

One of the Questions of Form



Curvilinear or straight...is it a matter of preference? Is it the stylistic will of the architect who imposes their desired form upon society? Why is it that architecture traditionally tends to be manifested in straight lines, rectilinear massing and 90 degree angles? If a curve is introduced, then it is typically an arc, circle, or sphere derived from rudimentary platonic solids. If there is an angle to disrupt the perfect 90 degree box, it is seen as a roof or derived from some quality in the site. Why are windows and doors square, walls vertical, and floor slabs horizontal? Is it a direct consequence of the construction industry, mass producing straight pieces that are later assembled into the buildings of yesterday? Is it performance based following the laws of gravity in terms of vertical loads? Is it because people need flat horizontal surfaces to exist upon? Is it because we are used to seeing buildings in straight and rectilinear arrangements which give us a sense of familiar comfort stemming from cities of the past.

Other industrial realizations of mankind are not restricted to this prescribed rule-set. Taking a look at transportation; cars and boats, are designed for performance and style, being mass produced and continually evolving. Planes and trains are designed for aerodynamics and efficiency. Small objects such as electronics and media devices are sculpted and shaped based on functional and aesthetic requirements, but not restricted to the bulk of assembly found in buildings and construction materials. Why is architecture so far behind in terms of form?

When an interesting architectural proposal is conceived with irregular curvilinear form, or a complex network of smooth surfaces and natural shapes, why is it seen by the layperson as 'something out of a science fiction movie'? Why is there such resistance to receive architecture that escapes traditional methods of conception and representation?

Taking a look at nature and natural systems, straight lines and box-like forms are nowhere to be found...except at the horizon, a distant and infinitely unattainable threshold. No matter how far you travel toward the horizon, you will not reach it, until you escape the confines of the planet and see the straight line is really a curve. Does the straight line represent order and man's dominance over nature? Does it recall the power of an industrially advanced civilization? What about a digitally advanced one? Can form-generation escape a designer's prescribed realization? Can there be an architecture that conceives its own form? Even with advanced digital methods of generating form, there may be unforeseen outcomes, but there is still the matter of preference and decision. The manifestation is restricted to the logic and constraints of the designer's will. Even if the object itself is not designed, the code that generates the form is. Ultimately, all formed objects are formed...by a designer. So, is it a matter of preference?... MASH-ARKT : 2006