

# COHERENT NARRATIVE OF FORMALISM IN ARCHITECTURE AND CLARIFYING ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CONCEPT OF FORM



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Received: 13.06.2023, Accepted: 21.06.2023  
DOI: 10.17932/IAU.ARCH.2015.017/arch\_v09i1005

**Abstract:** *The concept of form is one of the most essential aspects of contemporary architectural discourse. Additionally, there is a school of thought and approach to architecture known as formalism, which focuses primarily on the form of work while paying little attention to other aspects of architecture, such as functionality, structure, social considerations, and cultural influences. The form is the central concept in formalist thinking. However, the multiple meanings of the word "form" and the lack of consistent research into formalism's origins and philosophical roots make it challenging to understand the relationship between formalist thinking and the concept of form in architecture. This research aims to explore formalism in the epistemological field of architecture. By examining the idea of formalism in architecture, we will determine the specific understanding of form that this idea entails. We will discuss formalism as an idea put forth by scholars, critics, and theorists who have been involved in the study and critique of architecture. To achieve this, we will refer to historical and theoretical sources and architectural criticism that has addressed the question of formalism and form in architecture. Formalist thinking in architecture has its roots in the artistic formalism movement. Over time, it has evolved and been enriched by various theories and teachings, significantly impacting the perspectives of theorists, critics, and architectural professionals. In this article, we distinguish three types of formalism. First, formalism is a mode of thought among scholars who have approached architecture and architectural knowledge from a formalist perspective. Second, formalism is a method used in the analysis of architectural works. Third, formalism is a method employed in the design of architectural works.*

**Keywords:** *Form, formalism, architectural formalism, concept of form*

## **Mimarlıkta Biçimciliğin Tutarlı Anlatımı Ve Biçim Kavramı İle İlişisinin Açıklanması**

**Özet:** Form, çağdaş mimarlık söyleminde en önemli kavramlardan biridir. Bu kavrama ek olarak ayrıca, temelde eserin formuna odaklanan ve mimarının işlevsel, yapısal, sosyal ve kültürel yönleri gibi diğer yönlerine çok az önem veren bir düşünce okulu ve mimari yaklaşımı da söz konusudur ve buna Formalizm adı verilmiştir. Form, formalist düşüncede ana kavramdır. Bir yandan form kelimesinin çoklu anlamları, diğer yandan formalizmin felsefi kökleri ve düşüncesine ilişkin tutarlı araştırmaların eksikliği, mimarlıkta formalist düşüncenin ne olduğunu ve özellikle form kavramıyla ilişkisini anlamayı zorlaştırmaktadır. Bu araştırma, mimarlığın epistemolojik alanındaki formalizmi ile ilgilidir. Mimarlıkta formalizm düşüncesini inceledikten sonra, bu düşüncenin hangi biçim anlayışıyla ilgili olduğunu bulmaya çalışılmıştır. Formalizmi, bir fikir olarak mimarlık bilgisi ve eleştirisi işiyle uğraşan akademisyenler, eleştirmenler ve kuramcılar tarafından inceleyeceğiz ve bu doğrultuda onların mimarlıkta formalizm ve form sorununu tartıştıkları tarihsel ve kuramsal kaynaklara ve mimarlık eleştirisine başvuracağız. Mimarlıkta formalist düşüncenin kökleri sanatsal formalist akımına dayanmaktadır. Bu düşüncenin kuramları ve öğretileriyle zenginleştirilip içi doldurulmuş ve kuramcılar, eleştirmenlerin ve mimarlık profesyonellerinin düşüncelerinde önemli bir yere sahip olmuştur. Bu makalede, üç tür formalizmi birbirinden ayırıyoruz. Birincisi, formalizm, mimarlık ve mimari bilgi hakkında biçimci bir yaklaşım ve perspektifle konuşan akademisyenler arasındaki bir düşüncedir. İkincisi, biçimcilik mimari eserlerin analizinde bir yöntemdir ve üçüncüsü, biçimcilik mimari eserlerin tasarımında bir yöntemdir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Form, formalizm, mimari formalizm, form kavramı*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The words “form,” “formal,” and “formalism” are frequently discussed in architectural conversations. However, there is still no consensus among experts regarding the precise meaning of these terms. It is crucial to clarify to experts and the architectural profession what formalism refers to its origins and its roots in architecture. Moreover, the word “form,” present in both “formalism” and “formal,” is used in architecture with numerous meanings, leading to confusion about the nature of formalism in architecture. Therefore, to grasp the essence of formalist thinking in architecture, we must explore the meaning of “form” and its relationship to formalism while also considering the opinions of scholars on the matter.

To comprehend the significance of form in relation to formalism, we first need to understand formalist thought in architecture and art. Secondly, we must acquire sufficient knowledge of the word “form” 's connotations to determine the boundaries and gaps in its meaning within architectural formalism. Understanding both form and formalism individually, as well as their interconnectedness, is crucial. This article aims to present a coherent narrative of formalism in architecture and clarify its relationship to the concept of form by examining its historical and conceptual position. To achieve this, we will refer to historical and theoretical sources in architecture.

In essence, we will explore the history of formalist thinking and experts’ opinions on architectural formalism. Additionally, we will delve into the concept of form in architecture to uncover its meaning and application in relation to architectural formalism. This research adopts a non-quantitative approach, employing conceptual history as its strategy and thematic analysis as its method. According to the research questions, this article is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter examines the philosophical roots and origins of formalism in architecture. The second chapter explains formalism in architecture, while the final chapter explores the relationship between the concept of form and architectural formalism.

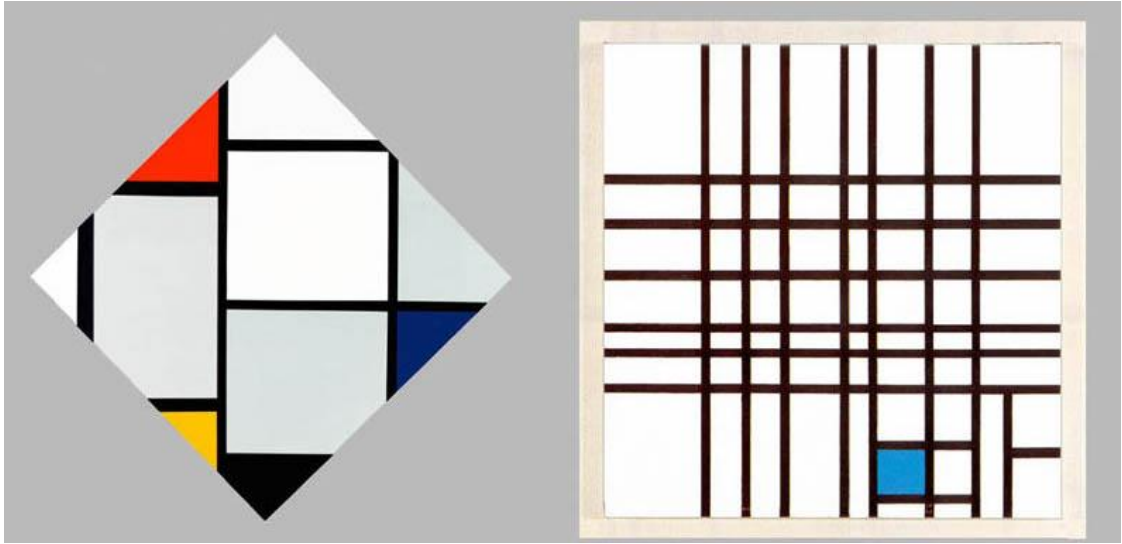
The origins of formalism, specifically German and Russian formalism, are discussed, along with the works of researchers who have explored the topic of formalism in architecture. One such attempt was made by Hakan Anay in his essay on formalism (cognitive knowledge) and its influence on architecture. However, Anay’s analysis primarily focuses on reviewing the background of formalism, and he falls short of providing a comprehensive understanding of formalist thinking in architecture and its relationship to form [1].

## 2. PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS AND ORIGINS OF ARCHITECTURAL FORMALISM

The emergence of formalism in architecture can be traced back to its influence on formalism in art. The artistic formalism movement began in the 1830s and was strongly influenced by Kantian aesthetics. Immanuel Kant, in his book “Critique of the Power of Judgment,” declared that form was the fundamental element in all fine arts. According to Kant, aesthetic criticism is primarily concerned with “form.” He believed that form is a quality of the mind that compels us to perceive things in a particular manner. We perceive this form in things because our minds “impose” it upon them. Kant argued that the origin of beauty does not reside in the objects themselves but rather in the process of perceiving them [2].

For Kant, form is distinct from the sensory aspects of things, which he classified as matter. He also maintained that the utilitarian aspects of an object have no place in aesthetic judgment since they require knowledge of what the object is and what it does. Therefore, such aspects belong to the realm of knowledge rather than aesthetics. Kant’s significance in the history of the concept of “form” lies in the idea that form resides in perception, not in the objects themselves. This raises the question of why the mind recognizes beauty in objects. According to Kant, the mind recognizes beauty in objects because it sees in them, regardless of their content and meaning, a representation of that “form” [3]. Aesthetic criticism and the perception of beauty are thus based on the mind’s ability to recognize external characteristics that correspond to its internal concept of form [2].

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Johann Friedrich Herbart played a significant role in articulating formalist aesthetics, influenced by Kant's views. He asserted that "meaning in a work of art is superfluous because every work inherently contains a unique set of formal relations that the artist has intentionally and skillfully assembled" [4]. Herbart explained formalist aesthetics in terms of perceiving the relationships between lines, tones, color planes, and other elements, with a particular focus on the psychological aspect of this process. Herbart's aesthetics and philosophers like Robert van Zimmerman developed further in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Zimmerman emphasized the internal relationships among elements rather than the forms themselves in his comprehensive study titled "Knowledge" and "Form" [4].



*Figure 1. formalist aesthetics in terms of perceiving the relationships between lines, tones, color planes, and other elements Tableau No. IV; Losenge Composition with Red, Gray, Blue, Yellow and Black, c. 1924/1925. 56 1/4 x 56 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (108)*

After the 1870s, there was a resurgence of interest in the concept of form by Romantic thinkers such as Goethe, Schiller, and Schlegel. Their perspective revitalized the dry and lifeless formalist approach of the time, which viewed form as merely the relationship between components within a work. The Romantics' understanding of form significantly impacted theories of formalism in various artistic domains, including literature and architecture. While they acknowledged Kant's ideas on the relationship between degrees and the creation of aesthetic experiences, they found Kant's framework insufficient in explaining why forms are pleasurable. Consequently, they turned to psychology in an attempt to identify the factors that make artworks enjoyable. According to the Romantics, art's subject matter lies in the expression of the inner life of individuals, and form serves as the medium for its manifestation. This perception of form among the Romantics facilitated the development of a more scientific understanding of form based on the psychological principle of "empathy." The concept of empathy in art suggests that art forms attract us because they enable us to experience emotions that we already know through our bodies [4].

Numerous thinkers have explored the concept of empathy, but the most important and influential figure in introducing this concept to art and architecture was the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin. His work enriched the concept of form in architecture significantly. In his 1886 dissertation titled "Introduction to the Psychology of Architecture," which was published in the 1930s, Wölfflin proposed a novel concept of form that had not been extensively discussed in architecture before. The book begins by posing the question: "How do architectural forms have the capacity to express feelings and emotions?" Drawing upon the principle of empathy, his answer to this question is that "just as we have a body [and a personality], physical forms in architecture also express personality" [5]. Wölfflin suggests that since our physical bodies serve as the medium through which we perceive the material world, by comparing

architectural works to the human body, a new understanding of architecture emerges, strongly influenced by Goethe and other Romantics' ideas on the form [5]. He argues that the same force that holds humans upright and prevents them from becoming shapeless masses can be referred to as well, life or the power of form. The conflict between matter and force sets all living things in motion, constituting a central theme in architecture.

In addition to Heinrich Wölfflin, another architect named Adolf Geller also expressed formalist architectural thinking around the same time in 1887. In his article titled "What is the reason for the constant change of architectural styles?" Geller states that architecture is the true art of pure visible form [6]. He views form as a play of lines and bright shadows, independent of any meaning and inherently joyful. Influenced by Kant, he removes everything that suggests content from form, believing that form can bring pleasure to the viewer even without content [5]. Geller argues that architecture, unlike painting and sculpture, is a system of abstract and geometric lines that do not directly reference the tangible elements of our daily encounters. As a result, the contemplation of architectural works, unlike painting and sculpture, is not necessarily linked to natural causes. Geller's reflections gave rise to an intriguing perspective that suggested the emergence of abstract and non-objective art, claiming that its origin and roots lay in architecture [6].

However, despite the earlier roots of formalism in architecture, there was a tendency at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the modernist period, to neglect the concept of form in its formalist sense in architecture. According to Adrien Forti, this neglect stemmed from the contradiction between Kant's idea of form and the modern understanding of architecture. The historical development of architecture should be measured by changes in how we perceive and observe the world. Such a perception of form contradicted modernism, which viewed new forms as the inevitable product of new materials and technologies, as well as the teachings of the Bauhaus, which saw form as a universal and timeless category.

Therefore, the flow of formalism in art serves as the gateway to formalist thinking in architecture. This thinking was initially based on the concept of form rooted in Kant's perspective and further developed through the Romantic idea of form. However, due to the contradiction between formalist views of form and the ideals of modernist architecture, the development of formalism in architecture was suspended for a considerable period. It was only later, in the 1960s and 1970s, as a response to the functionalist movement in modern architecture, that formalist architectural thinking resurfaced. And, of course, it owed much to the insights of Wölfflin, Geller, and other leaders of formalist thinking in art.

In his article "Critical Architecture, Between Culture and Form," Michael Hayes distinguishes between two contrasting approaches to architecture criticism: one that views architecture as a tool of culture and another that sees it as an independent form. Hayes identifies formalism in architecture as a position that disregards historical context and instead focuses on independent architectural issues and formal operations. Formal operations refer to how the components of a work fit together, how the final product achieves integration and balance, and how these components and processes can be recombined and understood without external references. According to Hayes, these operations are considered architectural, independent, and internalized within formalism [7].

Hayes suggests that a critique that ignores historical issues and understands the work without external references is characteristic of formalism. This means that formalist criticism is primarily concerned with the internal aspects of the work itself rather than its relation to the cultural context or the time in which it was created. Formalism analyzes how architectural components interact and form a coherent whole, emphasizing the understanding of architectural operations and their potential for reuse and recombination [7]. To grasp the position of formalism as an approach to understanding and critiquing works, it is helpful to contrast it with contextualist criticism. Contextualist criticism considers the work of architecture in relation to its historical, cultural, and social context. It seeks to understand how architecture reflects and responds to broader cultural and societal conditions. In contrast, formalism focuses on the work's intrinsic formal qualities and operations without giving primary consideration to external references or historical factors [8].

### 3. THE COURSE OF THINKING IN THE ARCHITECTURAL FORMALISM

Prior to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the prevailing tradition of criticism and thought did not recognize the autonomy of art. Artistic forms were often expected to serve moral and non-artistic goals, supporting national values and societal objectives. The work of art was seen as a means of realizing these goals, and its aesthetic qualities were secondary in importance [9]. Formalists emerged as a response to this tradition and protested against the prevalent conditions of art criticism. They argued that focusing solely on the external world and neglecting the formal aspects of the artwork itself hindered the correct interpretation and evaluation of works of art. Formalists insisted that art criticism and research should pay attention to the work's formal qualities and consider them essential in the proposal of art theory [9].

Formalists, in contrast to traditional art critics, focused on the artistic value of a work of art based on its form. They believed that the form, whether in literature, music, architecture, or any other art form, determined its artistic merit. Formal aspects were considered essential in the artistic evaluation of a work. Ellen Colquhoun, a prominent architectural formalism theorist, described formalism as a way of thinking that prioritizes legal relationships over causal relationships. This definition is related to the mathematical understanding of functions, which study structures independently of external factors. Formalism focuses on “how” things are rather than why they are. This characteristic of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century thought can be observed in various disciplines, including mathematics, art, and architecture. Colquhoun explains the formalist approach to the study of art, stating that formalism limits the analysis of artworks to their formal structure, avoiding discussions about their specific meanings in historical periods. Colquhoun argues that the formalist tendencies of the avant-garde architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century hindered the continuous progress of understanding architecture in terms of historical laws related to technical and social revolutions. Instead, he suggests that modern architecture has reached a point where it can establish aesthetic laws independent of external events [10].

To summarize the viewpoints of Colquhoun and Hayes, the key characteristics of architectural formalism include efforts to establish the independence of the field of architecture and a focus on internal architectural issues. This entails discovering and explaining the rules and regulations specific to architecture. Formalism emphasizes the “how” of architecture rather than its “why,” leading to a disregard for the historical and social context of work in architectural criticism. The study of formal techniques and operations of architectural works is prioritized to uncover the components and processes that constitute the work and how they can be recombined to guide architects' designs [7].

Moving beyond the theoretical understanding of formalism, we now turn to the thoughts of those who have adopted formalism as an approach and method of criticism. According to the formalist approach, everything needed to critique a work should be found within it. The context of the work, including its causes of creation, the effects of historical and social context, and the life of its creator, are considered external to the work and of secondary importance in criticism. Colin Rowe is a notable figure often regarded as the initiator of architectural formalist criticism [11].

Rowe's formalist analysis was heavily influenced by his teacher, Rudolf Wittkower [12]. Wittkower studied eleven Renaissance villas by Palladio and identified a consistent geometric order, a nine-part grid, in their designs. Colin Rowe took this analysis a step further and applied Wittkower's method to modern buildings. In his article “Mathematics of the Ideal Villa,” published in 1961, Rowe used diagrams to compare Palladio's Villa Malcontenta with Le Corbusier's Villa Stein, aiming to reveal the Palladian origins of modern architecture and establish connections between modern and historical examples [13]. In concluding the article, Rowe pays tribute to the formalism of Wolflin while acknowledging the limitations of formalist criticism. He states that criticism begins by juxtaposing similar architectural works and aims to identify differences between them, demonstrating how the role of a single element can be transformed through specific strategies. Rowe considers this approach to be Wolflinian, and he acknowledges that such a critique cannot fully address questions of iconography and content [13].

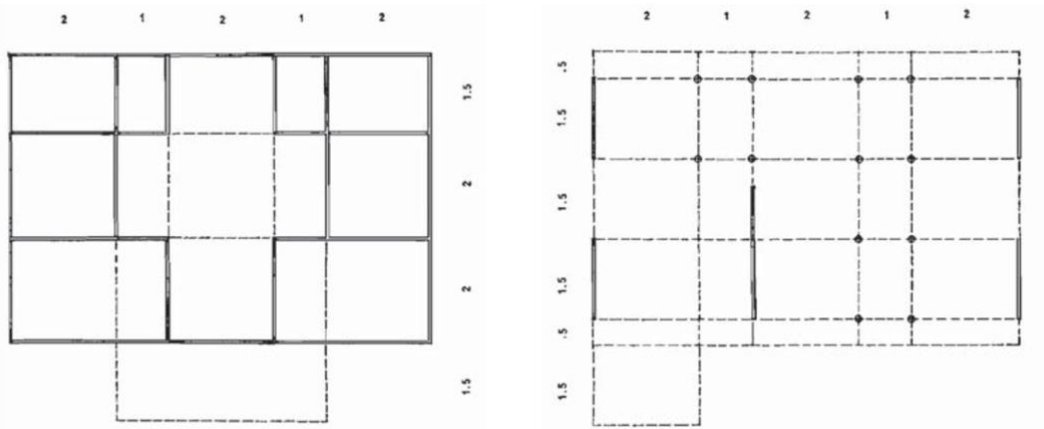
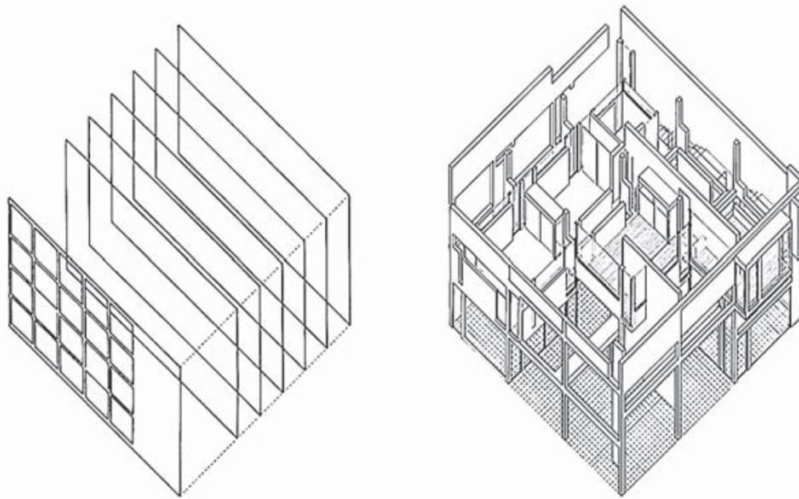


Figure 2. Analytical Diagrams, Palladio's Villa Malcontenta with Le Corbusier's Villa Stein (Rowe, 1982)

Despite its acknowledged limitations, Colin Rowe's critical approach established him as a prominent figure in architectural formalism and one of the most influential architectural educators of the 1960s. His formalist studies had a lasting impact on a generation of architects. Through his comparison of Palladio's Villa Malcontenta with Le Corbusier's Villa Stein, Rowe aimed to illustrate the presence and continuity of history in modern buildings and challenge the modernist architectural movement, which claimed to be detached from history and tradition. As mentioned earlier, formalist studies such as Rowe's analysis focus on the work's structure, function, and context.

One of Colin Rowe's students, Peter Eisenman, carried on the tradition of formalist criticism in architecture. Eisenman was introduced to formalist analysis during his travels to Europe with Rowe in 1961, where he was influenced by Rowe's analytical approach to criticism. In his 1963 doctoral thesis titled "The Formal Basis of Modern Architecture," Eisenman sought to identify the common formal foundations of classical buildings and selected modern buildings and all architecture as a whole [14]. Using geometric patterns, he systematically analyzed eight prominent modern projects by architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, Le Corbusier, and Giuseppe Terragni, employing Colin Rowe's nine-part grid as his analytical tool. However, Eisenman expanded the use of this grid from two dimensions to three, focusing on the articulations and internal mechanisms that shape the buildings. Eisenman's analysis method is best exemplified by his axonometric drawings of the Casa del Fascio (Palace of Fascism) project, which illustrate his approach to exploring the formal aspects of architecture.



*Figure 3. Axonometric analysis of the Casa del Fascio by Giuseppe Terragni (Eisenman, 1963)*

Unlike Colin Rowe, Peter Eisenman sought to go beyond the analytical aspect of formalism and explain architecture as a language with its own syntactic rules and internal mechanisms. He viewed architecture as a text to be read, emphasizing the role of syntax and the rules governing the relationships between architectural components. Eisenman's approach to formalism in architecture aligns with views in literary theory, drawing inspiration from Russian formalism, the Prague School, structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstruction. This perspective considers architectural form as a system of signs, linking formalism to linguistics.

Eisenman's approach diverged from the functionalism of late 1960s modernists. Instead, he saw architecture as committed to positivist research in the behavioral sciences, systems theory, and technology, viewing form as a pure function of a function. His essay "Post-Functionalism" (1976) articulated his vision for a self-referential, independent architecture focused on its own formal and material operations. Eisenman believed that achieving architectural independence involved two aspects: first, developing a method that allows architectural elements to become self-referential, and second, inventing a construction process that can create self-reference without adhering to the norms of modernism.

In the first part of his project, Eisenman aimed to explain architecture as a system of signs, going beyond the physical aspects and focusing on the information signals conveyed by architectural forms. Each part of the building is considered a sign within this framework. The second part involved creating a self-referential process, drawing inspiration from Russian formalism's concept of defamiliarization or the technique of revealing the author's manipulation of materials. Eisenman's engagement with Russian literary formalism established a connection between formalism in architecture and linguistics.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a significant confrontation with the ideas of modernism, and formalism emerged as a powerful approach that challenged the principles of modern architecture. It offered an alternative path for architects and thinkers, with efforts focused on strengthening formalist tendencies in architecture. While achieving complete independence of the field of architecture might have been a challenging goal, formalism provided a means to resist the instrumentalism of capitalist society during that period. Indeed, formalism in architecture does not constitute a cohesive and consistent movement like formalism in art or literature. Instead, it represents a collection of scattered efforts by individual scholars. It is an intellectual system with general characteristics, extending beyond a sole focus on architectural form. Therefore, not every thinker who emphasizes form should be labeled a formalist.

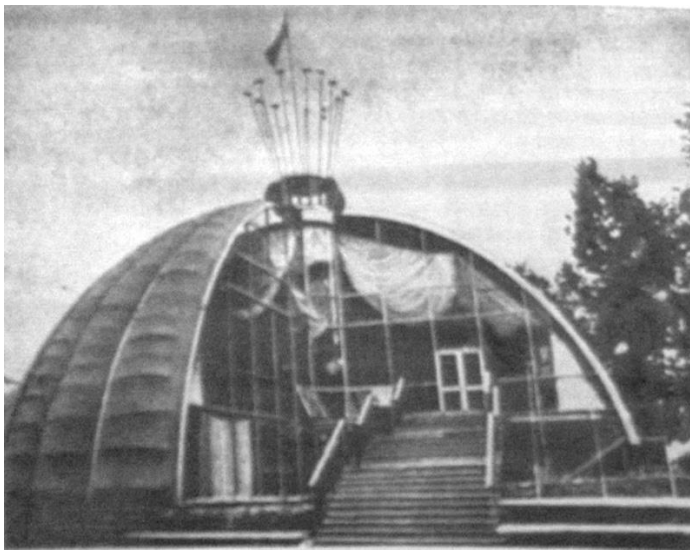


Figure 4. *Post-Functional, Kazakhstan Pavilion at the XII International Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow. Architects: T. Suleimanov, M. Simonov, 1985. (Sholpan K. Utenova, "V poiskakh natsional'noi formy [In Search of the National Form],* Arkhitektura i stroitel'stvo Uzbekistana, vol. 6, 1988, p. 10.)

So far, we have identified formalism in two realms: the descriptions and measurements of its influence on architecture and using formalism as a tool for criticism and analysis of architectural works. Eisenman introduced a third area by integrating formalism into architectural design. He proposed formalism as a normative and prescriptive mode of thinking in addition to its theoretical aspects, employing it as an approach to architectural design.

After employing axonometric diagrams to analyze architectural works, Eisenman gradually incorporated formalist principles into his own design projects. He discovered that the architecture of Terragni, which he had previously analyzed through a formalist lens, could be transformed through displacement, resulting in a limited design's ability to generate an infinite number of combinations. Eisenman's early work frequently referenced the Casa del Fascio project and Le Corbusier's Domino [15].

However, since this discussion is about formalism within the realm of knowledge and architectural criticism, we will not delve further into the design aspect based on formalism.

#### **4. THE CONCEPT OF FORM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH FORMALISM IN ARCHITECTURE**

In the context of architectural formalism, the concept of "form" holds great significance. However, the multifaceted nature of the term has posed challenges in fully grasping formalism in all its dimensions. While exploring the intellectual history of formalism, it becomes evident that thinkers who have delved into the subject of formalism in architecture often neglected to examine the nature of the concept of "form thoroughly" and its relationship with formalist thought. Instead, they focused more on the nature of formalist thinking in architecture and its implications.

To shed light on the concept of form in relation to formalist thought, it is necessary to analyze the theme of form. Scholars such as Adrien Forti in "Words and Buildings" have conducted comprehensive research on the various meanings and applications of form in architecture throughout different historical periods. Similarly, Jaza and others have addressed this issue as well. However, in this article, we will restrict our exploration of form to its significance within the realm of formalist thought in architecture.



- I. Formalism in architecture can be understood by tracing its origins back to theories of form in art. These theories emphasize the artistic aspect of architecture and argue that the artistic value of works resides in their form. Therefore, to grasp the concept of form in architectural formalism, it is crucial to consider these theories that view architecture as an art form. This distinction is important because form discussions extend beyond formalism and encompass various non-formalist architectural theories. However, within formalism, form implies the artistic value of architecture.
- II. In formalism, the focus is primarily on understanding “how” something is rather than delving into the reasons or motivations behind it. The emphasis lies in comprehending the formal structure, techniques, and operations of a work of architecture. This approach prioritizes analyzing the form itself and its intrinsic qualities rather than placing significant weight on external factors or historical context.
- III. Formalism emerged as a response and opposition to functionalism, highlighting a fundamental contrast between form and function within this perspective. While functionalism emphasizes the utilitarian and practical aspects of architecture, formalism shifts the attention toward the aesthetic and formal qualities of architectural works. This tension between form and function becomes apparent in formalist approaches to architecture, where artistic value and formal characteristics take precedence over functional considerations [16].

By considering these key points, we can gain a better understanding of the concept of form within architectural formalism and its distinctive approach to evaluating and interpreting architectural works. The concept of form in architecture has been a subject of ambiguity and confusion, partly due to the different ways it has been understood. Architecture has a unique role in giving physical form to spaces that accommodate people, which sets it apart from other disciplines. In architecture, form is more commonly considered as a physical shape rather than a purely philosophical idea. However, there have been instances where the form has been viewed as both a physical form and an abstract idea, further contributing to the concept's ambiguity. Form, in its sense of shape, refers to the characteristics that can be perceived by the senses.

On the other hand, form as an idea refers to the characteristics that are perceived by the mind. Resolving the ambiguity between these two meanings has been a central theme in discussions about form in architecture. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of form became particularly confusing in Germany. Kant viewed form as a purely perceptual quality, while Goethe considered it as a quality inherent in things akin to a germ or genetic principle. Hegel introduced form as something beyond physical objects, only knowable by the mind. As architects started using the word “form,” all three meanings were often conflated.

Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, except in the realm of philosophical aesthetics, Germans used the term form in architecture simply to refer to shape or mass without other philosophical connotations. It was primarily used to describe the physical characteristics of buildings. However, in the 1930s, the English-speaking world began using the word form in a broader modernist sense to encompass the idea behind a design. This shift in usage sometimes created difficulties in reconciling the new concept with the previous understanding of the term. Beyond the ambiguity of the word form, there is a more intricate problem in understanding its meaning. Often, the significance lies not in the specific meanings attributed to form but in its use as a counter-category for defining values and other concepts. The form is like an empty container that can adapt to different and possibly contradictory concepts, often in opposition to other ideas. It can be seen as a vehicle for expressing and decorating aspects of mass culture, social values, experience, progress, technology, and functional relationships. In essence, form in architecture holds meaning through its interactions with other concepts and values. It can be seen as a flexible and adaptable element that accommodates various interpretations and ideas.

In conceptual history, one approach to understanding a concept is to examine its opposite concept, which helps define and differentiate its domain. Applying this approach to the concept of form in architectural formalism, we can contrast it with the concept of function. The relationship between form and function has been a central topic in discussions about form and architectural formalism [17].

The architectural discourse of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was heavily influenced by the idea that there should be a causal relationship between form and function. This idea was encapsulated in Sullivan's famous statement that "form follows function." On the other hand, Formalism argues that for architecture to be considered art, it must surpass functional and material limitations, and its formal aspects should challenge its functional aspects. Formalism emphasizes the expressive and aesthetic potential of the architectural form [18].

In the vocabulary of modern architecture, function often refers to the practical use, usefulness, and structural requirements of a building, including construction, shelter, organization, and materials. However, there are also metaphysical functions attributed to form, where ideas and expressions emerge [19]. These metaphysical functions are not typically addressed in functionalist theories of architecture.

Various thinkers, such as [20] & [21], have proposed that there is a necessary contradiction between form and function in architecture for it to be considered art. As a work of art, architecture is committed to expressing metaphysical or transcendental ideas that go beyond its material aspects [22]. The aesthetics of architecture are not solely dependent on construction or functional considerations. The design and creation of architectural forms are undertaken independently of material considerations and mechanical tools.

The assertion that "architecture is the result of the contradiction of form and function" reflects the viewpoint that the contrast between form and function is significant for proponents of formalism and those who recognize the artistic aspect of architecture. Both groups emphasize the realization of architecture as a work of art, placing emphasis on its formal aspect.

## **5. RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF FORM IN RELATION TO FORMALISM**

You have presented a nuanced perspective on formalism in art, highlighting the formalists' focus on aspects such as function in architecture or subject matter in painting. Formalists prioritize the aspects of the artwork that change from one piece to another and consider them aesthetically irrelevant. They seek to preserve the independence of art by separating its artistic value from non-aesthetic aspects like function, theme, emotions, and thoughts.

However, you argue that all aspects that contribute to the realization of a work of art, including function, play a role in its artistic value. The mere function of a building may not determine its artistic value, but how that function is realized becomes crucial. Similarly, the artistic value of a painting, music, or poem lies in the manner in which their respective content is expressed. The artistic value of architecture cannot be separated from the quality of the performance that takes place within it.

You propose that formalists also consider another aspect of artworks, which they refer to as content. This aspect varies from one work to another and can contribute to the work's artistic value. Though it may lack aesthetic value, content influences artistic value when realized through the form. The form is seen as the way of expressing content, encompassing the substance and meaning within the semantic limits of form.

It is important to note that architectural formalism does not reduce content solely to performance. While performance is an essential aspect of content in architecture, there are other dimensions to consider. Formalists primarily emphasize form and its role in realizing the various aspects and subtleties of content in architecture. By highlighting the relationship between form and content, you provide a more comprehensive understanding of how formalism considers the artistic value of architecture and the broader context within which it operates.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Despite the repeated presence of words such as form, formal, and formalist in architectural conversations, there is no clear understanding of these terms and their relationship. And this has led to ambiguity and perhaps misunderstanding in the approach to the idea of formalism in architecture. The reason for this ambiguity is, on the one hand, the lack of studies that have dealt with the issue of formalism in architecture coherently. This research is the result of questioning the idea of formalism in architecture and its relationship with the concept of form. Searching for the origin of formalist thinking in architecture, we saw that formalism is a theory in art at the beginning of its appearance. Despite the repeated presence of words such as form, formal, and formalist in architectural conversations, there is no clear understanding of these terms and their relationship. And this has led to ambiguity and perhaps misunderstanding in the approach to the idea of formalism in architecture. The reason for this ambiguity is, on the one hand, the lack of studies that have dealt with the issue of formalism in architecture coherently. This research is the result of questioning the idea of formalism in architecture and its relationship with the concept of form. Searching for the origin of formalist thinking in architecture, we saw that formalism is a theory in art at the beginning of its appearance.

Formalism is more than anything influenced by Kant's views on form and then influenced by the romantics' perception of form, who emphasize the coexistence of form and matter and see form as a will and force that crystallizes from matter. Heinrich Wolfen was the first to propose formalist architectural thinking in the late 19th century. In examining the thinking of formalism in architecture, we saw that formalism, despite its first appearance in architecture in 1887, which emerged from the heart of the formalism art movement, decades later was a reaction against modern functionalism, which was seriously raised in architecture. And due to the studies of Colin Rowe and Peter Eisenman, he had the greatest impact in the field of architectural criticism. In architecture, like other arts, the most important issue that forms the basis of formalism thinking is the effort to give independence to the field of architecture. Such independence requires paying attention to "how architecture means the formal techniques and strategies that shape the work, instead of why it means issues such as what is the function and context of the work in architectural criticism. And also trying to discover and explain rules within the field so that it guides architects in designing architectural works. To explain the meaning of form in relation to formalism, in the last chapter, we examined form using the techniques of the history of concepts, contrasting it with the most common concept of its opposite function.

Formalist thinking dictates that, for architecture to be art, priority must be given to that aspect of the work which plays a decisive role in its artistic value. That is, formal and non-formal aspects of the work are simply referred to by formalists as content, and this content in architecture is often referred to as 'function'. Although formalists focus on the formal aspect of the work, they admit that all other aspects may also contribute to the determination of form and should be addressed to the extent that they contribute to the determination of form. On this basis, we arrive at a formalist definition of form that does not negate and abandon content but believes in the unity of form and content. According to this definition, form is the way in which content is realized. A definition that, for the first time, includes the content and substance of the work within the semantic boundaries of the form.

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