

History of Architecture and Culture – 6

Lecture 2

Works of Alison and Peter Smithson - 1

Alice and Peter were among the most influential architects and at the same time they created so much controversy in the mid-20th century. This people they did their part in fledgling in British pop art movement with their famous Landmark building such as the Economist building, Robin Hood Garden housing Complex and other buildings that they designed. The subsequent project being 1956 of the future. The visionary home exhibited at the daily Mall, ideal home exhibition, the early 1960 economics building, early 1970 Robin Hood Garden Housing Complex in East London and a lot of other projects. These projects were infused with the same energy and the same ideal. These guys have been doing ever since the 10th team Congress. So they built schools, they built workplaces, they built homes and all worried only about the progressive society. The way the society has changed after the world war and the way society has changed after modernism. They called the society meritocratic society. Bureaucracy aristocracy where all there. They all called the society meritocratic society and that is the progressive society for which listen and Peterson and all those popular buildings. Allison and Peterson competition entry for the reconstruction of post war ruins project. It was a bold brash vision of completely new urban form where people have not heard or seen before. Plan was simple it was intended to bring high densities of people in a way that created an infinitely richer and more satisfactory way of living in cities. So they wanted to bring in people closer for a packed living. To achieve this packed living concept, they arrived at another concept which they called streets in the air. These connected clusters connected by corridors or streets in the air which will be predominantly pedestrian. That will be accessible above and below each mid street level, believe that the concentrating pedestrian circulation would create the community bonding. And to bring that kind of community back into the architecture that was so rustic and so plain in modern terms and this was some of the more bombastic and monumental CIAM modernist housing project . So in these kinds of projects the people wanted to bring in one element that the CIAM did not have that is humanity aspect. These people wanted to have to bring people close to each other so that they can infuse the sense of humanness in the monumental CIAM modernist housing projects. They separated the pedestrian Street from the ground. The ground was no longer the pedestrian Street

because they wanted to give away the modern growing automobile industry. Everybody where buying automobiles, the number of automobiles on the road drastically increased after the war which meant that roads need to be wider and wider and the roads were always and always filled with bad traffic and automobiles. Well if the passenger traffic is also put on the street it will cost 2 problems. One is the safety of the passengers. Second is the pollution and the noise, air, everything gets polluted for the people. So they run the risk of losing lives either quickly or slowly which means that the pedestrian roads cannot be together with the vehicular roads. So what Allison and Peter Smithson did was they separated pedestrian roads from the ground level and put it on a higher level and called it as the street and the sky. Latest look at the interesting project called Golden Lane housing project in London. Although the project mostly owes to Le Corbusier's early ideas. United Habitations and other projects which Le Corbusier had done and this project was a little more radical on the path because it emphasizes place on the building itself and it emphasizes more on urbanization. Instead of the creation of network of continuous buildings arranged in a Cellular pattern these people wanted it to introduce the building as one discrete unit of urbanization. Such a network what would happen if such a network where to work. They need to respond to local requirements of the people and they need to work based on local land conditions topography and soil conditions and etc. Whenever there is some change in the level they would start simply creating another layer of urbanizing upon the existing fabric of the city. And the existence fabric of the city is not going to change so there is just going to be another layer of urbanism over the existing layer. This is take a look at the project which is designed. The clustered network is a flexible system, it was the rejection of the imposition of a complex grid. What modernism used to have was complex grid pattern call the columns and all the positions need to be exactly fitted on to the particular grid. A1 A2 a3. B1 b2.b 3 but this project is where they deviated from the complex grid and they came into a little more flexible grid project. And that is another way which they broke out from the strict modernist rules. This project was presented at the CIAM 9th Congress and only after the project was presented at the 9th Congress, team 10 was formed and in the upcoming years Anderson and Peter Smithson became the most influential members of team 10. Only after this project. This were some of the sketches hand drawings made for this project people have tried out different orientations and the space composition volume composition for the project. This is going to be a street with unit facing on opposite side after Street weather units can be arranged according to the special

requirement over here. And the changes in typography also. Although the emphasis on community, flexibility, pedestrian approach adaptability, these are all good on one hand. The residential life from the streets have has been detached. And that has been proven disasters for cities. Person who is living in the City has to be close to the street. If I have distance myself from the street. I no longer belong to the city. I belong in a capsule. Alison and Peter Smithson although community designed flexibility model Where all acceptable and appreciable to an extent. This distancing from the street kind of gave negative impact to this project. This is one of the sketches which was made by then where is the create cities, decentralized cities and office spaces and factories, craft areas, ceremonial areas, different areas of the cities in different parts where is area would be self-sustained in their needs. So what went wrong in the project? People said that they were detached from the streets. So what happens if they get detached from the streets? It is a matter of urban scale, and the dismissal of urban block as the Classic element of cities. In every City building block of the city, is the urban block, block needs to be surrounded by streets on all four sides and the urban block needs to have all the basic facilities covered within itself. So that is the main fundamental functional unit of the city. And if that is not going to be there, the city is not going to function the way, people have been in the city so long. And if you want to change the complete way of looking cities, you need to change it by changing the mindset of the people. The mind of the people have been set to certain type of Living, and when we think of cities, we have certain image in mind and when that image is disturbed, people don't have a sense of belonging to the city. There was a project called spangeblock in Rotterdam which was a great success. They also employed Pedestrian Street in the air. And they linked buildings with each other, Even though they link buildings I had a clear disposition within there city block. They had the city block and all the buildings were connected to each other and without that spangeblock wouldn't have been a success. The assemblies of buildings when you put all the city blocks buildings together they have to have a relationship with the street. And the relationship has to be in a philosophical way a little more traditional that has to create Open Spaces, say private spaces, semipublic places and then a private space. That was the traditional flow of space within the whole city block. That is what needs to be done in a particular City block when you are designing.

Works of Alison and Peter Smithson – 2

Alison and Peter Smithson also designed interior Streets in the air and therefore called them as supportive streets to the real streets of the city and they were also visibly connected to the pedestrian spaces below in multiple levels within the same block. Take a look at the picture here. Every 3rd floor, 123 every 3rd floor there is a street or a corridor that connects all these spaces together and all these spaces are connected again, to each other and also to the street. Similarly here in this building everyone two three, 3rd Street will have a corridor space and then the corridor is again connected through staircases to the lobbies and this part which is not seen here and then it is connected to the main street to the city. Initial projector for this studio is a President study of notable housing projects which happens previously and take the ideas from those projects reiterated them for polyvalencesvariability's, interchangeability intermediate spaces open Spaces and mass customization. To add all these elements to it and that is what at Alison and Peter Smithson did to it during the project. Specific charge is the dissection of the Golden land project by Alison and Peter Smithson. When they took the project all they did was, they did a lot of study on the president are previously existing housing projects or and all they work and all that, they took all the ideas they took 4 or 5 really important aspects and they compared all these projects with those ideas. And that is what made all the difference. And those important aspects for them according to them poly Valance, variability, interchangeability and mass customization for people. So these are the things that these guys talked about. According to them the goal is to collect, filter analyses represent the information on the assigned project as it explicitly relates to the issue below. These are the drawings of Golden Lane project. And according to legends, alison and Peter Smithson gave few schematics here and there then they also wrote in their drawing that, drawing suggested here should be considered as a minimum, where ever explanation is encourage should be undertaken with the project. So that is what these people told. We give basically minimum standards for construction and where ever further explanation is required, so they allowed for further exploration encouraged all these additional things that could be done in this project. So Allison and Peter Smithson took care of the following things and you can see this in the screen below, massing, unit types, fenestration, circulation, systems, revision. We will just take a quick look at what the ideas where about.

Massing: Take describe with particular attention to the interaction of mass with respect to context, ground plane, and natural light. For them a mass should have a context, context

should have a meaning and it has to have certain relationship, with the ground plane, the existing ground plane and it needs to correspond to the natural light direction then comes this

Unit Types: Individual unit arrangements and global unit distribution. Alison and Peter Smithson do is they create a plan for one single unit and they try to interpolate all these plants into diversities from the block plan and the plan becomes a whole society plan and that is when the whole thing starts. They make multiple of this individual unit arrangements and that is what forms a nice distribution diagram in the whole project itself.

Fenestration: According to them fenestration describes at the level of individual window, overall composition. So they did not work on fenestration because of one issue for example modernism foodtech elevation symbolism. And it would neutralize all the elevation features into one single line. But what alison and Peter Smithson did was in section they drew sections and they placed the window in section so that which one room with which the window is positioned with when have a certain reason why the window is kept, at the same time they took the same section and they created a elevation. The overall composition of the elevation should also match should also work to good extent. That is how these people started working. They did not start from the elevation and then manage or be ok with whatever happened in the section but they worked other way. They first Worked on a section, choose the room, choose the window, window type, height, location everything and from there the interpolated it to the elevation which according to them worked. Moving Onto circulation.

Circulation: Show circulation in relation to typical and emergency situation overall and within the units. There are four kinds of circulation according to Alison andpeter Smithson, they show normal circulation, emergency times circulation, overall circulation of the whole project within the units, between the units and within the units the kind of circulation that they have. These were the things that matter to them. Moving on to system.

System: Major construction to include diagrams of structure, envelope and mechanical

revisions: Place the president study on the studio site as a plan and as a massing diagram like we discussed earlier. His work on the president plan and president building study and they do extent of study on those drawings and only then the they are ready to build another building. These are the projects which they had worked on. It is interesting to know the topography of the building.

This picture on the right here is the Robin Hood Gardens. And it is a social Housing Complex in the east of London this project was completed in the early 70's. This building is brutally structure still standing as an experience example of all the theories they had a written converted all the theories to practice. These practices today face an uncertain future because people are planning to pull this building down. This was built in a post war Britain where residential Towers were been built as a symbol of progress after the war. As you all know Britain won the war, so as a mark of victory on the war they had to show off to the people that we are a progressive Nation here. To show progress all the residential Towers high raised buildings were built as a symbol. So this building was supposed to be a symbol and this is what Alison and Peter Smithson created. There were a lot of buildings that were developed during that particular time and Robin Hood Gardens was one of them. And the Bare front tower nearby to that typical place is another one of them. And the two building stands today with just one or two streets between them. built within a decade of for one another and there is one major difference between the two buildings. Barefront tower is stated as a listed building protect it from being torn down because it is now cited as an important architectural work while Robin Hood Gardens has been denied the status of a listed building. So Robin Hood Gardens is facing a problem of demolition even though it is one of the best examples of post war architecture in Britain and it is being denied the status of a listed building which is now on the verge of extension. Smithson preached modern architecture which are designed with low cost locally available materials. They were categorized as brutalist and sought for each building to be designed according its location and its use not as a global. From these idols they created their own aesthetic, utilitarian Aesthetic it reflects all the condition of the built form of all them had. 6 features that we discussed earlier today. Alison and Peter Smith Silva determined to improve people life screw design. They believed that through design people can make a difference in people's life. So the communal space the garden space which they designed, created a rising hill which ruminated from the construction. This communal space is an essential part of the Robin Hood garden because this is where the people gather and have their social spaces. So this social space was very important for Alison and Peter Smithson because describe the ways they can make people's life better. So this Robin Hood Garden was seen as their Chance to prove their vision for a progressive social housing and they came up with this kind of project. This is how it looks from the outside and the street and the sky looks like this. As I discussed earlier in one of

the project, every third level of the building includes a white concrete balcony jutting out towards the centre of the site overlooking the garden. From the street, from the sky you can look into the garden. The balconies are wide enough for multiple people to walk and even for children to play in the balcony. This is one of the concepts where Smithson was very proud of because they got all the kids would come and play in the corridor, people will come and watch the garden and they will have street like experience from the corridor. Except that it created a sense of corridor and not a street. From the beginning the Robin Hood Gardens project has been a centre of debate concerning its success because some people say it's a success and some people say it is not that successful. Initially the structural issues of the building raised the cost of the building enormously and the maintenance was another big problem. A serious denial in up keeping the maintenance of the apartment was becoming less desirable places, to live. But people didn't want to leave there anymore. The developers are eager to demolish the buildings so they can expand their own visions of the future and they can build a much more building for the present day although this building was constructed like 45 years ago and is still actually a good project to live in but people thought it is not a very desirable place to live because there was a serious denial in upkeep and the maintenance of the project. So one thing led to another and it is said to be demolished. Why are we demolishing buildings? If London intends to keep the Robin Hood Garden what they have to do is, they will have to re-invest in the renovation of the building and the renovation of this building would come at a much higher cost in the current plan to demolish. So they do the renovation so they do all the upkeep and maintenance thing. And they still keep a 45 year old building and that is going to cost much more higher than demolition of building and a new construction.

Works of Aldo Van Eyck

Moving onto Aldo Van Eyck. According to him house must be like a small city to be a real house a city like a large house if its to be a real city .according to Aldo our house must be a small city if it is to be a real house and at the same time a city must be a large house if it is to be a real city. so Aldo van eyck draws parallel 2 city and house and he says that a city is nothing but a large house and house is nothing but a small city. Aldo van Eyck was interested in nonhierarchical development of cities. And in his project Amsterdam orphanage he creates a building with many in between conditions spaces to break down lot of Hierarchy of spaces.

Building is constructed out of two sizes of modules 1 smaller size module for the residences and the larger size module for all the community spaces. The module consists of 4 rounded columns at the corners with a domed roof has a precast concrete on the top. This is how the project looks like. These are the four columns and there is a domed roof on top. The far side of the building are either made of a solid wall or a glass wall. This is how the plan of the building is. Smaller Units are the residential units and the larger units are the community spaces. The units of the program are laid out on an orthogonal grid. The units project of 2 diagonal parts 1 here and 1 over here. Aldo van Eyck creates an equal amount of negative spaces from the positive he has formed. Each individual unit is neighbored by its own outer space. Each individual unit has its own outdoor space. The large Courtyard is diagonally of sided from the residential space and the entrance of the admin space, are connected with streets. So they are all following the same principle if you look at the bigger picture here he avoids creating a central point within the orphanage he allowed fluid connections between all the spaces so there is no actual Central point Of the orphanage. Amsterdam orphanages is the idea of a balanced community. This design earned him international recognition and established his humanist theories in a built project. He also designed a lot of temporary pavilion in the summer of 1966 to host sculptures and it was destroyed a few months later was rebuilt in 2006 in the garden of Netherlands. The construction is a careful exercise in, has 6 parallel walls which are almost 4 meter high and he creates multiple patterns inside these things. And in view it looks like this. This is how the playground looks like. This is how the playground looks like plan, it creates a very interactive distinct spaces for people to play around creating interesting spaces for children to play around, varied levels where children can jump around and this was what there in that particular place and aldo van eyck creates in the same space with doing nothing on the walls around it, just by manipulating the floor he has created such a beautiful playground area. He is the master of making playgrounds and he has also written a book about playgrounds on the city.