Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid and the value of Deconstructivism

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Abstract. The paper aims to compare and discuss the value of deconstructivism in today's society by choosing two famous architects, Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry. From Zaha's Guangzhou Opera House, some relationships with the buildings around can be found, and their association largely illustrates the importance of flexible and unusual buildings. Moreover, Gehry has a strong inspiration for everything that happens horizontally, which is a perfect illustration of Zaha and deconstructivism. By analyzing his architecture philosophy and aesthetics, the indispensable part of deconstructivism can be understood with a clear view of how modern architects apply it to their designs.

Keywords: Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, Deconstructivism.

1. Introduction

Deconstructivism became a popular design style in the 1980s, but this idea originally came from Jacque Derrida, a French philosopher who proposed this idea as a criticism to argue against structuralism in language [1-3]. His main idea is a strong dislike of emphasized structure in everyday life, and he argued that symbols are enough to expose the truth and ideology, so the whole structure of an object pales in comparison with the research of the individual. According to Martin Heidegger, an eminent philosopher, philosophy at that time represented metaphysics, and the history of western philosophy was related to the history of metaphysics that said when an object or a quality can be seen, it is defined as existing [4]. The word "logos" defined that behind everything, there is only truth saying in a word that contains the great power or a representation of God. People at that time treated the definition as the infrangible truth which operates immutably, some even called it "the law of God". Under this circumstance, Derrida and his intellectual companions who together formed the deconstructionism argued against the logos. They intended to smash regular rules, all the existing rules, except rules to social morals, marriage, and ethics. Beyond that, they still encourage order in consciousness, such as the way to create and think, and to reveal characters of different nations. In another word, breaking the old rules and creating more reasonable rules. Deconstructivism inherits rules and criticism from modernism, Derrida used the words from it but changed the relationships and arrangement between vocabulary and vocabulary [5].

This idea was gradually attached to architecture. In New York in 1988, seven non-mainstream architects were invited to a deconstructive architecture show and brought their impressive understanding of architecture to audiences, but none of them at that time had a persuasive work to show the uniqueness of their design and construction [6]. After several years, all seven architects became the famous forerunner in the deconstructive field. They gathered as a strong group, which made people accept their unusual architecture [7]. A great example of this is Dancing House designed by Frank Gehry, he cut the normal shapes of the original building and rebuilt it with curve lines like water flowing. As more designers followed the steps, deconstructivism deeply changed the traditional thinking about the rules, principles, and so-called aesthetics. As Derrida said, deconstructivism aims to challenge dichotomy and criticizing those things should be diverse [3].

This paper will discuss what causes deconstructivism so attractive and popular around the world and its value existence. It's easy to notice that today investors such as entrepreneurs are likely to give up ordinary buildings which stand boxed in the city center, what they want now is a structure that possessed special traits that differ from others around or even be viewed as a landmark. That's because

stranger and more unusual the building is, more visitors prefer to travel to this place, so it helps improve the reputation and make more money. No wonder there's an increasing number of curve buildings in cities today. For example, the Poly Theatre in Suzhou looks like a worm digging the ground. Due to the wired shape, a lot of visitors go there, take pictures and enjoy the operas, so a tantalizing structure from a building can strongly attract visitors and improve the local economy. Recently, architectures are not only a place to live, but they offer spaces for people to exchange their cultures and history, and the structure of a building can reflect its host's appreciation and social reputation. Under this circumstance, it's super important to understand why nowadays more and more people are willing to pay attention to their homes, buildings, or even public spaces, and why people prefer more about strange-shape skyscrapers

Among all the world-famous architects, Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry are chosen as examples to represent the thriving of deconstructivism, their distribution to architecture, and the value of their works to citizens. Zaha's Guangzhou Opera House can be used as an instance to show its way to boost culture and improve the economy in that place. Zaha has designed a lot of great works which help the local economy, as their structures of soft lines and unusual shapes greatly attract many people. The same things happen in the Guangzhou Opera House, it merges with all the buildings around to make an outstanding landscape and improve the value and renown of that place. Frank Gehry is the pioneer to design shapeless architectures [8]. This paper will discuss his way of thinking and his design aesthetics. By showing these two great architects, it’s possible to find the existing value of deconstructivism.

2. Deconstructivism, Constructivism, And Reality

It is widely accepted that for most ideas and works of deconstructivism, its relationship with constructivism is of great importance [9]. Constructivism was introduced to the community of the intellectuals firstly as a contemplative way of re-thinking reality and how expressions of reality are formed and transformed. Among the scholars of constructivism, Ferdinand de Saussure is having the most profound influence on artists and architects. By applying the ideas from his father and father's friend Adolphe Pictet, the structural framework he tries to build in the explanations of linguistic problems depicts the picture that understanding the structural expression of the reality is the key to ultimate and social truth. His work on Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes are of great significance for both comparative study and a constructivism are depicted. The notions of the signified and signifier are helpful in understanding artists and architects, especially with their work. The creation of architects is similarly using the design frameworks and instruments to signify the real world or the formula of the value that the architect believes. That is to say, no matter whether it is deconstructivism or constructivism, they bear the same meaning-production logic which is using the unique linguistic system to signify the world they try to build or the value they try to create. It is the notion and discovery of the structural framework of the world and its relationship with the expressional world that guide people to embrace the works of deconstructivist architects. To be more specific, the work and design are more comfortably considered as a language of value expression rather than simplistic weird.

In his creative process, contemporary American architect Frank Gehry said, "that's how I think. I'm just a mobile pen. I think about what I'm doing, but I don't care much about my hands." At first glance, Gehry's sketch gives people a sense of disorder, which seems to be just graffiti, but its lines are distinctive and full of rhythm, just like the dance of Chinese wild grass calligraphy. Here, in addition to Gehry trying to get the focus of research in design through sketch thinking, he also revealed his sensitive observation of abstract expression art and a kind of design perception of sketch polysemy expression.

Abstract expressionism, known as the New York School of painting, is a popular art movement centred in New York after World War II. The most prominent feature of its painting style is seeking visual and spiritual stimulation. Due to the influence of external factors and the reasons of the United

States itself, American Abstract Expressionism art also shows obvious diversity in painting style. The "gamut painting" advocated by artists such as Roscoe, Newman, and Mathewell emphasizes the use of strictly selected and limited abstract images, the use of pure color to express abstract lines, surfaces, and bodies, and orderly organize them into corresponding levels [10].

The "visual field" that constitutes the continuation and expansion of color. Although these painters pursue different painting styles, they have amazing consistency in trying to get rid of the shackles of traditional aesthetic concepts and advocating free expression such as arbitrary spontaneous and intuitive personal will. The art experiment of abstract expressionism style is regarded by the industry as a real expression process of cognition and experience of the real world, that is, it is mainly to show a nonformal, impromptu, and dynamic art creation process, and the work itself is the inevitable result of this activation process. This improvisation is largely integrated into the artist's artistic concept of subconsciousness with some emotional catharsis and surrealism, which greatly goes beyond Kandinsky's modernist thought of trying to establish a new order and becomes the summary of all modern art and the beginning of a new art experiment before World War II.

Abstract expressionism emphasizes the creation of inner expression and emotional experience, which has a deep impact on Gehry's sketch creation. In particular, the "automatic conception" creative method advocated by artists inspired Gehry deeply and developed into an "unconscious" architectural creative method in his architectural practice. His extremely "random" sketches and the unrestrained morphological characteristics produced by randomness imply the unique charm of the art of analogy and abstract expression. Gehry constantly tries to apply some theories and techniques in the art to his sketch creation and creates a fantastic, extremely confident, and even expansive future-oriented strange form for people with artistic conception. For him, "surface" is far more profound and meaningful than "background". Gehry not only pays great attention to abstract art but also has close contact with artists. "In a sense, I may be an artist, I may have crossed the valley between the two," he said He once mentioned that the strokes in the painting can directly express the artist's creative process, so he also pursues a similar embodiment in the sketch creation.

People can feel that Gehry's architecture has narrowed the distance between architecture and art, experienced a lot of emotional and spiritual things from his works, and can get a sensory response in himself. This is the same as illusory art. Gehry treats every building as a sculpture, an empty container, a space with light and air, and reflects the suitability of the surrounding environment and feeling and spirit. Gehry is very interested in art and has close contact with painters. He often gets inspiration from painting and works together. The artistic evaluation of Gehry's architecture reflects the development of Western art trends. Contemporary western art emphasizes self-centeredness and tends to seek more stimulation, more intense transformation and deformation, and greater tension. Therefore, cynicism, ridicule, games, paradoxes, making faces, making strange faces, playing art and anti aesthetics have become a fashion, and the pursuit of artistic images is disharmonious, incomplete, and inconsistent. In Gehry's architectural works, we can see the elements of stacking, antitradition, cynicism, and games in the same line with the western art trend. Gehry does not deny the artistic elements rich in his works. In this art, we can see some kind of intention. In Gehry's own words, this kind of intention is to question the existing things. The artistic quality of Gehry's architectural works is undoubtedly a great contribution to architecture.

3. Design philosophy and artistic analysis of Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid

The answer to Gehry's artistic phenomenon can be found in Gehry's feelings about the city and other objects. Jenks has described Gehry's racial and religious influence. Gehry often breaks the existing buildings and puts the elements in his works in an unfinished state. Just as he broke down cardboard furniture, he created works characterized by rough and broken surfaces. Jenks believes that this approach may stem from his complex attitude toward racial identity: the Jewish past was suddenly denied and accepted into a new symbolic order. Gehry changed his current name from Goldenberg when he was 20, but now he is beginning to show regret and wants to return to his original name and

disclose his Jewish identity. The various psychological analysis helped him understand his dual motives and the peaceful life of ordinary people in the United States, giving up Jewish customs, changing to atheism, the return of racial identity, and even the lack of attribution in his career. In short, he understood this difference.

As long as something unacceptable is accepted, he will say, "being accepted doesn't mean everything". He took this as the creed of his life's work. This sentence explains his interest in the image of fish and his extensive use of the theme of fish. As a child, as a Jew in the purely Catholic environment of Toronto, he was ridiculed as a "fish eater" and "fishy person". At that time, he and his grandmother went to the Jewish market to buy fish every Thursday. He would put the fish in the bathtub and play all day until his grandmother made it into smoked fish the next day. Gehry himself said in an interview that this will also have some impact on his fish art. "Besides, if you believe in astrology, since I was born on February 28, I should be Pisces —— I don't believe in it... I'm also a good swimmer. Swimming is my sport and I'm a waterman, so fish is another symbol for me, a symbol of perfection," he said. Gehry first used the fish shape in his design in the 1950s, using broken plastic pieces to make a fish lamp. Jenks believes that two obvious meanings are very important. Firstly, people will have a good impression of "fish", just like "elephant" and "dinosaur" buildings (the shapes of other animals have been built into habitable spaces many times). The notion that shape should be inspiring continues as his philosophy of architecture develops into a more deconstruction field.

Secondly, in this transparent fish body, it becomes the symbol of Gehry's architecture and art, and his translation of things that cannot be explained by function and value. In this sense, "fish" has become the perfect symbol of Deconstruction Architecture. The design meaning of "fish" reveals that in this form, you can simplify its broken and abstract form, but not the well-known scaly guy. This is a "fish shock". In this sense, Gehry's deconstruction is extreme modernism. In addition to his own life experience, plus the facade design of another work of Gehry mentioned earlier - the tower of the French Luma Arles Art Center, which integrates the important role of the Alps in the foreign cultural memory, we can see that the regional characteristics also have a great impact on Gehry, an architect.

For Zaha Hadid, the same traits can be found in both the outer shell and the function of the Guangzhou Opera House. When people stand outside or drive a car passing architecture, they can notice that the shape of the building is viewed like two pebbles with the colors black and white, so visitors usually call it "Fruity and Double Gravel". It has no vertical walls, no regular geometrical shapes, and lines, but comes with twisted curves. According to calculation, the great building possesses 64 different surfaces, 41 corners, and 104 ridges. No wonder people usually treat it as two stones around the river.

To match the local place, Zaha Hadid got her inspiration from a real rock in the Zhujiang River to design not only the outer shape but also the inner function. The twists and turns of the river valley became the profile of the building, and the broken lines of different curves became the inner space, so when all the lines and curves matched together, it became the lobby and amusing place. The light comes through the curves and lines to the inner space, which then is reflected into different angles, giving people inside a smooth feeling. Also, all the spaces are not alone, they can interact with each other, from Zaha's description, her spaces follow a curve line, but not a regular shape or straight lines. It seems lines are swimming inside the building. From all the characteristics of Guangzhou Opera House, it's easy to discover that the building has a strong relationship with nature, and it's a new approach to the culture of a city, the spirit of Optimism about the great passion and lofty aspirations toward future development. Indeed, Deconstructivism is not a group of people who waste their time developing unrealistic shapes of a building, but their ways of thinking, their courage, and their philosophical beliefs influence the whole world. Looking back to previous centuries, people around the world can either see a church or the regular houses, they had no chance to welcome diversification like today. As a result, architecture before had little function except for living and spiritual rituals, but today buildings sever many functions for different kinds of people, which means all the factions of architects have a great impact on the whole society. For example, today's buildings can attract people to visit a place to enhance the local economy, and serve as an amusing place, for business, and

scientific research. Deconstructivism, inside them, aims to break the barriers of the same shapes of buildings and create a new one that simulates nature to help balance people's lifestyles.

4. Conclusion

This article uses the examples of Zaha Hadid's Guangzhou Opera House and Frank Gehry's aesthetics to discuss the value of deconstructivism. By doing this, a strong relationship between deconstructivism and the whole society is shown. It was obvious that buildings with different shapes are necessary for people to balance their life. That's because deconstructivism gives people a place to show their understanding of their cultures and history, which opens people's minds not only in words but also in views. As a result, if people can understand the fixed and nonfixed; usual and unusual, they will go through their biases and embrace all the cultures. So, in the future, a building is not just a space to make money or live, but it helps strengthen the association with people around the globe.

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