

History of Architecture and Culture – 5

Lecture - 17

Works of Charles Renee Mackintosh

Charles Renee Mackintosh was a Scottish architect, designer and an artist. He was a post impressionist artist, a main representative of Art Nouveau in the UK. Some of his famous works include, the famous Mona Lisa master piece, the Glasgow School of Art, the Villa Windyhill. The Hill House, Scotland Street School, A series of city centre tea room interiors. He developed the same Art Nouveau theory which the main land European architects had at that time and added more sophistications into the theory and developed a style of his own. He had a very sharp contrast between the strong right angles on one side and the floral insight decorative motives on the other hand. So he had a contrast between these 2 and developed his own style of architecture. His work was exhibited at the Vienna Secession during the 1900. He won the competition to design the Glasgow School of Art, his first and probably the most important building. This is the Glasgow School of Art if you are wondering how it looked in art. The building is an E shaped building in plan, with corridors along the main spine of E, the corridor links the major art studios along with the street side and some smaller ancillary rooms and some basic requirements, offices on the rear side of the E. What Mackintosh did was, he would put the big rooms on the far end of the building, north façade was facing the street, east and west ends were having large art and studio rooms, on the west side he had the big 2 storey library and the whole site was situated on a steeply slopy side towards the south facing the hill. This is the plan of the building. This is the north façade of the building where it faces the road. Here you can see the corridor which connects all these places. This is the main entrance, leads to an entrance hall and centralized staircase. It has masters room, office rooms, toilets. He has junior architects, here is ornament room. On the 1st floor he had design rooms here and some lecture rooms over here. Here is the museum and 2 storey library. And on the top most floor he has the embroidery composition, the directors studio on the top most floor and he has the personal studios of all the professors here. The built mass of the facade reflects the context in which the building is set. The north façade like, I showed you the pictures is a simple horizontal rectangular mass or a vertical rectangle or horizontal rectangle with large industrial type windows. Huge windows which lightens all the studios and rooms inside and it alternates with masonry appears, peer window, peer window, peer window. This façade is set behind a stone railing interrupted at the centre with an art nouveau iron arch under which steps lead up to the asymmetric composition of the entrance. The steps is situated in asymmetrical manner like I showed you in the plan. If symmetrical, the entrance should be here, instead from here the entrance is moved to here. This is the asymmetrical manner in which he has designed the plan. If you see this picture you can see the art nouveau arch and the main entrance. This is the north façade, large industrial type window which are alternating with the peers. Here in this slide, you are able to look at the main front elevation of the building. Here you can clearly see that, this is the central portion, the main portion of the building and its flat on either side by all the buildings that he needed to put and here, instead of putting the entrance here like I said, he has put in one corner and has another one main arch directly above this. This main window does not correspond to this center. So he has placed all these elements, 1,2,3,4 all these elements in an asymmetrical manner

typically leading from the mere classical style of anterior. The E shaped building. I told you the building is E shaped right that is not clearly visible from the northern side, the main façade if you see. But from the south façade, the rear end, arms of E are clearly visible. And it clearly makes a varied composition of assembly, rising above the entire city scape. These are the interiors of the Glasgow school of art. he designed the interiors with equal emphasis as the exterior itself. The floral motives, the art nouveau, geometric forms bring the scale and color to a particular proposition. So it gives a sense of scale and color to all the rooms may be the details of the mantle piece, the lighting, the rhythm be the pictures, carpets, crockery, furniture name it all these elements are designed properly with art nouveau floral and geometric motives fused together that gives a sense of scale to the entire place, the entire room. This darkly finished wood structure supports the mezzanine floor near the library. A critique once wrote about mackintosh. His firm belief that construction should be decorated and not decoration constructed in other words that the salient and most requisite features should be selected for ornamentation he applied with great rhythm and inventiveness especially in those projects such as Glasgow school of art and Scotland street school where budgets were severely limited. From this we can clearly see that mackintosh did not want a decoration, decorative piece to be constructed. He clearly wanted the construction to be decorated and he clearly states in his building that the projects must rise out of its economy not by the win and fancy of an architect. so in Glasgow school of art and Scotland street school budgets were highly limited, he created his incivility in his architecture that what was made his name echo through centuries. While looking at this next building, the hill house, hill house is one of the finest and largest building of mackintosh domestic buildings. It was built from local rough cast, rough rendered, local sandstone which was available. It clearly looks like a Scottish baron house. He saw that the building was not a single creative act but a social process. So what he did was he believed that the original design of the building, to suit the changing needs of the client was something which he considered was important. so he must see that the social process must be maintained in the architecture which he is creating. On one side the architecture and on other side he has changing culture and changing traditions, so he wanted to include all those things. So he kept altering the house, while the building kept progressed itself to accommodate a nursery for new baby and the new baby was an unexpected addition to the blackie family. so he kept on revising after the clients requirement so that was what made him successful. This is the plan of the hill house. A simple straight forward plans giving lights and mentalish to all rooms. the willow tea rooms is one of the next, the very important projects of Charles renee mackintosh, the willow tea rooms occupy a narrow infill slot on sauchiehall street. This is the sauchiehall street and this is the narrow end we are talking about. So this is the shop and he created the tea room here. He creates the signage of the tea room in this manner, the type face the graphic design of the streetscape element itself. this is done very carefully by Charles renee mackintosh. This four story building façade sits carefully in its urban context. The façade is very carefully designed, gently the top corner of this building aligns with the 4 story building on either sides to make sure that this building does not stand out from the context. The pedestrian and most public levels are distinguished from the upper private levels with an intermediate corners in between, if you can see the elevation. This is the top corners band which gently aligns with the neighboring 4 story building and this is the pedestrian area and the public area which is clearly distinguished from the private tea rooms by another corners

which is added in between and large windows, central windows of the 1st and second floors contrast deeply with the smaller windows with the third and fourth floors. In contrast to the neighboring buildings, which are heavily detailed, this building is simple, and it is tucked out white rather than giving any other color, this building marks, a sense of simplicity in context with the neighboring buildings. This gave the building an elegance and lightness appropriate for the purpose. Mackintosh not only designed the building and interiors he also designed the crockery, he designed the cups which says the willow tea rooms in his very special type face.

Vienna Secession

We are getting into another important topic called the Vienna secession. This was formed by a group of Austrian artists in the year 1897. The group included people like painters, sculptors, architects and other creative people. The main idea of Vienna secession was to reject all the revivalist styles. Because there were neo classic revivalism, gothic revivalism, classic revivalism, baroque revivalism. Lots of styles which had existed previously, in the previous centuries are now getting revived by the architects. So these people, the secessionists, they rejected all these revivalist styles and contradicting to all the belief that existed during that time period. The conservative academy is that the people who were running the show they were entrusting all the revivalist style, but these people, set apart themselves and they started rejecting all these styles. These people were trying to promote an art that would celebrate modernity. The secessionist trend appeared in several cities across Europe, beginning in Munich in 1892. There were no unifying characteristics of Viennese secessionist painting or sculpture or even architecture. There were no great sense of unifying character between the secessionists that happened in multiple cities. But they were committed to one thing, modernizing art, by getting in touch with the latest modernizing art movement. And Austria in the Vienna secession, the aim was to promote modern Austrian art by acquainting themselves with the latest trend in architectural movements. There were 2 people who were very key and instrumental behind the Vienna secession. One of them was Joseph Hoffmann. Let us take a look at some of the projects he has designed, the Moser house and the Stoclet palace are some of the buildings that he designed. This is the Moser house and this is the Stoclet palace. If you see his buildings, you can clearly see the way in which he has tried to reject any revivalist style that could have influenced his building. He rejected everything. He followed the latest trend in art and architecture at that particular point of time in Vienna. So that was one when he was able to produce this kind of architecture. The buildings were marked by double story high sitting rooms, clear white interiors occasionally disturbed only by elements that are necessary by the building. The elements that are necessary for the building are often decorated. Just like Mackintosh said in Glasgow, these people were trying out the pretty much same thing in Vienna. They started decorating the construction and they didn't construct anything without decoration. This was the result of it.

Secession Building

Another important component of Vienna secession was Joseph Maria Olbrich. Joseph Maria Olbrich designed a very interesting building called the secession building. Why the secession building is important, I will tell you all the key features of secession building. Before we get into that, this is how the building looks. A simple line building with a dome. On either side of the

entrance, on either side of the steps, you have this element that is flanking the steps, one of the key element of secession building which joseph maria olbrich designed. Take a look at some of the pictures of secession building. Plain square building with apart of it constructed on the stroke some wanted by a room, simple plain white colors. Golden color doom, decor that was art of the time period. Not of any previously existing style. New style was born along with this building. So let us look at the story of this secession building. All the secession members gathered and they gave commission to them, hardly 30 year old architect, joseph maria olbrich. Olbrich at that time was working along with auto wagner's. When he was working along with auto Wagner's earlier the secession members gathered and they wanted olbrich to build their new secession building. When olbrich finished his design. His design was made with violent reaction on the ward of the municipal council. There were constant problems the municipal created which olbrich had to fight and retain some office designs concepts. So there were lot of things going on. It took more than 9 months for the building to be designed which was actually built in less than 6 months. But immediately during the wars, the building was almost completely destroyed . During the 2nd world war when the german troops were retreating, they set the building on fire. The building was adopted and renovated lot of times in the course of its life. During the 100 year period, the building was renovated lot of times. If you look at the ground floor plan of the building and the cross section of the building it reveals the building is entirely made up of very simple, geometric forms. look at the massive of the building, what happens was, unbroken plains, there were plains over plains, horizontal plains and vertical plains that dominated the exterior of the building. These massive unbroken walls are lending the exterior appearance of the deal constructed by series of solid cubes. So it makes the whole building look like a cube and 2 cubes over here, cubes on top with dome on top. This entrance area is decorated by 3 gorgons, mask of gorgons each symbolize the architecture sculpture, and painting respectively. This is done right above the main entrance arch. Let us come to the main and most dominating feature of the building. It has one cube on the ground floor, one little cube on the 1st floor and top of that what makes this building so great is the laurel leaf tomb, right on top of it. So that is the most dominant symbol on top of the building. It hovers over the building in the form of sphere which is actually made up of 3000 gilt leaves and 700 berries of dome. If you see here, these are the laurel leaves and you can also see some berries in this picture. this is the centre of the dome, Today if you go to Austria, Vienna, Vienna is the capital of Austria, even today, any tourist guide will take you to the building and show you what this building is made up of. Not just to an architect, even to a public point of view this secession building marks a very important point in history of viennese architecture and the culture of vienna itself. so that is why, even if any tourist goes to Austria, this secession building will be a part of bush list to see. Today this building has been seen and visited by a lot of people and been appreciated by a lot of people and been talk about a lot of people, but right now. During this time, when this building was constructed, this building faced a lot of criticisms. This building was called temple for bullfrogs, a temple of the anarchic art movement. A mausoleum, a pharaoh's tomb, the grave of the Mahdi, a crematorium. This building was criticized as the head of the cabbage. The entire building was called in the newspapers as a bastard between temple and warehouse. A cross between a greenhouse and a blast furnace. These are some of the worst things that could happen to an architect and a building. But always remember there is an important lesson in this

particular example, you are what you believe and your design is what you believe in head as correct. Designing a building and if you really think that this is going to be the future or this is going to be the correct answer. The solution to the architecture problem that we have here, if we strongly have a belief on the piece of architecture or idea, we should very very strongly get attached to that idea. Even if there is so much criticisms about that idea or architecture, we should learn to survive those comments only then we can learn time lessons. joseph maria olbrich here was a very fine example of that. He withstood the protests from the municipal committee. He withstood the protests from the public. He withstood the protests from the press and any art critique from that particular architecture time. He withstood the test of time, he passed the test of time. Today he stands proud and tall with his building adapted and renovated so many times which is one of the most important landmarks in Austrian architecture, even world architecture for that matter. There is very important lesson here ladies and gentleman, never loose hope to criticisms. There will always be critiques and there will always be good architects. joseph maria olbrich was one example. this is another building which was designed during the secessionist period. Here too you can take a look at the projectile geometry and rectangles, squares, passing of squares and rectangles. Long windows and contrastingly short windows in the ground floor look at the pattern of grills every where, a typical Vienna secession going on.