



STEPS OF CRITICISM IN ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN

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Criticism

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- Steps of Art Criticism

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Introduction to Architectural Criticism

- **Criticism in architecture** helps designers **understand and improve** their work.
- It allows them to see what **works well** and what **needs improvement**.
- By analyzing designs, designers can make better choices about space, function, and style.
- Good criticism leads to better, more creative, and more useful designs.
- Just like in art criticism, a **structured approach** exposes the meaning and effectiveness of a design.

Architectural criticism examines several key aspects of a design to evaluate its success and impact.

- 1. Functionality**
- 2. Aesthetics**
- 3. Sustainability**
- 4. User Experience & Comfort**
- 5. Cultural and Historical Context**
- 6. Innovation and Technology**
- 7. Structural Integrity & Safety**
- 8. Spatial Organization & Flow**

To properly examine each point, the four-step criticism approach should be applied

1. Description (What do I see?)

2. Analysis (How is the work organized?)

3. Interpretation (What message does this design communicate?)

4. Judgment (Is this a successful architectural work?)

Step One: Description (What do I see?)

In the first step, you carefully describe the architectural work, noting the following aspects:

- **Designer and year**
- **Size and Scale:** Dimensions, height, and overall volume.
- **Materials and Techniques:** Concrete, wood, glass, steel, and construction methods.
- **Form and Style:** Is it modern, classical, postmodern, or vernacular?
- **Key Features:** Number of floors, shape, façade details, and interior elements.
- **Function:** What is the purpose of the building? Who uses it?

Example: The Louvre Pyramid (Paris)

- A large glass and metal pyramid located in front of the historic Louvre Museum. ← Size and material
- It uses transparency and modern materials to contrast with the classical surroundings. ← Style
- The structure consists of 673 glass panes that form a geometric pyramid. ← Structure
- Designed by architect I. M. Pei, completed in 1989. ← Information about the designer
- Serves as the **main entrance** to the museum, guiding visitors underground. ← Function



Step Two: Analysis (How is the work organized?)

In this step, we analyze how **architectural elements** are arranged to create a functional and aesthetic space.

Proportion and Scale

How do different parts relate to one another?

Balance and Symmetry

Is the design symmetrical or asymmetrical?

Rhythm and Repetition

Are design elements repeated to create harmony?

Circulation and Flow

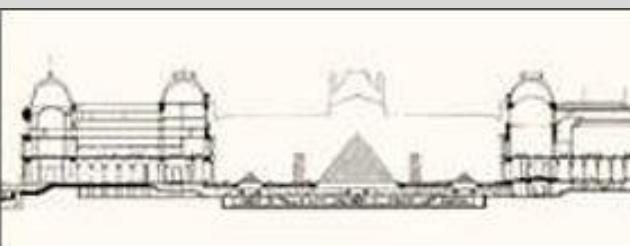
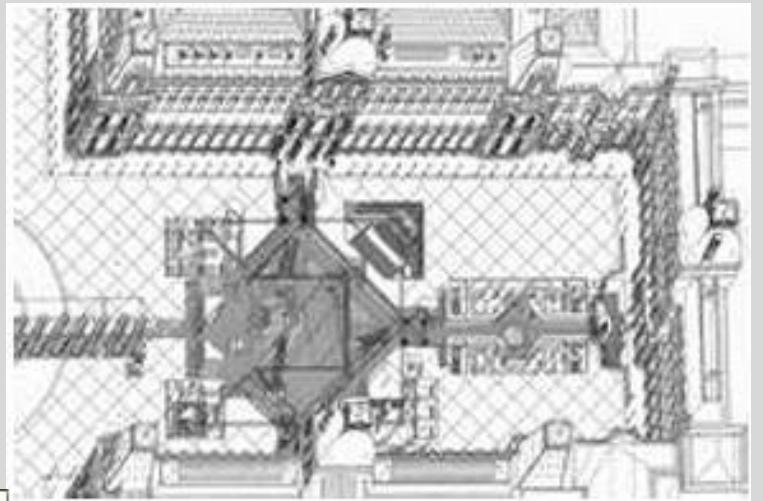
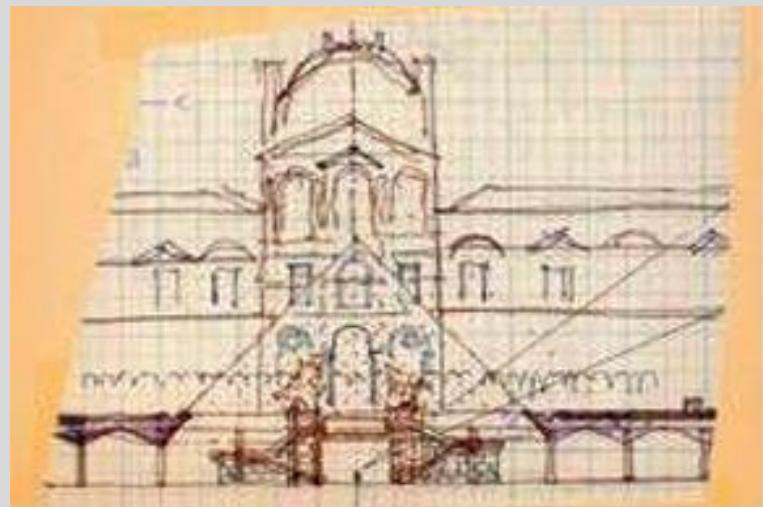
How do people move through the space?

Use of Light and Shadow

How does natural or artificial light affect the design?

Example: The Louvre Pyramid

- The pyramid's **triangular** shape maintains **symmetry** and **balance** within the **courtyard**.
- It **contrasts** with the historical style of the Louvre but integrates seamlessly through its transparency.
- The **glass allows natural light** to illuminate the underground lobby.
- The structure's geometric **simplicity enhances its functionality** and aesthetic appeal.



Step Three: Interpretation (What message does this design communicate?)

This step involves understanding the **meaning** or intent behind the design.

- What **feelings or emotions** does the space evoke?
- Does it reflect cultural, historical, or environmental **themes**?
- What is the designer's **message or concept**?

Example: The Louvre Pyramid

- **Symbolizes** the fusion of **modernity and tradition**, showing how **new** architecture can coexist **with historical** structures.
- **Represents transparency, accessibility, and openness** in the arts.
- The use of glass creates a **feeling** of **lightness, elegance, and technological advancement**.
- **Acts as a landmark** that transforms the Louvre into a global attraction with contemporary appeal.

Step Four: Judgment (Is this a successful architectural work?)

Here, we evaluate the overall success of the design based on:

- 1. Functionality**
- 2. Aesthetics**
- 3. Sustainability**
- 4. User Experience & Comfort**
- 5. Cultural and Historical Context**
- 6. Innovation and Technology**
- 7. Structural Integrity & Safety**
- 8. Spatial Organization & Flow**

9. Personal Judgment

Example: The Louvre Pyramid

Upon close examination, it becomes evident that..."

"Ultimately, the work succeeds/fails in..."

"This design/piece of art can be judged as..."

- **Aesthetic Success:** The contrast between modern glass and classical surroundings **creates a visually striking effect.**
- **Functional Success:** Effectively serves as the main entrance, enhancing visitor circulation.
- **User Experience:** The transparency and open design make the museum more inviting.
- **Sustainability:** Though made of glass, its design minimizes excessive energy consumption by maximizing natural light.
- **Personal Judgment:** The pyramid successfully integrates past and present architecture, making it an iconic and influential design worldwide.

Case Study 1: Villa Savoye (Le Corbusier)

Background of the Project and Designer

The Villa Savoye (1928-1931) was designed by **Le Corbusier**, a pioneer of modern architecture. This villa, located in Poissy, France, follows his “Five Points of Architecture,” emphasizing functionality and simplicity. The interior is a reflection of his modernist vision, focusing on open spaces, light, and movement.





Step One: Description (What do I see?)

- **Open-plan design:** The interior features continuous flowing spaces without heavy partitions.
- **Material choice:** Reinforced concrete, white plaster walls, steel, and glass.
- **Furniture style:** Minimalist built-in furniture in harmony with the building's structure.
- **Lighting:** Large horizontal ribbon windows provide ample natural light.
- **Functionality:** The interior is designed for flexibility and ease of movement.

Step Two: Analysis (How is the work organized?)

- **Proportion and Scale:** The rooms have a human-centered scale, promoting comfort.
- **Balance and Symmetry:** Asymmetry is intentionally used to create dynamic interior spaces.
- **Circulation and Flow:** Open staircases and ramps create seamless movement between floors.
- **Use of Light and Shadow:** The ribbon windows allow daylight to define and soften spaces.

Step Three: Interpretation (What message does this design communicate?)

- Emphasizes **modern living**—functional, open, and efficient spaces.
- Reflects **industrial modernism**, showing how machines and buildings can merge.
- The open-plan promotes **freedom of movement**, rejecting traditional compartmentalized interiors.

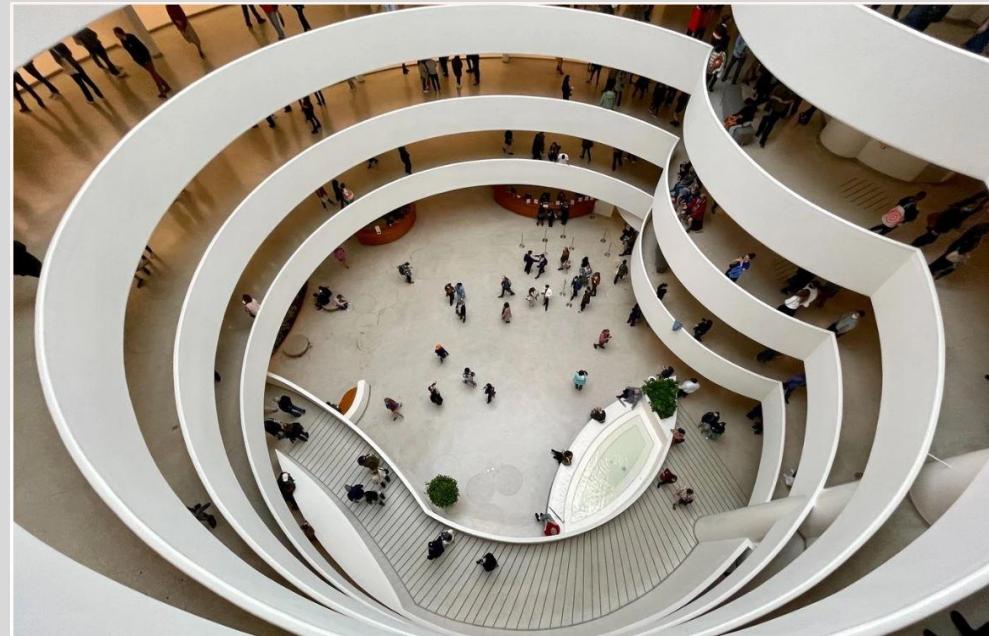
Step Four: Judgment (Is this a successful interior design?)

- **Aesthetic Success:** The clean lines and open concept create a timeless modernist aesthetic.
- **Functionality:** The open-plan, natural light, and built-in furniture enhance usability.
- **User Experience:** Some critics argue it feels cold and impersonal due to minimal ornamentation.
- **Sustainability:** The use of passive lighting strategies was ahead of its time.
- **Final Judgment:** While iconic, the design prioritizes form over comfort in some aspects.

Case Study 2: Architectural Project – The Guggenheim Museum (New York)

Background of the Project and Designer

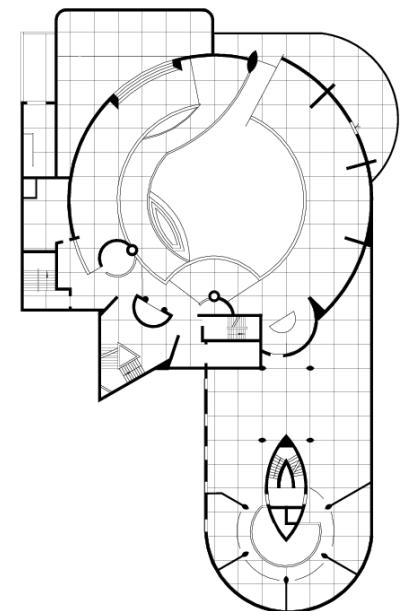
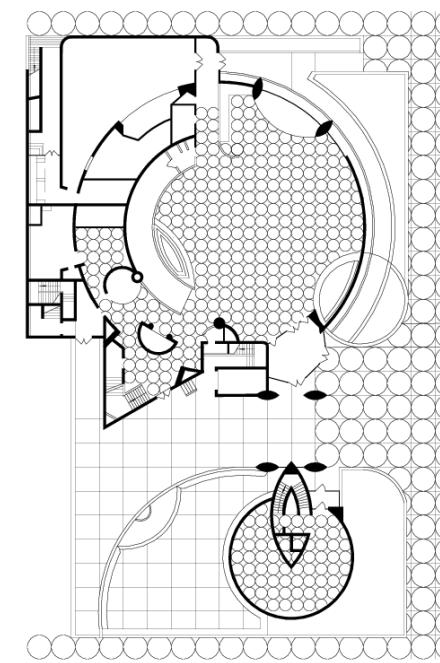
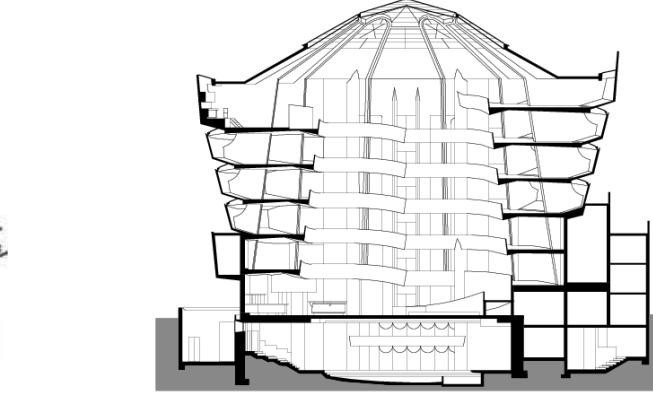
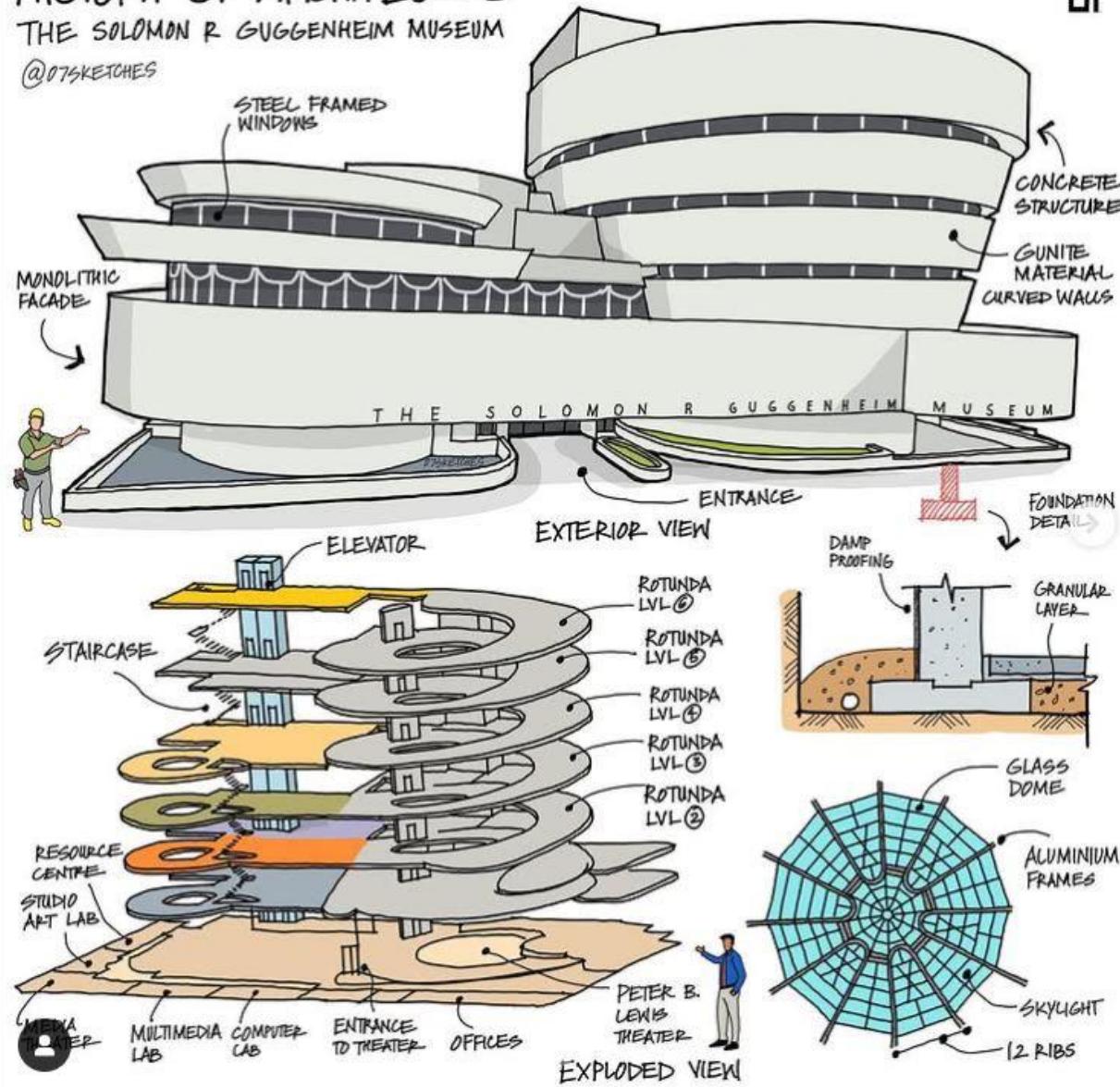
- Designed by **Frank Lloyd Wright** and completed in 1959, the **Guggenheim Museum in New York** is one of the most famous modernist buildings. It challenged conventional museum layouts with a continuous spiral ramp and organic form, offering a revolutionary experience in art display.



HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE

THE SOLOMON R GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

@07SKETCHES



Step One: Description (What do I see?)

- **Unique Form:** The museum has a **spiral shape**, resembling a nautilus shell.
- **Materials:** Reinforced concrete structure painted white.
- **Interior Layout:** A single continuous ramp spirals upward from the entrance.
- **Lighting:** Natural light enters from a **large glass dome** at the top.
- **Art Display:** Unlike traditional galleries, artworks are exhibited along the curved walls of the spiral.

Step Two: Analysis (How is the work organized?)

- **Proportion and Scale:** The interior and exterior are proportional to create a seamless, flowing experience.
- **Balance:** The structure is asymmetrical but maintains balance through circular geometry.
- **Circulation and Flow:** The spiral ramp eliminates the need for stairs, guiding visitors smoothly.
- **Use of Light:** The skylight dome ensures natural illumination throughout the interior.

Step Three: Interpretation (What message does this design communicate?)

- Represents **organic architecture**, where form follows function.
- Symbolizes a **new way to experience art**, free from rigid gallery layouts.
- The spiral suggests **continuous movement and progression**, making art viewing an evolving experience.
- Challenges the conventional **box-like museum format**, standing as an independent architectural statement.

Step Four: Judgment (Is this a successful architectural work?)

- **Aesthetic Success:** The organic curves and simplicity make it an iconic, recognizable landmark.
- **Functionality:** While visually stunning, the sloping floors have been criticized for making art display difficult.
- **User Experience:** Visitors appreciate the continuous flow but some find the incline tiring.
- **Sustainability:** The extensive use of concrete is not environmentally friendly.
- **Final Judgment:** The Guggenheim redefined museum architecture and remains a masterpiece despite functional challenges.

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