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Robert Venturi

(1,204 approximately)

Talking about Robert Venturi, one of the most notable and inspired postmodern architects who are still alive, almost all of us will recognize him from *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, his well-known and prominent book which was published in the year 1966.¹ The reason why *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* was appeared to have an immeasurable impact on architecture at that time until now was because it had brought about a new worldview into architectural field which were related to Venturi himself pointing out the idea of using symbolism seeming to surpass the inflexibility and rigid of Modernism.² Not so long after this book was published, some of both young and old generations of architects had been gradually deviating from the modernism to the postmodernism which was said to use history, tradition and especially vernacular style of a specific location in the work instead of following stereotype.³ According to this, we can say that Robert Venturi's most important contribution to mankind was introducing Postmodern architecture which have influenced other architects ever since.

To begin with, we have to know what Modernism and Postmodernism is.

¹ Wikipedia contributors. "Robert Venturi." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 1 Feb. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Venturi >

² Douglas Kahl. "Robert Venturi and His Contributions to Postmodern Architecture." *University of Wisconsin Oshkosh*. 1 Feb. 2012. <minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/28244/kahl.pdf?...1>

³ "Encyclopedia of World Biography on Robert Venturi." *BookRags*. 1 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/robert-venturi>>

Modernism is one of many architecture's characteristics which is primarily concerned with simplicity of form and style that can be perceived in straight lines, squares or even in geometric forms.⁴ Even though the modern architecture has been gaining its popularity since the end of World War II, somehow, it was seen to have shortcomings relating to human's feelings in the field of its lifeless, dull style. Besides, there is no linkage between them and their owners. According to this, having no specific symbol or signature makes the buildings' beauty and value fade away as time pass. Seeing that there was an imperfection in Modernism, reaction to this kind of architecture known as Postmodernism was put into this area.⁵

Postmodernism is another kind of architectural characteristic that includes symbolism, specific tradition and culture of a particular place and vernacularity in design. At first, Postmodern architects and his works were seemed to be a rebellion to the most popular and perfect modern architects, because many architects thought that looking in detail and examining normal people's vernacularity which was the way to create Postmodern art work was disgusting and odious. Then it made them a difficult task to examine it without bias. According to this clue, we can conclude that the people who loved change in architecture, Postmodern architect, were found to be against modernism or against the majority.⁶

So as to understand the background of Robert Venturi's story about how he got

⁴ Wikipedia contributors. "Postmodern architecture." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 1 Feb. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern_architecture>

⁵ Wikipedia contributors. "Modern architecture." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 1 Feb. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_architecture>

⁶ Wikipedia contributors. "Postmodern architecture." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 1 Feb. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern_architecture>

an inspiration in architecture named as postmodernism, we first have to look back on his life. Venturi whose father was a fruit grocer was born in 1925. Since he was a boy, becoming an architect was Robert Venturi's objective. In 1947, he completed the degree in architectural field from Princeton University from which he also got his Master of Fine Art.⁷ Around the year 1950s to 1960s, he was working in Osar Stonorov and Eero Saarinen, the office of architecture. During this moment, not only was he an apprentice of the architectural office, but also he was a lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania on theory of architecture. As a result of this, the architectural theory course along with he himself starting to see flaws and to question about the simplicity in architecture claimed to be the most successful over decades gave him the idea of what being a basic in writing his legendary book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. From this point on, the history of architecture have changed.⁸

Robert Venturi's idea of using symbolism, relevant culture and tradition in art works and he himself also seemed to be counterrevolutionary to other architects around 1960s-1970s because at that moment having different appearance of his or her own buildings was not desirable or seemed to be a black sheep.⁹ However, he kept continue designing buildings in the way that he thought it had something more to do with specific symbolism and traditions rather than just Modernism's straight lines. Moreover, Venturi also realized that people actually want their buildings to have something that can be linked to them or something that can always convey their

⁷ "Encyclopedia of World Biography on Robert Venturi." *BookRags*. 1 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/robert-venturi/>>

⁸ "Robert Venturi." *Famous architects*. 1 Feb. 2012. <<http://architect.architecture.sk/robert-venturi-architect/robert-venturi-architect.php>>

⁹ Douglas Kahl. "Robert Venturi and His Contributions to Postmodern Architecture." *University of Wisconsin Oshkosh*. 1 Feb. 2012. <minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/28244/kahl.pdf?...1>

memories or their nostalgic experience, even though the time has passed. Therefore every time he and his firm were hired to design or revitalize the building, they had to do a lot of research about that particular place in order to know its culture, tradition or even the attitude of local people towards the city so that they could create a building that will seem precious and beautiful to them whenever they look at it. Otherwise, if he and his firm did not do like this, their pieces of art, buildings, would be categorized as Modernism architecture. Although the modernism or simplification created appealing buildings, their beauty would not last forever unlike Symbolism.¹⁰

At first Venturi's idea did not pervade other architects that fast, since he had only a few of his own buildings to use as an example.¹¹ However, the time had come, the first important work of he and his firm was the Vanna Venturi House which was the house that Venturi designed for his mom. This house is so important and unique since it was not built to follow the rules of Modern architecture which are being functional, simple or even cutting out the unnecessary details. To illustrate, the outside of the Vanna Venturi House seems to be very simple; nevertheless, the inside is vice versa. Or we can see from the chimney that normally it has to be located at the center, but for the Vanna Venturi House it was not.¹² The other works of him that was considered to be important are Guild House, the place for old people to live, building in Princeton University.¹³ Later on, other architects realized how important role of symbolism is, then they began accepting it as a postmodern architecture and some

¹⁰ "Robert Venturi." *Famous architects*. 1 Feb. 2012. <<http://architect.architecture.sk/robert-venturi-architect/robert-venturi-architect.php>>

¹¹ Douglas Kahl. "Robert Venturi and His Contributions to Postmodern Architecture." *University of Wisconsin Oshkosh*. 1 Feb. 2012. <minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/28244/kahl.pdf?...1>

¹² "Vanna Venturi House." *Great Buildings Architecture*. 1 Feb. 2012. <http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Vanna_Venturi_House.html>

¹³ "Encyclopedia of World Biography on Robert Venturi." *BookRags*. 1 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/robert-venturi/>>

adapted it and mixed it with Modern architecture. One part of the skyscrapers having glass windows lying repetitively in 21st century which we can see in our daily life also came from using of the symbolism of Postmodern architecture.¹⁴

According to the evidence that we have been through it in this essay, we can confidently say it was Robert Venturi who introduced us the Postmodern style of architecture- using symbolism, mixing high-style with vernacular and so on.¹⁵ If it was not him who, at that time, felt that there was something superior to Modern architecture, we now would not have a house that can call a house not a house that look like an office or a police station. If it was not Venturi who was intrepid to speak out about his idea about bringing religion in and combining it with architecture to the public, we would not have a building that can link us to our good old day, memory or even our belief. Or if it was not him who wrote the book so called *The Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, we would not have an architecture's field called Postmodernism. Consequently, we again can say that Robert Venturi's most important contribution to mankind was introducing Postmodern architecture which have influenced other architects ever since.

¹⁴ Douglas Kahl. "Robert Venturi and His Contributions to Postmodern Architecture." *University of Wisconsin Oshkosh*. 1 Feb. 2012. <minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/28244/kahl.pdf?...1>

¹⁵ Wikipedia contributors. "Postmodern architecture." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 1 Feb. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodern_architecture>