**Elements of Architecture: *Annotated Arch***

**by Carol Strickland, PH.D.**

**“Architecture is a unique art form that combines art and science: Beauty and utility.”**

**“All architecture proposes an effect on the human mind, not merely a service to the human frame.” John Ruskin**

Recurring Motifs: evolution and revolution

Ancient Greeks and Romans set the foundation

Architects embellished their engineering

Rebels busted loose from Greco Roman rules and designed building owing little to convention and bowing to individual imagination

**Historical advances:**

Continuity v. Innovation

Plain v. ornate

Greek temples were simple v. Roman building were ornate

Early Christian churches were spiritual with the use of light and iconography v. Islamic use of light is similar but mosaics are geometric with absolutely no fauna or human icons

Gothic architecture was complex and mysterious v. Renaissance designs were purely rational

High Victorian buildings were covered with elaborate decoration v. modern building were stripped bare.

Ancient buildings are still standing; today’s high velocity culture and the quest for novelty causes turn over within a decade.

**Engineering advances:** making new building forms possible, from the keystone arch in ancient Rome to high rise buildings that make your coffee sway on the top floors.

**Utilitarian Elements:**

Enclosed space: Sacred space; privacy: spirituality

Commemorative: historical praise

Shelter: Pragmatic, functional, purpose

Power and authority: propaganda

Cultural icons or symbols

Public monuments; commemorative; historical are social material and immaterial artifacts and reveal a society’s philosophical, religious, and political values.

**Egyptian Pyramids** suggest permanence and immortality

**Parthenon** represents the Golden Mean, with its balance of vertical and horizontal lines, or the ideal equilibrium of Greek philosophy

**Gothic Cathedrals** are dominated with vertical lines that represent heavenly aspiration to the medieval mind.

Initially these masterpieces brought tangible components of culture, and created visual provocation.

Prince Charles called the National Theatre a “monstrous carbuncle.”

Truly original architecture reassesses preconceived notions that are still debated today.

**Analyzing Architecture:**

“Architectural art begins physical and ends psychological.” James F. O’Gorman in *ABC of Architecture*

How do architects use social and political background in their designs?

How do architects manipulate elements of design?

What makes architects excellent at incorporating detail; craftsmanship; materials; proportion; functions; surface color and texture; relation to site; space and light?

Why is assessing excellence more important than style or fads?

What are the three qualities that Architecture must embody? (function, structure, and beauty)

Function is a floor plan, a diagram of the horizontal layout of room.

Structure is how the building is supported, is illustrated in the section, or vertical slice of the building’s stories.

Beauty is demonstrated in an elevated drawing, frontal views, showing exterior and interior designs.

Function and structure are easy to assess

**To gauge architectural aesthetics requires:**

Rhythm

Line

Scale

Light

Texture

Color

Ornament

Acoustics

Site

Space

Weight and mass

Human Character

Ambition

Values

Sculptural decoration

Axis/Interior organization

techniques

Proportion

Symbolic significance

Ritual significance

Context

Patron