

History of Architecture and Culture – 5

Lecture - 21

Works of Erich Mendelsohn

Erich Mendelsohn was a Jewish German architect, he was known for a brilliant expressionist architecture which he did in 1920's he also well known for developing something called the dynamic functionalism and his projects for various cinemas and departmental stores which he designed not only was he expressionist architect but he also a key proponent of the Art Deco movement and Streamline Moderne movement notably with his Mossehaus design in 1921. These early experiences what they did was generated a personal philosophy of define Eric Mendelsohn himself is called "Dynamism" this concept was demonstrated almost all buildings that he designed with an attitude that was both personal from own heart and expressionist one thing which Mendelsohn was very share of he used no historical precedence in formulating his designs which means all his designs were completely his own without any influence of any of the previously know historic style or precedence.

So the result was his early buildings avoid the electric borrowing of the previous styles, something that most of the contemporaries people either had gothic influences or classical influences or renaissance influences, even influences of art know art and craft movement another styles, his ideas were derived from expressionistic sketches that he admit and the romantic symbolism that derived him. While his earliest design sort of what this fake the later designs Mendelsohn consciously moved away from expressionist architecture designing a series of building in a more linear fashion. He was moving from expressionism towards modernism.

- In 1933, Mendelsohn fled from Nazi Germany to England where he gained citizenship
- He acted as a design partner with Serge Chermayeff until 1939 when he moved to Palestine
- In 1941 he moved to the U.S. where he established a successful general practice
- While practicing he lectured to students and some universities and he also wrote some newspapers and magazines

Let us take look at his most pioneering work. Erich Mendelsohn in Einstein tower he designed a small but powerfully modeled tower, he designed this to symbolize the greatness of Einstein concepts not only was it a completely expressionist building which was modeled by his sketches not only does it look expressionist and look different from any of the other building it was designed earlier but it also very very functional building. The function of the building was to hold Einstein's own astronomical laboratory. For an Einstein astronomical laboratory how and architect go about starting to design something such greatness's that, so Mendelsohn

wanted completely futuristic plastic kind of a building. The kind of architecture that you don't built you rather moulded without any sharp corners or angles, smooth rounded corners, gentle curves. So for this kind of design, plastic design he wanted to material that could go with the design so he wanted something malleable something that he can mould with something that he can work around. So he wanted reinforced concrete as a material which can be made to curve and which can be used to design with whatever plasticity that he wants to put inside this building but at that point of time it was right after first world war and there was huge shortage of all kinds of building materials and the concrete was the material which was more sort after, because after world war the lot of people were trying to build fast quick type of constructions especially the army, government buildings, the office buildings, the administrative buildings all these buildings required quick construction and this all sort concrete. So the concrete was not completely available for the building. So Mendelsohn had to accept the fact that he cannot get less amount of concrete and for the rest of the building he used to brick. So majority of the portion of the building was done in brick and few portions here and there, there were done concrete. So as a result total external effect of the building was done by rendering the surface material. Even so one person called the building the 'sarcophagus of architectural Expressionism' we all know what Sarcophagus means right we studied it in ancient Egyptian architecture and we remember that sarcophagus and this place where they put the mummified body of an Egyptian king inside a pyramid. The sarcophagus is the box in which they put the king. It is also used to describe something of great importance. So if we take parallel from that the sarcophagus architectural expressionism is one of the most brilliant titles that the building can get not only that this building is one of the most brilliantly designed original buildings of the twentieth century. So in German it's called Einstein term, the Einstein term is astrophysical laboratory or observatory inside the Albert Einstein Science Park in Potsdam, right outside Berlin Germany

It was built on the summit of the Potsdam Telegraphenberg to house a solar telescope which was designed by the famous astronomer Erwin Finlay Freundlich.

The telescope supports experiments and observations to validate prove or disprove Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. So that is the reason why this Einstein tower was built. The building was first conceived in 1917 but was built from the year 1919 to 1921 after the huge fundraising drive that collected all the money that required for building the Einstein tower. This building became operational only in 1924. Although Einstein never worked in this building he supported the construction and the operation of the telescope. It is still a working solar observatory today as a part of the Leibniz institute for Astrophysics Potsdam. This is the plan of the building you can see that the ground floor of the building is huge with entrance steps leading to the outer fair and leads to the other rooms. Similarly that is what happening here that is the external staircase that leads to the main door and then leads to the further rooms.

The light from the telescope is directed down through the shaft straight to the basement where instruments and the laboratory are located.

There were more than half a dozen telescopes in the laboratory, the outside of the building the exterior was originally conceived in concrete but in mention earlier due to construction difficulties with the complex design and shortage of building materials because of the war, most of the building actually done in brick and it was later covered with stucco, so the smooth transition can be easily made, the material of the construction was changed during the construction of the building. So what Mendelsohn what he did not update the designs to accommodate the change in material. This caused a lot of problems including cracking and dampness because there were some portions of the building which were designed for concrete and concrete is much damp proof material or water proof material than brick it takes a lot of time for water to seep in through concrete while it takes very very less time for water to seep in through brick. So when the material was changed from concrete to brick the suitable alteration that was necessary to change the material was not done in this building, it caused a lot of problems they were cracks they developed, the building was completely inundated with dampness, dampness causes great many problems to stabilize you guys know that, this is the section of the building, this is the main central section and this is the lateral section of the building entrance, main door which leads to the main tower area, the tower rises for another five floors with telescope mounted on top with laboratory in the basements, the light from the telescope is channel straight towards the laboratory towards the equipment everything is placed and that is why I told in the earlier in the lecture that the building not only looks great but it also works great

Schocken Department Store

So let's move onto the next building that Eric Mendelsohn designed, this is the Schocken Department Store. Schocken Department Store it is the most noteworthy characteristic feature of the building is the extraordinary brevity, the simplicity of each piece of this building, take a look at the building, the building its overwhelming its simplicity, simply arranged windows dissonance in this walk of Mendelsohn's, there is the body of the store proclaiming its horizontality in its solid and windowed bands which is completely what he wanted. Take a look at the sketch and this sketch somehow transform to this entirety of the building, totally loudly shouts out horizontality in every manner

The main entrance floor there is a sign age runs along the lower cornice line here which says Schocken Department store is not seen in the picture, there are the other hand the two pivot points of the Semi-Cylinders

One reverberating and elongated along the sloping street to the left, and the other echoing it across the roof from the other side of the building

Many critics spoken of the musical quality of the building of the play between “inflection and the counterpoint”. There is the section of the building and this is the plan of the building, the front portions were designs that semi cylinder pretty straight forward plan with simple rows of column so that all the things that leads to be put up can be easily put up staircases left in other things wherever required toilets, simple functional very efficient, very close to modern architecture, this is sketches that he made for the building says Schocken huge letters on top of the building, Sign age the different versions of the same design tried out different possibilities we all to know about the previous lecture that Eric Mendelsohn designs and buildings from expressionist sketches that he makes, he makes numerous amount of brilliant sketches and all his designs evolve develop from the designs from the sketches that he made seen some of the sketches in previous episode to and this is another example of how his sketches transform self into reality.

De la war Pavilion

The another famous building which we goanna look at today is De la war pavilion

This building is international style building was constructed in 1935 and when he was walking along with Serge Chermayeff, this building was considered to be by in turn in Art Deco Style by some people and some other people thing that the building is international style where some people claim to be the first Major Modernist public building in Britain, although it was the fact that this building was proceeded directly only by summons by the Dutch influence, Hornsey town halls which got designed earlier just a months earlier.

This building was a pioneering structure in spirit, the purpose of this pavilion which was completely constructed lot of steel, concrete and glass was provide accessible culture and leisure for the people of Bexhill and the surrounding areas and to regenerate the economy of the town and the surrounding area.

There was the competition was announced in 1934 and the competition had a programmer that it had to an entertainment hall to see at least had 15,000 people, they also want to see 200 seat restaurant, reading room and a lounge, and the initial budget of the project was about 50,000 pounds although this was later raised to 80,000 pounds. The competition was run by RIBA, it attracted over 230 entrants most of them practicing in the Modernist style in here up. The aesthetic employed by the building in international style proved especially suited to the building, the building wanted to achieve certain things, they wanted economy of the place in surroundings, so the international style actually welcome all this kind of ideas it tended to streamline industrially efficient and influence designs with expensive metal frame windows

huge expensive windows for that, things can be seen from outside you can display stuff easily and it completely corner of all the traditional brick and stone work because they didn't want brick and stone work anymore. They favored steel and concrete construction now, this was the plan of the building it you can see a lobby main entrance of the toilet for either sides huge auditorium and the backyard support function of the auditorium over here with the gallery like space here on the east, this is the plan of the first floor with more seats of the first floor of the auditorium looking down at the stage, so gallery outside of the auditorium first floor with restaurant which cafeteria and the restaurant which the talking about earlier, the section of the building look something like this, the north and the south elevation of the building respectively again look at the sign age very very bold brilliant sign age is which Eric Mendelsohn creates in its buildings. This is the another famous building which Eric Mendelsohn and design this is called Mossehaus. Mossehaus with the building which he designed in streamlined model in style, take a look at the building gentle curves look at the features from pointing at over here and look at the shave of the window and over here this are typically streamlined modern architecture features that I am pointing out over here, this is the another departmental store which is the Petersdorff department store again designed in combination of streamlined modern style and the modernist style, the building definitely has all the ingredients of the typology departmental stores, it has huge glass windows which people can see outside the ground floor of the building is completely open glass with the upper floor finding the floor lines huge sign ages, the building has inviting quality with the corner element rounded so that it has invited quality into the architecture onto the people. This is the interiors of the Hat factory which he designed actually the Hat factory look like this on the exterior, we saw in earlier slice this is the Hat factory that we are talking about interiors that just I showed you while this is the residence building which he designed later years. So the interiors of this Hat factory look something like this made of free forced concrete brings in light from the top huge building. There is a variety of building that Eric Mendelsohn design and there is something that we need to understand from his design. Each and every single work that he is done, he never look back into history to take inspirations all his works completely new and most importantly he designed for the time which he was living in earlier design were expressionistic then he started designing building that were in Art deco style, after that he designing streamlined model style, then he started moving towards international style and modernism. This architects living and working in the periods of 1915, 1916 to say 1935 in his prime this was the prime of his age this is when he design most of the famous buildings. The architecture of Europe change a lot from expressionism while started his career to modern architecture when he almost ended his career, he also moved present day Poland he was born to Germany and to England and to Palestine he moved around lot of places before he finally moved USA and wherever he moved he also gets experience from that particular place and the particular surrounding's he learned lot of those things he tries to apply this things into his buildings. Look at the way he changes his

way of style from one time period to another time period just because he like expressionism he doesn't stick to expressionism till he dies, he feels that he needs to be a change in the direction in which the architecture is moving, he moves from expressionism and he move towards steam lined model towards Art Deco towards expression towards international style towards modernism, there is a clear change in the way he designs from early designs to modern design.