

## **WEEK 03- HISTORY**

### ARCH-572, ARCHITECTURE THEORY AND CRITICISM

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This week's readings from Giedion, Russell and Rowe, suggests the importance of understanding the difference and inter-relation of two different eras from history, specially in terms of art and architecture. The readings also reveal the dynamic observation of history amongst different generations, enabling discoveries of new aspects in the historic art works, which otherwise went unnoticed for generations, and helps in widening the current perspective.

Sigfried Giedion was a disciple and follower of Heinrich Wölfflin, from where he learnt to understand the spirit of an epoch. Jakob Burckhardt, Wölfflin's professor and discoverer of the age of Renaissance, was the first person to interpret a difference in historic periods, with regards to art, architecture and social institutions. In doing so, Burckhardt averted his own opinions and emphasised on factual sources. Giedion claims that artists who believe that certain forms are valid for every age were in fact mistaken and that every form of art has its own existence in its respective historic period which changes if touched. In order to get a wider perspective today, one has to consciously examine the past, which is not imitation but a matter of continuity.

As a demand for historic continuity, the author claims that there is a need for a wider survey of historical background, to help the present live in a larger sense of understanding. By stating examples of nineteenth-century, the author ascertains that disregarding immediate past leads to an indifference in current traditions with gaps. Later, the author states that the current society which perceives the civilisation as split, including science and art, is actually living in a realm of common feeling and thought that gets reflected into their personal works one way or another.

Henry-Russell Hitchcock strengthens the idea of Giedion in his book 'The International Style', by stating that continuing the legacy of art and architecture is not merely imitating the surface of it, but to adopt the interior principles of it, which makes it alive. Hitchcock begins by stating that the nineteenth century architecture failed to create a style of architecture that had a discipline of its own, which gave it a bad name of cheapening the idea of architecture style by having individual styles instead of having one ideal style through scientific understanding. However, there was a new contemporary style that was emerging, and which was more inclusive and non fragmented. He argues that style is a frame of potential growth and not a mould to imitate. It is the volume that defines the concept of architecture, not mass.

Collin Rowe's essay, 'Mathematics of Ideal Villa' is a perfect example to dignify Hitchcock's statement of idealising historic architecture through science and Giedion's theory of dynamic perception of history through generations. Rowe compares two distinguished architectural masterpieces from different eras; Palladio's 1550's built Villa Foscari with Le Corbusier's 1927 built Garches Villa, and finds that although the two buildings are dissimilar by all physical means, they still carry a common style of mathematical aesthetics. Both villas corresponds a volume of similar proportions, 8X5.5X5 with a comparable facade ratios. According to Rowe, mathematics was the basis of ideal proportions found in nature, also defined by Christopher Wren as 'natural beauty'. The author promotes a constructive criticism to identify the differences and seeking to understand a general logic in all forms of architecture, following the ideology of Heinrich Wölfflin. By doing so, Rowe claims that one might possess knowledge of accessibility, without having to falsely pretend on knowledge that lies outside the reference itself.