



DESIGNER AS A CRITIC

Asst. Lecturer Aya Shukri Mohammed

Criticism

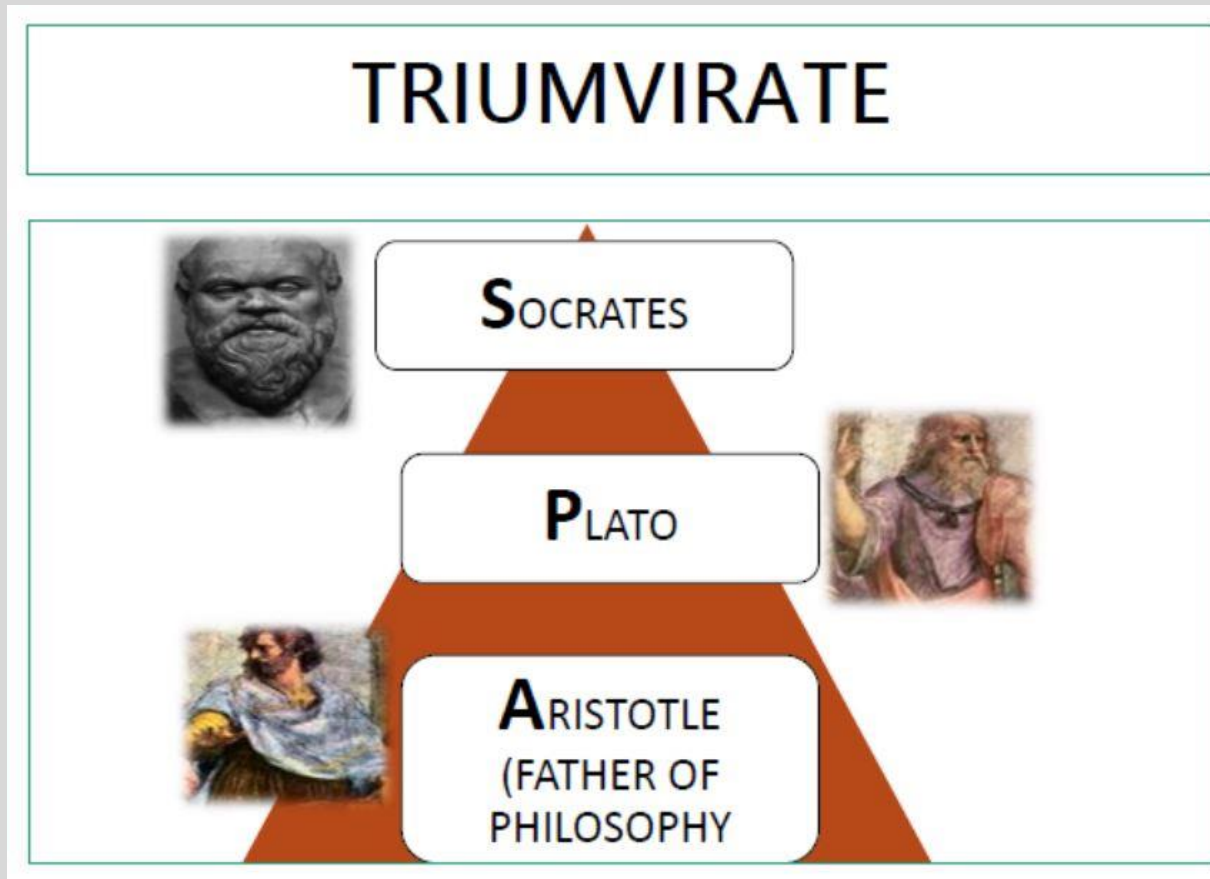
Second Semester

Week number 3

Feb 2025

Previous Lecture

- Ancient Philosophers
- Beauty in philosophy



Lecture Contents

- **What is Architecture Criticism**
- **Elements of Criticism**
- **Pillars of Criticism**
- **The architect as a Critic**
- **Critic Union**
- **Popular Critics**

What is Architecture Criticism

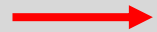
Is a **critique** of a completed building, or in some cases a **published design proposal**, **assessing the architect's success**, in meeting his aims and objectives and those of others.

Architecture criticism is a bridge between the architecture profession and the public. It is concerned with **opinions**, **values**, and **value judgments** with the qualitative aspects of individual buildings, groups of buildings, and the built environment as well as with **design, taste, cultural values with communities**, and of course most importantly with the communication of ideas.

Basic Elements of Criticism

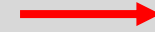
Critic

**1 Critic: Source of
Criticism**



Critique

**2 Critique: Message written,
Said or Imaged**



Receiver

**3 Receiver: Architect,
Designer, or Student, product**

Pillars of the criticism process

First: the critical person (Critic)

Second: The object of criticism

Third: The method of expressing criticism

Fourth: The conditions of the critically process.

First: Critic

One who expresses a reasoned opinion on any matter, especially involving a judgment of its **value, truth, beauty, or technique**.

Critic: taster, reviewer, reader

Music critic

Drama critic

Theater critic

Newspaper critic

Literary critic

Art critic

Architecture Critic

Critic

A critic is one who likes or dislikes a book, a movie, or Art.....

- A literary critic is usually a **professor** of literature.
- The critic, should be **flexible, tactful**
- To be active in Criticism, the critic should **be educated, and be able to explain his way of criticism**

Critic

- Generally, Criticism depends on the critic's ability to distinguish and the method used for criticism
- Criticism is affected by
 - **1. time**
 - **2. place**
 - **3. The method used**
 - **4. culture.**
- Criticism is a **relative problem, not absolute**
- Historically it has been associated with what is **beautiful or ugly**, and beautiful or ugly may be relative.

Second: object of criticism:

It is the specific Art, Design or architectural work under criticism, and criticism here is on several levels:

❑ Thought criticism:

- ✓ Criticizing **ideals, objectives, principles and theories**.
- ✓ It is concerned with **thought** more than it is concerned with the architectural work itself.

❑ Output (Production) Criticism

- ✓ It aims to describe the work, **explain its elements and symbols**, judge the quality of the Work **compared** to others, as well as study the effect of the work on the receiver.
- ✓ It studies the relationship of work to thought, principles and rules

❑ Methodology criticism :

- ✓ design methodology, mechanisms and methods

Third: Method of Expressing Criticism:

- ✓ **The oral method**, which uses a verbal conversation with the designer or other evaluators, is carried out either in academic institutions or in the real worlds of design, such as architecture and offices.
- ✓ **Written method:** Criticism in a descriptive, interpretative, or evaluative form.

Fourth: Conditions of the critically process:

- ✓ **The viewing angles of the work** are an important aspect that may emerge positive or negative aspects in it, and actually change the reality of its criticism, its meanings and its interpretation.
- ✓ **Time factor** the role of this factor in changing the nature of criticism directed at the work.
- ✓ **Prevailing theories and ideas:** the prevailing intellectual context plays a role as one of the conditions affecting the critical process.

The Architect as Critic

- An architect-critic is often an **architect**.
- They have a better ability to explain building design issues.
- A knowledgeable and confident critic can provide valuable insights.
- Their criticism should come from a deep understanding of the design process.
- Good criticism should be useful to:
 - The original designer(s)
 - The readers
 - The critic

CICA/ Critic Union/ CICA/ History

Name and Foundation

- CICA stands for the *Comité International des Critiques d'Architecture* (International Committee of Architectural Critics).
- It was established in **Mexico City in 1978**.
- It is closely linked to the World Congresses of the International Union of Architects.

Early History

- The first official CICA meeting took place in the **Joan Miró Foundation (July 1979)**.
- Prof. Bruno Zevi (Rome)** was elected the first President.

CICA/ Critic Union/ CICA/ History

Purpose and Approach

- CICA is a **pluralistic organization**, welcoming diverse views.
- It provides a platform for **architectural critics** to participate in international events and **architectural competitions**.
- It emphasizes that the critic's role is **separate from the designer's** but still requires **close collaboration**.

Zevi was best known as a writer. His most influential books were "**Toward an Organic Architecture**," published in 1945, and "**Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture**," first published in English in 1957.



Bruno Zevi

The Architect as Critic

- Bruno Zevi has argued that critics should be installed in architectural offices: this would give architects an opportunity to test their ideas on an objective and neutral person at the outset of a project.
- Many CICA members are, architects themselves who have also chosen to be involved with criticism. In that way they continue a wholly respectable line of individualistic professional architectural criticism.
- Some of them have developed specialist interests in aesthetics, in urban planning, in architecture and theory, in history and in wide multi-cultural aspects of the disciplines and ideas that form part of the environmental arts and sciences.

The advantages of the architect as critic

- The advantages of the architect as critic, the critic who comes to architecture trained in another discipline is disadvantaged. The weaknesses of the "journalist-critic" have been exposed many times in the past through lack of awareness of architectural history or context.
- In order to understand architecture however the critic must know how it is made. The centrality of the design process must be acknowledged. The critic must have a notion about how it works and how a design is conceived and made.
- In order to understand architecture however the critic must know how it is made. The centrality of the design process must be acknowledged.

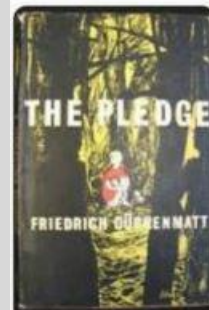
Popular Critics

Friedrich Dürrenmatt

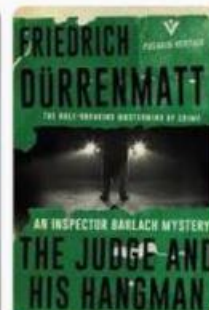


- Friedrich Dürrenmatt was a Swiss author and dramatist. He was a proponent of epic theatre whose plays reflected the recent experiences of World War II. The politically active author's work included avantgarde dramas, philosophical crime novels Born: January 5, 1921, Konolfingen, Switzerland Died: December 14,

Friedrich Dürrenmatt > Books



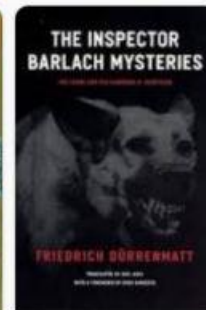
The Pledge:
Requiem for ...
1958



The Judge
and His Han...
1951



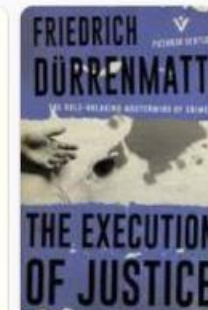
Suspicion
1952



The Inspector
Barlach myst...



A Dangerous
Game
1956



The Execution
of Justice
1985



The
Assignment
1986



The Tunnel
1952

Friedrich Durrenmatt was a Swiss author and dramatist.

who expressed serious reservations about critics in his little essay Chat about criticism in front of the press he said, "no writer is ever quite sure that he can master his own job ...". As a writer and architect myself I know exactly how he felt.

In his essay he went on to define four classes of critics.

He described them thus:

The first can neither write nor criticize.

The second can write but cannot criticize.

The third cannot write but can criticize,

The fourth can write and criticize!

Most critics", Durrenmatt said, "are to be found in the first class, the most famous are in the second, and in the fourth are those who know something about the subject being criticized. Nobody is to be found in the third category -those who cannot write but can criticize it is purely hypothetical!"



John Ruskin: one of the famous Critics (1819 –1900)

- **Who was John Ruskin?**

- An English **critic of art, architecture, and society**, as well as a talented painter and writer
- Born on February 8, 1819, in London, England.
- Died on January 20, 1900.

- **His Views:**

- He criticized the "laissez-faire" approach and opposed industrialism.
- He believed that mass production took away the joy of doing work well.

- **On Architecture:**

- Ruskin defended Gothic architecture as the noblest style.
- He admired the Gothic design and the medieval society that created it.



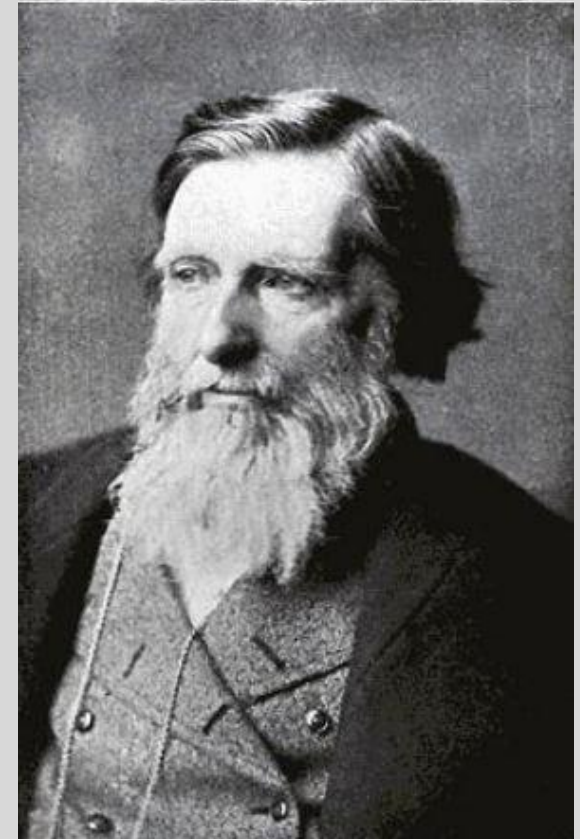
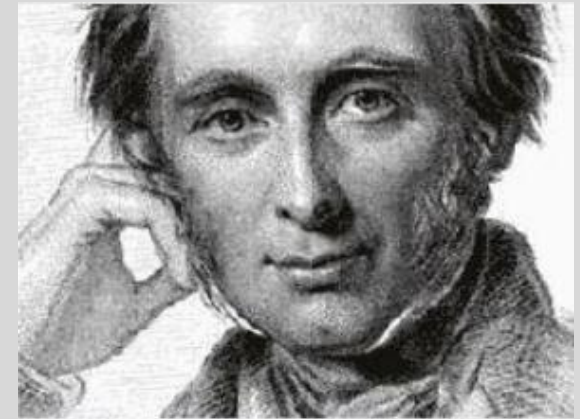
John Ruskin: one of the famous Critics (1819 –1900)

- In his book ‘**The Seven Lamps of Architecture**’ published in London, In the “**Lamp of Memory**” he advocated for **conservation** instead of **restoration** of old buildings.
- He **was against** the **restoration** and believed these heritage buildings were linked to the past.
- The English architect believed that heritage buildings shouldn't be adapted for reuse.
- He argued that these buildings technically belong to "the dead."



What do you think? Of his approach?

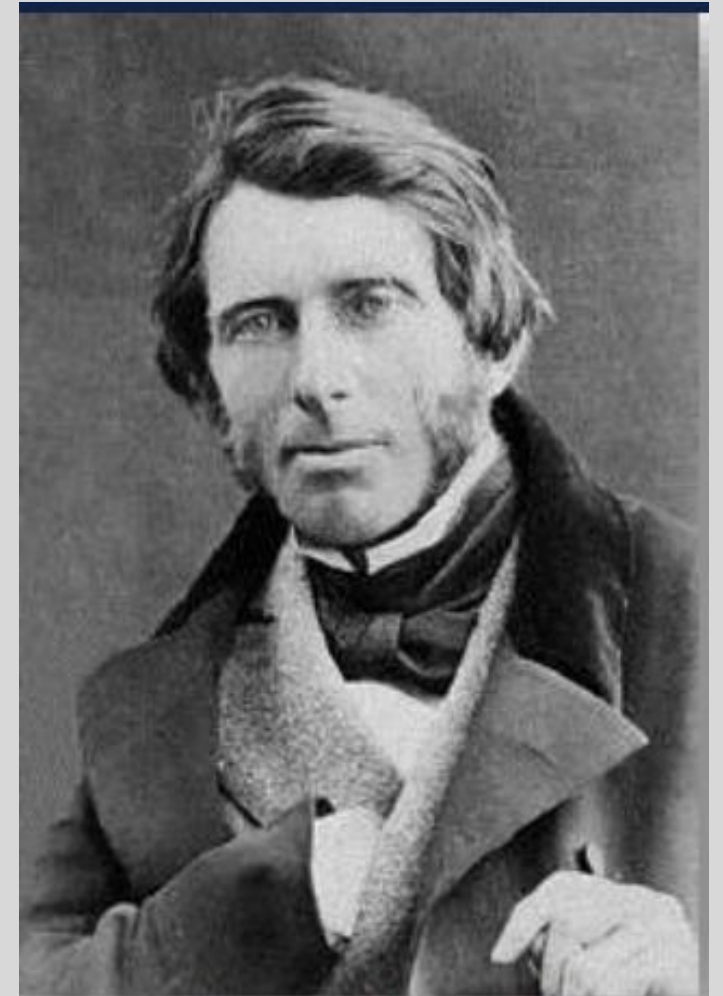
- **Architecture is built on fundamental elements**—mass, space, line, and color. Each generation **interprets and applies these elements differently** when analyzing buildings or defining great architectural styles. **In other words, what is considered important in architecture changes over time based on cultural and artistic perspectives.**
- **John Ruskin** strongly advocated for the **Gothic style** in architecture. He emphasized **Unity and Coherence** in design.



Why is Ruskin important in criticism?

He showed how **personal architectural preferences** influence criticism.

- His work proves that **architectural criticism is not just about aesthetics but also philosophy and values.**
- He helped establish the **role of critics in shaping public and professional opinions** on architecture.



John Ruskin

Do you have any questions?

References

1. Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary theory: An introduction* (2nd ed.). University of Minnesota Press.
2. Habib, M. A. R. (2005). *A history of literary criticism: From Plato to the present*. Blackwell Publishing.
3. Richter, D. H. (2017). *The critical tradition: Classic texts and contemporary trends* (3rd ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's
4. Wimsatt, W. K., & Beardsley, M. C. (1954). *The verbal icon: Studies in the meaning of poetry*. University Press of Kentucky.
5. Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A glossary of literary terms* (7th ed.). Harcourt Brace College Publishers.