiosis of parts and whole (www.kisho.co.jp).

Furthermore, while these roofs gleam in the sunlight like the fuselage of a 747, these shapes recall simultaneously the ancestral forms of 16th century Edo store houses (1991). By clothing somewhat traditional shapes in a contemporary material, Kurokawa's carrying out his method of *Abstract Symbolism*, and according to Jencks (1991) it is precisely here that he achieves the efficacy of connotations. And doing so, he fulfils here one of the key goals of Postmodernism which has eluded so many other architects: to bring different periods of architecture together in a non-totalistic way (Jencks, 1991). Kurokawa's core concept of time continuum of past-present-future is in this museum successfully translated into built forms (Jencks, 2002).

Figure 10: Entrance rotunda suggesting the nonexistence of a center



According to Kurokawa, the most compelling of this method of symbolic overlaps is to be found at the entrance rotunda (fig. 10). This round arrival plaza he says ‘suggests the nonexistence of a center’. It has no decoration, no fountain nor any statues where one would expect it - at the center - and because its surrounding circular shape is sliced through on the arrival axis, the image of this particular part of the building is also one of incompleteness (www.kisho.co.jp). More over the rotunda recalls simultaneously many other contrary forms: again those Edo roofs now curved into a circle; a sense of community symbolized by the circular columns surrounding it, or again the flash of the bomb. This last image may have been unintended – as Kurokawa never mentioned this, but according to Jencks when one sees, on arrival, the gleaming knife-cut of aluminum slicing through the blue sky – a flash of light - and then turns around to discover that this cut is also oriented to where the bomb fell, the allusion has great force and is made stronger for being suggested, and not literally represented (Jencks, 1991). In sum one remains free to read this space in at least four ways – the non-existence of a center, a sign of community, a reference to the Edo roofs, and the allusion of the flash of the bomb – a space that is coherently truly multivalent (Jencks, 2002).

If Kurokawa’s museum is not perfect and does not attempt to create a sustained harmony, it is equal in quality to the canonical works of the Modernists and stands comparison with the best Postmodernists’ works (Jencks, 2002). Unlike Tange’s building, which Kurokawa criticizes for being alienating and one-dimensional, his own Hiroshima Museum blends on the contrary various meanings from different periods and different cultures (Jencks, 1991) but played against each other staccato-like to keep their identity and autonomy. The virtue of the Hiroshima Museum says Jencks (2002) is its subtle significations, and the ability to suggest things without naming them explicitly. In the end all the overtones are subdued and generalized to the point that one cannot quite identify any source. Rather there is an aura of associations which one can’t quite recall, like the name of a person one knows but has forgotten.

This Kurokawa’s design allows a multitude of interpretations open and renewable and is realized with a quietness that is rare in Modern and Post-modern architecture concludes Jencks (1989). The *Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art* was praised with the Gold Medal at "The Fifth World Biennale of Architecture", Sofia, 1989, and a first prize by the architectural institute of Japan in 1990 (www.kisho.co.jp).

Analysis of similarities and differences between Jencks and Kurokawa's notion of Multivalence

Through such review 4 main ideas for the notion of *Multivalence* are distinguished in Kurokawa's own theories and built works, namely:

- Aim : to transcend modernism and eliminate the dominance of the West
- Worldview : Japaneseness
- Key concept : In-between
- Methodology : Fragmented symbols (Juxtaposition of contrary forms)

In parallel Jencks argument revolves around 4 main themes as follows:

- Aim : To propose an alternative to the modern movement
- Worldview : Semiotic
- Key concept : Double coding
- Methodology : Symbolic themes (Unity in variety)

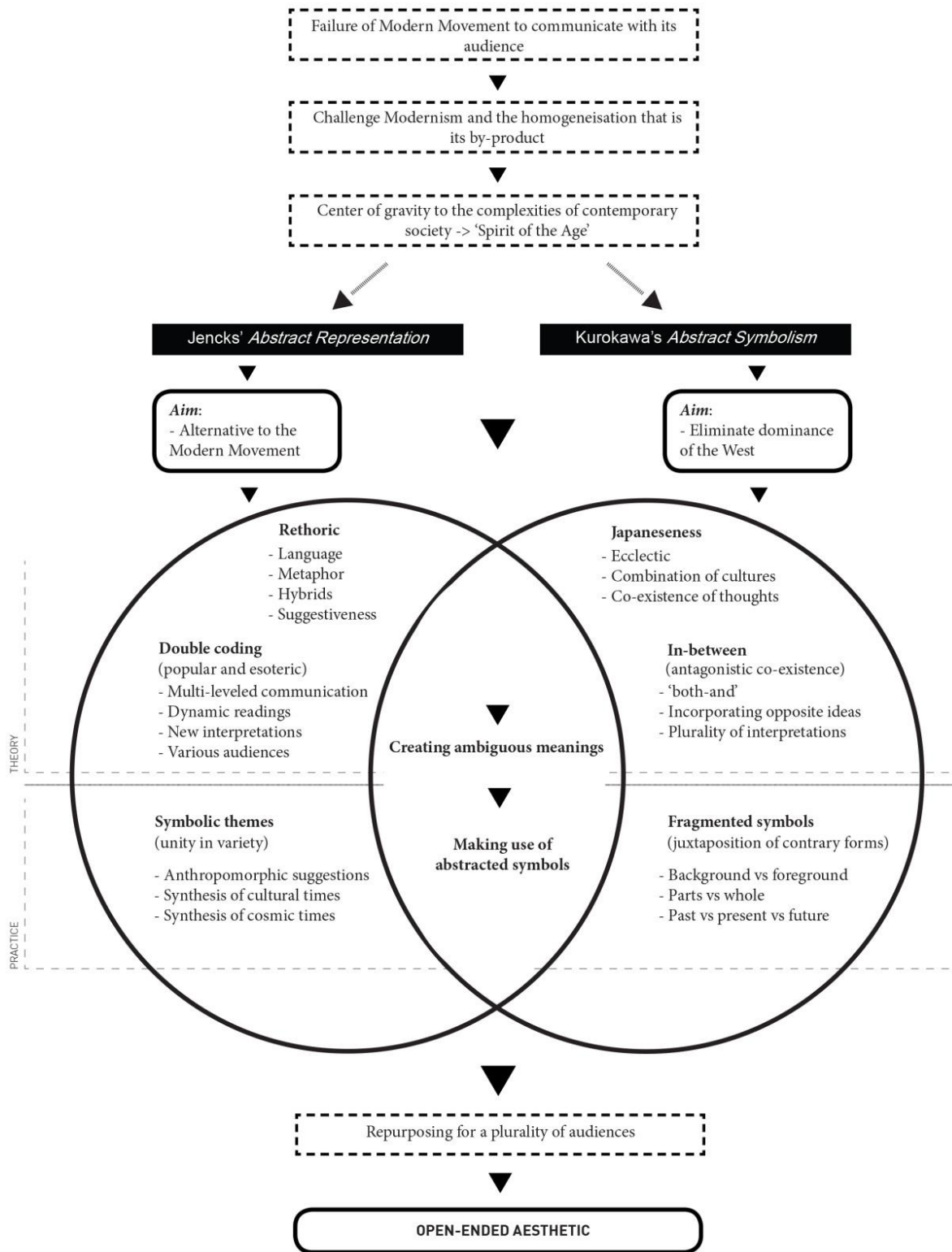
When their primary concerns appear distant they however converge on the main following topics:

- Aim : The creation of ambiguous meanings
- Methodology : Making use of abstracted symbols
- Conclusion : Repurposing for a plurality of audiences

According to the set of relationships identified below (Fig.11) various nuances can be traced however the main difference between the two stands in Jencks interest for unification while Kurokawa instead aspired to amplify the opposition of contrary forms. Jencks' plea for a *Multivalent* architecture after all originated with the necessity to render his analysis of complexity intelligible so that to be able to be shared and to become a comprehensive counter proposal to the Modern movement. According to Guermazi (2014) if the complexity he was advocating could certainly support his criticism of the rigidity of Modernism, however that could hardly be utilized as a central component to constitute a 'new' discourse for architecture. This dilemma could only be overcome by simplifying complexity he says, and it is exactly this contradiction between the 'complexity' of architecture and the need to simply and objectively analyze it that Jencks attempted to surpass through his notion of *Multivalence* as a sort of 'clear form of complexity'.

In practice Jencks translated this into the need for symbolic themes (e.g. the thematic house) so that to bind all various elements of a work and to bring them to a higher level of perception. It seemed critical for him that even though a multitude of symbols were to be expressed in one work, nevertheless those would need to be linked through an overall theme for the audience to reveal and so to increase the resonance of the work's meanings. It is exactly this notion of 'coherence' and unification that prevailed in all the definitions Jencks gave to Postmodernism in architecture. The notion of the whole still dominates Jencks works and theories.

Figure 11: Similarities and Differences of Abstract Symbolism and Abstract Representation



In contradistinction, through his own interpretations, Kurokawa did advocate the need for fragmented symbols to spread out randomly without specific ambitions for synthesis. Arguably Kurokawa's philosophy of symbiosis underlaid all his production from writings, art works, and architecture and could be mistaken as an equivalent response to a need of coherence. However, the essence of symbiosis exemplifies quite the contrary for symbiotic relationships do not attempt to resolve differences, but instead allows for oppositions and contradictions to remain. In Kurokawa's methodology all his symbols are to be laid out like bits of memories, while their arrangements are to be fragmented so to create tensions and ambiguities (Kurokawa, 1997). According to him, the conscious manipulation and collision of different elements from different cultures and different periods is a mean to evoke meaning through differences and disjunctions, and in this it is fundamentally different from Jencks notion of coherence (Kurokawa, 1989). Rather, the notion of *Multivalence* was for Kurokawa produced by first intellectually manipulating figurative motifs and patterns, modifying them through abstraction, fragmenting them, and placing them in abstract relationships (Kurokawa, 1996). By deconstructing and placing symbols in unexpected arrangements this allowed him to transform original meanings and so to create new meanings (Kurokawa, 1998). Following this method, the symbols that are quoted in his designs are situated as free elements, and each person who reads them is free to adopt his own method of interpretation.

There is no one accurate reading he said and the objective of this method was to permit the various signs to operate in free combination (Kurokawa, 1991). In sum the expression of the parts dominates Kurokawa's works and theories.

So if for Jencks *Multivalence* had been a notion to theoretically unify complexity that translated into the use of symbolic themes with the purpose to produce pleasing unity with variety (coherence), Kurokawa on the other hand utilized his method to evoke in architecture *Multivalent* meanings through random juxtapositions of antinomic elements in a celebration of disharmony and ambiguities.

CONCLUSION

In summary, it is suggested that the main difference between Jencks' and Kurokawa's interpretations of the notion of *Multivalence* results from their respective worldviews. The concepts of unity and harmony inherent to the dual nature of Western philosophies that place an emphasis on the whole was moreover being challenged by Kurokawa advocating an Eastern philosophical stance on the in-between putting equal values on parts and whole instead. However both their views and theories still correlate with their shared ambition for the creation of a new form of architecture more suited to their contemporaries. It is then understandable that their analysis combined with their life-long friendship translated into the similar conclusion to open-up architecture to a wider audience in response to the growing forces towards globalization and alongside the rejection of puritan's ideals that persisted amongst Modernists. With this in mind, both advocated the need to merge the abstraction of the moderns and the ornaments of the classics combining these two antinomic methodologies so that to bridge them in order to create a new paradigm. The most significant meaning of the notion of *Multivalence* might have been overall a method that permitted a reconciliation of the present with its immediate and distant pasts bringing architecture back on a path towards a more comprehensive evolutionary pattern.

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