

## CHAPTER 9

### PATTERNS: ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE

#### 9.1 INTRODUCTION:

The argument of this chapter is that *patterns of architectural language*, analysing the ideas of architectural movements, may be expressed, organised and grouped in software menus.

The patterns expressed by the ideals of architectural movements will give the designer choice about language or style if it is expressed by the proposed tool. As stated in the introduction, these patterns may portray ideas from different ideologies. Patterns (as excellent examples) should portray the often opposing ideals in different movements.

#### 9.1.1 IDEOLOGIES OF MOVEMENTS:

Glancy (1989:11) comments as follows about the ideals of Modernism:

*'Modern architecture was as much a moral crusade as a way of building. It was seen as morally good because it told no lies. The elevations of a modern building were drawn straight from its plan...*

*Modern architecture was morally right because it used materials honestly. At the same time it was right because it sought to satisfy real rather than imaginary needs....'*

Modernism thus had definite ideologies which are expressed in the

retrospect. It is interesting to note a cyclic pattern with regard to architectural language:

language of the elevations and forms and space. In these ideals there are patterns which can be expressed graphically.

Jencks (1980:10) suggests that the Modern movement attempted to be utopian; we know very well that the many Modernist manifestos gave the ideals of Modernism a utopian driving force :

*'The Modern Movement, capitalised like all world religions, had its Heroic period in the twenties and its classy period, its dissemination and commercialisation, in the fifties. By the late sixties, it had lost much of its ideological power and with the death of Le Corbusier in 1965, it had lost much of its moral and spiritual direction. As a utopian movement, or at minimum an avant-garde attempt to influence society, it always had a normative role..'*

The utopian ideals of a movement are not only limited to Modernism. Broadbent (1990:164) analyses the ideals of Rationalism in Europe as follows :

*'...that according to the philosophers of the Enlightenment, architects should express in built form, the ideologies of society. Thus they should envisage and develop social utopias for which their task, then, is to find appropriate three-dimensional built forms.'*

Rationalism was an attempt to bring back historical values to the cities of Europe - it also expressed certain ideologies. By means of perspective visions of what the cities could be like, European architects were influenced to design accordingly.

### 9.1.2 MOVEMENTS AND ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE

Historian, J. Mordaunt -Crooke (1987:10) writing in the era of Post-Modernism states:

*'Style in Architecture is a way of building codified in imaginistic form. Since the Renaissance which left us the notions of individual style - architects have often been perplexed by the twofold nature of their calling: building as service and building as art: the eternal tension between form and function...*

*The modern movement tried and failed to abolish style by abolishing choice. Post Modernism or rather Post functionalism has recreated the dilemma by resuscitating choice. Today the wheel of taste has turned a full circle. The twentieth century has had to discover what the nineteenth Century learned so painfully: Eclecticism is the vernacular of sophisticated societies; architecture begins where function ends.'*

This statement that Modernism tried to abolish style by abolishing choice, raises the valid but sometimes very controversial issue; that of *style or architectural language*.

When analysing 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde movements in architecture, in

retrospect it is interesting to note a cyclic pattern with regard to architectural language:

Mordaunt-Crooke remarks that the wheel of taste has turned a full circle. It seems that it has turned twice in one century. The twentieth century has experienced for the first time in the history a cycle of Classicism, Modernism, Classicism (Rationalism, Post Modernism) and now again Modernism (New Modernism, Deconstruction). A swing of the pendulum from historic to new/functional to historic/contextual to new modernism can be clearly seen.

The debate concerning patterns in movements could well be around the question: *'Is there a non-style in architecture?'* Is Modernism a non-style or merely an abstaining from applying decoration to buildings?

## 9.2 MOVEMENTS

### 9.2.1 MODERNISM

In architectural circles today everybody is familiar with the term Modern and has a clear vision of its architectural language. Some would rather prefer the word Functionalism to describe the movement. The term Modern is a relative one (modern will always be going out-of-date), but Modernism has become a movement which has changed the face of the world. Its success and expansion have been in step with many technological developments since 1920 and the many new materials which have been introduced.

Examples are:

- The use of steel reinforced concrete in structural applications,
- Glazing technology with regard to windows and facade treatment,
- Building systems and mass-production.

Historians and critics have at different times asked many penetrating questions and published suggested answers regarding where the profession finds itself. S. Giedion (1957), in the Modernist tradition, asks many relevant questions for the time. He points this out in the foreword: *'When one is standing in the midst of an evolving period, only a few signs can occasionally be traced or noticed. Only later, when checking backward can one judge whether truly constituent facts had been recognized or whether the argument had gone astray.'*

As a scholar of his time he speaks as a mentor and promoter of Modernism. However, he is honest in his reasoning that only the future will show if the signs (these could be interpreted as patterns) were valid. It is difficult to judge patterns or signs in contemporary movements although time does test these patterns. Do they bring permanent values or are they only fleeting fashions? Most Modernists of this era believed the movement was to stay forever.



Fig 9A Walter Gropius, own house 1925: Modernist example

### 9.2.2 POST MODERNISM

Venturi (1966: 22) published his essay against Modernism less than ten years after Giedion's book, and states:

*'Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern architecture. I like elements that are hybrid, rather than 'pure', compromising rather than 'clean', distorted rather than 'straight forward, 'ambiguous rather than 'articulated'.....*

*boring as well as 'interesting', conventional rather than 'designed', accommodating rather than excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and clear. I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. I include the non sequitur and proclaim the duality...*

*I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer 'both-and' to 'either or', black and white, and sometimes gray, to black or white. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combination of focus: Its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once.'*

Venturi might well have started the Post-Modernist movement with this essay, since there was a change in architectural language from this time on. Architects recognised that context is important. Historical elements were again used in designs.

The Modernist Movement did propound ideals that ignored the historical value, especially the context of buildings, to a great extent. Post Modernism

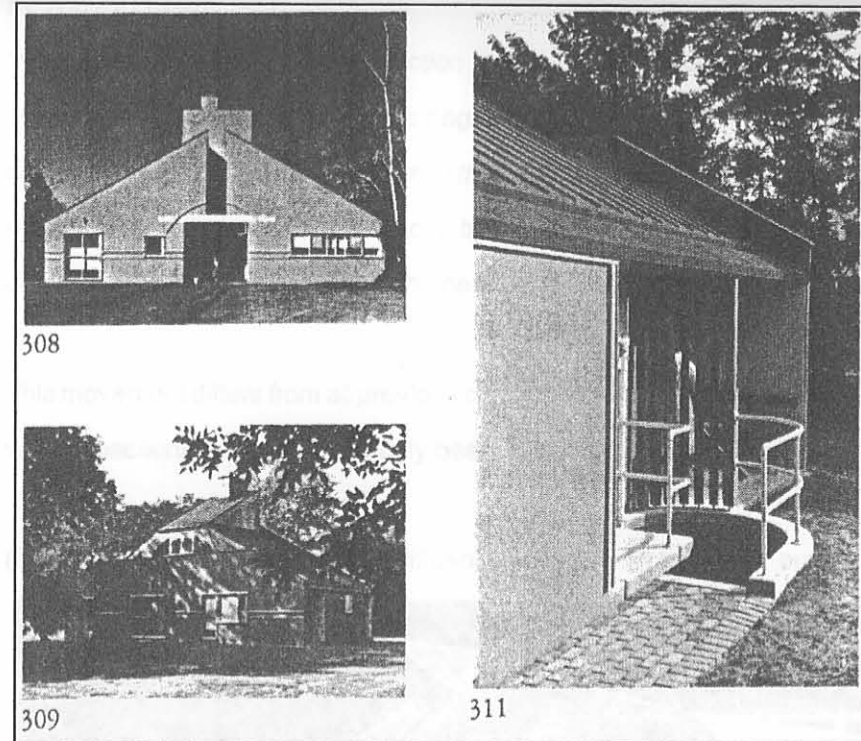


Fig 9B House in Chestnut-Hill by Robert Venturi : Post Modernist example

as a reaction to this tendency gave attention to context. It used mostly historical *elements*, in many instances not blending them well. The commercialisation of Post Modernism probably caused many poorly designed buildings to be built the world over and the movement was short-lived.

### 9.2.3 NEW MODERNISM

We are undoubtedly in a period of further evolution. Today architects who have learnt from the past failures of Modern Architecture are designing sophisticated modern buildings with sophisticated technology giving the world timeless modern buildings (see Fig 9C.) Modernism or Functionalism is still in existence.

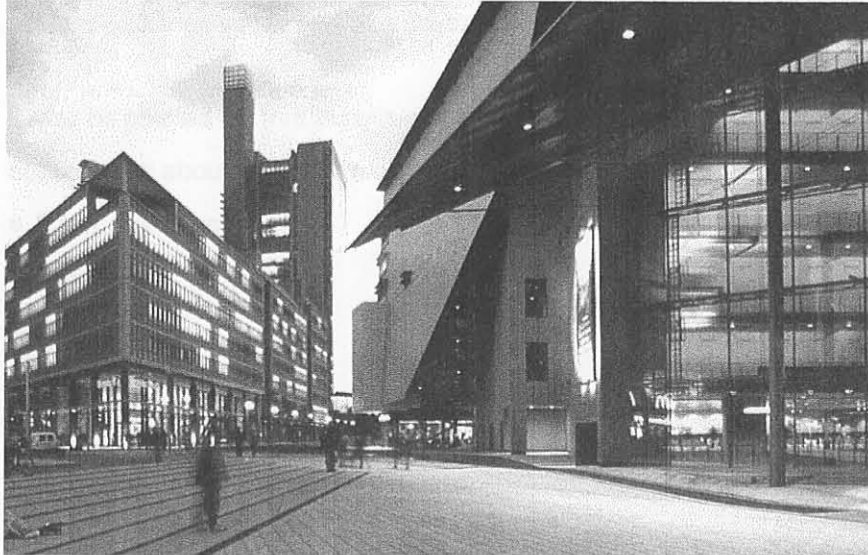


Fig 9C Renzo Piano, Potsdammer Platz: *New Modernism*

Since the 1990's some architects have experimented in Deconstructivism, which could be described as creating a new order from disorder. Deconstruction originated in the philosophies of Derrida, a movement totally different from previous orders and traditions. In the words of Derrida, quoted

by Wigley (1990):

*'Now the concept of de-construction itself resembles an architectural metaphor. It is often said to have a negative attitude. Something has to be constructed, a philosophical system, a tradition, a culture, and along comes a de- constructor and destroys it stone by stone, analyses the structure and dissolves it. Often enough this is the case....'*

This movement differs from all previous principles and orders and has drawn varied reactions. It has undoubtedly been creative and avant-garde.

(See Fig 9D.) It will probably influence modern architecture but it is

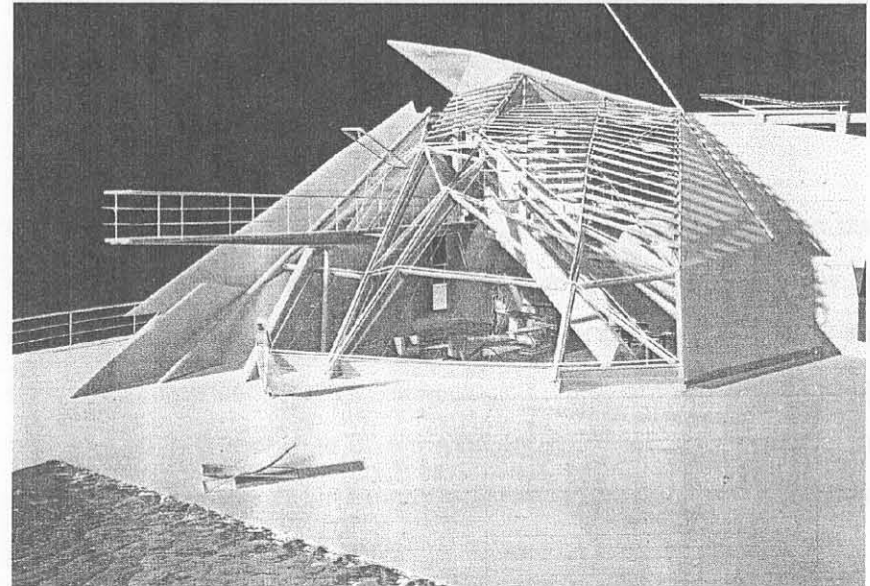


Fig 9D Coop Himmelblau, The open house California: *Deconstructivism*

debatable whether the movement will have a serious worldwide following. There are however, in any movement, unique design patterns that have to be investigated.

Commercial architects have also borrowed from the vernacular and produced styles that are popular but not new. Sometimes producing new classical buildings without the aid of craftsmen, sometimes designing very eclectic buildings which exhibit a mixture of elements from the past.

It may be pointed out that in spite of all the theories, architecture is after all not so much about descriptive words, but about:

- Form, mass, volumes
- Function
- Composition
- Scale
- Relationships
- Language
- Space
- Progression
- Planes
- Order (or disorder)
- Style (or no style)
- Symmetry (or asymmetry)

- Humanity (not robots?)

### 9.3 THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF FORM

About form and its timelessness: de Carlo (1982:37) says:

*'Forms may be suitable or unsuitable; vital or weary or dead: evolutive or incapable of adaptation; they may encrust if their use is changed or be always open, whatever the change of use; they may be persistent or vanishing; they may keep their integrity only within a system of correspondences, or enrich in not corresponding; they may have univocal meaning that answers the expectations of specialized groups.. or multiple meanings that at different levels are eloquent to everyone; and also: revealing conflicts or expressing consensus; inferring repression and alienation or stimulating criticism and therefore deliverance; they may have intrinsic meaning or meaning derived from transplantation: from literature, most of the times; etc.'*

De Carlo is observing that forms will be tested by time (as Gideon also remarked); forms include changes to the urban environment and how the changes influence it. Of this we are certain, cities change. Our society and culture are influenced greatly by technological changes; the best of buildings will have to face a change of environment and economic realities. The continuing relevance of form cannot be separated from the realities of a fast-moving, further developing world, in a future that is not so clear.

As generations pass we could become intimidated by the new, the avant-garde. The professors of Neo–Classicism early in the twentieth century avoided Modern Architecture and were threatened by it. The avant-garde will always be there, attempting to do what was never done before, maybe even go back to the past once again.

Alexander and Krier believe in the past, Derrida and the deconstructivists believe all previous orders must make way for the new order, dissolving that which was previously acceptable.

#### 9.4 PATTERN FOCUS :

The aspect of style or language in architecture may be controversial but the patterns should not be analysed for their style or fashion value but for the value of the language or style principle to the designer. There are in Classicism and Vernacular patterns valuable principles that may even benefit a Modernist designer.

Some designers may never use the classical, some may never use the vernacular patterns, it should always be open-ended and be left to individual preference. The following table suggests a possible pattern focus for the movements analysed. The examples of the patterns could be categorised according to these elements:

<b>1. MODERNISM</b>	<b>2. CLASSICISM</b>	<b>3. VERNACULAR</b>
1.1 HIGH TECH	2.1 NEO CLASSICISM	3.1 TRADITIONAL
1.2 NEW MODERNISM	2.2 POST-MODERN	3.2 INFLUENCES
1.3 DECONSTRUCTIVISM	2.3 RATIONALISM	3.3 SPONTANEOUS
<b>PATTERN FOCUS</b>	<b>PATTERN FOCUS</b>	<b>PATTERN FOCUS</b>
FUNCTION	COMPLEXITY	ORGANIC
SIMPLICITY	FORMALITY	INFORMAL
COMPLEXITY	HIERARCHY	STRUCTURE
PURIST	FORM	BUILDING METHOD
ORDER	STYLE	RANDOM ORDER
DISORDER	ORNAMENT	SPACE
FORM ACCENT	GEOMETRY	PROGRESSION
'NO STYLE'	FACADE	
GEOMETRY	PROPORTIONS	
VOLUMES	SPACE	

TABLE 9-1 PATTERN FOCUS IN MOVEMENTS

The designer could find ideas and inspiration from Modernist, Classical or Vernacular patterns to help in the discovery of the design solution. The patterns related to language or style should not prescribe to the designers which style to choose but rather give them input regarding the choices already made and show possibilities of further developing the language chosen.

Architectural language choice is personal and subjective. The avant-garde architect believes in New Modernism or Deconstructivism for example and sees his choice of style as an outflow of his conviction. Commercial architects for instance could be more flexible in their choice, and client preferences and prescriptions may play a role in determining the style or language.

### 9.5 DEVELOPING AND PRESENTING PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE:

To show the style or language properly, a number of architectural detail elements will have to be shown. Adding detail however, could be very time-consuming. It is therefore suggested that *photographs* of design examples be used to illustrate the patterns.

The question of copyright and authorship will have to be addressed - architects will have to give permission for their work to be published or used to illustrate patterns.

*(See also menu and examples of patterns, following.)*



FIGURE DIAGRAM ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE



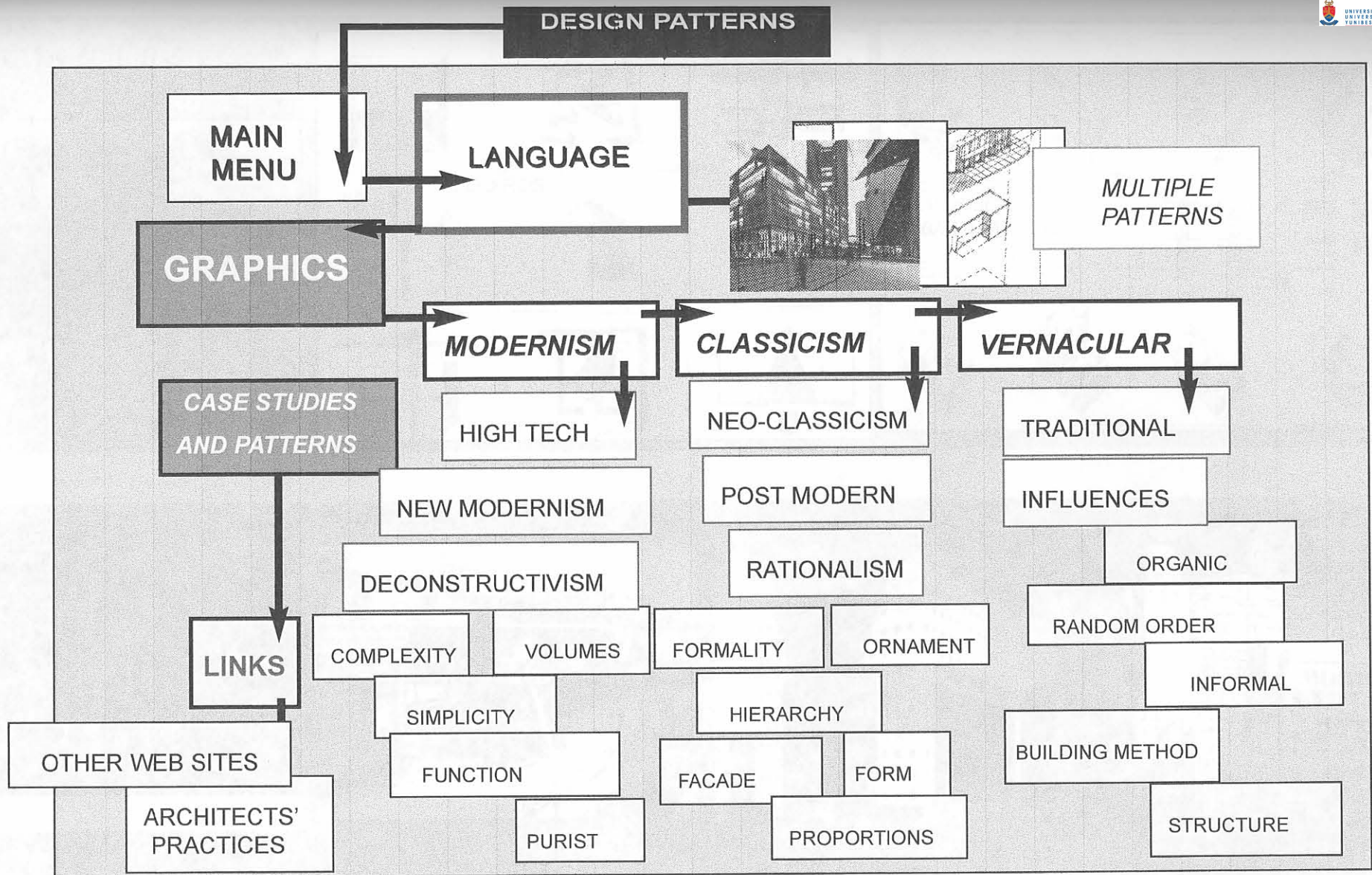
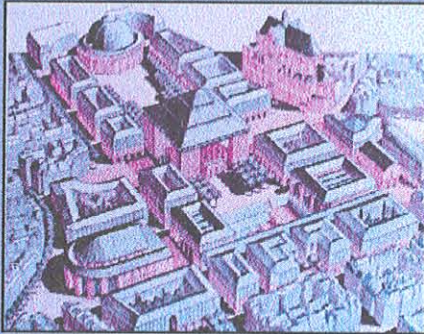
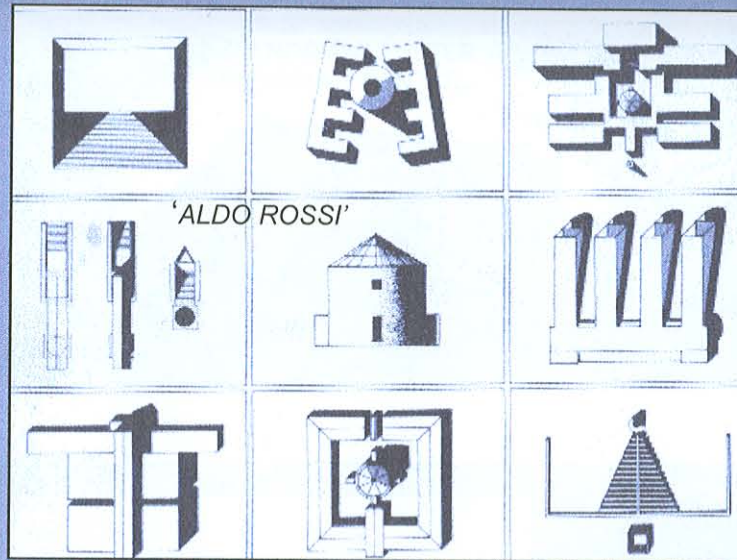


FIG 9E DIAGRAM OF ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE MENU

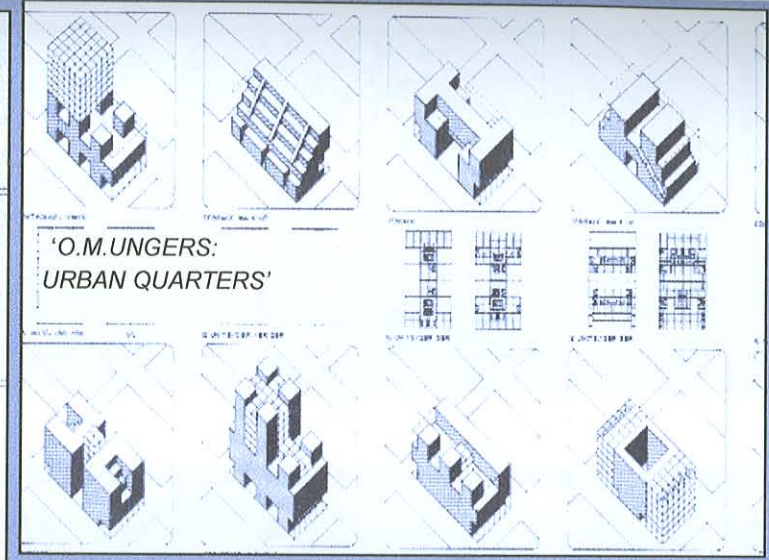
# RATIONALISM



'L. KRIER: LUXEMBOURG RECONSTRUCTION'

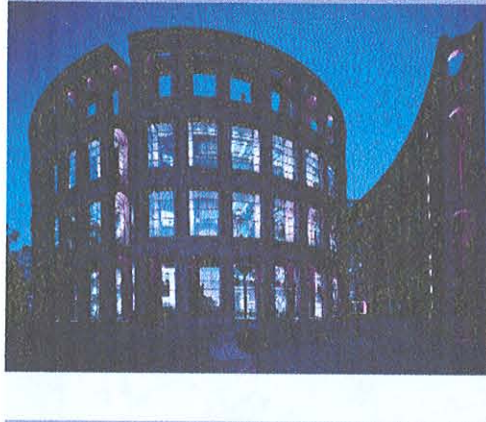


'ALDO ROSSI'



'O.M. UNGERS:  
URBAN QUARTERS'

# POST-MODERNISM



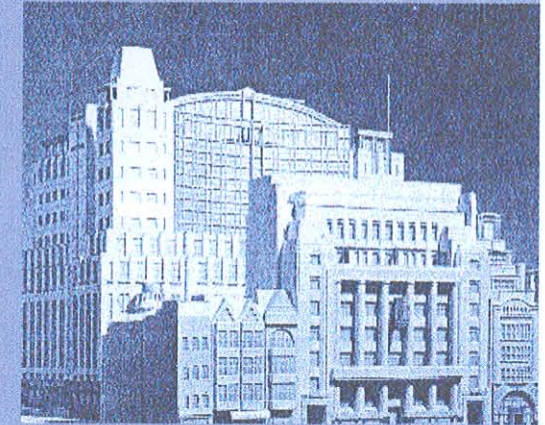
MOSHE SAFDIE  
VANCOUVER LIBRARY



JAMES STIRLING:  
STUTTGART STAATSGALERIE



MICHAEL GRAVES  
PORTLAND BUILDING

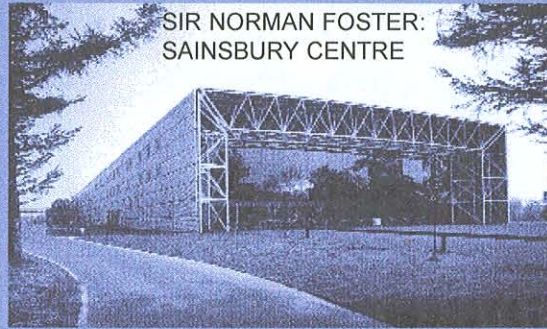


KOHN, PENDERSON FOX :  
CANARY WHARF

FIG 9 F ARCHITECTURAL  
LANGUAGE : CLASSICISM



ALSOP & STORMER:  
MARSEILLES TOWN HALL



SIR NORMAN FOSTER:  
SAINSBURY CENTRE



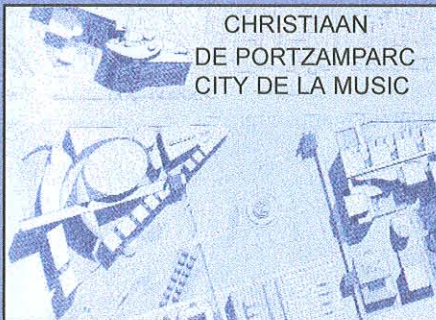
RENZO PIANO:  
POTSDAMER PLATZ



RENZO PIANO:  
AIRPORT FASCADE



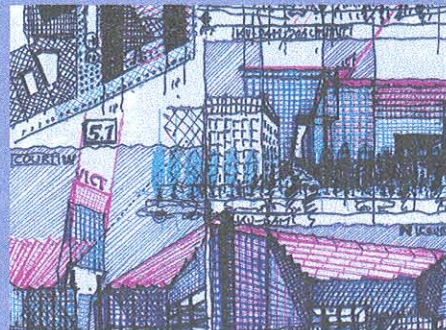
KISHO KUROKAWA:  
EHIME PREFECTURE MUSEUM



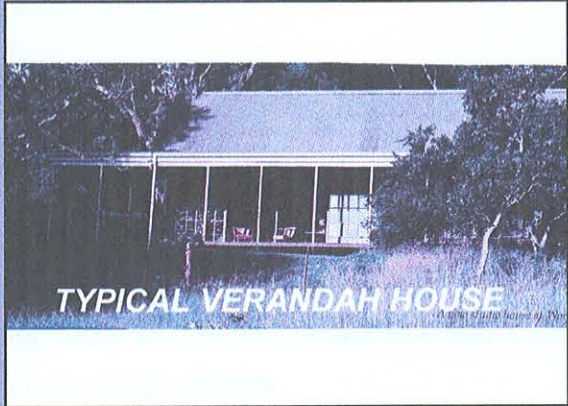
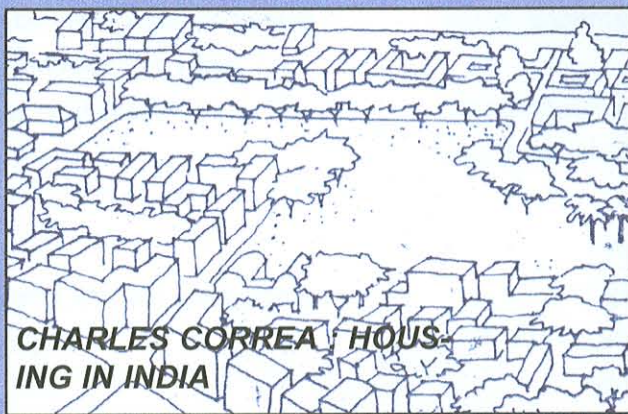
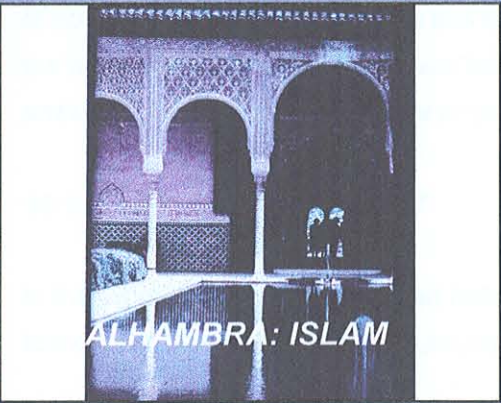
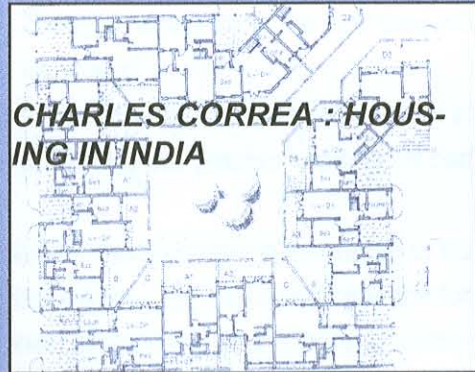
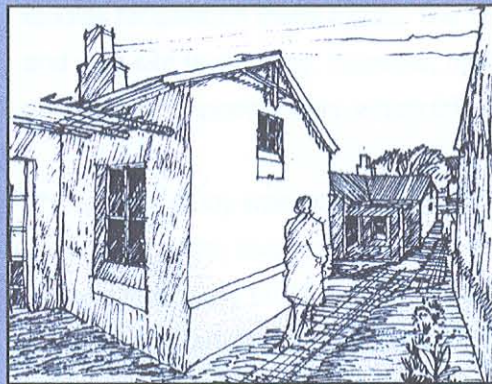
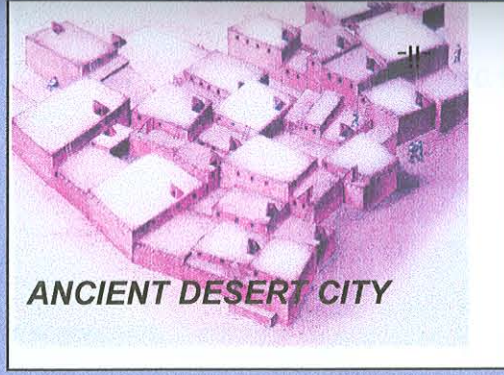
CHRISTIAAN  
DE PORTZAMPARC  
CITY DE LA MUSIC



RENZO PIANO:  
IMAX THEATRE



RENZO PIANO  
POTSDAMER PLATZ



**VERNACULAR**

**FIG 9 H ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE:  
VERNACULAR**