

The aesthetic construction of multiple humanistic thoughts in historical buildings

Wenyu Qi

Lisbon School of Architecture, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0001-6465-5055

Yun Liu

Dalian Polytechnic University, Ganjingzi District, Dalian, Liaoning Province, China
ORCID: 0000-0002-9994-8031

Mário S. Ming Kong

CHAM, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0002-4236-2240

ABSTRACT: No matter which country, the aesthetic thought of architecture is regarded as an important criterion in the evaluation standard of historical architecture. These buildings carry the thoughts and emotions of architects from different eras, condensed into traces of beauty, and exist in contemporary society. This kind of aesthetic significance constantly gives new aesthetic significance through the appearance of the surface and the traces of the years. This kind of aesthetic thought has surpassed the content stipulated by the law of aesthetic form. It rises to the psychological level of aesthetic identification produced by human emotional identification. In the process of building renovation and protection practice, the most core value lies in this. This chapter uses actual cases to demonstrate the theme “aesthetic significance is the aesthetic recognition of humanistic value.”

Keywords: Historical architecture, Humanistic thought, Renewal, Aesthetic significance, Multiple constructions

Over time, the multiple humanistic values formed by historical buildings constitute the aesthetic thought of architecture; historical buildings explain a basic principle: aesthetic activities are human experience activities with the world of imagery as the object, and further elaborated the diachronic nature of architecture. The vitality embodied in architecture connects the past and the future simultaneously and connects the emotions between people in the past and the present; this is also the embodiment of the core humanistic value of architecture.

In the space-time collision between architecture and people of the past and present, the circulation of emotions and the identity of the psychological level also change with the changes of society and times. It contains the aesthetic transmission of architectural space, including historical value. This transmission must be based on the city’s historical context, the emotional identity of people, and the vitality of the building itself. This leads to the multiple humanistic meaning and aesthetic construction of architecture in the relationship between architecture and city, architecture and people, and people and environment.

Furthermore, the multiple humanistic meanings of this historical building contain extremely rich aesthetic thoughts and connotative characteristics.

1 THE AESTHETIC CONCEPT AND CONNOTATION IN HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

The German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762) first proposed the concept of aesthetics in 1750. It is a discipline that studies “the aesthetic relationship between man and the world,” that is, the object of aesthetic research is aesthetic activities. Aesthetic activity is a kind of human life experience activity that takes the image world as the object. It is a kind of spiritual and cultural activity of human beings. The human cultural environment influences it. Therefore, aesthetic activity is also social and historical.

When we say that a particular historical building has aesthetic value, it means that it can trigger people’s emotional activities on a psychological level. The “time value” of architecture is an aesthetic activity that

includes the history of architecture and the sense of spanning time and space that people feel through architecture. This kind of dialogue with time touched through architecture is the main point of the aesthetic significance discussed in this article, not to check it.

It is generally believed that aesthetics is an important way of human existence. Furthermore, it is related to moral judgment. Beauty has the essence of goodness since ancient times, and this has become the highest ideal and highest principle of the ancient European literary concept. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) believes that aesthetic pleasure should be a kind of “disinterested and free pleasure” (Kant, I. 1987), which has nothing to do with purpose. He explained that aesthetic judgment only links the representation that enables an object to be given to the subject and makes people notice the object’s character and the inner emotional connection that stipulates the power of representation. Judgment is called aesthetics because it is based not only on concepts but also on the inner abilities’ consistent emotions, as long as this consistent performance is felt. The aesthetics of architectural works depend to a large extent on the imagination space it gives people. Imaginary space means that it can accommodate more personality characteristics and carry richer moral memory so that different people can find a fit point that matches their own personality characteristics in the personality projection and arouse resonance. In other words, the moral memory that the public can appreciate and recognize must be related to “sincerity” and “good,” so eternal beauty must be the true and the good, and things that violate the true and the good cannot be beautiful.

The true and the good of historical buildings come from the moral memory it carries. The aesthetics of historical buildings objectively return to the tradition of classical aesthetics, and on this basis, they absorb and accommodate multiple aesthetics. The space left by history remains deep in people’s hearts. It is an emotional imprint, an emotional identity, and a preconceived aesthetic feeling. When this kind of aesthetics is reflected in the historical space and reflects the aesthetic value through the years, it forms a higher level of aesthetic significance. The construction process of architecture is actually a process of spiritual and energy transmission, transformed by the wisdom and labor of construction artisans. As time changes, the artisans who originally endowed the building with the soul are no longer there, but future generations can still perceive the beauty and spirit carried and witnessed by the building itself. This aesthetic feeling is detached from the architecture itself and across time and space. As the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858-1905) believed, “Kunstwollen” means “eternal meaning” (Elsner, J. 2006), which is the driving force and driving force behind the development and evolution of art and aesthetics.

As a practical art, architecture can give the relevant subject a profound artistic aesthetic feeling through the resonance of the architectural space and the background of the relevant subject. In architectural aesthetics, personal moral memory plays an important role. The moral memory carried by architecture originally came from a specific individual. However, through the accumulation of time, it will eventually become a collective moral memory. Thus, architecture has the characteristics of inheritance and can inherit moral memory. Human architectural aesthetic activities highly depend on their own architectural moral memory. However, from the perspective of moral memory theory, modern architecture has severely weakened the building’s function to carry human moral memory and even played a seriously destructive effect on the carrying function of the building’s moral memory.

Our architectural aesthetic activity can be modern or present, and its basis might be the past. The architectural aesthetic activities completed by the ancestors in the past will not be lost entirely over time, and some of them will definitely remain as architectural moral memories. When they are retained as moral memories, they are an important motivation for us to carry out architectural aesthetics in the present or now and an important criterion for us to complete architectural aesthetics in the present. One of the important reasons we can carry out architectural aesthetics like our ancestors is that our ancestors carried out architectural aesthetic activities in this way. Therefore, the moral memory left by the ancestors in the past architectural aesthetic process is an essential reason for us to have architectural aesthetic confidence in the present.

2 THE DIACHRONIC AND HUMANISTIC AESTHETIC VALUE OF HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

Zong Baihua (1897-1986), the first pioneer of Chinese architectural aesthetics, believes that the essence of Chinese traditional architectural beauty is practical and a manifestation of life, a kind of living architecture. In his understanding of the beauty of traditional Chinese architecture based on the theory of life aesthetics, he also mentioned that architecture is an artistic conception. Moreover, the construction of architectural, artistic conception is precisely the rhythm and expression of human life. Therefore, he believes that architecture is a kind of space-time art, and the space-time of architecture is filled with the breath of human life (Baihua, Z. 1981). In other words, Chinese residential buildings have always been an environment that integrates natural scenery and residential space, although buildings are artificial and inanimate. However, everything, whether wood or stone, has the expression of life and spirit from the aesthetic point of view.

In the United States, historical buildings are recognized by law as landmarks: “Urban landmarks usually refer to some urban buildings or places that have important historical, aesthetic, and cultural significance, and are recognized by authorized organizations because of their special important status” (Stimson, HL 1947). From the history of landmark protection in the United States, it can be seen that after “landmarks” were identified, urban architectural styles of different age levels in American cities have gradually formed. As a valuable historic building, the old Pennsylvania Railway Station was once the condensing point of urban life. At the same time, this century-old railway station has carried the emotional sustenance, joys, and sorrows of many families and even individuals. The gathering and parting between people, between people and buildings, between people and the environment, takes place here. The classical atmosphere makes this space full of indescribable beauty and is deeply imprinted in people’s hearts. This historical aesthetic value became why the people of New York started a conservation movement when the building was demolished.

The noumenon of historical relic space architecture appears today as a carrier of human emotional imprints, and it has two meanings. First, people produce the memory of the past in the current environment rather than the real past. Second, because the past has not been preserved intact but has been reconstructed. On the other hand, when the building satisfies the aesthetic and emotional connection relationship that can be more compatible with the people of the present, it will finally reappear in front of the world with a “new” appearance. The “new” here does not refer to the new modeling and new materials of modern construction technology but the “renewal” of historical buildings under the guidance of the restoration design principles.

3 THE CONTEXTUALITY OF THE AESTHETIC VALUE OF HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

In the 1860s, “contextualism” was put forward in the concept of postmodernism, and it was introduced into architecture from the application of linguistics. The urban context is the cultural time and space background of the dynamic development of architecture. The dynamic development of the urban context makes the urban appearance full of vitality and grows organically. On the other hand, the context expresses the relationship between people, people and buildings, buildings and cities, people and cities, and the relationship between history and culture and the entire city. It emphasizes the closeness and respect of the new building to the environment, pays attention to the original structure and context of the

city, has a deeper and broader connotation, and emphasizes the integrity and time-space of the city’s history. The renewal of historical buildings is different from the construction and design of conventional buildings. The focus is not on the free expression of the designer’s style and design preferences but the protection and rejuvenation based on the expression of the urban regional context and the aesthetic and emotional value of the building. This renewal is the material manifestation of people’s collective aesthetic thoughts. For example, the expansion project of the Louvre in Paris (Figure 1) was designed by the famous architect I.M. Pei (1917-2019). He chose not to destroy the original structure of the building or add extra structure to the original palace. Instead, he used a metaphorical method to embellish the entrance of the Louvre in the center of the palace courtyard in the form of a glass pyramid. He used the same geometric solid, although transposing it to another context by applying new building technologies to give it a contemporary High-tech expression. However, it is impossible to look at the intervention without being immediately reminded of the Egyptian pyramid (Kong, 2013). In doing so, he connected other lighting and used small pyramids to form a group of modern environmentally designed artworks so that the new part and the solemn Louvre formed a classic and modern echo. Pei’s design did not overly highlight the elements but gave full respect to the original historical buildings with a humble attitude. He concealed the enlarged part underground, and the pure and transparent glass pyramid gave viewers a broad perspective to appreciate the majesty of the Louvre. On the other hand, this reconstruction also shows the aesthetic value creation of space in the protection design of historical buildings, which is the concrete expression of architectural aesthetics based on people’s collective consciousness.



Figure 1. Echoing tradition and modernity, the expansion project of the Louvre in Paris. Credit: The authors.

The aesthetic transmission of architectural space, including historical value, must be based on the context of urban history. The “human” in it is the most

critical flow factor in the history of the city. When they are organically combined, the aesthetic significance of the building is also upgraded.

In the process of renewing the space of historical relics, those restoration and aesthetic flows are constantly occurring. At the level of aesthetic significance, it represents the inheritance of the urban context and the sense of belonging of architecture itself in the relationship between diachronic and synchronicity.

In appreciating the aesthetic value of historical buildings, the most important thing is image reconstruction. It is also the core of architectural aesthetic appreciation. In the revival and design of historical buildings, we should also pay attention to the reconstruction of image aesthetics and pay attention to the cultural characteristics of the core aesthetics of historical buildings. The successful expansion of the Lille Art Museum in France has realized the symbiosis of historical and modern architecture. The original Lille Art Museum was built in 1892 and is a typical palace-style building. The building houses many excellent paintings and sculptures from the 15th century to the 20th century. However, due to the small area used, many reconstructions have failed to achieve the desired effect.

Finally, the expansion project of the Lille Art Museum was co-hosted by designers Jean-Marc Ibos and Myrto Vitart and was completed in 1997. They retained the building's original red brick arch structure and connected the original art gallery's ground floor space with the urban space through additional buildings. In addition, they designed a temporary modern art exhibition hall with glass skylights at the junction of the new and old buildings, which formed a strong contrast with the solemn and gorgeous style of the old buildings. The construction of the new part shows the greatest respect and restoration to the old building, forming a harmonious relationship between the old and the new in the historic building. In the reconstruction process, they also paid attention to the creation of the aesthetic atmosphere of the image, that is, to maintain the artistic sense of the old exhibition space and to see the appearance of the modern new museum. The two complement each other and enrich the aesthetics of the Lille Art Museum.

The aesthetic significance in the renewal of the historical relics space carries more cultural and human values based on history and past times. Only those humanized spaces that stimulate the experienter's spiritual resonance and spiritual communication can arouse people's unique emotional memories. Architecture is a symbol of collective memory, and the establishment of the Jewish Memorial (Figures 2, 3) in Berlin is more like an emotional architectural expression of people's trauma and memory after the Nazi genocide. The architectural shape of the newly-built Jewish

Memorial is a cuboid building with repeated successive turns and forced compression. This architectural form expresses the pain of the Jews being oppressed and the emotion of dissatisfaction and resistance. The slit-like windows on the side of the building resemble scars cut by a random knife, making viewers more aware of the profound suffering caused by the war to the Jews. The symmetrical Baroque architecture of the new building and the old building is in sharp visual contrast. It also forms a sad emotional atmosphere, making the experience and the building form an emotional resonance and promotes a better appreciation of the emotional point of communication between people and the past.



Figure 2. The facade of the Jewish Memorial in Berlin, Germany. Credit: The authors.



Figure 3. The interior of the architectural space of the Jewish Memorial in Berlin, Germany. Credit: The authors.

Precisely because of the renewal of the historical relics space, it maintains its uniqueness while linking the past and the future. The functional discussion of its rejuvenation and social significance must discuss the form of the building itself, the use function, and discuss it from the perspective of social and historical development and the value of the country and the city. From a global perspective, the form and connotation of landmarks are traced. In this sense, aesthetic significance has become more three-

dimensional and inventive in the restoration process of historical buildings.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The aesthetic construction of architecture, in a sense, what it presents, is not only the construction characteristics of the building at the time of its construction, but it refers to the memories and traces of the years that the buildings living in history leave with the changes of the times. It also represents the social and historical human values that people in the history of change and the cultural environment live in and endow. Whether it is the emotions of the old Pennsylvania train station or the memory of the glass pyramid of the Louvre, all historical buildings that have received widespread emotional recognition like them connect the past and the future. It is not only the concentrated expression of its vitality but also the multiple humanistic meanings of historical buildings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This chapter had the support of CHAM (NOVA FCSH/UAc) through the strategic project sponsored by FCT (UIDB/04666/2020).

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