T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
MASTER'S PROGRAM IN ARCHITECTURE

SEEING BEYOND STRUCTURES

THE POWER OF AESTHETICS IN HOUSING ARCHITECTURE

MASTER'S THESIS

RAMI HARKOUS

ISTANBUL 2025

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ABSTRACT

SEEING BEYOND STRUCTURES
THE POWER OF AESTHETICS IN HOUSING ARCHITECTURE

Rami Harkous
Master's Program in Architecture
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Nilay Unsal Gulmez

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This study explores the critical yet often overlooked role of aesthetics in the performance and perception of urban housing environments. While factors such as cleanliness, organization, and functionality are frequently cited as indicators of success or failure, this research highlights aesthetics as the hidden line that can determine residents' overall satisfaction and sense of livability. Aesthetic quality, far from being merely ornamental, exerts a significant influence on psychological well-being and everyday experiences. Even when urban housing performs well in technical terms, a decline in visual and spatial aesthetics can lead to perceptual deterioration and disconnection.

The research traces the philosophical roots of aesthetics, referencing centuries of debate around subjectivity, objectivity, and its alignment with human nature. To establish a solid foundation for aesthetic evaluation, the study integrates principles from design theory with philosophical approaches—namely phenomenology, transhumanism, and contextualism. This integrated framework offers a method for translating abstract aesthetic values into practical architectural solutions tailored to modern housing challenges.

Through qualitative narrative interviews, the study investigates how individuals across various demographics experience and interpret aesthetics within their residential spaces. Findings reveal that aesthetic perception significantly influences emotional

attachment, functionality, and spatial identity. By bridging theoretical and practical insights, the study emphasizes the responsibility of designers, urban planners, and policymakers to embed aesthetic considerations into the planning and development process. Doing so enhances the livability of urban housing and ensures alignment between design intentions and public reception. Ultimately, the study advocates for aesthetics as a foundational dimension in sustainable and human-centered urban development.

Key Words: Aesthetics, Urban Housing Environments, Quality of Life, Design, Philosophy.

ÖZET

YAPILARIN ÖTESINI GÖRMEK: KONUT MIMARISI VE ESTETIĞIN GÜCÜ

Rami Harkous

Mimarlık Yüksek Lisans Programı

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Nilay Ünsal Gülmez

Mayis 2025, 120 sayfa

Bu çalışma, kentsel konut çevrelerinin performansı ve algısında genellikle göz ardı edilen ancak kritik öneme sahip olan estetik unsurunu incelemektedir. Temizlik, düzen ve işlevsellik gibi faktörler başarının ya da başarısızlığın temel göstergeleri olarak sıkça vurgulanırken, bu araştırma estetiği, sakinlerin genel memnuniyetini ve yaşam kalitesini belirleyebilecek gizli çizgi olarak ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Estetik nitelik, sadece süsleyici bir unsur olmanın ötesinde, psikolojik iyi oluş ve günlük deneyimler üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahiptir. Kentsel konut projeleri teknik olarak iyi işlese bile, estetik düzeydeki düşüş, algısal bozulmaya ve mekânsal yabancılaşmaya yol açabilmektedir.

Araştırma, estetiğin felsefi kökenlerini inceleyerek, yüzyıllardır süregelen öznelcilik-nesnelcilik tartışmalarına ve estetiğin insan doğasıyla olan ilişkisine değinmektedir. Estetik değerlendirme için sağlam bir temel oluşturmak amacıyla, tasarım kuramları fenomenoloji, transhümanizm ve kontekstüalizm gibi felsefi yaklaşımlarla bütünleştirilmiştir. Bu entegre çerçeve, soyut estetik değerlerin modern konut mimarisine uygun pratik çözümlere dönüştürülmesini sağlamaktadır.

Çalışma, farklı demografik gruplardan bireylerle yapılan nitel anlatı röportajları aracılığıyla, konut alanlarındaki estetik algı ve deneyimlerin nasıl şekillendiğini araştırmaktadır. Bulgular, estetik algının duygusal bağ, işlevsellik ve mekânsal kimlik üzerinde belirleyici olduğunu göstermektedir. Teorik ve pratik verileri birleştiren bu araştırma, tasarımcıların, kent planlamacılarının ve karar vericilerin estetik unsurları dikkate alarak insan odaklı, yaşanabilir ve sürdürülebilir kentsel konutlar geliştirmeleri gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Estetik, Kentsel Konut Ortamları, Yaşam Kalitesi, Tasarım, Felsefe.

To those who believed in this vision, your guidance and support has been the unseen foundation of this work, where design meets the soul…

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Chapter1

Introduction

Human experiences and quality of life are significantly impacted by the built environment, especially in residential settings where people develop strong emotional and psychological bonds. However, recent urban housing developments frequently put efficiency and usefulness ahead of aesthetics, resulting in architectural landscapes that are uninspired and homogenous. By identifying the topic, laying out the thesis aim and introducing the main questions that will guide the investigation, this chapter clears the groundwork for the study. In addition to discussing the research methods, scope, and limits, it presents the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) as a possible framework for incorporating aesthetics into urban housing design. By questioning the link between architectural aesthetics, housing settings, and human well-being, this chapter prepares the basis for a more comprehensive investigation of how aesthetic principles could improve inhabitants' quality of life.

1.1 Problem Definition

Globalization, combined with rapid technological advancements, and economic shifts are pushing nations and cities to adapt to evolving architectural trends (Florida. 2014). Cities such as Tokyo, Paris, London, Istanbul, and Dubai have undergone significant redevelopment, with an emphasis on infrastructure advancements, zoning arrangements, and systems for urban strategies.

The impact of globalization on urban centers indicates a downward trend in residents' engagement with their surrounding environment. These changes in residential areas contribute to an erosion of the community's distinct identity. Jan Ghel's analogy of a good city is being like a good party, where people don't want to leave early which emphasizes the importance of creating a sense of place and human experience in urban residential environments (Ghel 2013 p:161). This is particularly important for the design and layout of residential developments within the urban landscape. Because houses are architectural artifacts that people attain more meanings and build their memories in. Aside from the functional effectiveness of housing projects, there is an important concern about the development of personal value for identity and the tangible sense of place among residents, where they feel excited and

well about their living surroundings. But does this vision align with the characteristics and attributes of nowadays cities?

There are numerous urban visions for housing projects, some of which have been realized while others have been criticized and abandoned. For instance, because of factors such as uniformity, neglect of human scale, cultural context, and an emphasis on functionalist principles, Le Corbusier's Contemporary City Concept stands out from general acceptance. Architectural projects, which solely concentrate on functional qualities and space's beneficial aspects, are criticized for illustrating cities as static and devoid of life, which is opposite to the purpose of architecture, as Daniel Libeskind mentioned *"Architecture should make us feel different, if not, engineering should be enough"* (Rauterberg, 2012 p:19).

The widespread influence of globalization has resulted in cities that look like one another, a concern expressed by Bernard Khoury (2018), who conceive these urban hubs to become cemeteries for architectural imports. This criticism focuses on a vision for shallow designs, while minimizing costs, and maximizing livable space resulting in repetitive and uninspiring architecture.

Architectural project evaluation must go beyond functionalism to include aspects such as visual qualities, practicality, sustainability, and user-centric perspectives. However, these elements as well may not be enough to create truly habitable spaces. Zaha Hadid emphasizes this point through her journey by arguing that architecture is about well-being and its pleasures, not just providing shelter (Rauterberg, 2012 p:25). The importance of architectural aesthetics emerges as a critical factor, emphasizing the quality of life and livability, and any space that one fits in and can do a specific function with lack of sense of place and identity or even excitement, drops down from being a livable space.

One of the primary problems in today's urban hubs is that aesthetics is not considered as a fundamental aspect of the design process. As a result, there is a lack of understanding in integrating aesthetics seamlessly into architectural elements, which limits the creation of habitable environments and higher quality of life for housing environments. Residential dwellings are the primary places in which people spend a significant portion of their lives, fostering personal connections, providing value, and

acting as archives for their memories. This tendency has grown significantly in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, precipitating a shift toward hybrid work models that emphasize remote work from home. As a result, the aesthetic qualities of residential spaces are thought to have a profoundly positive influence on human well-being. Furthermore, because residential environments represent a major part of the built landscape, widespread uniformity within existing housing stocks and a lack of distinct identities have the potential to erode the urban fabric and the image of cities as well as the wellbeing and its livability.

1.2 Aim of the Study

Aesthetics appreciation encompasses multiple aspects of human perception that go beyond quantitative evaluation to include emotional and intellectual experiences. Aesthetic philosophy which studies beauty is a complex and subjective concept in and of itself. It is a quality or characteristic that causes an observer to feel pleasure, satisfaction, or admiration. However, it varies from person to person, making it a deeply personal and culturally influenced concept (Dewey, 2005).

This thesis aims to unfold the crucial concept of "aesthetics" and conduct an in-depth analysis of its interactive interplay with housing environments. Particular emphasis will be placed on the perception of aesthetics by residents as well as discussing the possibility of outlining some guiding principles and criteria for the design of aesthetically informed housing environments. Aesthetics considerations have a significant impact, not only on the visual attraction of structures but also on the overall experience and wellbeing of their inhabitants.

1.3 Research Question

Aesthetics in architecture extends beyond being an additional decorative element to include emotional and intellectual experiences. Housing projects, which are frequently viewed as shelters that have a specific function, exhibit a fundamental significance in producing complex reactions, which might be positive or negative depending on each inhabitant. The relationship between aesthetics and architecture has

profound impact on the human experience, and not solely based on physical reality. Based on this understanding, the main research question of this thesis is articulated as follows:

- What are the foundations of aesthetics that could enhance urban housing environments, ultimately shaping inhabitants' experiences and influencing their perception, behavior, and overall quality of life in these spaces?

1.4 Methodology

This study presents the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) as a framework for comprehending and implementing aesthetics in urban housing architecture, aligning aesthetic preferences with rational principles. The research design integrates experimental study with philosophical foundations. In order to investigate the relationship between housing aspirations, aesthetics, and socioeconomic factors, the methodology combines theoretical analysis and qualitative research. The study begins with a review of aesthetic theories and design philosophies, especially those of David Hume, Roger Scruton, and Immanuel Kant. These thinkers helped in building the philosophical foundation of the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA), which argues that aesthetic judgment is not purely subjective but can be systematically understood through shared, rational principles.

To ground the RAA in real world housing contexts, the study employs a qualitative research design through having a narrative interview with 18 individuals from Beirut and its suburbs, chosen to represent three income groups: low-income (below $9,000 annually), middle-income (between $9,000 and $25,000 annually), and high-income (above $25,000 annually) (World Bank, 2021). Although there is empirical evidence that socioeconomic backgrounds and overall quality of urban housing design intersect in real-world situations, lower-income neighborhoods are often characterized by slummy housing and disorganization, while higher-income neighborhoods tend to exhibit well-maintained housing, more theoretical research and empirical analysis are needed to completely clarify the underlying mechanisms and actual consequences of this relationship. It is still unknown if income inequality or other confounding variables are the main cause of this association (Stiglitz, 2012).

One open-ended question was posed to participants in written narrative interview format: *"Please provide a brief paragraph describing your vision for your future home. Include in your response the things you would like to change about your current living situation, the problems you would like to see resolved in your ideal future home, and any particular features or upgrades you would like to see".* Participants are encouraged to elaborate on their housing goals in response to this question, which results in rich qualitative data for analysis. This method was chosen to maintain a degree of interview structure while enabling a flexible, open-ended investigation of individual desires. Thematic analysis, an effective method for finding, examining, and summarizing patterns in qualitative data, was used to examine the interview responses after they were transcribed. In this study, thematic analysis is preferred because it highlights similarities and differences in housing preferences by identifying recurrent themes across various income groups (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Following the completion of the thematic analysis, the study compared the themes derived from participant responses with the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) principles previously established in the thesis. The purpose of this comparative analysis was to find areas where participants' aesthetic preferences and the RAA's theoretical framework aligned, as well as any differences that might indicate that the framework needs to be modified. The RAA's principles were combined with the themes that emerged from the participant narratives to create an integrated conceptual map. This final map provides a comprehensive overview of the application of the RAA's foundation to residential architecture, elucidating the relationship between housing goals across various income levels and the framework's principles.

1.5 Scope of the Thesis

This research examines into the architecture of urban housing environments, going beyond the common understanding of these buildings as nothing more than places to live. It aims to understand housing as essential elements that have a significant influence on behavior, perception, and general quality of life in communities. Drawing inspiration from Koolhaas' concept (1978) of architecture as both story and identity, the study aims to clarify the complex relationship that exists

between design philosophy, aesthetics, and community dynamics. The study aims to offer significant perspectives on the intricate connections among design, aesthetics, and community within the framework of urban housing architecture, utilizing a multidisciplinary approach.

In order to explore the relationship between urban housing architecture, aesthetics, and community dynamics, this study takes an in-depth approach which is divided into five chapters, each with a specific function to further our understanding of housing aesthetics and how it affects community well-being. These chapters are interrelatedd yet separate from each other.

The introductory chapter establishes the context for the thesis, by defining the problem statement and outlining the study's aim. This chapter lays the groundwork for the upcoming investigation into the aesthetic dimensions of urban housing architecture by introducing the methodology and limitations of the study.

Building on the conceptual foundations laid in Chapter 1, chapter 2 investigates the theoretical underpinnings of design philosophies, aesthetics, and their impact on community dynamics. By synthesizing existing research and academic discourse, it seeks to identify key factors influencing aesthetic vision in housing architecture, laying the groundwork for future empirical investigations.

Chapter 3 moves from theory to execution by presenting an integrative approach to housing architecture that combines philosophy and design principles. Building on the theoretical foundations laid in Chapter 2, this section proposes a practical foundation for improving aesthetic quality in urban housing environments. The proposed approach's effectiveness and applicability will be evaluated empirically through a qualitative analysis in chapter 4.

Chapter 4 presents the metholodogy of the research; data gathering techniques and anlaysis. Then it shares the findings of the research, including a comparative analysis with the proposed framework.

The conclusion chapter summarizes key findings and insights from previous chapters, and provides recommendations for future research. By reflecting on the methodological approach and its implications for understanding housing aesthetics,

this chapter helps to advance scholarly discourse in the field of urban housing architecture.

1.6 Limitations

The limitations of the study can be categorized under three main points:

Constraints on Scope: Although the study's goal is to shed light on the aesthetics of urban housing, its reach is limited by time

frame and geographic contexts, but this will not lead to the limitation of the applicability of its conclusions in other contexts.

Methodological considerations: Although the study uses qualitative methods to evaluate the aesthetics of housing, it does not include experimental design or quantitative analysis, which may limit the depth of insights into the connections between design philosophies, aesthetic elements, and community perceptions. Mixed-method approaches may provide a more comprehensive understanding of these intricate relationships.

Chapter 2

Exploring the Intersection of Design Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Community

Fostering a comprehensive understanding of the impact of design requires investigating the intersection of aesthetics, community, and design philosophy. It helps to uncover design foundations that are contextually appropriate and sensitive to the various needs of the community. It also highlights socio-cultural effects, promotes innovation, empowers communities, and provokes ethical reflection and interdisciplinary discussion. In the end, this endeavor advances ethical, creative, and inclusive design methods that improve communities' engagement and well-being in their built environments.

2.1 Conceptual Foundations, Principles, and Perspectives

This chapter delves into the conceptual foundations, principles, and perspectives that shape architectural design. It begins by exploring the definition and philosophical underpinnings of aesthetics, considering the nature of beauty and its role in architecture. Furthermore, the chapter examines the impact of aesthetics on quality of life, investigating how architectural design choices influence human well-being and experience.

2.1.1 Exploring key frameworks informing aesthetic considerations in architectural design. Philosophy is commonly understood to be a collection of concepts that describe methods for achieving aims, carrying out tasks, or leading a life of meaning (Aristotle, 1962). Furthermore, aesthetics, a prominent topic in philosophy since ancient times, is crucial in shaping a variety of human activities, including architecture. In the same way, architecture prioritizes aesthetics heavily, considering a space's appearance and experience even though its primary goal is to create functional spaces. Because of this common emphasis on aesthetics, philosophical frameworks and movements frequently have an impact on architecture. Philosophy and architecture have always been related, especially when it comes to debates about form design and how people interact with their built environment (Santayana, 1896). An overview of philosophical developments and important frameworks, emphasizing their effects on aesthetic considerations in architectural design, is necessary to completely understand

this relationship. Through a comprehension of the development of philosophical positions and their impact on aesthetics, we can recognize the ways in which architectural design has changed and evolved over time.

2.1.1.1 Ancient world. Ancient Egypt (c. 3100 BC–30 BC), Ancient Greece (c. 800 BC–146 BC), Ancient China (c. 2100 BC–16th century CE), and Ancient Rome (c. 753 BC–476 CE) are just a few of the civilizations that make up the ancient world. Reflecting their respective cultural, religious, and societal values, each of these cultures offered distinctive viewpoints and guiding principles for the philosophy of design and architecture. Although certain themes like balance and visual qualities are shared by all of these ancient civilizations, their particular application and emphasis varied (Mitrovic, 2011, p.27).

Religious ideas, such as the afterlife for the Egyptians or the Greeks' emphasis on harmony in nature, frequently had a significant influence on design and architecture in ancient cultures, particularly in Ancient Egypt, China, and Greece. Greek ideas and building designs had a significant influence on ancient Rome. To delve deeper into this topic, I will focus on Ancient Greece and Rome, which were more concerned with nature and human philosophies.

Ancient Greece (c. 800 BC–146 BC)

Ancient Greek design philosophies influenced many aspects of art, architecture, and aesthetics. Several key elements influenced what is commonly referred to as Greek design philosophy.

Ancient Greek design principles were distinguished by a focus on harmony, proportion, and the idealization of the human figure. The development of distinct column orders, such as Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, became an integral part of Greek architecture. Geometric patterns inspired by nature were widely used in various art forms and architectural ornamentation. Philosophical ideas from Plato and Aristotle and others (Figure.1) influenced Greek design by emphasizing the pursuit of the ideal, balance, and the relationship between beauty and virtue. Functionality and purpose were paramount, combining practicality with aesthetic appeal. Symmetry and order were highly valued, which added to the overall visual harmony (Dinsmoor. 1973).

Main influential philosophical and intellectual movements that undoubtedly shaped the culture, including artistic and architectural practices such as Pythagoreans, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Sophism, Vitruvian Principle, Epicureanism and Stoicism. Among the philosophical schools of ancient Greece, four major ones had a significant impact on architecture during that time: Vitruvian Principle, Platonism, Aristotelianism and Pythagoreanism (Dinsmoor, 1973).

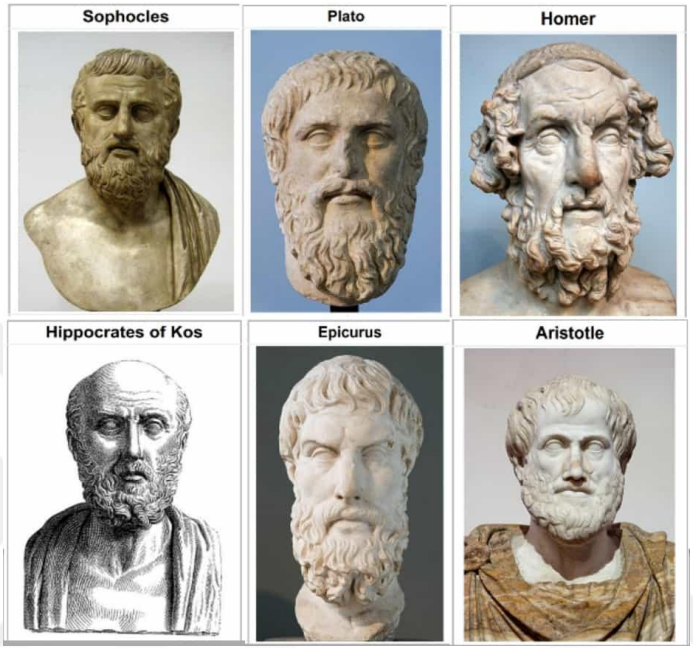


Figure 1. Influential figures in ancient Greek philosophy and their contributions to the development of Greek design principles (Scott 2023).

Pythagoreanism (6th BC)

Key Concept: Pythagoras founded this philosophy in 6th century BC, which is known for its emphasis on mathematics, specifically geometry and numerical relationships. Pythagoreans believed that mathematical principles could be used to understand the world, and numbers held mystical significance (Hersey, 1976).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Greek architecture was greatly impacted by Pythagoreanism, which placed a strong emphasis on mathematical harmony. Geometric ratios like the well-known Pythagorean theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$) were regarded by them as the keys to understanding cosmic order, and they felt that numbers had mystical significance. This resulted in a concentration on architectural design. (Hersey, 1976). For example, temples such as the Erechtheum (Figure.2), at Acropolis, Athens,

Greece that have been built around the 6th century BC and were carefully designed using proportions such as 3:4:5, which dictated the size of columns, sculptures, and overall designs. Its rectangular plan and column spacing, according to historians, reflect these golden ratios, evoking a sense of perfect harmony and visual balance that is still relevant today (Cornelli, 2013). There was an emphasis on mathematical precision to ensure the structural durability and integrity of the buildings, which in turn produced an aesthetically pleasing built environment that was more stable and well-ordered.

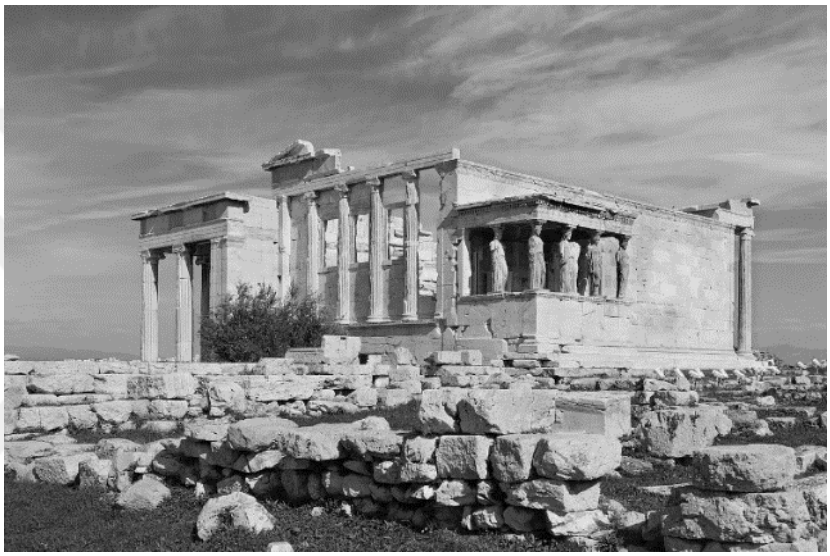


Figure 2. The Erechtheum, western side, Acropolis, Athens, Greece (Jabulon, 2008).

Platonism (4th BC)

Key Concept: Platonism, founded by the philosopher Plato in 4th century BC, emphasizes the existence of abstract, ideal forms that transcend the material world. Plato believed in a higher reality of perfect, eternal forms or ideas that represented the true essence of things. The idea of Platonic forms, which has had a long-lasting impact on architecture and design, is also a part of this philosophy. The influence of Platonism can be seen in its emphasis on perfection, symmetry, and proportion in the search for a higher ideal. (Armstrong, 1940).

Impact on Design and Architecture: The influence of Platonism can be seen in its emphasis on perfection, symmetry, and proportion in the search for a higher ideal. Architects influenced by Platonism may strive to incorporate timeless and universal principles into their designs, reflecting ideal forms through geometry and mathematical proportions. The pursuit of ideal forms and proportions is evident in the structures of Romanesque architecture and Étienne-Louis Boullée's (Figure.3) which are notable examples of Platonism's influence in architecture, (Armstrong, 1940).

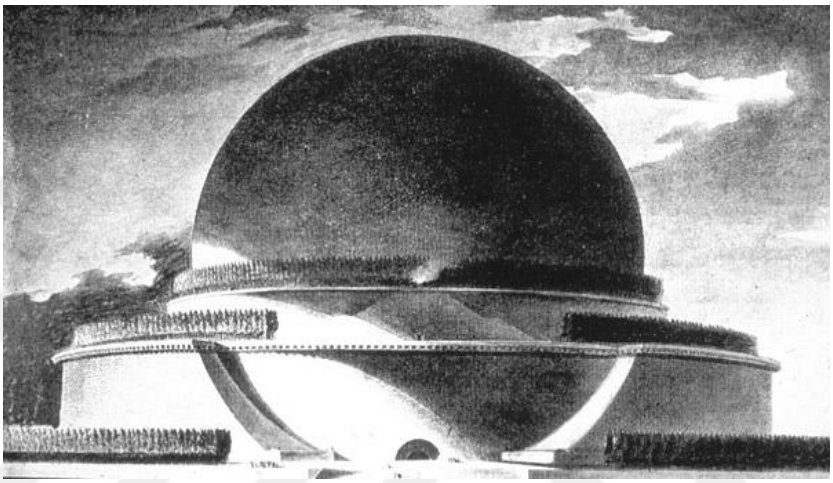


Figure 3. Boullée, Cénotaphe (Newton 1784).

Aristotelianism (4th BC)

Key Concept: Aristotle, a student of Plato in the 4th century BC, approached philosophy from an empirical and practical standpoint. His philosophy, Aristotelianism, emphasizes the study of nature and the observation of reality. Aristotle's ideas encompass the concepts of substance, potentiality, and actuality. The central idea of Aristotelian philosophy is substance, which includes both matter and form, as the basic unit of reality. Form defines an entity's unique configuration and identity, whereas matter is the fundamental substance of an entity. Aristotle also makes a distinction between a substance's potentiality and actuality. Potentialities are their innate abilities or states, while actualities are their actualized forms or states. As an example, a seed contains the potential to grow into a tree, but it doesn't actually realize this potential until it attains maturity (Mitrovic. 2011).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Aristotelianism has influenced a more practical and observational approach to design and architecture. Architects who follow Aristotelian principles may prioritize functionality, practicality, and the inherent nature of materials. The emphasis on empirical observation can result in structures that are well-suited to their intended function (Wilson, 2014). Though it's crucial to remember that architectural philosophies like Aristotelianism don't dictate particular designs,

Vitruvian Principles (1st BC)

Key Concept: The Vitruvian Principles, derived from the writings of the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius, aims to capture the essential characteristics of good architecture. These principles are Firmitas, Utilitas and Venustas. Firmitas highlights a structure's ability to endure weather and time by emphasizing its structural stability and robustness. Functionality is the main focus of Utilitas, which evaluates how well a structure fulfills the needs of its users and accomplishes its intended goals. Venustas, or beauty, highlights the aesthetic features of architecture, encouraging balance and aesthetically pleasing layout. When combined, these ideas create a comprehensive strategy that takes into account both functional and aesthetic factors, producing a stable and well-rounded architectural philosophy (Johnson. 1994).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Designers and architects have employed these ideas for ages to create buildings that are both aesthetically pleasing and structurally sound. The Vitruvian Principles are most clearly shown by the Pantheon

Figure 4. Pantheon Rome front elevation (Rabax, 2006).

in Rome, Italy (Figure.4), which was constructed in the year 126 AD under Emperor Hadrian. This engineering and design achievement exemplifies balance, proportion, and usefulness. These ideas have impacted on the design of famous structures and urban areas, where a harmony between form and function is valued. Modern architects are still inspired by the Vitruvian principles and modify them to fit new design trends and challenges (Johnson, 1994).

The table below (Table 1) summarizes the key concepts, design principles and aesthetic considerations, and their inferences on quality of life in the ancient world.

Table 1

Summary Of Key Concepts, Design Principles, Aesthetic Considerations, And Their Inferences on Quality of Life in the Ancient World.

Philosophical frameworks / Schools of taught	Key concepts	Design Principles and Aesthetic Considerations	Quality of Life
Pythagoreanism 6th BC	The emphasis is on mathematics as the foundation of reality. Believed in the harmony of the universe through numerical relationships.	Harmony and proportion play an important role. The use of mathematical ratios and proportions in design to achieve visual harmony.	Relationship between mathematical order and human experience. It believes that understanding mathematical principles improves human experience.
Platonism 4th BC	The Theory of Forms states that the material world reflects superior, non-material forms. Reality is found in abstract, universal ideas.	Idealism and symbolism inform design. Architects strive to create ideal forms in the physical world. Geometry and symmetry are crucial.	The emphasis is on the transcendent and the pursuit of higher knowledge. Architecture as a means of lifting the human spirit.
Aristotelianism 4th BC	Concentrate on empirical observation and categorization. It believed that studying the physical world would help understanding reality.	In architectural design, place an emphasis on practicality. The emphasis is on functionality and the use of materials appropriate for the purpose.	A practical and experiential approach. Concerned with individuals' well-being in their daily lives.
Vitruvian Principles 1th BC	Consist of three main concepts: Firmitas (strength), utilitas (functionality), and venustas (beauty)	Prioritize durable and sustainable structures that are functional and aesthetically pleasing.	Enhance human experience by creating spaces that are both practical and visually appealing

The early stages of ancient philosophical discourse revolved around the essential interplay between design and function and the way they interact with human experience. Throughout antiquity's various philosophical frameworks, the primary focus remained on creating long-lasting shelters and architectures. Despite this common goal, visible differences in approach emerged, defining the various

perspectives on the optimal synthesis of design principles and functional considerations in harmony with human experience.

2.1.1.2 The Middle Ages and renaissance. The Middle Ages, which spanned between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and Renaissance, were difficult to divide into discrete subperiods. The spread of Christianity and the erosion of imperial power were two of the many factors that contributed to the gradual but steady transition from ancient times to the medieval era. Efforts to categorize particular philosophical and architectural advancements into discrete subperiods fail to consider the intricate interactions between concepts and cultural manifestations throughout the medieval spectrum. The Middle Ages had the fusion of theological, philosophical, and architectural elements, creating a distinctive cultural and intellectual landscape. The transition from ancient times to the Middle Ages saw a shift from human-centered philosophy and classical architecture to theocentrism which means having God as a central focus, the integration of faith and reason, and the emergence of distinct architectural styles with profound symbolic and religious meaning. The resulting structures not only served practical purposes but also conveyed spiritual and intellectual meanings, leaving a lasting legacy in European history (Mitrovic. 2011).

Several schools of thought came during the Middle Ages, but the ones who did a noticeable impact in architecture and design were Neoplatonism and Scholasticism. Scholasticism has been followed by the Renaissance period that can be characterized by humanist school of taught.

Neoplatonism (3rd Century)

Key Concept: Neoplatonism, inspired by Plato's teachings that emerged in the 3rd century, had a deep impact on medieval architecture, particularly during the Romanesque period (10th to 12th centuries). It emphasized the transcendent and spiritual aspects of reality and interpreted the material world as a reflection of higher, divine principles. While both Platonism and Neoplatonism have their roots in Plato's philosophy, Neoplatonism adds metaphysical complexities, a hierarchical structure of emanations, and a greater emphasis on mysticism and spiritual ascent. Neoplatonism

is a more mystical and metaphysical interpretation of Plato's ideas (Alexandrakis, 2002).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Neoplatonic ideas shaped the symbolic and metaphysical aspects of medieval architecture. This way of thinking inspired designers and architects to incorporate symbolic and allegorical elements into their works in an effort to convey deeper metaphysical meanings within the built environment. The use of allegorical and symbolic elements in architectural design reflected Neoplatonism, which saw the physical world as a reflection of higher truths (Alexandrakis 2002). For example, architects like Brunelleschi and Michelangelo were deeply influenced by Neoplatonism, through their Renaissance churches (Vess, 2009). Their focus on symmetry, mathematical perfection, and the use of light in churches like San Lorenzo and St. Peter's Basilica (Figure.5) reflects these ideals. Neoplatonic ideals are expressed by the magnificent use of barrel vaults and semi-circular arches, which evoke a sense of divine order and harmony. The ethereal light emitted by the stained-glass windows represents the divine enlightenment that exists within its sacred walls (Smithers, 2016).

Figure 5. Main facade of Saint Peter's Basilica (Alvesgaspar, 2009).

Scholasticism (13th Century)

Key Concept: This philosophical movement emerged in the medieval Christian world, specifically between the 12th and 14th centuries. Scholastic philosophers, including Thomas Aquinas, sought to reconcile Christian theology with classical philosophy, particularly Aristotle's works. Scholasticism sought to explore theological

questions through reason and logic, emphasizing the harmony of faith and reason (Panofsky, 1976).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Scholasticism's emphasis on reason and systematic inquiry had an impact on Gothic cathedrals' meticulous design and mathematical precision. The use of geometry and proportion in architecture can be viewed as an extension of scholastic principles into the physical realm (Panofsky, 1976).

Humanism (14th to 17th Centuries)

Key Concept: Humanism, which flourished in the late medieval and Renaissance periods spanning from the 14th to the 17th centuries, emphasized the importance of human accomplishments, classical learning, and a renewed interest in ancient Greek and Roman ideas (Scott, 1980).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Humanism prepared the way for the Renaissance, which reignited interest in classical architecture. Elements of classical design, such as columns and symmetry, were reintroduced into architectural styles during the Renaissance, diverging from some aspects of medieval architecture. Inspired by architectural treatises such as Alberti's De re Aedificatoria," they embraced mathematical precision, emphasizing the beauty of order and harmony. Renaissance palaces and churches, such as the Palazzo Medici Riccardi (Figure. 6), featured

Figure 6. Cortile di Palazzo Medici (Sailko, 2008).

classical elements, indicating a shift away from medieval styles. Humanist ideals influenced urban planning concepts such as "the ideal city." This period laid the groundwork for long-lasting architectural principles, influencing later movements such as Neoclassicism in the 18th century (Scott, 1980).

The table below (Table 2) summarizes the key concepts, design principles and aesthetic considerations, and their inferences on quality of life in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Table 2

Summary Of Key Concepts, Design Principles, Aesthetic Considerations, And Their Inferences On Quality Of Life In The Middle Ages and Renaissance

Philosophical frameworks / Schools of taught.	**Key Concepts**	**Design Principles and Aesthetic Considerations**	**Quality of Life**
Neoplatonism 3rd century	It emphasizes the metaphysical realm and the One as the ultimate reality. Reality is hierarchical, with multiple levels of existence. Influenced by Plato and Plotinus' ideas.	Symbolism is essential with a focus on using symbols and allegory to represent higher realities. Geometry and proportion are critical in capturing the harmony of the universe.	Focus on the soul's journey to spiritual enlightenment. Art and architecture seek to elevate the viewer's soul while conveying the divine order of the universe.
Scholasticism 13th century	Integrates Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy. The emphasis is on reason and faith, and the goal is to achieve harmony between the two. Thomas Aquinas is an important figure.	Rational order and symmetry are emphasized. Architectural designs frequently reflect the orderliness and balance of Scholastic thought. Religious architecture is noticeable.	The integration of reason and faith aims to provide a complete understanding of the world. Education becomes a central component, with a focus on the pursuit of knowledge.
Humanism 14th to 17th centuries	Classical education is being revived, with an emphasis on human-centered thinking. Individualism, human dignity, and secular knowledge are all important values. Influenced by classical Greek and Roman philosophy.	Inspired by classical architecture, with a focus on proportion, symmetry, and human scale. Classical forms, such as columns and arches, are on the rise again.	Individuals' ability to reason, be creative, and express themselves is emphasized. Humanism honors the potential for intellectual and artistic achievement. A renewed interest in the human condition and secular knowledge.

2.1.1.3 The modern era. The modern era, which burgeoned during the Renaissance period includes Enlightenment, and Industrial Revolution and continues to the present day. It is characterized by a dynamic interplay of philosophical ideas that has had a significant impact on political structures, scientific advancements, and cultural perspectives. The Enlightenment philosophy of the 17th and 18th centuries emphasized reason and individual rights, laying the groundwork for democratic values. The Scientific Revolution, led by figures such as Copernicus and Newton, encouraged empirical research and technological advancement. Existentialist and phenomenological philosophies of the 19th and 20th centuries, including thinkers such as Kierkegaard and Sartre, Husser, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and others, influenced not only social sciences but also architecture and design (Risebero, B. 1983).

The modern era has given rise to various philosophical movements, such as existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism, postmodernism and contextualism, poststructuralism, transhumanism and post-humanism, and several of these have directly influenced architecture and design principles, shaping the human experience in the built environment.

Cartesian Approach (16th century)

Key concept: The Cartesian approach, which is based on René Descartes' philosophy, includes dualism, rationalism, and the pursuit of mathematical certainty. Descartes proposed a fundamental separation of mind and body, emphasizing reason and logical deduction as the primary methods of knowledge acquisition. His belief in clear and distinct ideas, which mirrors the certainty found in mathematical truths, has had an indelible impact on intellectual pursuits. In the modern era, these fundamental concepts continue to shape philosophical perspectives and influence various fields (Mitrovic. 2011).

Impact on Design and Architecture: The Cartesian approach is characterized by geometric precision, functionalism, and commitment to logic and reasoning. Architects use Cartesian principles to create designs with clear lines, defined shapes, and precise proportions. The emphasis on reason is consistent with the modern architectural principle of functionalism, resulting in spaces that are rational, efficient, and purposeful. Cartesian influence can also be seen in grid-based layouts, minimalist

designs, and rational material selection. While contemporary practitioners frequently combine Cartesian ideas with other philosophies, Descartes' approach has had a long-lasting impact, as evidenced by the ordered and purposeful nature of the modern built environment (Mitrovic, 2011). The Dutch Pavilion (Figure.7) at the Venice Architecture Biennale (2018), curated by Marina Otero Verzier, is an architectural project that reflects Cartesian approach.

Figure 7. Dutch pavilion at the venice architecture biennal (scagliola, 208).

The pavilion features a compact, grid-like orange locker room, embodying the Cartesian grid system that rationalizes space through precise X, Y, and Z axes (Otero Verzier, 2018). This design reflects the Cartesian emphasis on order, control, and compartmentalization, mirroring the highly controlled Dutch landscape. The lockers, while functional, serve as symbols of the fragmentation and standardization of modern environments, challenging visitors to reconsider the impact of Cartesian rationality on their lives. By blending functionality with symbolism, the pavilion engages with philosophical ideas, offering a thought-provoking exploration of how Cartesian principles shape architecture and society (Otero Verzier, 2018).

Enlightenment Rationalism (17th to 18th centuries)

Key Concept: Enlightenment Rationalism was a philosophical movement in the 17th and 18th centuries that emphasized reason, science, and skepticism over established authority. It emphasized individual rights and secularism, arguing for human development, through logical reasoning and empirical observation. Inspired by classical ideals, this movement challenged traditions and encouraged critical examination of societal structures, influencing political and social revolutions and laying the groundwork for democratic principles and human rights recognition (Madanipour, 2007).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Enlightenment Rationalism's influence is visible in the enduring principles of symmetry, influences of ancient classical tradition, and function. This movement produced neoclassical architecture, which emphasized proportional designs and public buildings. Architects rejected excessive ornamentation in favor of natural light, open spaces, and human-scale design. This approach paved the way for subsequent architectural movements and transformed the field, resulting in a design philosophy that valued reason, functionality, and the harmonious integration of the built environment with human experience. (Madanipour, 2007). École Militaire in Paris, France, designed by Ange-Jacques Gabriel in the mid-18th century (Figure.8), this military academy exemplifies Enlightenment rationalism with its symmetrical layout and neoclassical façade (Gallet, 2025).

Figure 8. The central building of the École Militaire Complex in the 7th arrondissement of Paris at dusk (Voldran, 2012).

Romanticism (Late 18th to mid-19th centuries)

Key Concept: Romanticism, an intellectual movement that flourished in the late 18th and early 20th centuries, introduced key philosophical concepts that are still relevant today. At its core, romanticism embraced individualism while rejecting the enlightenment's strict rationalism. It emphasized emotions and imagination, valuing people's unique experiences and expressions. Nature was central to Romantic thought, serving as a source of inspiration, spirituality, and the sublime. The movement also criticized the negative effects of industrialization, advocating for a return to a more harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world. These ideas paved the way for a shift away from rigid rationalism and toward a more subjective, emotionally driven approach to understanding the world (Risebero 1983).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Romanticism has had an impact on architecture and design in a variety of ways, including aesthetics. Architects embraced organic architecture, aiming to integrate structures into their natural surroundings. The emphasis shifted from purely functional designs to spaces that engaged emotions and senses, with a focus on the experiential aspect. The movement sparked a resurgence in craftsmanship, rejecting mass production in favor of individual talent and creativity. Symbolism and deeper meaning found their way into design as architects sought to

Figure 9. Antoni Gaudí, Casa Batlló (Schd, 2003).

convey narratives and elicit emotions. Furthermore, elements inspired by nature and fantasy were incorporated into architectural designs, reflecting the Romantic ideal of a simpler, more idyllic existence (Risebero, 1983). Casa Batlló in Barcelona, Spain, designed by Antoni Gaudí (Figure.9), Casa Batlló is an example of Catalan Modernism, heavily influenced by the Romantic movement. Its organic shapes, vibrant colors, and incorporation of natural forms reflect the Romantic emphasis on individual expression and connection to nature (Garcia. 2001).

The Industrial Revolution, Functionalism, and the Emergence of Modernism (18th-20th Centuries)

Key Concept: The late 18th and early 19th centuries saw the Industrial Revolution, a period of intense industrialization that had a significant influence on society, including design. As industrialism, a system characterized by mass manufacturing and machinery, became more widespread, there was a need for a fresh approach to design. As a result, functionalism began to take shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Utilitarianism, another name for functionalism, placed utility and efficiency above beauty. The ornate designs of the past gave way to ones that put an emphasis on overall functionality and the use of novel materials, like steel and glass, which were suitable for mass production. Architects such as Le Corbusier, who created a house "a machine for living," championed this emphasis on purpose and function, which laid the groundwork for the broader modernist design movement (Hill, 2003).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Together with functionalism, modernism was a revolutionary design movement that arose in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its goal was to reject traditional approaches and adopt new concepts that accurately represented the quickly changing social, political, and technological landscape. The "form follows function" design tenet of modernist architecture was predicated on simplicity and minimalism. Clean lines, open floor plans, and an emphasis on the interaction between indoor and outdoor spaces are characteristics of buildings designed by modernist architects. They preferred new materials and technologies over ornamentation from the past. This change in design had a profound effect on aesthetics and general quality of life. The functional design of the Barcelona

Figure 10. The Barcelona Pavilion, Barcelona (Pomeroy, 2010).

Pavilion (Figure.10) and other modernist buildings improved the living and working conditions of their occupants while also creating an atmosphere of openness and light. The modern architectural and design landscape is still shaped by the legacy of functionalism and modernism, which placed an emphasis on form over function in the built environment (Hill, 2003).

Existentialism and Phenomenology (Late 19th to mid-20th centuries)

Key Concept: Existentialism, a philosophical movement from the mid-twentieth century, asserts that existence precedes essence. Existentialist thinkers such as Sartre and Camus believe that people define themselves through their choices and actions, living realistically and dealing with the anxiety that comes with radical freedom. Phenomenology, founded on Husserl's work in the late 19th century,

investigates conscious experience, emphasizing intentionality and the study of lived experience or lifeworld. It encourages the removal of preconceptions in order to observe phenomena objectively. Both philosophies emphasize the value of subjective experience, freedom, and the rejection of predetermined essences (Dodd, 2017).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Existentialism and phenomenology have had a significant impact on architecture and design principles. Architects, influenced by these philosophies, prioritize human-centered design, focusing on the user's needs, emotions, and experiences. Phenomenology's influence can be seen in the design of spaces that considers the user's perception and engagement, encouraging a focus on the sensory qualities of environments. The philosophies have enabled designers to deviate from traditional norms, fostering innovative and authentic approaches to spatial design. As a result, modern architecture reflects a dedication to personal experience, freedom, and the creation of genuine, meaningful built environments (Dodd, 2017). The Salk Institute for Biological Studies (Figure.11), located in La Jolla, California, USA designed by the Louis Kahn and completed in 1965 can be regarded as an example that applies Existentialism and Phenomenology. It prioritizes human experience through the use of natural light and framed views, engages with its surroundings through minimalism and open courtyards, celebrates material authenticity through exposed concrete, and creates sacred spaces that invite contemplation and introspection.

Structuralism (Mid-20th century)

Key concept: Structuralism is a philosophical movement that began in the early 20th century, primarily in the fields of linguistics, anthropology, and philosophy. At its core, structuralism holds that elements of human culture, including language, can be better understood by looking at the underlying structures that organize them. Rather than focusing solely on individual elements, this approach seeks to identify and analyze the relationships between different components within a system. The central idea of structuralism is that meaning is derived from relational structures between elements, which are more important than the individual components themselves. Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, is widely regarded as one of the founding figures of structuralism, particularly for his contributions to the structural analysis of language (Hertzberger, 2015).

Figure 11. The Salk Institute for Biological Studies completed in 1965 (Yusheng,2010).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Structuralism had a significant impact on principles and approaches. Architects agreed to the concept that a building should be viewed as a complex system with interconnected components. This viewpoint influenced how architects designed and organized space, emphasizing the connections between various architectural elements. Rather than focusing solely on aesthetics, structuralism in architecture promoted a comprehensive approach that considered the functional, spatial, and social aspects of a design. Architects such as Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn used structuralist principles in their work, emphasizing the importance of the underlying organizational structure and how it affects the overall experience of a space. This philosophical shift had a long-lasting impact on subsequent architectural

movements and design theories, influencing how professionals conceptualize and create built environments (Hertzberger, 2015). While there isn't a universally acknowledged architectural project purely designed according to structuralism, for example The Pompidou Center in Paris (1977) designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers (Figure 12), reflect structuralist ideas where here it focuses on underlying systems and challenges traditional forms. The Pompidou Center's exposed structure highlights its systems, and its design disrupts the classical aesthetic.

Figure 12. The Pompidou Centre in Paris, France (Kartouchken, 2015).

Postmodernism and Contextualism (mid to late 20th century)

Key concept: In response to modernist architecture's rejection of ornamentation and emphasis on universal functionality, postmodernism evolved in the second half of the 20th century. Postmodernism was a humorous embrace of historical allusion and fragmentation, pioneered by architects such as Robert Venturi, whose seminal work "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" in 1966, challenged the notion of a single, perfect form. Contextualism, which emphasizes how a building's physical, social, and cultural context influences its design, is in line with this emphasis on diversity. While postmodernism challenges the idea of absolute architectural truth, contextualism maintains that meaning is specifically constructed through engagement with context. In this instance, the architect acts as an interpreter, combining social requirements, historical references, and the surrounding built environment to create a unique yet flexible design (Jencks, C. 2012).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Contextualism kept us rooted in a sense of place, while postmodernism pushed us to redefine beauty and welcome the unexpected. The key to effective design lies in achieving an optimal equilibrium between these two elements, resulting in architecture that is both respectful and visually appealing, thereby enhancing aesthetics and quality of life (Jencks, 2012). Philip Johnson's AT&T Building in New York from 1984 (figure.13) is an example of architectural projects that combines elements of contextualism and postmodernism. The structure embraces connections to history and ornamentation, which are essential

Figure 13. The AT&T Building (Shankbone, 2015).

components of postmodernism, while rejecting contemporary minimalism and showcasing a broken pediment in the Chippendale style. In keeping with contextualist ideals, its granite-clad façade and solid street-level presence react to the surrounding urban fabric (Jencks, 1977).

Post-Structuralism (Late 20th century)

Key concept: Post-Structuralism is a philosophical movement that emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a reaction to structuralism, challenging the notion that language, culture, and reality could be understood through fixed, hierarchical structures. Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes are among the most important figures in Poststructuralism. One of its central ideas is the rejection of fixed meanings and the acknowledgement of the instability and ambiguity inherent in language and cultural systems. Derrida, for example, introduced the concept of deconstruction, which entails examining the inherent contradictions in texts to reveal the fluid and shifting nature of meaning. Post-structuralism emphasizes the role of

context, power dynamics, and the interaction of various discourses in shaping our perception of reality (Kuma, K. 2019).

Impact on Design and Architecture: Post-structuralism has influenced a departure from rigid adherence to predetermined forms and principles. Architects and designers began to experiment with more flexible and open-ended approaches, acknowledging the subjective nature of interpretation. Buildings and spaces began to reflect a diverse range of meanings and experiences, rejecting the concept of a single, universal narrative. Poststructuralist ideas have encouraged designers to consider the cultural, social, and historical contexts of their projects, resulting in a more inclusive and diverse approach to architecture. This philosophical shift has made way for innovative and experimental designs that question traditional norms, raising awareness of the interconnectedness of space, society, and perception (Kuma, 2019).

In “The Language of Postmodern Architecture” Jencks (1977) claims that deconstructivism departs from conventional post-modernist aesthetics, embracing a more avant-garde and less historicist methodology. Considering that the philosophical foundation of deconstructivism derives from Jacques Derrida, a post-structuralist philosopher, it is possible to claim that post-structuralist debates have a significant impact on the works of architects such as Bernard, Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid and Frank O’Gehry. Post-structuralism isn't a design style, but some architects' work reflects its ideas, such as Frank Gehry, the renowned architect, who created the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (Figure 14), which opened its doors in 1997. The deconstructivism architecture of the building has a curved, titanium-clad exterior that gives the impression that it is always changing. The Guggenheim Bilbao has won accolades for both its creative design and its capacity to bring Bilbao back to life. (Thuroczy, 2005).

Figure 14. Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (Riina.2006).

Posthumanism and Transhumanism (21st century to the present)

Key concept: The rapid advancement of technology has sparked philosophical questions about humankind's future, especially in the field of architecture. The perspectives on the relationship between humans and technology offered by two well-known schools of thought, posthumanism and transhumanism, are different but thought-provoking.

Transhumanism is a techno-optimistic philosophy that originated in the 1920s with the ideas of intellectuals such as Ilya Prigogine and Julian Huxley. It encourages using technology to get around human limitations. This philosophy envisions bioengineering, artificial intelligence, and human-computer interfaces leading to the enhancement of human capabilities, including lifespan, cognitive function, and physical capabilities. Pioneers of the transhumanist movement such as FM-2030 (F.M. Esfandiary) pushed for the development of technologies that would combine human and machine intelligence and envisioned radical life extension (Becher, 2024).

On the other hand, posthumanism takes a more critical stance. It opposes anthropocentrism, the conventional belief that humans are the highest form of existence and was first proposed by intellectuals such as Michel Foucault and Donna Haraway in the middle of the 20th century. According to posthumanism, developments in technology have the potential to drastically change our understanding of what it means to be human and even bring about the emergence of a "posthuman"

state. This viewpoint forces architects to reevaluate the design topic. Buildings may now be made to accommodate a wider variety of intelligences, whether they be artificial or completely novel, rather than just human needs. Beyond anthropocentric design principles, the idea of "posthuman architecture" has been investigated by architectural theorists such as Mark Wigley (Scott,1980).

Impact on Design and Architecture: These two theories have the potential to revolutionize architectural function. Transhumanist architecture would prioritize human augmentation. Buildings could evolve into integrated living and working environments that optimize human potential. Furthermore, it might be feasible to create settings that combine conflict and play, like integrated fitness centers that dynamically adjust to each person's physical capabilities or co-working spaces that adjust to brainwave patterns to promote collaboration. But technology wouldn't be the only force behind this change. In addition, transhumanist architecture encourages the use of sustainable materials, energy-efficient systems, and designs that improve the well-being of both people and the environment in response to the growing environmental concerns. However, posthumanism compels architects to consider forms other than the human body. In order to satisfy the requirements of non-human intelligence, structures may be designed with features that react to artificial intelligence or other complex cognitive systems. Recognizing the roles and rights of non-human species and ecological networks in the built environment is another aspect of this (Allenby & Sarewitz 2011). Transhumanism could foster constructions that use materials that respond to a wider variety of sensory experiences or that produce intricate electromagnetic fields to elicit non-biological. Although pure post humanist or transhumanist architecture isn't very common just yet, these movements are undoubtedly having an impact on modern design. Future architecture will likely incorporate specific aesthetics as technology develops, and human understanding grows. Therefore, for instance, buildings may be planned for optimal efficiency, incorporating sustainable elements and integrated technology to support well-being, or they may have sleek, metallic exteriors with sharp geometric shapes reminiscent of machinery, or they may use cutting-edge materials for greater functionality (Garcia, 2024).

The table below (Table 3) summarizes the key concepts, design principles and aesthetic considerations, and their inferences on quality of life in the Modern Era.

Table 3

Summary Of Key Concepts, Design Principles, Aesthetic Considerations, And Their Inferences On Quality Of Life In The Modern Era

Philosophical frameworks/ Schools of Taught	Key Concepts	Design Principles and Aesthetic Considerations	Quality of Life
Cartesian approach 17th century	Rationalism (emphasis on reason), Dualism (mind-body separation), Certainty (search for absolute truths).	Clarity, Order, Precision. Geometric and systematic designs reflect logical organization.	sense of calmness, evoking a sense of quality and craftsmanship, symmetrical designs, enhances visual harmony and satisfaction
Enlightenment Rationalism (17th to 18th centuries)	Reason, Progress, and Individualism. Belief in the human capacity to reason and improve society.	Symmetry, Neoclassical Elements. Reflects ideals of balance and classical designs.	Focuses on reason, order, and the pursuit of knowledge as driving forces for human experience.
Romanticism (Late 18th to mid-19th centuries)	Emotion, Nature, Individual Expression. Celebrates the subjective and emotional aspects of human experience.	Picturesque, Organic Forms. Designs inspired by nature and emphasizing individual creativity.	Encourages emotional and individual expression in design, valuing the connection to nature.
Industrial Revolution and Functionalism (18th to early 20th centuries)	Efficiency, Functionality, Mass Production. Embraces utilitarianism and efficiency in design.	Form Follows Function, Simplification. Prioritizes practicality and simplicity.	Utilitarian design focuses on functionality and efficiency to improve everyday life.
Existentialism and Phenomenology (Late 19th to mid-20th centuries)	Subjectivity, Existence, Conscious Experience. Emphasizes individual experience and existence.	Phenomenological Design, Creating Experiences. Focus on designing spaces that evoke personal experiences.	Prioritizes subjective human experience and explores the individual's relationship with the built environment.
Modernism (Late 19th to mid-20th centuries)	Simplicity, Progress, Technology. Embraces technological advancements and rejects ornamental excess.	Minimalism, Industrial Materials. Clean lines, simple forms, and the use of modern materials.	Focuses on functionality, simplicity, and the celebration of technological progress.
Structuralism (Mid-20th century)	Systems, Relationships, Language. Seeks to understand structures and relationships within a given system.	Grids, Structural Expression. Emphasizes systematic, organized structures.	Gives the feeling of systematic, monotonous and routine.
Post-Structuralism (Late 20th century)	Power Dynamics, Instability. Challenges fixed meanings and structures.	Fragmentation, Deconstruction. Embraces the breakdown of traditional forms and concepts.	Supports the questioning of stable structures, allowing for multiple perspectives and interpretations.
Contextualism (latter half of the 20th century)	Context, Cultural Influences, Site Specificity. Considers cultural and environmental context in design.	Responsive Design, Integration with Surroundings. Designs that harmonize with their surroundings.	Prioritizes designing in harmony with the cultural and physical context to enhance user experience.

Table 3 (cont'd)

Postmodernism (Mid-20th century to the present)	Diversity, parody, and fragmentation. Rejects grand narratives and celebrates various perspectives.	Playfulness, Eclecticism, Postmodern Elements. Mixes historical references and styles.	Random architectural scape leading to absence of harmony and scattered feeling and experiences.
Posthumanism / Transhumanism	Posthumanism: Questions traditional human exceptionalism and explores the blurring lines between human and non-human. Transhumanism: Embraces technology to overcome human limitations and create a better future for our species, potentially leading to a "transhuman" state.	Posthumanism: Designs may move beyond solely human-centered concerns, considering AI or hybrid beings. Environmental awareness. Transhumanism: Technologies aim to integrate seamlessly with humans, augmenting our experience.	Posthumanism: Technology has the potential to create entirely new types of beings by erasing the distinction between humans and non-humans. Transhumanism: living a longer, healthier life because of technology. We would go beyond the limits of what it is to be human.

2.1.2 Aesthetics as a design philosophy. This exploration investigates into the complex world of aesthetics, tracing its roots from ancient philosophical views to contemporary interpretations. Diverse perspectives on beauty emerge from this rich tapestry of thought, posing questions about its subjective and objective basis. Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant provide profound insights into the nature of aesthetics, promoting analysis on the relationship between personal perception and universal truth. Through these philosophical currents, fundamental questions emerge about the essence of beauty, the role of individual taste, and the universality of aesthetic judgments. The process demonstrates the profound role of aesthetics in shaping our understanding of human perception and creativity.

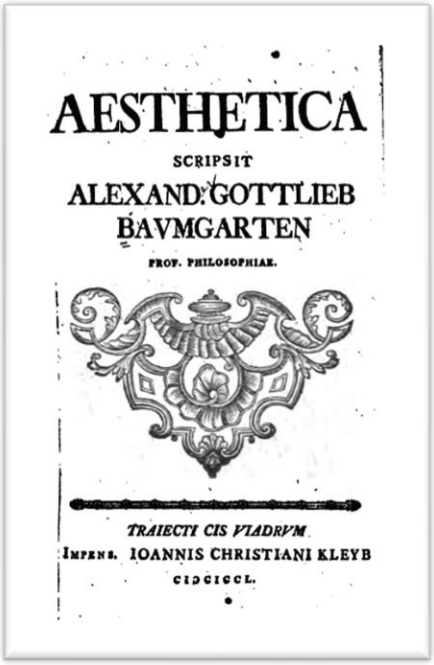
2.1.2.1 Philosophical foundations of aesthetics. According to the Oxford dictionary (Blackburn, 2016), aesthetics as a basic form, is a philosophy of beauty, a system of principles for the appreciation and making of the beauty, and the word beauty has traditionally been counted among the ultimate values, with goodness, truth, and justice. Merriam Webster defines "The Beautiful" as the characteristic or set of attributes in a person or thing that elicits pleasure to the senses or the mind. From a philosophical standpoint, it is worth noting that, according to Webster's definition, "beauty" is a quality in something rather than in itself, and according to the Oxford Dictionary's definition, it has principles.

Going back to the ancient periods, for Aristotle beauty was a contingent quality that had to be attached to something else, beautiful things are those with well-arranged and functioning parts that fulfill their purpose while Plato on the other hand, argues that beauty is a thing in itself and the absolute concept existing outside our world (Denham, 2012).

Despite differing views on the essence of beauty and its relationship to the human condition, scientific research, particularly in fields like psychology, biology, physics, and anatomy, has yielded important insights into human thought, emotion, and behavior. However, because aesthetic experience is subjective, a purely scientific explanation is called into question. Undoubtedly, hormones, neurotransmitters, and life events all influence our perceptions, but they also raise more questions than they do answers (Swami, Viren & Salem, Natalie 2011).

A branch of philosophy called aesthetics emerged as a result of this gap, and it is devoted to the philosophical analysis of art, taste, and beauty.

An important change in the philosophical understanding of beauty, art, and perception was marked by the development of the term "aesthetics" in the 18th century. Aesthetics, which comes from the ancient Greek term "aesthesis," which means perception, originally included the philosophy of art and the theory of beauty. But its


AESTHETICA

SCRIPSIT

ALEXAND. GOTTLIEB BAVMGARTEN

PROF. PHILOSOPHIAE.

TRAIECTI CIS VIADRVM

IMPENS. IOANNIS CHRISTIANI KLEYB

CIↃIↃCCL.

Figure 15. First page of Aesthetica (Baumgarten 1750).

purview expanded to include a broader investigation of perception (Schneck, 2020). Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in his book Aesthetica (Figure 15), widely considered the founding father of aesthetics, played a pivotal role in this development. He distinguished between sensuous knowledge, which refers to the perception of beauty and sensory experience through our senses (sight, touch, hearing, etc.) and intellectual knowledge which refers to knowledge gained through reason and logic. He believed aesthetics wasn't just about passive sensory experience but also involved a lower level of cognitive activity that he called "lower cognition" or "sensitive cognition." This "sensitive cognition" allowed us to appreciate the harmony, perfection, and emotional impact of art and nature (McGushin, 2007). This distinction marked a crucial step in establishing aesthetics as a separate and legitimate philosophical discipline. Prior to the 18th century, the philosophy of art, or its equivalent, existed without clear boundaries. Art and science, for example, were often intertwined. However, Baumgarten's work helped differentiate between the two disciplines based on their methodologies and objectives. Science relies on systematic observation, experimentation, and evidence-based reasoning to discover objective truths about the natural world. Conversely, art involves elements like perception, interpretation, creative expression, and the communication of emotions. This distinction between the methodologies of science and art solidified the foundation of aesthetics as a distinct discipline.

Nowadays, people mix between Aesthetics, Beauty, Elegance, Artistry, Visual Appeal, and many other words as all are synonyms, but in fact they are not. While these terms are related and can be used similarly in casual conversation, their differences become clearer when examined in academic or specialized contexts. Each term encompasses different aspects of perception, creativity, and expression, which help us understand and appreciate beauty, aesthetics, and artistic endeavors.

The argument over whether aesthetics is subjective or objective requires a rethinking of what beauty is, much like René Descartes' (Figure 16) methodical doubt. When Descartes realized that his previous assumptions of everything might not be true, he began on a philosophical mission to create an unquestionable set of knowledge. This approach, known as Cartesian Skepticism, called for a systematic doubting of

Figure 16. Portrait of Rene Descartes. (Hals,1997).

everything and a radical suspension of belief. After an extensive investigation, only claims that could not be rejected would be stated as true knowledge. Empirical beliefs, or those based on sensory experience, were what Descartes started with. He was quick to recognize that the senses had limitations, giving scenarios like how illness can change one's perception of taste or how too much alcohol can cause the illusion of a spinning room. However, these experiences are frequently recognized as false, through compare and contrast with prior experiences. These were what Descartes called "local doubts," and they applied to particular sensory experiences or isolated occurrences such as the previously mentioned skewed perceptions (Watson, 2007).

However, a deeper worry came out, what if every sensory experience was inherently false? This was called "global doubt" suggesting that there might be a universal illusion created by what Descartes called as evil genius. In this case, all perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs could be fake, making the difference between reality and illusion impossible to recognize. But in the end, Descartes discovered that the act of doubting oneself is a crucial element of achieving accuracy. Doubting oneself indicates the presence of thinking confirming one's existence and ruling out the possibility of being an illusion. This fundamental idea, famously stated in his book *Meditations of First Philosophy* as "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think; therefore, I am) formed the basis of Descartes' philosophical system (Watson, 2007).

When we come into contact with works of beauty, we frequently feel and think differently. As Descartes noted, this phenomenon emphasizes the duality of the aesthetic experience: the affected perceiver and the object itself. But the question remains: what defines the character of this effect? Does an object's beauty come from within, or does the perceiver create it? This discussion appears like the old disputes between Aristotle and Plato (Figure 17) about the nature of perception. Aristotle supported the idea that characteristics of an object, like an apple's red color, are present in an objective way and necessary for its identification. In contrast, Plato pointed out the central role of the perceiver in creating meaning (Denham, 2012). Both viewpoints are valid, for example, people who can see can always tell when an apple is red, and blind people can also understand the concept of "redness" but they fail to address this characteristic alone. For the blind person, "redness" is a concept that has been formed by outside factors (someone who explained the redness to him). This implies that the apple's "redness" is a quality added with principles that give it its chromatic character rather than just an inbuilt attribute.

Figure 17. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle from left to right (Chris. 2024).

The expression "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" implies that aesthetic judgments are completely subjective. When personal taste is essential, debates about aesthetics are pointless since every viewpoint is equally valid. However, it appears that the word has no meaning or that we are not communicating anything when we call something beautiful, if beauty is wholly subjective, then anything that anyone holds to be or experiences as beautiful is beautiful as James Kirwan (1999), for example, asserts.

David Hume (Figure18), a philosopher from the 18th century, however, maintained that subjective "liking" and objective artistic worth should be distinguished.

Figure 18. David Hume (Ramsay 1754).

Regarding personal enjoyment ("Do I like it?"), one cannot be demonstrably wrong, but when it comes to artistic quality ("Is it good?"), a different methodology is needed. According to Hume, the basis for objective aesthetic value lies in our natural biological tendencies. By nature, we are drawn to characteristics that indicate health and repulsed by those that indicate decay. This implies an aesthetic sense that is already preprogrammed. Building on this innate ability, we develop an aesthetic sense of taste, just like our senses of smell, hearing, and sight. Although variations in its refinement can result from individual development and experience, this taste enables us to identify and assess aesthetic properties. Someone with "good taste" is able to spot small imperfections and notice small details that others might overlook, which is another word called “Talent”. Hume agrees that there is a built-in sense of aesthetics. But he modifies this idea by saying that "good taste" is something that can be developed even by people who don't naturally have it. We can learn to value aspects of beautiful objects that may not instantly speak to us by exposure and analysis. A person with this talent will be able to articulate and recognize the objective qualities that contribute to artistic creativity in addition to developing a sophisticated taste for example extracting beauty aspects from nature. These people have the potential to become influential critics or tastemakers who establish guidelines and direct how other people are perceived. Their

skill is in picking up on subtleties, breaking things down, and then communicating these insights in a way that encourages a more in-depth comprehension and appreciation of aesthetics (Costelloe, 2013). This process is similar to a child initially drawn to the vibrant colors and drawing. Through exploration and guidance from tastemakers (his teacher in this case), the child may learn to appreciate the balance of composition, the use of negative space, or the subtle variations in texture within an art piece, leading the child to produce more professional art therefore more aesthetically pleasing. In this way, individuals with a natural talent for aesthetics can establish objective guidelines, serving as a foundation for learning and refinement in others.

Philosophers such as Roger Scruton contend that beauty is more than just taste. Things are objectively beautiful when they possess specific attributes. According to Scruton, things that are beautiful make us happy, draw our attention, and allow us to compare them to determine which is nicer, then there are objective characteristics that contribute to beauty. These characteristics can be complex and involve aspects like harmony, proportion, and conformity to certain ideals. Additionally, he thinks that determining what is beautiful is a matter of "taste," which is intriguing because one can develop a taste. Students studying architecture are a prime example. Their preferences for buildings evolve with time (Scruton, 2013). This explains why various people have different tastes in buildings when it comes to architects, this effect is discovered by psychologist David Halpern. He did a study in 1987 with students in the U.K, a group of volunteer students were shown photographs of unfamiliar people and buildings and were asked about their attractiveness. Some of the volunteers were architects, some weren’t. All the students had similar views of which people were attractive, but this changed when they were rating buildings. The architecture students’ favorite building was the least favorite building of the other students, and vice versa. One of the most important things was, the longer the architecture students had been studying, the stronger this effect was (Halpern, 1995). This research supports the argument of Hume mentioned above, concerning the Good Taste, and the judgment.

Immanuel Kant's (Figure 19) Critique of Judgment outlines his seminal contribution to aesthetics. Here, he presents the idea of "judgment of taste," a mental capacity that is different from pure sensation and reason. Kant claims that this ability enables us to evaluate beauty objectively. In this context, disinterestedness refers to

the capacity to value an object purely based on its aesthetic qualities, independent of one's interests, desires, or pragmatic considerations. Disinterested contemplation

Figure 19. Portrait of Immanuel Kant (Becker, 1768).

ignores any external influences or subjective associations in favor of concentrating on the formal aspects of the object itself, such as its structure, harmony, and internal relationships. For example, envision an individual encountering a landscape painting depicting a tranquil river meandering through verdant hills. His/her assessment is influenced by subjective experience rather than the artwork's inherent aesthetic qualities if it is influenced by a personal connection to rivers, possibly because of early memories. Kant highlights the necessity of eliminating personal biases in order to arrive at a true aesthetic judgment. Disinterested contemplation in this case would entail concentrating on the composition, color scheme, brushwork, and overall interaction of these elements in the painting. The evaluation would then be based solely on the painting's intrinsic artistic merits, unaffected by the viewer's background or preferences. Therefore, disinterestedness encourages an objective and detached approach to aesthetic experience, enabling us to appreciate the beauty of nature, art, or other objects without being constrained by our own subjective preferences or desires (Crawford, 1974).

Secondly, Kant's concept of universality in aesthetic judgments suggests that genuine judgments of beauty are more than just subjective preferences; they have a universal quality. According to Kant, when we make an aesthetic judgment, we expect others to agree with our assessment of beauty based on the inherent qualities of the

object being judged, rather than personal tastes or preferences (Kant, 2003). Consider the experience of listening to a classical piece, such as Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No.9. When someone listens to this symphony and finds it beautiful, Kant would argue that their perception of beauty is not solely based on subjective preferences or individual tastes. Instead, it is based on the inherent qualities of the music, its harmonies, melodies, rhythms, and overall structure. Kant now suggests that the individual listener is not the only one who judges beauty. Instead, the listener believes that others who hear the same symphony should also appreciate its beauty. This belief is based on the idea that the inherent qualities of music have a universal appeal that transcends personal preferences. So, when someone claims that Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 is beautiful, they make a statement that goes beyond their personal enjoyment. They believe that the symphony has qualities that should be universally recognized as beautiful by anyone who hears it, regardless of personal preferences or cultural backgrounds. This is where Kant's concept of "subjective universality" comes in. Aesthetic judgments are subjective in their basis (pleasure), but they aim for universality (everyone should agree) (Kant, 2003).

Third, Kant's idea of the "Ideal of Beauty" is the basis of his aesthetic philosophy. He refers to it as "Common Sense" and argues that, in spite of the wide range of personal preferences and interests, there is a guiding principle or ideal that acts as a universal norm for beauty. This ideal contains characteristics that are seen fundamentally beautiful throughout cultures and historical eras, transcending cultural and chronological boundaries (Kant, 2003). For example, consider a sculpture like Michelangelo's "David." Kant would argue that this masterpiece exemplifies the Ideal of Beauty by embodying universally valued qualities such as harmony, proportion, and unity. Despite its origins in the Italian Renaissance and reflection of that era's cultural values, "David" is still admired and revered by people from all walks of life and time. Kant would argue that the beauty of "David" is more than just a matter of personal opinion or subjective preference; it is based on the ideal standards of beauty. The sculpture's perfectly balanced proportions, graceful lines, and harmonious composition evoke a sense of aesthetic pleasure that goes beyond personal preferences.

Nietzsche’s vision dissolves the rigid boundaries between subjectivity and objectivity by emphasizing that our inner lives and the outer world are interconnected,

much like the inseparable union of body and brain. He argues that aesthetic experience is not merely a passive reception of beauty but a dynamic interaction in which the raw, instinctual powers of the body (Dionysian) merge with the ordering, rational capacities of the mind (Apollonian). In works such as The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche shows how art becomes a transformative process, allowing personal sensations and universal forms to merge, thus elevating life itself into an aesthetic realm. This synthesis suggests that the act of creating and appreciating art is life-affirming, which means a process that directs physical being and intellectual insight into a singular life-affirming experience (Acharya, 2013).

The discussion of aesthetics and beauty spans centuries of philosophical inquiry, encompassing a variety of perspectives and debates. From ancient philosophers like Aristotle and Plato to modern thinkers like David Hume and Immanuel Kant, the study of beauty has evolved, addressing issues such as subjectivity versus objectivity, universality, and the nature of aesthetic judgment. One of the most important insights is the distinction between subjective preferences and objective standards of beauty. While people's tastes and preferences vary, there are underlying principles and characteristics that contribute to the recognition of beauty across cultures and time periods. According to Kant's concept of "Ideal of Beauty," certain aesthetic qualities transcend individual perspectives and cultural contexts. Furthermore, education and taste cultivation can help to refine one's aesthetic sensibilities. While some people have a natural attraction for certain types of art or beauty, others can develop appreciation through exposure, study, and reflection.

2.1.2.2 Aesthetics in architecture and its impact on quality of life. Aesthetics is a fundamental aspect of architectural design. Architects intentionally combine visual components to evoke feelings of harmony, beauty, and emotional connection. (Ghom & Abraham, 2021). However, architecture is more than just beauty, it acts like a silent language, constantly communicating with us and shaping our experiences. It shapes the environment in which we live, influencing our satisfaction, quality of life, and even our behavior through the way we relate to one another and our surroundings (Jacob 2012).

Beyond its functional purpose, architecture has shaped human experience for hundreds of years. In addition to giving us a place to live, it structures and influences our feelings, behaviors, and, eventually, our well-being. "Quality of life" (QoL) refers to a wide range of factors associated with human well-being. *"An individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live"* is how the World Health Organization defines it (Teoli D & Bhardwaj A, 2023). This covers relationships with others, the surroundings, safety, one's physical and mental well-being, and a feeling of direction in life. These variables can be greatly influenced by aesthetic design.

Our brains are naturally programmed to react to visual cues. Neurasthenics research suggests that viewing beauty stimulates reward centers, triggering the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter linked to motivation and pleasure. Conversely, unpleasant surroundings can induce stress and anxiety (Vedantam, S. 2010). Architects leverage this inherent connection by incorporating harmonious and aesthetically pleasing elements into their designs. One of the main factors influencing wellbeing is natural light. Windows and skylights placed thoughtfully fill spaces with natural light, which improves mood and regulates sleep cycles, space is still another important factor. Comfortable and clutter-free living spaces promote a sense of freedom and reduce feelings of restriction. Furthermore, proportion, the harmonious relationship between building elements, adds to a sense of order and balance, influencing our perception of the environment (de Botton, A. 2007).

The three pillars of successful architecture are strength (firmitas), functionality (utilitas), and beauty (venustas), according to the earliest known architectural theory, Vitruvius's "Ten Books on Architecture" (1914). According to Vitruvius, a structure should be both aesthetically pleasing and structurally sound. This trio continues to be a pillar of architectural philosophy and has had a significant impact on innumerable architects throughout history. While beauty is subjective, some design principles and patterns resonate across cultures. These principles, including symmetry, proportion, and balance, are evident in diverse architectural styles worldwide. The Bauhaus school, a pioneer in integrating a theoretical foundation into design education, exemplifies this. The idea that art and function should be separated was diminished,

with an emphasis on the necessity for design to be both visually appealing and functional. Students who received practical experience with a variety of materials and techniques in workshops were able to make informed design decisions based on their foundation in artistic theory. Ultimately, the Bauhaus produced well-rounded designers who saw design as a language by promoting a unifying vision that connected all art forms, including furniture, graphics, and architectural design. (Costanzo, 2015 p:112).

Despite vastly different cultural and historical backgrounds, both the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and the Parthenon in Greece utilize symmetrical design and balanced proportions to evoke awe and harmony. Additionally, specific materials and design components can evoke historical or cultural references, fostering a sense of connection and meaning for viewers from similar backgrounds. For example, individuals familiar with Gothic architecture might experience reverence and spirituality upon encountering Gothic arches in a church building, whereas someone from a different cultural background might not interpret it the same way (Tekel, 2016).

The idea that architecture is only a functional space, especially in housing, has been refuted by various theories and academic fields, such as semiotics. Although judging aesthetics in architecture can seem arbitrary, semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, can assist us in understanding the more nuanced significance of artistic decisions. According to semiotics, a building's facade, materials, proportions, and spatial arrangements all serve as signifiers that add to the overall message the building is trying to convey, then on the other hand effects the inhabitant’s quality of life. Aesthetics has shaped this message; our interpretation of a design's meaning is influenced by its harmony, beauty, or anxiety (Preziosi, 1979).

Our perception of space and movement is influenced by a building's overall shape and form, which can range from geometric simplicity to organic curves. The scale of the building in relation to its surroundings and the individual components also have an impact on the overall sense of balance and harmony. Through the Modular system, architect Le Corbusier promoted comfort and order by highlighting the relationship between human form and well-proportioned elements (Le Corbusier, 2002). Visually appealing materials like wood, stone, and glass, as well as color schemes, can influence our perception of space and evoke emotions. Bolder colors

draw attention to key areas and exude vitality, while muted tones evoke a feeling of peace and space. These ideas were examined by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in his color theory (Goethe, 1840).

Within the broader discourse on aesthetics in architecture, it becomes necessary to distinguish between two dominant but often conflicting conceptual trajectories. The first finds its roots in classical antiquity and was later codified during the Enlightenment period, particularly through the emergence of modern aesthetic philosophy in the eighteenth century. Thinkers such as Alexander Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant, and later Roger Scruton contributed to an understanding of beauty as a measurable and rational quality, grounded in the principles of visual composition, formal order, symmetry, proportion, and harmony. This axis of aesthetic thought has remained dominant in architectural education and professional discourse, where aesthetic value is frequently equated with visual clarity, formal legibility, and adherence to established compositional rules. Beauty, in this framework, is construed as an objectified quality, accessible through the sense of sight and assessable through formalist criteria (Scruton, 2013).

In contrast, a second paradigm has emerged more forcefully in recent decades, informed by phenomenological philosophy and embodied cognition. Thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Juhani Pallasmaa, and Gernot Böhme have challenged the ocularcentrism of classical aesthetics by arguing that architectural experience is inherently multisensory, affective, and situated within a lived context. According to this view, aesthetics is not confined to visual perception but is constituted through bodily engagement, spatial atmosphere, emotional resonance, and memory. Pallasmaa emphasizes the primacy of the body and the senses in experiencing architecture, while Böhme introduces the concept of “atmosphere” as a fundamental aesthetic category, referring to the spatially extended emotional qualities that emerge in the interaction between subject and environment. This phenomenological approach reframes architectural aesthetics as a field of sensory immersion, where value is derived not from abstract formal order but from the qualitative texture of spatial experience (Böhme, 2017, Pallasmaa, 2012).

These two axes first, the classical-compositional and second, the phenomenological-experiential, represent distinct epistemologies within architectural

aesthetics. They also embody broader philosophical tensions between objectivist and subjectivist modes of understanding. Importantly, these frameworks are not merely theoretical; they actively shape the way architects design, critique, and teach. Within the context of housing architecture, where the boundaries between functional utility and emotional inhabitation are particularly interwind, this conceptual division has real-world applications. While architectural education continues to emphasize visual composition as a marker of aesthetic competence, the lived experiences of inhabitants often reflect a richer, more nuanced sensory reality. A critical engagement with both paradigms, and the tensions between them, is essential for developing a more inclusive and human-centered approach to aesthetics in contemporary architectural practice.

In architecture, visual aesthetics is more than just designing beautiful structures. It's about creating environments that influence our experiences, actions, and general wellbeing by connecting with us on a deeper level. Architects can create a harmonious blend of aesthetics and functionality, improving the lives of people who occupy these spaces by comprehending the science behind aesthetics and applying it thoughtfully.

2.2 Urban Housing Environments in Shaping Communities and Quality of Life

Housing projects have evolved over time from serving as a simple place to live to becoming complex ecosystems that have a significant impact on the lives of those who live there. One clear illustration of potential risks of badly planned urban design is the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex (Figure 20) in St. Louis, Missouri. It was built in the 1950s as a result of modernist principles that put practicality and efficiency ahead of human experience. Residents felt isolated and hopeless due to the complex's tall, remote high-rise structures, lack of natural spaces, and lack of communal areas. The complex was open to crime and social decay since it lacked community spaces and surveillance. The once-promising project rapidly degraded and came to represent public housing failure and urban ruin. The fact that it was eventually demolished in the 1970s is a lesson in the value of taking social and psychological aspects into account when designing metropolitan areas (Larkin, 2007). Pruitt-Igoe's experience was comparable to that of the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, Illinois. This enormous public housing project, which was constructed in the 1960s, was notable for

its tall skyscrapers and dearth of community facilities. Crime and drug use increased as a result of the buildings' remote location, poor upkeep, and insufficient protection.

The Robert Taylor Homes (Figure 21), like Pruitt-Igoe, came to represent social dysfunction and urban deterioration. In the early 2000s, the complex was gradually

Figure 20. Pruitt-Igoe housing complex (United States Geological Survey 1965)

dismantled, leaving behind a legacy of poor urban planning and the significance of developing livable, sustainable communities (BBC, 2019).

But in recent decades, a paradigm shift has occurred, with a greater emphasis on design components that encourage communication and community development. Ground-level mixed-use developments in housing urban hubs that include cafes, stores, or community centers promote social interaction among locals and create a feeling of community and vibrancy (Carmona, 2010). Promoting social cohesion through architectural design is one of the main goals of strategic housing, in her book

Figure 21. the Robert Taylor Homes complex (Scott, 1998).

"The Death and Life of Great American Cities" (1961), Jane Jacobs stressed the value of public areas and mixed-use developments that foster interaction amongst diverse population, increasing sense of place and identity. This encourages a lively street life, decreases social isolation, and builds a sense of community. On the other hand, poorly designed housing developments with few opportunities for social interaction can worsen already existing inequalities and cause social fragmentation

In addition, a housing project's visual language goes beyond design and purpose. Alexander (1977) discusses that the feelings of materials have an impact on people, and certain materials like warm brick and natural wood can evoke approachability. Well-planned landscaping with trees and other greenery also motivates people to use outdoor areas, which fosters more social interaction and a connection with the natural world. Perceptions are influenced even by using color. While muted tones can evoke a sense of peace and tranquility, bright and inviting colors can evoke a sense of liveliness. The efforts to revitalize Kyiv, Ukraine (Figure 22), serve as an example of this change. The city's architecture, which was formerly typified by the uniformity of the Soviet era, has changed recently. Adding colorful facades and murals to the cityscape, Kyiv has embraced a more vibrant aesthetic while preserving its historical architectural legacy. Its residential developments also reflect this change in style. The city is actively adding these features to its housing projects, along with ground-level cafes and shops that are mixed-use, well-placed courtyards that have seating areas, and

Figure 22. View of the roof of colorful houses in Kiev (Kyiv), Ukraine (Filatova, 2013).

landscaping that is full of trees and other greenery. Kyiv is promoting a sense of community and well-being for its citizens by reviving these areas both aesthetically and functionally (City of Kyiv Department of Architecture, 2023). These design decisions go beyond practicality to promote a feeling of community ownership and belonging (Mitchell, 1995).

Even prior to COVID-19, the amount of time spent at home had an impact on the demand for well-designed living spaces. However, the pandemic was an obvious booster. Lockdowns and other social distancing measures force people to spend a lot of time inside their homes, making it difficult to distinguish between a person's home and place of employment or social hub. This greater tendency to stay at home made the shortcomings of poorly designed spaces visible. Poorly designed homes are one of the main causes of anxious conditions, monotheism, and physical and mental illness that were noted during lockdowns. The effects go beyond the current crisis. The growing number of hybrid work models, in which workers divide their time between the office and their home, further emphasizes the significance of housing architecture focused on quality of life. This change in work culture has led to people spending more time at home than ever before, even after the peak of COVID-19. Consequently, it is now critical to have well-designed homes that support both mental and physical health (Yaneva, 2022).

The connection between housing architecture and quality of life has undergone significant shifts. In the past, security and weather protection were the main concerns of housing architecture. However, the approach to home building has changed as cultures have evolved. Large bright homes with flexible layouts have been shown throughout architectural history to improve mental and physical health. On the other hand, poorly planned neighborhoods have negative impacts on health and social interaction. The objective of contemporary residential architecture is to design places that are visually appealing, functional, universally accessible, and enhance quality of life. This knowledge of the relationship between design and well-being has influenced contemporary social housing strategies. For instance, Slovenia's new social housing developments, which are frequently smaller in scope, prioritize common areas, greenery, and natural light to enhance the quality of life for its occupants. (García Mira, 2005). For example, OFIS arhitekti's Izola Social Housing project (Figure. 23) creates

a lively community center by skillfully fusing public and private areas. Residents' general well-being is enhanced by the project's emphasis on natural light, ventilation, and green areas. This creative method shows that regardless of socioeconomic background, well-designed housing may enhance inhabitants' quality of life. This emphasizes that decently planned housing is a basic right available to everyone, not just the wealthy.

Figure 23. Izola Social Housing by OFIS arhitekti (OFIS arhitekti, 2006).

To summarize, through history we can see shifts in housing designs and how their impact on communities and human behavior started to articulate.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, due to the fast pace of industrialization and urbanization, housing designs gave priority to efficiency and density. Tenement buildings, which frequently lacked basic amenities and adequate ventilation, gave rise to overcrowding and health issues in major cities during this era, (Riis, 1890). During the mid-20th century, the modernist movement had a significant impact on the design of housing projects during this time. Large superblocks and tall skyscrapers developed, which indicates a belief in development and technological advancement. However, the social needs of the locals were frequently overlooked in these projects, (Glendinning,2021). By the late 20th Century, it became increasingly evident that modernist housing projects would have a detrimental impact. The value of social interaction and community development in residential design was becoming

increasingly apparent. The book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" by Jane Jacobs, published in 1961, served as an important basis for this change in perspective. According to Jacobs, vibrant communities need a variety of uses, open areas, and chances for social interaction between neighbors. In the 21st century, there has been a persistent emphasis on developing housing projects that foster wellbeing and social interaction. There is a growing trend of mixed-use developments that include housing along with stores, cafes, and community centers. There's also more focus on designing hospitable outdoor areas, like plazas and courtyards, where locals can meet and mingle (Montgomery, 2013).

2.3 Globalization's Influence on Aesthetic Paradigms in Urban Housing Environments

One significant effect of globalization is the spread of architectural styles, since multinational corporations and standardized building techniques lead to a visual similarity across many countries. Large glass facades, open floor plans, and minimalist shapes are characteristics of modernist architecture that are currently visible all over the world in projects ranging from New York City, Texas London to Dubai (Figure 24). The universality and affordability of modern styles, which make them acceptable in a

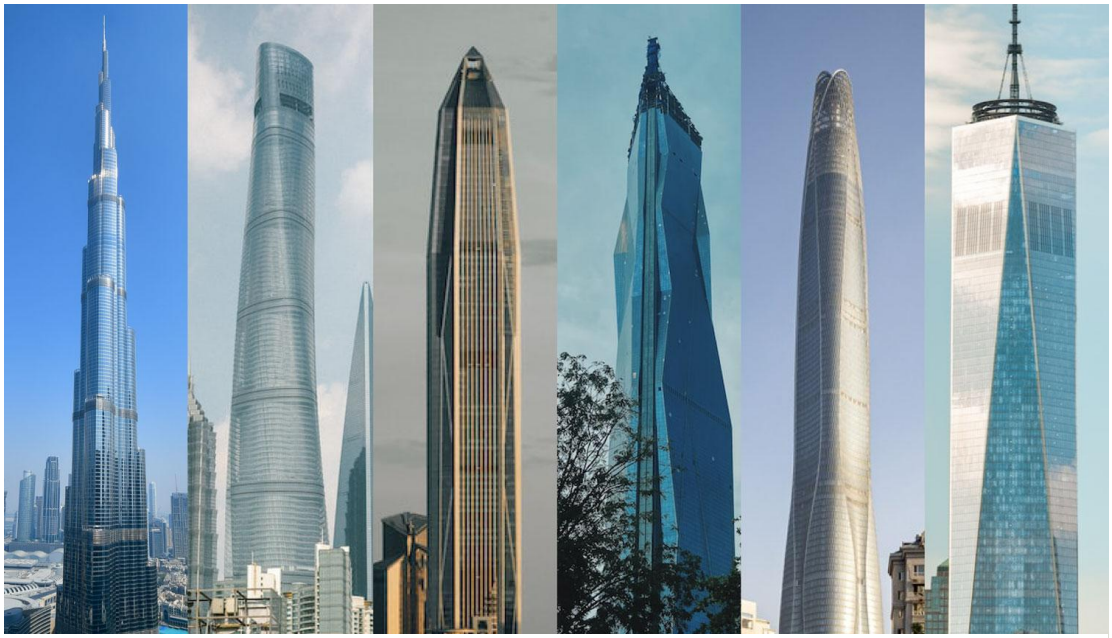


Figure 24. A lineup of the world's tallest skyscrapers, illustrating how contemporary tower design reflects globalized architectural trends rather than distinct national identities (Arpitha, 2023).

variety of cultural and economic contexts, are major factors in their widespread adoption. According to Khalil (2023) this trend may cover up unique local architectural identities and result in a more homogeneous global landscape.

However, localization behaves as a protective force. Global style adaptation by architects is becoming more and more driven by local cultures, customs, and environmental factors. The traditional building techniques and materials of a particular area are being reinterpreted with a modern twist as vernacular architecture. This emphasizes how crucial cultural identity and environment are in determining aesthetics (Adam, 2013).

Although globalization encourages innovation and trade, some contend that it has diluted architectural aesthetics and diminished the distinctive qualities of certain locations. According to studies conducted by experts such as Niklas Potrafke, growing trade and the blending of building styles across different countries are related. Moreover, globalization can accelerate architectural innovation by boosting the exchange of ideas and knowledge across nations (Potrafke, 2014). New design ideas from all over the world are continuously presented to architects and designers, which can encourage them to develop original aesthetic expressions in their own work. These positive impacts hold negative side effects which translates to the prevalence of homogenized modern designs which have the potential to displace traditions that are sensitive to the environment and local cultures. As a result, there is a feeling of placelessness since buildings are similar to one another and don't have the distinct character that custom architectural styles can. This homogeneity turns architecture into a purely functional exercise with no emotional resonance, diminishing its potential to surprise and inspire. Adam (2013) raises enquiries, what would it be like if every city is characterized by identical, angular skyscrapers that lack intricate details, vibrant colors, and traditional building materials, elements that once reflected the historical and cultural identity of their locations? In this case, architecture loses its ability to evoke feelings of community, tell stories, and grab interest (Adam, 2013).

User preference research reveals the intricate relationship between local and global aesthetics. According to a study by (Özkan, & Yilmaz, 2019), participants valued open layouts in modern design because they create a feeling of space and openness to the outside. However, the survey did find that participants valued

traditional components that reflected their cultural heritage. Certain participants expressed their inclination towards integrating traditional architectural features, such as balconies or courtyards, into their contemporary residences. This demonstrates how architects must reconcile local preferences with worldwide trends. A balance can be achieved by employing design strategies that blend desired modern characteristics with traditional elements. Additionally, user preferences may differ according to socioeconomic status and other demographic variables. While older generations might be more attached to traditional styles, younger generations might be more open to global aesthetics. Higher earners might also demand uniquely designed homes that combine local and international influences (Contreras, 2023).

The growing concern for environmental sustainability is another important effect of globalization. The aesthetics of housing projects are being shaped by sustainable building practices, which are being driven by international regulations and environmental awareness. Recycled materials, energy-efficient facades, and green roofs are becoming more and more popular. In addition to improving the environment, these components establish a new aesthetic pattern that places an emphasis on environmental responsibility and functionality (Wu, 2022).

There is no denying that the aesthetics of residential architecture have been impacted by globalization. Although modern architecture tends to be homogenized, architects are increasingly incorporating sustainable practices and customizing these styles to fit specific local contexts. Future home design will probably strike a balance between cultural identity, global trends, and environmental factors.

2.4 Challenges and Considerations of Thinking Aesthetic in relation to Urban Housing Environments

Creating visually pleasing housing architecture is a craft that involves a careful balance between livability and subjective beauty. The complex connections between creativity and subjective reception are something that architects must constantly manage. While some may view design ideas as visionary or innovative, others may view them as impractical or visually distracting. This contradiction emphasizes how difficult it is for architects to balance various views of beauty and utility in a single

architectural manifestation. In his book "Contemporary Issues in Housing Design,"(2008) Kutay Güler emphasizes that the challenge is giving each home a distinct personality while preserving a unified design language that appeals to the occupants and the neighborhood. The idea of aesthetics itself further complicates this. Studies conducted by Ogbonna et al. (2017) investigate the ways in which "pleasure, arousal, and dominance" can affect people's perceptions of the beauty of a building. Designing for a broad spectrum of tastes is a continuous negotiation due to this intrinsic subjectivity and the lack of precise guidelines or standards for obtaining generally recognized aesthetic appeal.

When contemplating the cost of aesthetics, the delicate balance between form and function becomes increasingly challenging to maintain. Unquestionably, fine materials and minute details can elevate a design, but they can also blow the budget completely. On the other hand, sacrificing functionality in favor of aesthetics may result in long-term dissatisfaction. According to a study by Jacody and Alonso (2022), putting all of the emphasis on aesthetics during the design process can at some level affect residence functionality leading to discomfort, especially during times of prolonged use like the lockdowns that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Real art is in coming up with inventive ways to accomplish an appealing appearance while working within practical limitations. In addition to being environmentally friendly, sustainable materials and designs that maximize natural light, and ventilation can also improve the aesthetics.

But aesthetics is more than just appearance. User experience and resident interaction are important factors that influence how satisfied people are with architectural spaces. Optimizing design outcomes and increasing the effectiveness of user-centered environments require a sophisticated understanding of the particular characteristics and preferences of the target audience. Open floor plans and large outdoor areas may be priorities for a young family with active children. Retirees, on the other hand, might prefer cozier designs with features that make their golden years more accessible. By focusing on the needs and desires of the intended occupants, the aesthetic language is guaranteed to speak to them, making the space feel genuinely livable (Brand, 1995). The role of the architect is not limited to the single house; it also considers the house's place in the greater community. A home is a part of a larger

environment rather than existing in an isolation. How it will blend in with its surroundings must be considered during design. A modern, minimalist design for example, carries a risk of being a visual conflict in an area where historic brick homes predominate, unless it is carefully integrated. Even while certain designs could at first seem out of place in their surroundings, a balanced aesthetic still requires a harmonic interaction with the surrounding context. According to Alexander (2018), maintaining the area's architectural style and utilizing materials that blend in with the surrounding environment is significant to create a cohesive streetscape. This not only gives the inhabitants a more aesthetically pleasing built environment, but it also promotes a feeling of belonging and community (Alexander, 2018). The Lucas, located in Boston at 136 Shawmut Avenue (Figure 25), is an example of fusing modern and historic architecture. Architect Finegold Alexander preserved the iconic structure of a famous 19th-century Gothic Revival church while converting it into luxurious apartments. In honor of the building's history, the project keeps the original stone façade, arched windows, and intricate brickwork. Contemporary features are smoothly incorporated into modern additions, such as a sleek glass-and-metal structure that rises from within the conserved walls. This method preserves a feeling of place while meeting contemporary urban demands by honoring the historical identity and fostering a healthy conversation between the old and the new (Finegold Alexander Architects 2018).

Figure 25. the Lucas at 136 Shawmut Avenue, designed by Finegold Alexander Architects (FAA, 2018).

According to Farmer (2023) a thoughtful fusion of classic design elements with elegant modern flair is the secret to timeless beauty. While using too many trendy features runs the risk of making the home appear out of date in a matter of years, they

can also add a bit of excitement. Timeless design tenets such as appropriate scale, proportion, and deliberate use of light establish a strong base for long-lasting appeal. Architects who embrace the growing trend toward sustainable design can further enhance aesthetics. This goes beyond simply adding solar panels and recycled materials. Incorporating natural elements into the living area, for instance, biophilic design principles can foster a sense of well-being and a connection to the outside world. By carefully positioning windows and skylights, one can optimize natural light, minimize the need for artificial lighting, and create a feeling of greater openness and space. Being in natural environments can greatly improve one's mood and cognitive abilities. In this sense, environmentally conscious design becomes not just necessary, but also an effective means of producing visually pleasing and healthful living environments (Kellert, Heerwagen, and Mador 2011).

Ultimately, architects have the ability to make homes into more than just places to live by carefully navigating these issues and considerations. They are able to design aesthetically pleasing and useful areas that appeal to the occupants, honor the surroundings, and endure over time, turning into more than just houses but also thoughtful examples of how to combine aesthetics, functionality, and social responsibility. Although the topic of this discussion has been single-family home aesthetics, the same concepts apply to larger-scale developments and multi-unit housing projects. In these situations, fostering a sense of community and appreciating the surrounding context are even more crucial. Architects have to think carefully about how their designs will affect public areas, pedestrian traffic, and the overall character of the neighborhood.

2.5 The Influence of Socioeconomic Factors on Architectural Design and Aesthetics

Although architecture is sometimes viewed as a reflection of its historical and contextual setting, how much do socioeconomic issues influence its visual appeal and design? The possible impact of these variables on architectural decisions, such as material choice, spatial arrangement, and visual components, is examined in this research. The intricate interaction between society, economy, and design is brought to

light by investigating whether socioeconomic situations have a direct impact on architectural expression or if other factors are more important.

2.5.1 Definition and overview of socioeconomic influences on architectural design and aesthetics. As clear nowadays, socioeconomic situations have a big influence on architecture, which is a physical representation of human civilization and is influenced by many different variables. Both the function and Aesthetics of buildings are determined by socioeconomic factors, which include wealth distribution, cultural values, and technical developments. Social structures, economic standing, and income distribution are reflected in the built environment. These factors affect not only the materials and building techniques employed, but also the built environment and visual aspects of architectural design (Engels, 2012). Historical data analysis shows a close relationship between socioeconomic circumstances and architectural expressions. While wealthy cultures build advanced, resource-intensive structures, economically poor neighborhoods frequently prioritize functional and economical cheap architecture. This relationship is not absolute nor static, however, as other important aspects like political beliefs, technical advancements, and cultural changes effects the outcome of the neighborhoods (Kunstler, 1994). For example, European Renaissance architecture emphasized symmetry, proportion, and the use of opulent materials like marble as a result of economic success and a renewed interest in classical education. Functionalist design, on the other hand, was brought about by the Industrial Revolution, when economic techniques and materials like steel and concrete gave priority to functionality over decoration. The 20th century also witnessed designs that went beyond budgetary constraints. One of the best examples is the Villa Savoye in Poissy, France, designed by Le Corbusier. This villa rejected economic declines when it was built during the Great Depression, a period of extreme economic suffering. Rather, it adopted modernist ideas such as horizontal windows, open floor designs, and pilotis, which are considered not the most cost-effective, these design decisions produced remarkable functional and visual results. This contrasts sharply with the prevalent building methods of the day, which frequently put cost of construction ahead of visual qualities and space design (Sbriglio, 2015).

Global economic imbalances now are reflected in different architectural environments. Buildings in wealthy metropolitan regions frequently place a high priority on elegance, innovation, and sustainability, reflecting the values and financial capabilities of the people who live there. These skylines are dominated by skyscrapers, which are symbols of power and prosperity. In contrast, economically deprived areas prioritize affordability, which results in less complex designs and less expensive materials (Frampton, 2024). Urban planning is another area where this disparity is evident. For example, social housing programs try to reduce inequality by combining cost with usefulness, yet they frequently don't put much attention to the visual appeal of the neighborhood under the pretext that it increases the cost. However, some projects are able to strike a balance between visual appeal and social benefit, showing that architecture may improve communities despite financial limits (Gage, 2018). Montreal's Habitat 67 is an example of social housing that placed equal emphasis on affordability and architectural design. This complex, designed by Moshe Safdie, used prefabricated concrete modules to lower building costs while producing an attractive and innovative form. In addition to maximizing space efficiency, the stacked module design gave inhabitants plenty of natural light and ventilation. Habitat 67 kept individual unit expenses low while fostering a strong feeling of community by implementing shared facilities and community spaces. This historic building sets a high bar for future affordable housing developments by proving that social housing can be both practical and visually appealing (Safdie,1970).

It's a provocative idea to say that architectural designs might transcend financial circumstances, especially when striving for high visual characteristics. According to this viewpoint, architecture is an artistic and intellectual pursuit that may surpass financial and material constraints. Critics argue that architecture should be guided by human experience, design, and usefulness rather than budgetary concerns (Pallasmaa,2012). However, architecture and its social setting are bound together. Design decisions are directly impacted by practical factors including population demands, material availability, and building costs. Furthermore, cultural and social values, which are results of economic conditions, are reflected in architecture. These connections are further strengthened by urban planning, which is influenced by variables like income levels and population density (Alexander, 2018).

Rather than viewing aesthetics and socioeconomic concerns as opposing forces, architects should strive for harmony. Numerous examples highlight projects that successfully integrate aesthetic appeal with functionality, affordability, and social relevance. Sustainable architecture, adaptive reuse projects, and socially conscious designs exemplify this approach. Socioeconomic circumstances and architecture are somehow intertwined. Architects can design structures that not only satisfy society's functional needs but also advance its goals by acknowledging and resolving these links. In order to guarantee that architecture continues to reflect and influence society, it is necessary to strike a balance between visual appeal and practical considerations.

2.5.2 Socioeconomical influences on architectural design and aesthetics in Beirut and surrounding areas. The city of Beirut (Figure 26) is divided into zones, each of which has a distinct population that has a common socioeconomic and religious backgrounds. The architectural environment of Beirut is an unusual tapestry made from the strands of religious plurality and socioeconomic inequality. The layout

Figure 26. Bird eye view of Beirut City Lebanon (Rizk, 2018).

and characteristics of its residential areas have been greatly impacted by these elements.

The urban fabric of the city has been permanently altered by the severe gap between the wealthy and the poor. Three different income levels can be distinguished in Beirut and its suburbs, according to the World Bank (2021). Middle-income households make

between $9,000 and $25,000 a year, whereas low-income households make less than $9,000. On the other hand, households with high incomes make above $25,000. This classification offers a framework for comprehending the region's economic varieties.

Wealthy people's homes in Beirut combine contemporary luxury with cultural history, with sleek designs and classic elements like stone facades and arched windows. Large floor plans, luxurious finishes, smart home automation, and expansive views of the city skyline or Mediterranean are common features of these residences. Situated in upmarket areas like Downtown (Figure 27) or Achrafieh, they prioritize security, privacy, and easy access to fine dining and shopping while providing expensive amenities like gyms, spas, and concierge services. In the center of Beirut, these homes are a symbol of elegance and prestige. The wealth and prestige of their occupants are reflected in these architectural elements. On the other hand, Beirut's middle- and lower-class residential buildings, such those in Bourj Hammoud and the southern suburbs (Figure 28), differ greatly but have some striking parallels that stem from the

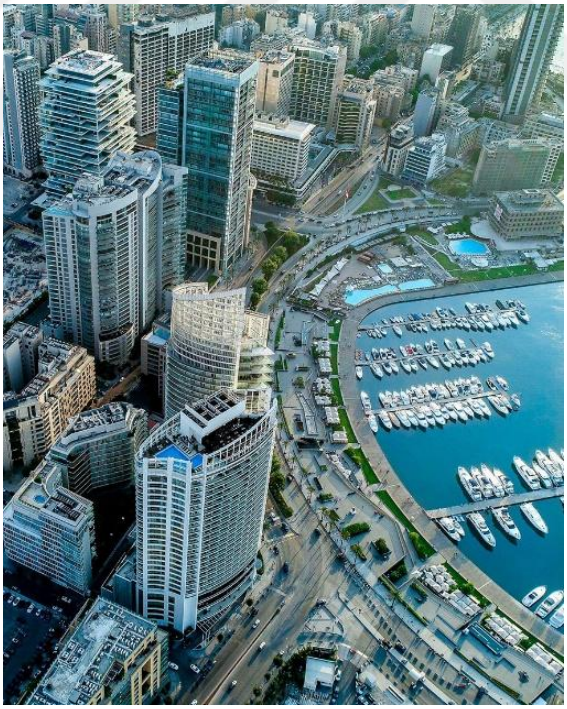


Figure 27. Bird eye view of Beirut Downtown (Rizk R. 2020).

urban dynamics of the city. The most common middle-class districts in Beirut are characterized by planned, moderately designed apartment complexes that serve small and medium-sized families.

These complexes balance accessibility, price, and practicality with a very low attention for aesthetics. Lower-income neighborhoods, on the other hand, are frequently made up of buildings constructed carelessly and without proper legal permits, leading to crowded, poorly planned places lacking proper infrastructure and urban design. High income neighborhoods have efficient infrastructure, well-formed streets, and parks that are kept up thanks to both public and private funding. Most of Beirut's population lives in middle-class neighborhoods, which have steep streets, few and improperly maintained green spaces, and irregular urban design. The government only provides minimal basic amenities in these regions. The worst conditions are seen in lower-income districts, which have few or no green spaces, streets that are unpaved or in poor shape, and no official infrastructure because of haphazard and illegal building. There is little government involvement in these places, thus locals have to make decisions for themselves in dangerous situations. (Ragette, 1980). Figure 29 illustrates the spatial distribution of residential prices across Beirut neighborhoods, reflecting the income levels of their respective residents. Beirut likely exhibits distinct income-based residential groupings, with high-income individuals and families concentrated along the northern coastline, particularly in areas like Manara and Ain el Mreisseh, as evidenced by elevated property prices and the presence of upscale amenities. Parts of central districts such as Achrafieh and Downtown Beirut also attract affluent residents with luxury apartments and high-end commercial establishments,

Figure 28. Beirut southern suburbs (Robinson 2019).

and pockets of wealth can exist even within more mixed-income neighborhoods. Middle-income populations are likely prevalent in central neighborhoods like Achrafieh, Hamra, Verdun, Rmeil, Mar Mikhael, and Gemmayzeh, which offer a mix of residential and commercial spaces, as well as in areas slightly further from the city core where housing may be more affordable. In contrast, lower-income residents are more likely to reside in the southern and southwestern suburbs, exemplified by areas like Wata el Msaytbeh, Msaytbeh, Kaskas, and Horch Tabet, characterized by lower property prices and potentially less developed infrastructure, as well as in urban pockets surrounding the main city and neighborhoods with higher refugee populations. Several factors contribute to this segregation, most notably real estate prices, alongside historical development patterns, disparities in infrastructure and services, the location of economic opportunities, and the tendency for social networks to form along socioeconomic lines (Ramco Real Estate. 2015).

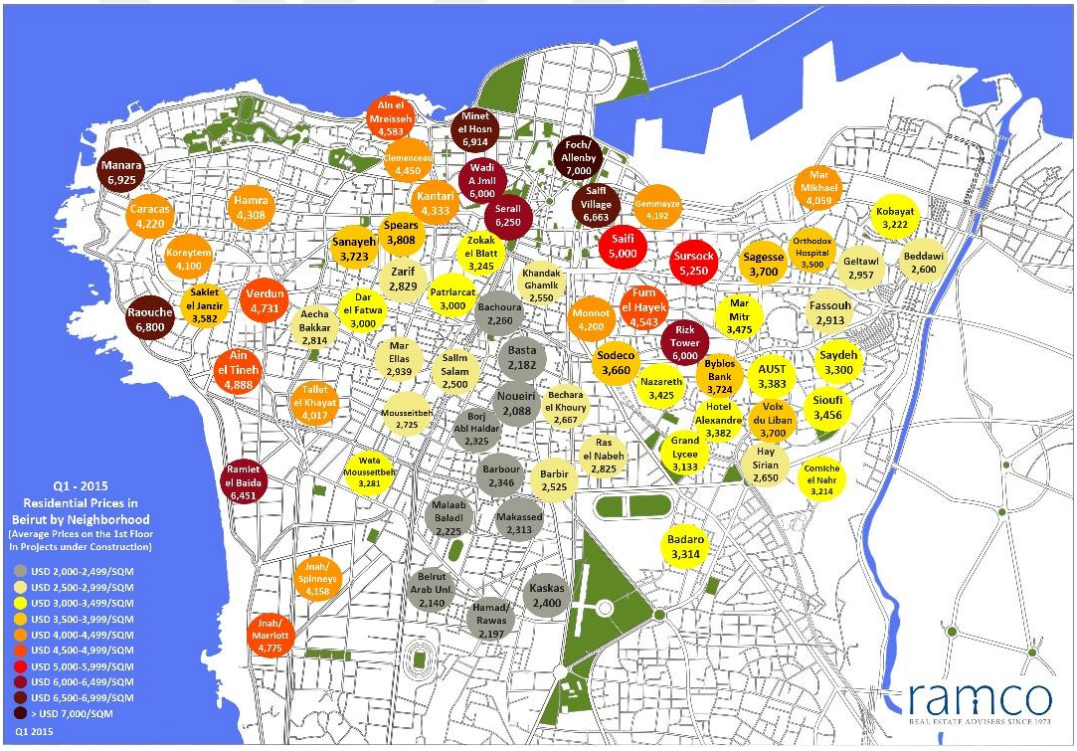


Figure 27. Beirut neighborhoods residential prices per sqm in 2015 (Ramco 2015).

Beirut's urban landscape has also been significantly shaped by religious loyalty (Figure 28). The city of Beirut is home to a wide variety of religious groups. Christianity (mostly Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and other varieties) and Islam (separated into Sunni and Shia sects) are the two major religions. Additionally, there

are smaller groups like Druze and others. Because of the city's political tensions, these religious organizations are frequently linked to particular neighborhoods. For instance, Shia populations are concentrated in places like the southern suburbs (Dahieh), while Sunni-majority neighborhoods like Cola and surroundings contrast with primarily Christian areas like Ashrafieh and Gemayzeh. The social and cultural fabric of the city is shaped by this division, which adds to its distinct character.

Figure 28. Top view of a Church and Mosque situated in Beirut City (Rizk R. 2023).

With clear distinctions between Muslim and Christian groups, religion has had a major impact on Beirut's urban housing architecture. Muslim homes frequently place a high value on privacy, with designs that divide public and private areas, such as separate kitchens, living rooms, and bedrooms. Smaller windows, which tend to be hidden from view by thick external curtains or shutters, are another example of privacy concern. The focus on private residences rather than neighborhood development as a whole is another example of this emphasis on individual privacy, which may lead to fragmented urban expansion. Christian homes, on the other hand, typically have more open and connected floor plans, with living, dining, and kitchen spaces being combined into one common area that reflects the values of social interaction and hospitality. With less focus on privacy. There are typically larger windows that provide a link between the inside and outside, and less curtains. Furthermore, Christian

communities may place a greater emphasis on neighborhood harmony and engagement. However, the lack of government investment in infrastructure and urban planning, especially in low-income areas, presents difficulties for both populations. Regardless of religious affiliation, areas suffer from deteriorated housing conditions, crumbling buildings, and inadequate public services, all of which have contributed to urban degradation. Ultimately, religious and cultural values have molded the architectural identity of Beirut's (Figure 29) domestic spaces, but the broader urban landscape is marked by neglect, particularly in poorer neighborhoods where both Muslim and Christian groups struggle with housing quality and infrastructure (Vloeberghs, 2015).

Regardless of religious background, these deteriorations are typically not observed in high income districts, where urban conditions are noticeably better. Better-maintained housing and infrastructure in these places have been made possible by the private sector's integration with increased government involvement. These communities frequently see significant investments from private developers, which results in better public services, contemporary amenities, and higher-quality construction. These regions benefit from government initiatives that prioritize infrastructure construction, maintenance, and urban planning, leading to a more cohesive and efficient metropolitan environment. There is now a glaring disparity in the living circumstances of Beirut's various socioeconomic classes as a result of the active involvement of both the governmental and commercial sectors, which has protected these neighborhoods from the decline that impacts lower-income areas (Hafeda, 2019).

The city's religious diversity and socioeconomic inequalities are intricately reflected in Beirut's architectural landscape. The city's communities are sharply segregated, high-income sections have opulent, immaculate homes and strong infrastructure, while middle- and lower-class neighborhoods struggle with inadequate services, inadequate architecture, and a lack of funding. Religious connections, which influence not just the layout of residential areas but also the larger metropolitan environment, amplify these disparities even further.

Figure 29. Housing projects from Beirut Suburbs (Beirut.com 2017).

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

In architecture, aesthetics has developed from a philosophical search for beauty to a comprehensive examination of the ways in which design influences people's decisions, perceptions, and well-being. Aesthetics has evolved from a focus on universal beauty to an acknowledgement that cultural context and individual perception shape spatial interpretation. This is particularly noticeable in housing design, where improving occupants' well-being and emotional ties to their surroundings has replaced the previous focus on efficiency and functionality. The weaknesses of mid-century projects like Pruitt-Igoe emphasize the value of human-centered, community-focused areas that promote social unity and wellbeing. Beyond just being visually pleasing, architecture in places like Beirut reflects the socioeconomic differences between wealthy and poor areas. In order to meet cultural, economic, and environmental considerations, architects must strike a balance between

practical design and visual harmony. An international approach to house design now emphasizes sustainability and places that can be modified to meet a range of demands while fusing contemporary designs with regional cultural values. The ability of architecture to combine aesthetics and social justice will determine its future by enabling the creation of spaces that not only meet practical requirements but also foster wellbeing and human connection. In order to ensure that architecture can support social fairness and community identity, it is essential that these differences be bridged in the future of residential and urban design. Sustainable design techniques, such as utilizing eco-friendly materials, maximizing natural light, and adding green spaces, are essential to determining the built environment's aesthetic and functional quality as environmental responsibility becomes a more urgent concern. A potential path for developing housing that not only meets functional needs but also improves the emotional and social experiences of its occupants is provided by the lessons gained from previous mistakes and the continuous development of design principles. The subsequent chapter will thoroughly question the possible implementation of these concepts in forthcoming housing environments, focusing on the principles of aesthetic design and their impact on residents and community identity.

Chapter 3

Bridging Philosophy and Design: Aesthetic Principles in Housing Architecture

The last chapter discussed the complex process of creating aesthetically pleasing housing architecture and neighborhoods that demonstrate improvements in the quality of living for its inhabitants. Expanding on the examination of the relationship between design philosophy, aesthetics, and community development conducted in the preceding chapter (chapter 2), it is possible to argue more and more clear that integrative design approaches are necessarily needed for contemporary housing architecture. Under this strategy, the development of built environments that both meet the practical and aesthetic needs of people would take priority.

As our homes become increasingly uniform worldwide, we face the risk of losing the unique connection that exists between residents and their dwellings. An integrative framework for reestablishing harmony between practicality and beauty in housing design is presented in this chapter, which starts by looking at the ways in which several aesthetic theories can work in harmony to produce a holistic system for the assessment and design of housing projects. Building on this foundation, this chapter proposes the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA), a conceptual framework that combines three fundamental ideas: phenomenology, which considers the subjective experiences of inhabitants; contextualism, which stresses harmony with surroundings; and transhumanism, which integrates technology and sustainability.

3.1 An Integrative Approach for Understanding Aesthetic and its Foundations.

Talking about architecture typically includes a strong emphasis on usefulness. Words like "square footage," "open floor plans," "amenities" and many others, drive the discussion, emphasizing functional features over encouraging a more profound emotional bond between occupants and their homes. The popularity of minimalist design, which places a higher value on functionality, clear lines, and clear areas than on individual expression or designing a space that captures the personality of the occupant, is another indication of this emphasis on function (Jiang, 2024).

As seen by the rise in popularity of energy-efficient and smart home technologies over purely decorative features, there is a growing emphasis on functionality in homes today. Although there are obvious advantages to this trend, it also seems to be moving

away from the notion that our homes should reflect who we are as people and that they should make us feel connected to the places we live. This idea of home as a safe design (designed neutrally for everyone) has been studied by academics, who contend that our living situations have an impact on our wellbeing (Nakhodaeezadeh 2017). The conversation about housing architecture can be framed in terms of relationality, which means focusing on how individuals engage with their living spaces. This approach fosters an environment that promotes meaningful interaction and mutual support. Across time, various architectural principles have promoted various aspects, ranging from practicality to aesthetics (Erdinç, 2023). However, it is rare that housing developments that put human needs first will reflect these grand ideals. Although budgetary restrictions play a role, the fundamental problem is the lack of a defined framework outlining the necessary elements of genuinely livable spaces. Perhaps the key for housing design is to define a set of "Quality of life" standards that promote positive experiences and livability.

This integrative approach acknowledges the social and psychological dimensions of living in architectural structures, highlighting the importance of designing spaces that prioritize the well-being of inhabitants, respect the surrounding environment and context, to increase a sense of identity and place and create holistic human experience. The design should also stimulate creativity and emotional responses and embrace human-centered solutions that work with technological advancements for a sustainable future.

To define a comprehensive framework methodology for housing projects that prioritize livability and foster a distinct human experience intertwined with a deep connection to identity and place, a sequence or set of guiding principles might be proposed. Challenges in contemporary housing projects are frequently the result of a lack of understanding of human needs on the physical, intellectual, and emotional levels combined. As a result, there is a pressing need for a philosophical framework or systematic approach based on an in-depth analysis of these requirements and their interplay, which will guide both the design, judgment and evaluation of architectural interventions.

This study investigated various philosophical theories through the previous chapters (chapter 2), including aesthetics, which is considered the pivotal element of

the integrative approach to architectural design for housing investigated in this thesis. Aesthetics, as a philosophical framework, has the unique ability to balance and bring together design considerations and evaluative judgments from both subjective and objective perspectives. Within the field of philosophy, aesthetics is recognized as a discipline concerned with clarifying the essence of beauty, the nature of art, and the details of taste, as well as the processes involved in both the creation and appreciation of beauty. Furthermore, as previously stated, beauty refers to a set of qualities inherent in an entity that generates sensory and intellectual pleasure.

Throughout history and into the present, the discussion of aesthetics has centered on defining its fundamental principles and establishing criteria for evaluation. As a result, various philosophical perspectives have emerged, which involve contrasting theories and critiques. However, these different arguments have the potential to come together into a systematic framework. This is especially important in the context of housing projects, where the combination of various perspectives can result in a holistic approach to aesthetic evaluation and design.

A straightforward example can help clarify how different philosophical viewpoints on aesthetics interact. People's tastes in music these days are incredibly varied; they can be found listening to jazz bands, classical pieces, or a wide range of other genres. However, many people are still able to judge a piece of music's aesthetic value when it's not what they personally prefer. Everyone seems to agree on what sounds good in music, but is there really a right or wrong answer? Maybe our brains are wired to like music that fits together well, like familiar melodies or smooth harmonies. This "good fit" feeling might be why some music sounds more beautiful than others. Hume pointed out that this enables people to acquire a critical eye for artistic brilliance in particular fields, allowing them to recognize and assimilate standards of beauty (Hume, 1992). Ultimately, philosophers such as Aristotle assert that these standards are abstract from nature. Human artistic creation is based on the natural aesthetic principles found in the natural world (Dutton, 2009). For example, the melodic song of birds eventually became musical notation and melodies. Plato's theory of forms says the world around us is just a shadow of a perfect, unchanging ideas (Forms) which are more real than our messy, ever-changing world (Dutton, 2009). His theory of the “Ideal Beauty” is aligned with the idea of studying and

practicing things, we can train our minds to better understand the world of Forms. According to Plato, humans can strive for a state close to perfection, but they can never achieve the ultimate perfection. For example, even if we think a melody is beautiful right now, it could always be made better, implying that there is an ideal beauty that is unachievable. The beauty we take away from the natural world merges into something greater.

In "Critique of Judgment," Kant argues that aesthetic evaluations arise from personal experiences of pleasure, which are comparable to a sixth sense. Humans can distinguish between sounds that are beautiful to listen to and sounds that are just noise. These judgments, though subjective in origin, are commonly referred to as Universal Judgments because of their broad consistency among people. Hume argues that aesthetic evaluation (judging beauty or art) shouldn't just be about personal preference. He believes there's a way to objectively assess art and find its true worth, even though our initial experience of it might be subjective (Dutton, 2009).

Aesthetic norms serve as shared frameworks that guide the collective appreciation of qualities of beauty that are universally recognized. This phenomenon is best reflected in the academic domain of music education. In this instance, a curriculum that is regarded as universal is built around established musical aesthetic standards. Universally accepted characteristics of good music become fundamental, making music that satisfies these criteria appealing to all listeners. This is further demonstrated in social contexts such as parties or celebrations, where people enjoy dancing and listening to music together, even if it is not their usual taste. For example, when one is traveling and hearing music from a foreign culture, it can still be regarded favorably even though it is not their usual preference.

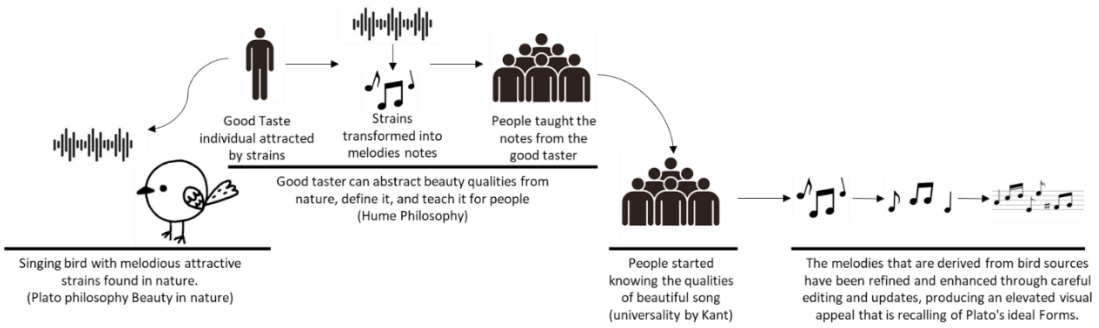


Figure 30. A Diagram that represents integrative approach (by Author).

In the end, the appreciation of aesthetics transcends personal taste and emphasizes the collective effect of visual objects on a community. Because of this common experience, there is a greater sense of universality, a feeling that unites a group despite individual preferences. Philosophers have long debated the nature of aesthetics and offered opposing theories. However, rather than viewing these viewpoints as conflicting, we can imagine a more comprehensive framework that acts as a middle ground, acknowledging both the subjectivity of aesthetics and the fundamental human need for aesthetically pleasing and functional spaces for daily life.

3.2 A Conceptual Framework for an Aesthetically Informed Housing Architecture that Enhances the Quality of Life

While acknowledging that socio-economic factors undoubtedly play a significant role in overall well-being, this discussion will concentrate on aspects that can be directly influenced by architectural design and visual aesthetics. The core principle guiding this exploration is the undeniable truth that our surrounding environment, particularly the visual elements we encounter daily, exerts a profound influence on our physical and mental well-being, affecting our overall quality of life positively or negatively. Studies in environmental psychology have consistently demonstrated the connection between design features and occupant stress levels, mood, productivity, and even physical health. For instance, in 2017 a study that investigated how exposure to colored light affected young adults' cognitive function was published in the journal Perception. Participants were split into two groups by the researchers, with one receiving blue light exposure during the workday and the other receiving dim light. According to the findings, those who were exposed to blue light did better on tasks involving working memory, attention, and processing speed.

According to these results, using blue light strategically may improve alertness and productivity at work, especially in the morning or early afternoon (Ritchie, 2017). The idea that architectural design has a big impact on wellbeing is further supported by the large collection of research such as biophilic design, which integrates elements of nature into built environments. In 2015, a study published in the journal *Health & Place* provides compelling evidence for the therapeutic benefits of biophilic design. Researchers found that hospital patients with rooms overlooking natural environments experienced a significant reduction in stress levels, lower pain perception, and accelerated recovery times compared to those with views of built structures (Kellert, 2018). These findings underscore the powerful influence of nature, even when experienced visually, on human physiology and psychology. Moreover, studies have shown that exposure to natural light, another key component of biophilic design, can improve mood, cognitive function, and sleep quality (Golden, 2021). By incorporating biophilic elements such as plants, natural light, and water features which are considered as visual elements, architects can create spaces that promote a sense of calm, connection, and overall well-being.

The quality of life within our built environment is deeply intertwined with the architectural decisions made during its construction. Our physical and mental health can be greatly impacted by design decisions, including the layout of the structure, the materials chosen, and the quantity of natural light and ventilation. For example, a well-designed facility with little natural light and inadequate ventilation might exacerbate feelings of discomfort and tension, whereas a building with plenty of natural light and sufficient ventilation can improve our mood and lower stress. Our social and cultural experiences are shaped by architectural decisions in addition to the physical ones. While poorly built public areas can alienate and isolate people, well-designed areas can promote social interaction and a sense of community. Ultimately, the quality of our built environment directly affects the quality of our lives (Torrington, 2006). Functionality is given top priority in well-designed spaces, encouraging daily activities and easy mobility. Natural light, ventilation, and access to green spaces are all factors that architects consider when designing a space because they can all have a positive effect on a person's physical and mental health. Adaptability is essential to ensure that spaces can change over time to accommodate evolving needs. Sustainable practices can lead to healthier living conditions in addition to environmental benefits. Visionary

architects plan, incorporating elements that can adapt to changes in the population or in technology. In the end, good architecture creates spaces that are coherent (through spatial cognition) and support a positive relationship between the user and the built environment, which promotes not only physical comfort but also mental and emotional well-being (García 2005).

The renowned British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, delivered the quote, "We shape our buildings thereafter they shape us," during a speech in 1943 in address to the House of Lords. The context for this statement was particularly significant. Britain, and much of Europe, lay in ruins following the devastation of World War II. Cities were bombed out, infrastructure was crippled, and the population was deeply traumatized. In this depressing and uncertain environment, Churchill recognized the importance of architecture in fostering a sense of national renewal and recovery. He believed that rebuilding familiar landmarks and maintaining traditional architectural styles would provide a comforting sense of continuity and stability. In addition, he had visions of applying motivating civic structures that would inspire people and restore their sense of pride in their country. He promoted a thorough reconstruction project that would produce aesthetically beautiful neighborhoods and lively public areas in addition to useful housing. By investing in well-designed architecture, Churchill believed Britain could emerge from the war not only physically rebuilt, but also emotionally and psychologically refreshed. By thinking carefully, considering design principles and aesthetics in residential architecture, it is possible to create environments that promote not only comfort and functionality, but also a sense of peace, inspiration, and overall improved quality of life (Ackroyd, 2012).

The concept of quality of life (QoL) aims to measure the well-being of a population or an individual with respect to both positive and negative aspects of their complete existence at a certain moment in time. Personal health (physical, mental, and spiritual), relationships, education, work environment, social standing, wealth, freedom, autonomy in decision-making, social belonging, and physical surroundings are examples of common aspects of quality of life (QoL). According to the World Health Organization, quality of life (QoL) is a subjective assessment of how a person views their reality in relation to their objectives as seen through the prism of their culture and values. QoL, according to the University of Toronto's Quality of Life

Research Unit, is the degree to which an individual can appreciate the valuable opportunities in their lives. It is crucial to distinguish between quality of life (QoL) and other relatively comparable concepts that are sometimes confused in literature, such as standard of living, socioeconomic status (SES) and health-related QoL (Teoli & Bhardwaj, 2023). Gordon Mitchell's diagram (Figure 31) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay of factors that contribute to quality

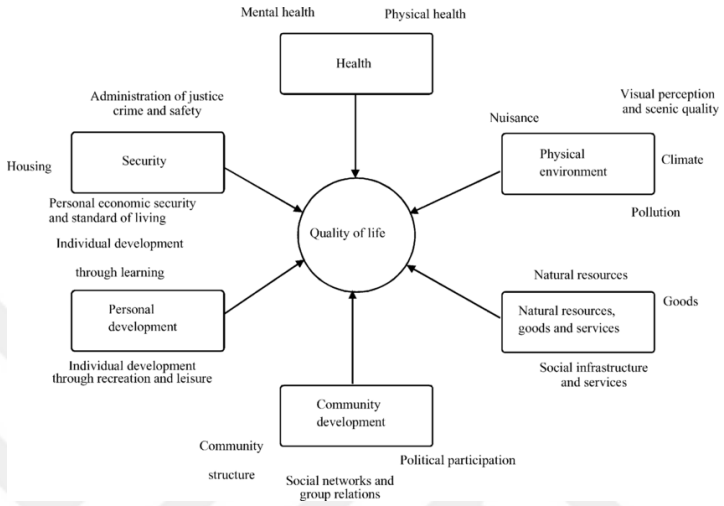


Figure 31. Quality-of-life components (Mitchell, 2000).

of life. At its core, quality of life encompasses not only physical well-being but also psychological, social, and environmental dimensions. The diagram illustrates how health, security, individual development, community development, physical environment, and access to goods and services are interconnected, influencing and being influenced by each other. A strong emphasis is placed on the importance of mental and physical health, as well as the role of a supportive community environment in fostering individual well-being. Additionally, the diagram highlights the significance of economic security, educational opportunities, and access to essential goods, services, and visual perception and scenic quality in enhancing quality of life. By recognizing the interconnectedness of these factors, the diagram emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to improving quality of life, addressing multiple dimensions simultaneously to create a more fulfilling and equitable society. (Mitchell. 1995).

Bryan H. Massam emphasizes the complex character of quality of life and outlines important criteria for assessing it in *Quality of Life: Public Planning and Private Living (2002)* where he separated it into six key parameters. He starts by

considering environmental quality, which includes things like noise pollution, access to green spaces, and the quality of the air and water. The second topic covered is personal health and well-being, considering both mental and physical health as well as access to medical care. The third parameter looks at economic opportunities, including financial stability, income levels, and employment rates. Fourth, social inclusion and equity are taken into account, with an emphasis on equitable resource allocation, cultural activities, and educational access. The fifth section examines services and infrastructure, such as public utilities, housing, and transportation. Lastly, subjective well-being, security, and chances for personal development are all considered in the evaluation of personal fulfillment and happiness. To provide a thorough assessment of quality of life, these interrelated objective and subjective aspects should be taken into account within geographical and cultural settings (Massam, B. H. 2002).

Bryan H. Massam lists six essential parameters of quality of life (QoL) in his research: infrastructure and services, economic possibilities, social inclusion and equity, health and well-being, environmental quality, and personal satisfaction and happiness. To provide a more thorough knowledge of QoL in the context of architecture and urban planning, I suggest that these parameters can be categorized into three broader categories: livability, sensual forms, and sense of identity and place. The first category, livability, includes the practical and functional aspects that influence day-to-day living. Health and well-being, which emphasizes access to healthcare and public health infrastructure, as well as the capacity of residents to carry out their daily activities and routines without interruption, along with environmental quality, which includes things like access to clean air and green spaces, infrastructure, and services like housing and transportation. These elements guarantee that a community runs smoothly and provides for the basic requirements of its members. The second category, sensual forms, refers to the more experienced aspects of quality of life, emphasizing the sensory experiences and visual quality that influence how individuals view their surroundings. A community's emotional and sensory richness is enhanced by social inclusion, cultural involvement, and the role that environmental quality plays in creating visually and physically pleasing surroundings. Lastly, the deeper ties that individuals and groups have to their surroundings are referred to as sense of place and identity. This category highlights the value of social equality and participation in creating a feeling of personal fulfillment and happiness as well as a sense of belonging.

Examples of this include public areas and community events that enable people to flourish and contribute to a shared identity. These components support the feeling of place, which is essential to designing spaces that people appreciate and belong to. This classification not only synthesizes Massam's requirements but also aligns them with broader architectural goals of livability, senual forms, and a sense of identity and place. By combining these elements, we can gain a broad understanding of the impact of architectural design and urban planning on individuals' overall quality of life, as well as how careful, context-sensitive design strategies can enhance this quality.

Drawing insights from the various philosophies, research, and case studies explored in the previous chapter, we can emphasize the crucial role that a sense of place and identity, and harmony within the housing environment plays in establishing the foundation for aesthetically pleasing housing architecture. This prioritization of contextualism comes as the first principle of the integrative approach to aesthetically informed housing architecture, which ultimately contributes to an enhanced quality of life under category of the sense of place and identity.

A prevalent misconception surrounding aesthetics is that it targets solely to the perception of beauty (Dewey, 1934). However, as explored in the preceding chapter, aesthetics encompasses a broader human experience, integrating aspects of functionality and livability into our judgments (Norman, 1998). A crowded, disorganized living area and a well-organized, user-friendly one can be seen to have very different perceptions. Both may possess aesthetic qualities, but the latter fosters a more positive human experience due to its functionality. Norman (1998) proposes that human perception of beauty in the built environment is often linked to features that also serve a functional purpose. For example, symmetry and balance, which we find aesthetically pleasing, often correspond to structural stability and ease of navigation within a space. Similarly, natural light and ventilation, essential for human health and well-being, frequently aligns with design elements that we find attractive, like large windows and open floor plans. In particular, the fundamental concepts of functional design are based on human body anatomy that is taken into account from the natural sense of beauty. This suggests that functional design and aesthetics as a physical and sensory sensation are related (Norman, 1998). Furthermore, aesthetics

cannot be a static sense of beauty and what speaks to us must be dynamic movements that are always changing, much like life itself.

Technology and sustainability are essential components of a healthy and prosperous future in today's world, and they cannot be treated as afterthoughts or luxurious additions. They must integrate into the foundation of our design processes. This collaboration is crucial in housing architecture to solve environmental issues and improve and facilitate living conditions. Architects can maximize energy efficiency, preserve resources, and enhance indoor air quality by integrating smart technologies. A more robust and sustainable built environment is achieved, for example, by the use of sustainable building materials, sophisticated water management systems, and automated lighting and climate control systems. Technology is crucial for mitigating the impacts of climate change and for adaptation, as highlighted by the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). We can build homes that are not only comfortable and useful but also socially and environmentally responsible by giving priority to technological innovation and sustainable design principles. Through embracing this dynamic interplay between sustainability, technology, and aesthetics, we can build an aesthetically pleasing world that also supports future generations' health and well-being (Harper, 2017). Therefore, alongside contextualism, a transhumanistic approach, which emphasizes the co-evolution of humans and technology, focusing on the function of wellbeing in a space with the integration with technology and future aspects, emerges as another foundational principle for integrative aesthetic design approach in housing architecture that aims to enhance quality of life and goes under the livability category.

A wide variety of mental, emotional, and sensory experiences are included in the link that residents have with their homes, which extends far beyond a house that has a function. Houses are dynamic, silent, communicative, subconsciously evoking structures rather than static ones. People who live there develop deep memories that are entwined with their residences. Architects who understand this have the ability to use phenomenology to create environments that evoke strong feelings and create lasting memories (Dodd, 2017). A philosophical framework called phenomenology emphasizes the subjective aspect of human experience, stressing how our unique consciousness and life experiences impact how we perceive the world.

Phenomenology emphasizes the significance of considering the distinct experiences of people residing in the built environment, especially in housing, when it comes to architecture (Sennett, 2018). By delving into the lived experiences of residents, architects can design spaces that resonate deeply, fostering a sense of belonging and well-being.

As an example, Lin (2022) explains how the celebration of micro-living in the Nakagin Capsule Tower had negative effects on its occupants. Despite their effectiveness, the tiny capsules caused claustrophobia and a feeling of loneliness. Small windows that block views and leave little room for personalization caused residents to feel isolated from the outside world and unable to establish a feeling of home. Moreover, these emotions are made worse by the capsules' repetitive design and the units' proximity to one another. While the lack of aesthetic control and the constant awareness of neighbors negatively impact on residents' sense of agency and privacy, uniformity also led to sensory fatigue. A phenomenological approach highlights the possible negative effects of the tower's design on the lived experience of its residents, even though some people might find it attractive from outside, and while compact living spaces may hold superficial appeal, the human body's inherent physiological and psychological needs may not be adequately met in such environments, potentially leading to adverse health outcomes (Lin, 2022).

Incorporating a phenomenological lens into design necessitates a shift from a static architecture approach to one that acknowledges the subjectivity of human perception and its influence on behavior. The task of the architect becomes one of translating these intangible concepts such as the emotions, memories, and sensory experiences into tangible design elements. In architecture, phenomenological approaches center on the individual's perception of space, with the goal of designing spaces that produce particular feelings, moods, and social interactions (Pallasmaa, 2012). Despite the intangibility of these ideas, architects can translate them into the built environment by using the visual aesthetics of design. The way that materials are chosen, spaces are arranged, and light interacts with them all affect how the user perceives space (Alexander, 2018).

An important theoretical framework that directly connects the quality of life to the aesthetic experience of the living environment is Habitat Theory, which emerged

prominently in the 1950s through the work of Jay Appleton. Appleton's theory, as presented in his seminal book The Experience of Landscape (Appleton, 1975), offers valuable insights into how humans engage aesthetically with their surroundings not merely as observers but as inhabitants. This theory aligns closely with the central concerns of this thesis, which emphasizes the lived-in aesthetic experience of housing, where aesthetics contribute fundamentally to the inhabitant's quality of life rather than existing solely as visual decoration.

Appleton developed his ideas by drawing from evolutionary biology, psychology, and geography, arguing that aesthetic responses are rooted in human survival needs. He proposed that landscape preferences are shaped by unconscious, innate tendencies to seek environments that provide safety and opportunities—conceptualized in his prospect-refuge theory. According to Appleton, humans prefer landscapes where they can prospect—meaning they have a broad, clear view to survey potential resources or threats—and also find refuge, areas that offer protection or concealment (Appleton, 1975). This dynamic balance between openness and shelter taps into deep psychological needs for security and orientation within an environment.

In The Experience of Landscape, Appleton supports his theory by analyzing a variety of landscapes and habitats, highlighting consistent human preferences across cultures and time. He illustrates how these preferences manifest through aesthetic qualities such as vantage points, depth, complexity, and sheltering forms. These elements not only appeal visually but fulfill psychological functions that support comfort and well-being in a habitat. Appleton thus reframes aesthetics as a biologically grounded, interactive experience rather than a purely formal or decorative one.

This perspective resonates with the argument that the aesthetic quality of housing should be assessed based on how it enhances day-to-day living experiences and supports well-being. It highlights that architecture and design must transcend purely visual criteria and address how well environments facilitate a meaningful, comfortable, and secure "live-in" experience. The focus thus shifts to understanding aesthetics as an embodied, interactive phenomenon integral to habitat and habitation.

Furthermore, Douglas Porteous's work Environmental Aesthetics: Ideas, Politics and Planning (Porteous, 1996) extends these ideas by exploring the socio-

political dimensions of environmental aesthetics, emphasizing how aesthetic judgments intersect with planning decisions and political contexts in shaping the built environment. Porteous underscores that aesthetics in environmental design—including housing—cannot be separated from their implications for quality of life and social justice, reinforcing the idea that aesthetics must engage with real lived experiences and functional needs.

The connection between aesthetics and quality of life, as articulated by Habitat Theory and environmental aesthetics literature, supports the thesis's core proposition that housing design should respond to fundamental human needs and experiential preferences rather than solely aesthetic ideals. This conceptual alignment also strengthens the argument for adopting a user-centered, experiential approach in architectural and interior design practices aimed at improving living environments across different income groups.

A foundation of well-established design and philosophical ideas, such as contextualism, trans-humanism, phenomenology, are grouped together in a conceptual framework which I term it as the Rational Aesthetic Approach. This merges reason and logic (Rational aspect of Aesthetic) with the individual preferences (Subjective nature of Aesthetic), with the intention of simplifying and creating a foundation for aesthetically pleasing housing design that improves the quality of life. It stands in contrast to relying solely on emotions, intuition, or personal preference. Alternatively, it focusses on using reason to analyze and evaluate the human appreciation of aesthetics, understanding the context and elements that contribute to its effectiveness. It is important to emphasize that the Rational Aesthetic Approach is hybrid and flexible in its application, yet consistent in its foundational principles. This approach emphasizes a core set of principles to synthesize rational analysis with aesthetic sensibility, while acknowledging the inherent variability in its application due to project-specific factors and resident demographics. I propose that this framework might help architects and designers in creating residential structures that appeal to the residents' practical and aesthetic senses as well as their emotions.

The overemphasis on functionality in modern housing design has homogenized living spaces, making them more and more alike in terms of layout and appearance. This detachment between inhabitants and their surroundings places a higher priority

on necessities than aspects of quality of life, frequently as a result of financial limitations. The quest of efficiency may lead to a loss of identity and a weakened sense of place as Ritzer (2004) mentioned in his book The McDonaldization of Society. The goal of the Rational Aesthetics Approach (RAA) is to balance this disparity by combining functionality and aesthetics to improve livability, give occupant well-being top priority, and develop a strong sense of place and identity.

RAA as a potential conceptual framework for housing design promotes positive human experiences and a high quality of life. This framework emphasizes:

- Contextualism: Designing in harmony with the surrounding environment and the needs of the residents.
- Transhumanism: Integrating technology and sustainable practices seamlessly for a healthy future.
- Phenomenology: Considering the subjective experiences of inhabitants and designing spaces that evoke positive emotions and memories.

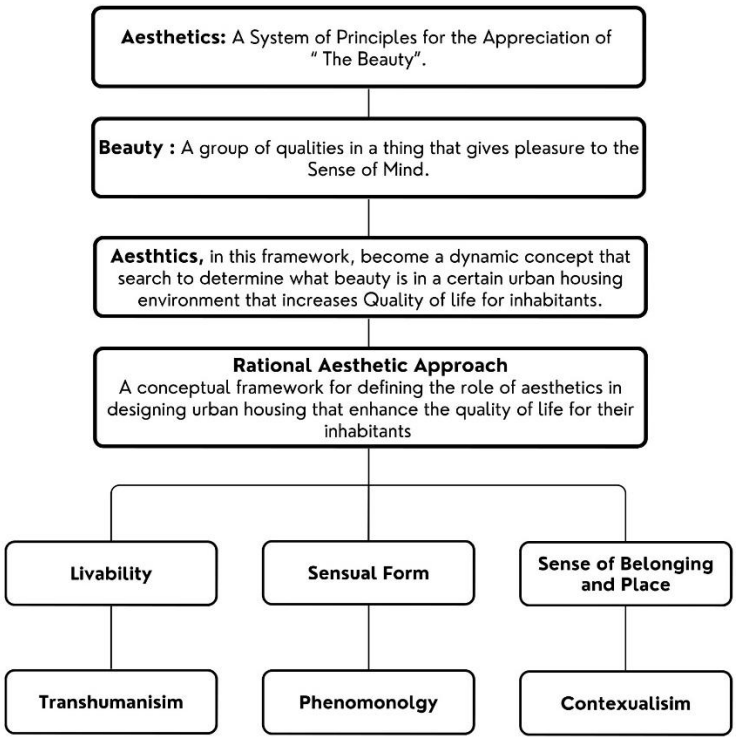


Figure 32. The initial conceptual framework for rational aesthetic approach. (By Author).

3.3 Chapter Conclusion

The Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) is a holistic framework for housing design that seeks to enhance quality of life by integrating functionality with aesthetic appeal, thereby addressing design aesthetics, psychological well-being, and the specific needs of individual residents. In modern architecture, efficiency and practicality are frequently given priority over individuality and emotional resonance, which can result in housing projects that are functional but lacking in qualities that make a house feel like home. By stressing a balanced approach highlighted by aesthetics, the RAA seeks to close this gap.

This approach is based on three fundamental ideas:

- Contextualism: The basic principle of RAA is that architecture should live harmoniously with the people who will be using space and its surroundings. According to this principle, designs should be sensitive to the unique social, cultural, and environmental context in which they are placed. Architects can enhance their residents' sense of place and identity by designing homes that feel connected to their surroundings through understanding and integrating contextual factors. Residents can develop close relationships with their neighbors and learn more about their neighborhood by encouraging social interactions and community involvement. Their identity is strengthened, their sense of belonging is increased, and their emotional connection to their home and neighborhood is strengthened because of this relationship.
- Transhumanism: Technology and sustainability are now fundamental aspects of modern living in a world that is changing quickly. The RAA supports the seamless integration of cutting-edge technologies and sustainable practices into residential design, using transhumanism as a guiding principle. By doing this, housing architecture could be both aesthetic and future-ready, supporting both the environment and the health and well-being of their occupants. The Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) claims that transhumanistic perspective could make the experience of dwelling more livable. This is accomplished by creating housing solutions that seamlessly integrate technology while giving human needs top priority. These designs improve how individuals engage with their living spaces, making daily tasks more effective, useful, and customized

to meet the needs of each individual. Adaptive settings and smart home systems, for instance, may offer individualized solutions for well-being, productivity, and comfort. In addition to making jobs easier, this fusion of technology and human-centered design, which is named transhumanism, produces environments that change with their occupants' changing needs, improving their overall quality of life and making living there more satisfying.

- Phenomenology: The third principle is concerned with the occupants' subjective perceptions. The RAA acknowledges that a home is not only a physical structure but also a place where people live, make memories, and experience a spectrum of emotions. Drawing on phenomenological insights, which emphasize people's lived experiences and sensory perceptions, architects can design environments that evoke a more profound emotional connection. This entails a thoughtful approach to elements like light, materials, and the experiential flow through spaces to create uplifting, stress-relieving, comfortable, and welcoming environments. A house with strong aesthetics, including balanced color schemes, affective materials, harmonious proportions, and legible spatial configurations, not only pleases the eye but also contributes to a deeper, lived experience. While visual perception is acknowledged, phenomenology is fundamentally about the holistic experience of space. It emphasizes how a person feels, senses, remembers, and inhabits a place through all modalities of perception, not just sight. Emotional bonds with a home emerge through this multisensory and embodied engagement: the warmth of sunlight on a wall, the echo of footsteps in a hallway, the scent of aged timber. Visual aesthetics help frame beauty, but it is their integration with touch, sound, memory, and atmosphere that transforms houses into places of meaning. In this way, homes become emotionally resonant not merely by how they look, but by how they are lived and felt over time. Architects may create homes that connect with their residents on a variety of sensory and emotional levels by fusing the emotional depth of phenomenology with the strength of beautiful visual elements. Over time, these homes can become places of inspiration and comfort.

Therefore, the RAA framework proposes a comprehensive approach to housing design that is flexible enough to adjust to the unique requirements and circumstances of various projects while using reason and logic to analyze and evaluate the human appreciation of aesthetics. By providing a framework that improves the livability of spaces, puts the well-being of occupants first, and develops a strong sense of place and identity, it aims to close the gap between the functional and the aesthetic.

Chapter 4

Perception of Urban Housing Environment in Relation to Proposed Framework

In order to explore the relationship between urban housing architecture, aesthetics, and community dynamics, this study takes an in-depth approach. After investigating the theoretical underpinnings of design philosophies, aesthetics, and their impact on community dynamics, the research seeks to identify key factors influencing aesthetics vision in housing architecture, laying the groundwork for future empirical investigations.

The methodological framework for assessing the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) as a theoretical basis for recognizing housing aesthetics in various socioeconomic settings is presented in this chapter. The RAA posits that aesthetics is an integral aspect of house design rather than a supplementary element, and while aesthetic evaluations may be subjective, they may be articulated through established logical frameworks. Using qualitative methodologies, the study uses written narrative inquiry to engage 18 people from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds in Beirut and its suburbs. Six generally desired elements of housing were found through the thematic analysis, and they were compared against the three main tenets of RAA: contextualism, transhumanism and phenomenology. The flexibility and limitations of the RAA framework are demonstrated by this research, which allows us to investigate how these theoretical concepts appear differently across socioeconomic levels. The results lay the groundwork for comprehending how aesthetic factors in housing design methodically enhance human experience and quality of life while taking socioeconomic variances into account.

4.1 Methodology of Field Study

Building on the theoretical foundations, the study proposes a framework (Rational Aesthetic Approach) for evaluating aesthetic quality in urban housing environments. The framework of Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA), which is based on the idea that beauty is not only subjective but also can be comprehended through a common, logical framework, highlights aesthetics as a crucial component of urban dwelling settings. The word "rational" is purposefully used to suggest that there is a

common ground for aesthetic judgement following the theories of David Hume, Roger Scruton and Immanuel Kant (Costelloe, 2013; Scruton 2013; Kant, 2003). By recognizing this "universal desire", RAA suggests that aesthetics may be methodically examined and utilized to improve the quality of life for residents. This method considers aesthetics beyond being a simply personal experience and instead promotes the health of society, establishing it as a fundamental, planned element of housing architecture.

The proposed framework is evaluated through a qualitative study. Qualitative methods are well-suited for this inquiry as they allow participants to express personal, nuanced visions for their future homes. Within the scope of the research, 18 individuals in Beirut and its suburbs from different income levels (6 low-income interviewees earning below 9,000$ annually, 6 middle income interviewees earning between 9,000$ to 25,000$ annually, and 6 high income interviewees earning above 25,000$ annually (World Bank, 2021)) are interviewed using a narrative approach. A narrative interview is a qualitative research method where the interviewer encourages the participant to share their experiences in a storytelling format. Instead of structured questions, the interviewer uses open-ended prompts to allow the interviewee to construct their own narrative. This method helps capture personal experiences, social contexts, and meanings attached to events. It is commonly used in psychology, sociology, and anthropology to understand lived experiences (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

A purposeful sampling approach is employed for this study. Purposeful sampling is a strategy where participants are selected based on their relevance to the research question (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). In this case, participants are chosen because they have a strong interest in or connection to the topic of homeownership and future living arrangements. Also, they are selected according to their income level based on the limits of World Bank (2021) to include equal number of participants from each level. This method is preferred as it allows for the recruitment of individuals who can provide in-depth and equal perspectives on the research topic.

To ensure a diverse and representative sample, attention is paid to the following demographic factors: age, gender, income level, and geographic location. Participants

are recruited from various socioeconomic backgrounds to capture a range of perspectives. Income level is considered to understand how socioeconomic factors influence individuals' views on aesthetic perception. Additionally, geographic location is considered to explore regional variations in aesthetic preferences and aspirations.

Table 4

List of Participants

Participant ID	Name	Age	Income Group	Neighborhood (Beirut/Suburbs)
#01	K.R	29	Low	Sabra
#02	S.Z	35	Low	Bourj Hammoud
#03	Z.H	31	Low	Chiyah
#04	I.A	44	Low	Borje Barajneh
#05	H.M	37	Low	Mazraa
#06	T.A	26	Low	Tariq el jdideh
#07	R.A	30	Middle	Haret Hreik
#08	A.H	28	Middle	Tayyouneh
#09	T.T	33	Middle	Ain El Romene
#10	H.N	34	Middle	Chiyah
#11	K.H	25	Middle	Hadat
#12	B.D	29	Middle	Badaro
#13	M.H	30	High	Saifi Village
#14	N.U	42	High	Achrafiyeh
#15	G.I	35	High	Downtown Beirut
#16	A.A	37	High	Achrafiyeh
#17	G.I	29	High	Gemmayze
#18	O.Y	26	High	Rawshe

The interviews are conducted at the participant's own home in June and July 2024. The duration of the interview is around 15 minutes, including the explanation of the study's purpose, the reasons for the interview, the expected outcomes, and

clarification of the question and response method. Participants are asked to write their answers in short paragraphs. Therefore, the data collection technique for this study can be defined as written narrative inquiry. Participants are asked the open-ended question, “Please provide a brief paragraph describing your vision for your future home. In your response, include what aspects of your current living space you would like to change, what issues your ideal future home would address, and any specific features or improvements you would like to see in your future home.” and provided their responses in the form of short written paragraphs.

As a result, the data is comprehensive since participants are able to express their ideas more precisely through writing than while speaking. Additionally, it reduces the possibility that the researcher's behaviors or body language may have an impact on answers, guaranteeing that the replies are truly those of the participants. Because each response is brief and targeted, the written answers facilitate consistent data collection and analysis, accelerates theme interpretation, and improves the academic quality of the study (Billups, 2019).

The method of data evaluation used in this study is thematic analysis. This qualitative approach involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data collected from the interviews. The process includes coding the participants' responses to capture recurring ideas and organizing these codes into broader themes (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saldana, 2012) that reflect participants shared and diverse perspectives on their ideal homes.

Following this process, a conceptual map is created to visually represent the relationships between the identified themes and how these themes varied across different income groups. This map provides insight into the relative importance of various housing features for different income levels.

The result from the thematic analysis is compared and overlapped with the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA)’s conceptual components to highlight any alignments or discrepancies. Finally, an integrated conceptual map is developed,

combining the themes from participants' narratives with conceptual framework of the RAA. This map provides an overview of housing aspirations across income levels and how they relate to the RAA's concept set.

4.2 Thematic Analysis Findings

This chapter examines how aesthetic preferences and housing needs vary across different income groups through the lens of the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA). By analyzing firsthand accounts from residents in low-, middle-, and upper-income brackets, the study reveals distinct priorities that shape their perceptions of comfort, functionality, and community.

Low-Income Group: Key Priorities and RAA Analysis
Participants: 01 to #06

Main Themes:
Functionality & Flexibility:
Open floor plans connecting living and kitchen areas to allow supervision and family interaction (P01, P06). Adaptable interiors for changing family needs (P03).

Safety & Security:
Well-lit pathways, secure entrances, fire escapes (P03, P01).

Affordability & Maintenance:
Desire for modern, energy-efficient homes to reduce utility costs (P05). Preference for simple, organized façades and low-cost improvements (P03).

Community & Social Interaction:
Access to communal gardens, social areas, shared activities (P02, P06). Emphasis on neighborhood cohesion, support networks, and mixed-use buildings combining residential and commercial facilities (P03, P04).

Space & Privacy:

Desire for more rooms, noise insulation, storage (P01, P04, P06).

Connection to Nature:

Balconies, small gardens, green spaces for children and leisure (P01, P02, P04, P06).

RAA Interpretation:

The low-income group emphasizes basic needs—security, functionality, and social connectedness—while aspiring for dignified living conditions through modest aesthetic improvements (colorful façades, greenery). Their aesthetic preference leans toward practical beauty that supports daily life, safety, and community belonging.

Mid-Income Group: Key Priorities and RAA Analysis

Participants: #07 to #12

Main Themes:

Quality & Modernity:

Use of high-quality materials, modern appliances, and smart home features (P07, P08, P11).

Space & Comfort:

Larger, well-lit, airy apartments with high ceilings and good ventilation (P08, P09, P10, P12). Dedicated spaces for work or study (P08, P10, P11).

Community & Cohesion:

Well-planned neighborhoods with unified architectural themes, green spaces, playgrounds, and social venues (P07, P09, P12).

Sustainability & Connectivity:

Green roofs, community gardens, bike lanes, walkability, and reliable public transport (P08, P07).

Privacy & Noise Control:

Sound insulation, private balconies or terraces, quiet neighborhoods (P07, P11).

RAA Interpretation:

Mid-income residents seek a balance between aesthetics and functionality, aspiring to integrate modern lifestyle comforts and community engagement with sustainable urban design. Their aesthetic appreciation includes distinctiveness and character (textured walls, traditional warmth), suggesting a desire for an environment that reflects personal identity and social status while fostering connection.

Upper-Class Income Group: Key Priorities and RAA Analysis

Participants: #13 to #18

Main Themes:

Luxury & Sophistication:

High-end materials (marble, hardwood), elegant and timeless design, spacious interiors (P13, P14, P18).

Technology & Convenience:

Integrated smart home systems managing lighting, security, climate, and entertainment (P13, P15, P16).

Privacy & Exclusivity:

Gated communities, private estates, soundproofing, dedicated creative or wellness spaces (P16, P17, P18).

Environmental Responsibility:

Eco-friendly features such as green roofs, solar panels, rainwater harvesting (P13, P14, P16).

Community & Culture:

Neighborhoods with cultural venues, art galleries, social interaction spaces combined with privacy and tranquility (P14, P17).

Connection with Nature & Leisure:

Expansive gardens, pools, jogging trails, rooftop terraces (P13, P15, P16, P18).

RAA Interpretation:

Upper-class respondents prioritize aesthetics that signify status, sophistication, and environmental consciousness, integrating advanced technology and privacy with cultural and social richness. Their aesthetic preferences emphasize symbolic meaning, exclusivity, and harmony with nature within a curated community.

Six major themes extracted from the thematic analysis of the interview data. These themes represent the core desires and needs expressed by participants in their visions for their ideal future homes:

1. **Functionality and Space Optimization:** Focuses on the practical aspects of living space, including efficient use of space, adaptability, and features that enhance daily living activities.
2. **Aesthetic Appeal and Design Style:** Relates to the visual and stylistic preferences of the home, including the aesthetics of the individual home and the overall neighborhood design.
3. **Community and Social Wellbeing:** Emphasizes the importance of social interaction, community spaces, and features that enhance a sense of belonging and community life.
4. **Connection with Nature and Green Spaces:** Highlights the desire for access to nature, green environments, and outdoor spaces as integral components of an ideal home and neighborhood.
5. **Safety, Security, and Privacy:** Addresses the needs for physical safety, secure living environments, and personal privacy within the home and community.
6. **Modern Amenities and Technological Integration:** Reflects the aspiration for modern conveniences, technological enhancements, and features that improve efficiency and quality of life.

4.2.1 Identification of Themes

Theme 1: Functionality and Space Optimization

Low Income:

- **Codes:** Open floor plan, connected living/kitchen, expanded doorways, functional kitchen, storage space, adaptable interior areas.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Open floor plan, connected living/kitchen - Participant #01 K.R): *"A more open floor plan with the living room and kitchen connected would be better than separating each room from other and each for a specific function. In this manner, I could supervise them while I prepare dinner and assist them with their homework at the same time."*

(Expanded doorways - Participant #01 K.R): *"Expanded doorways would be ideal for my growing family."*

(Storage space - Participant #06 I.A): *"My ideal future home would have enough bedrooms for everyone, plenty of storage space, and a functional kitchen where we can cook and eat together comfortably."*

- **Focus:** Maximizing limited space for family needs and supervision, emphasizing practicality and efficient use of available area to accommodate family activities and changing needs.

Middle Income:

- **Codes:** Workspace, dedicated study, well-equipped kitchen, ample storage, good air circulation, high ceilings, practicality.
- **Quote Examples:**

(Workspace, dedicated study - Participant #08 A.H): *"The growing number of home offices could be accommodated with an effective design that incorporates a designated workspace."*

(Dedicated study - Participant #10 H,N): *"A dedicated study area where I can focus on my work without distractions would be ideal."*

(Well-equipped kitchen - Participant #08 A.H): *"High ceilings, hardwood floors, and a well-equipped kitchen with contemporary appliances are examples of design features that I value."*

(Ample storage, good air circulation - Participant #12 B.D): *"I envision my future home to have ample storage space and good air circulation, making it comfortable and easy to keep tidy."*

- **Focus:** Desire for dedicated functional spaces within the home, such as home offices and well-equipped kitchens, reflecting the need to balance work and personal life.

High Income:

- **Codes:** Open-concept design, flow between living areas, multi-purpose areas, flexible spaces, grand foyer, large kitchen, gourmet kitchen, smart home technology for energy efficiency.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Open-concept design, flow between living areas, large kitchen, energy efficiency - Participant #13 M.H): *"An open-concept design that promotes flow between the living areas should feature a large, modern kitchen with energy-efficient appliances."*

(Flexible spaces, multi-purpose areas - Participant #15 G.I): *"The layout should be simple but elegant, with areas that serve multiple purposes and can be adjusted to suit various demands."*

(Gourmet kitchen, grand foyer - Participant #18 O.Y): *"Key spaces will include a grand foyer, a gourmet kitchen..."*

(Smart home technology for efficiency - Participant #13 M.H): *"Efficiency and quality of life would be improved by combining smart home technology..."*

- **Focus:** Seeking expansive/larger and flexible spaces that can adapt to various needs and activities, emphasizing seamless flow between areas and high-end functionality through gourmet kitchens and smart home integration for maximum convenience and efficiency.

Patterns and Variations Across Income Levels (Theme 1):

- **Pattern:** Functionality and space optimization are universally valued, but the *expression* and *scale* differ significantly across income levels.

- **Variation:** Low-income groups concentrate on workable solutions to facilitate spatial constraints, giving priority to basic spatial efficiency and adaptation for families living in limited settings. A growing emphasis on work-life balance and orderly living is reflected in middle-income aspirations that move toward designated functional spaces like home offices and fully furnished kitchens. High-income prioritize luxury, convenience, and adaptability on a bigger scale, emphasizing spacious, adaptable, and seamlessly integrated environments with cutting-edge functional technologies. The emphasis shifts from designing for limited space to optimizing the potential of large spaces.

Theme 2: Aesthetic Appeal and Design Style

Low Income:

- **Codes:** Color facade, murals, window planters, flowers, neat facades, organized facades, modern aesthetic, clean aesthetic.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Color facade, murals, window planters, flowers - Participant #02 S.Z): *"It would be cheerier with some color added to the facade, some murals that highlight the diversity of the neighborhood, or even just window planters filled with flowers."*

(Neat and organized facades - Participant #03 Z.H): *"…designing neat and organized facades is affordable I think."*

(Clean aesthetic - Participant #06 I.A): *"The building would be well-designed with a clean, modern aesthetic..."*

- **Focus:** Basic aesthetic improvements to counter perceived monotony and drabness of current living environments.

Middle Income:

- **Codes:** Modern design, slick finishes, high-quality materials, unified architectural themes, elegance, distinctive elements, character, exposed wooden beams, textured walls, clean, organized neighborhood, traditional design, warm, welcoming feel, minimalist design.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Modern design, slick finishes, high-quality materials - Participant #07 R.A): *"My ideal apartment would balance modernity and comfort. The living experience would be enhanced by a modern design featuring slick finishes, high-quality materials..."*

(Unified architectural theme - Participant #07 R.A): *"I envision a unified architectural theme for the neighborhood that fosters a feeling of identity and cohesion."*

(Distinctive elements, character, exposed wooden beams, textured walls - Participant #09 T.T): *"My ideal apartment would have distinctive elements that tell a story and add character, like exposed wooden beams and textured walls."*

(Minimalist design - Participant #11 K.H): *"I'd like a sleek, minimalist design..."*

(Traditional design, warm, welcoming feel - Participant #12 B.D): *"I prefer a traditional design with a warm, welcoming feel..."*

Focus: emphasis on particular design elements that express individual preferences and produce the desired ambiance, then more focus on materiality, texture, and feelings.

High Income:

- **Codes:** Contemporary luxury, eco-friendly design, classic architectural features, modern amenities, timeless aesthetic, elegant interiors, high-end finishes, bespoke furnishings, minimalist design, curated aesthetics.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Contemporary luxury, eco-friendly design - Participant #13 M.H): *"Neighborhood should combine contemporary luxury with eco-friendly design ideas."*

(Classic architectural features, timeless aesthetic - Participant #14 N.U): *"I would like an apartment that blends classic architectural features with modern amenities. A timeless aesthetic should be reflected in the building facade..."*

(Elegant interiors, high-end finishes, bespoke furnishings - Participant #18 O.Y): *"The house will be designed in a classic style, with elegant interiors featuring high-end finishes and bespoke furnishings."*

(Minimalist design - Participant #17 G.I): *"I dream of a contemporary home with a minimalist design..."*

- **Focus:** looking for upscale, well-chosen visual experiences that reflects exclusivity, elegance, and tasteful sophistication.

Patterns and Variations Across Income Levels (Theme 2):

- **Pattern:** While aesthetic considerations are present at all income levels, they get more complicated and particular as income rises.

- **Variation:** Low-income populations focus on fundamental, generally appealing aesthetic enhancements like color and cleanliness to overcome the perceived lack of visual appeal in their current environments. Middle-income groups show signs of a growing sense of personal aesthetic taste as they start to show preferences for particular design types (contemporary, traditional, minimalist), value high-quality materials, and recognize unified architectural

themes. A desire for high and customized visual spaces that convey status, and sophisticated taste is reflected in high-income ambitions, which place an emphasis on highly refined and curated aesthetics defined by modern luxury, timeless elegance, bespoke features, and eco-conscious design.

Theme 3: Community and Social Wellbeing

Low Income:

- **Codes:** Communal garden, common area, community room, mingle with neighbors, share knowledge, lively neighborhood, sense of community, community center, childcare facilities, after-school programs, mixed-use buildings.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Communal garden, common area, community room - Participant #02 S.Z): *"Imagine having access to a communal garden...A common area featuring comfortable chairs and a ping pong table...Perhaps even a community room for events like movie nights or get-togethers."*

(Mixed-use buildings, childcare facilities - Participant #03 Z.H): *"More mixed-use buildings that have houses and small businesses, childcare facilities, and other necessities like healthcare would be great."*

(Sense of community - Participant #03 Z.H): *"...but also needed to foster a sense of community."*

- **Focus:** Building a strong sense of community within the neighborhood to foster social support, interaction, and shared resources.

Middle Income:

- **Codes:** a community center, social gatherings, community gardens, a vibrant, active community, pride and community, public spaces to relax and chat, a feeling of community, and a tech-friendly neighborhood.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Community center, social events - Participant #07 R.A): *"A community center for social events...would all improve the neighborhood's appeal and promote a lively, involved community."*

(Community gardens - Participant #08 A.H): *"In addition to improving the area's aesthetics, community gardens and green roofs would promote sustainable living."*

(Pride and community - Participant #09 T.T): *"...a clean and organized neighborhood that fosters a sense of pride and community."*

(Tech-friendly neighborhood with community - Participant #11 K.H): *"It should be in a quiet, tech-friendly neighborhood with good internet connectivity and a sense of community."*

- **Focus:** Desire for planned community spaces and activities that foster a sense of belonging and social engagement.

High Income:

- **Codes:** Community-focused features, co-working spaces, wellness center, community libraries, rooftop lounges, landscaped courtyards, community within neighborhood, social interaction, sense of place, exclusive gated community, upscale shopping and dining options.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Community-focused features, co-working spaces, wellness center - Participant #13 M.H): *"Efficiency and quality of life would be improved by combining smart home technology with community-focused features like co-working spaces, a wellness center..."*

(Community libraries, rooftop lounges, landscaped courtyards - Participant #14 N.U): *"Shared areas such as community libraries, rooftop lounges, and beautifully landscaped courtyards should help to create a strong sense of community within the neighborhood."*

(Exclusive gated community - Participant #18 O.Y): *"I imagine a luxurious, private estate located in an exclusive gated community."*

(Sense of place - Participant #15 G.I): *"...for such things will make my belonging to my house way more and give a sense of place."*

- **Focus:** With premium facilities and areas intended for improving social contact among members in an opulent and exclusive atmosphere, the community is a carefully planned and exclusive experience.

Patterns and Variations Across Income Levels (Theme 3):

- **Pattern:** The desire for community is universal, but the nature and scope of desired community features differ dramatically across income levels.
- **Variation:** Low-income groups place a strong emphasis on useful community spaces and services that meet everyday needs and promote fundamental social ties, emphasizing real benefits like childcare and communal gardens. Aspirations for a more organized and amenity-rich communal life are more common among middle-class individuals, who tend to favor planned community amenities that promote social contact and shared experiences. A desire for community that improves their lifestyle in a privileged and private setting is reflected in high-income people's conceptions of community, which are defined by exclusivity, upscale amenities (such as fitness centers and co-working spaces), and carefully planned social settings. Their private luxury is extended into the neighborhood in a carefully planned and exclusive way.

Theme 4: Connection with Nature and Green Spaces

Low Income:

- **Codes:** Balcony, potted plants, sunshine, fresh air, communal garden, backyard, greenery, green spaces, playgrounds, community gardens.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Balcony, potted plants, sunshine, fresh air - Participant #01 K.R): *"It would be ideal to have a tiny balcony that could accommodate a few potted plants so we could enjoy some sunshine and fresh air."*

(Communal garden - Participant #02 S.Z): *"Imagine having access to a communal garden where people could cultivate herbs, vegetables, and possibly even some flowers."*

(Backyard, greenery, playgrounds, community gardens - Participant #04 I.A): *"A small garden or backyard would be a dream come true, providing a safe place for my kids to play and a bit of greenery to enjoy...neighborhood with green spaces, playgrounds, and community gardens."*

- **Focus:** Basic access to nature and greenery, often within or next to the home, welling for fresh air, relaxation, and children's play.

Middle Income:

- **Codes:** Private balcony, green space for recreation, community gardens, green roofs, parks, green spaces, small garden, flowers, vegetables, balcony, terrace.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Private balcony - Participant #07 R.A): *"...a private balcony for individual outdoor space."*

(Green space for recreation - Participant #07 R.A): *"...lots of green space for recreation..."*

(Green roofs, community gardens - Participant #08 A.H): *"In addition to improving the area's aesthetics, community gardens and green roofs would promote sustainable living."*

(Small garden, flowers, vegetables - Participant #10 H,N): *"I'd love a small garden where I can grow flowers and vegetables."*

(Balcony, terrace - Participant #11 K.H): *"A small balcony or terrace where I can relax and enjoy some fresh air would be a perfect addition."*

- **Focus:** Integration of nature within the home and neighborhood for recreation, relaxation, and sustainable living.

High Income:

- **Codes:** Floor-to-ceiling windows, panoramic cityscape views, green roofs, rooftop gardens, native plant-lined walking trails, green areas, lush garden, rooftop terrace, stunning views, zen garden, small pool, manicured gardens, large pool, tree-lined streets, parks, recreational areas.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Floor-to-ceiling windows, panoramic cityscape views - Participant #13 M.H): *"Large floor to ceiling windows that let in an abundance of natural light and provide panoramic cityscape views are a must-have in my dream apartment."*

(Green roofs, rooftop gardens, native plant-lined walking trails, green areas - Participant #13 M.H): *"I also give top priority to environmentally friendly features like rainwater harvesting, green roofs, and solar panels. A dedication to environmentally friendly living should be evident in the neighborhood itself, with lots of green areas, rooftop gardens, and native plant-lined walking trails."*

(Lush garden, rooftop terrace, stunning views - Participant #16 A.A): *"The outdoor area will include a lush garden, a spacious patio for entertaining, and a rooftop terrace with stunning views."*

(Zen garden, small pool - Participant #17 G.I): *"The outdoor area will feature a zen garden, a small pool..."*

(Manicured gardens, large pool, tree-lined streets, parks, recreational areas - Participant #18 O.Y): *"The outdoor area will boast manicured gardens, a large swimming pool, and a tennis court. The neighborhood will be quiet, with tree-lined streets, and close to parks and recreational areas..."*

- **Focus:** Extensive and integrated natural elements as key components of luxury living.

Patterns and Variations Across Income Levels (Theme 4):

- **Pattern:** Although there is always a strong desire to connect with nature, the scope, integration, and goal of access to nature change as income rises.

- **Variation:** Low-income populations prioritize small-scale, useful integration of greenery and primarily seek out basic, accessible nature for urgent needs like play, relaxation, and fresh air. Indicating a more integrated and peaceful approach to nature, middle-income expectations expand to include community gardens for sustainable living, private balconies for personal enjoyment, and planned green spaces for entertainment. Wide, carefully designed, and frequently spectacular natural settings (panoramic views, lush gardens, zen gardens) are featured in high-end ideas. These settings are effortlessly incorporated into luxury living and function as aesthetic upgrades, status symbols, and elements of exclusive private retreats. Nature turns into a well-planned, opulent addition to the house.

Theme 5: Safety, Security, and Privacy

Low Income:

- **Codes:** Safety, secure entrances, well-lit pathways, visible sightlines, noise out (solid construction, insulated walls), peaceful and spacious.

Quote Examples:

(Safety, secure entrances, well-lit pathways, visible sightlines - Participant #03 Z.H): *"Another top concern is safety; having visible sightlines, secure entrances, and well-lit pathways would all make us feel safer."*

(Noise out (solid construction, insulated walls), peaceful - Participant #04 I.A): *"My current place has thin walls and no privacy, so I would love a house with solid construction and well-insulated walls to keep out noise...I dream of a future home that is peaceful and spacious."*

Focus: basic physical safety and security in the home and community, as well as a desire for quiet and tranquil living spaces.

Middle Income:

- **Codes:** Privacy, well-insulated walls, safe neighborhood, lighting and landscaping for safety, peaceful neighborhood, quiet neighborhood, home office for work without interruptions.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Privacy, well-insulated walls - Participant #07 R.A): *"...In order to ensure both energy efficiency and privacy, my dream apartment would feature well-insulated walls..."*

(Safe neighborhood - Participant #12 B.D): *"The neighborhood should be safe and family-friendly..."*

(Peaceful neighborhood, quiet neighborhood - Participant #10 H,N): *"The neighborhood should be peaceful, with parks and green spaces...I dream of a future home that feels open and spacious...The neighborhood should be peaceful..." (Implied quietness in peaceful).*

(Home office for work without interruptions - Participant #11 K.H): *"My dream home would have more space, especially a separate home office where I can work without interruptions." (Privacy for work).*

- **Focus:** striking a balance between community safety and the increasing value placed on individual privacy and quiet, particularly in the home.

High Income:

- **Codes:** Top priority to environmentally friendly features for quality of life (implying safety/health), environmentally conscious infrastructure, cutting-edge security systems, privacy, exclusivity, top-notch security, gated community, private estate, underground parking for safety.

(Environmentally friendly features for quality of life, environmentally conscious infrastructure - Participant #13 M.H): *"I also give top priority to environmentally friendly features like rainwater harvesting...A dedication to environmentally friendly living should be evident in the neighborhood itself..." (Implied safety/health through environment).*

(Cutting-edge security systems - Participant #14 N.U): *"...cutting-edge security systems."*

(Privacy, exclusivity, top-notch security, gated community, private estate - Participant #18 O.Y): *"The community will offer top-notch security, privacy, and a sense of exclusivity...luxurious, private estate located in an exclusive gated community."*

(Underground parking for safety - Participant #13 M.H): *"...safe, underground parking." (Implied safety).*

- **Focus:** Advanced security systems, gated communities, and private estates are used to attain the highest levels of security, exclusivity, and privacy.

Patterns and Variations Across Income Levels (Theme 5):

- **Pattern:** Safety, security, and privacy are fundamental needs across all income levels, but the manifestation and emphasis shift considerably.

- **Variation:** In order to address urgent environmental and security problems in their current living arrangements, low-income groups place a higher priority on basic physical safety and noise reduction. A growing need for personal space and calm in addition to neighborhood safety is reflected in middle-class desires that broaden to encompass personal privacy and a peaceful home environment. With a focus on cutting-edge security systems, gated communities for increased privacy, and even expanding the definition of safety to include environmental health and well-being, high-income aspirations elevate safety and security to the level of exclusivity and comprehensive protection. Safety turns into a symbol of luxury and exclusivity.

Theme 6: Modern Amenities and Technological Integration

Low Income:

- **Codes:** Energy-efficient appliances and fixtures, well-maintained, reliable elevators.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Energy-efficient appliances and fixtures - Participant #05 H.M): *"My dream home would be modern and well-maintained, with energy-efficient appliances and fixtures to help save on utility bills."*

(Reliable elevators - Participant #06 I.A): *"...and have reliable elevators and security features."*

- **Focus:** Basic modern amenities that improve living standards and reduce costs.

Middle Income:

Codes: Smart home technology, tech-friendly neighborhood, internet connectivity, contemporary appliances, modern design, sleek finishes, bike lanes, public transportation, walkable streets.

Quote Examples:

(Smart home technology - Participant #07 R.A): *"...and smart home technology."*

(Tech-friendly neighborhood, internet connectivity - Participant #11 K.H): *"It should be in a quiet, tech-friendly neighborhood with good internet connectivity..."*

(Contemporary appliances - Participant #08 A.H): *"...a well-equipped kitchen with contemporary appliances are examples of design features that I value."*

(Bike lanes, public transportation, walkable streets - Participant #08 A.H): *"In order to promote connectivity, the neighborhood should be planned with bike lanes, dependable public transportation, and walkable streets."*

- **Focus:** Integration of modern technologies and amenities that enhance convenience, connectivity, and modern lifestyles.

High Income:

- **Codes:** Smart home technology, integrated features, app control, energy-efficient appliances, rainwater harvesting, solar panels, EV charging stations, modern gym, spa, wellness center, co-working spaces, underground parking.

- **Quote Examples:**

(Smart home technology, integrated features, app control - Participant #15 G.I): *"In my ideal smart apartment, all the features, from entertainment and security to lighting and temperature control, are effectively integrated and managed by a single app."*

(Energy-efficient appliances, rainwater harvesting, solar panels, EV charging stations - Participant #13 M.H): *"I also give top priority to environmentally friendly features like rainwater harvesting, green roofs, and solar panels...environmentally conscious infrastructure, such as electric vehicle charging stations..."*

(Modern gym, spa, wellness center, co-working spaces, underground parking - Participant #13 M.H): *"...community-focused features like co-working spaces, a wellness center, and safe, underground parking...a building that has a modern gym, and a spa because I believe that community wellness is extremely important."*

- **Focus:** Comprehensive integration of cutting-edge technologies and high-end amenities for maximum convenience, luxury, and sustainability.

Patterns and Variations Across Income Levels (Theme 6):

- **Pattern:** Modern amenities and technological integration are desired across all income levels, but the scope, sophistication, and purpose differ significantly.

- **Variation:** Low-income groups prioritize modern, cost-effective facilities like dependable infrastructure and energy-efficient equipment in an effort to raise their level of living. The desire for modern, connected living is evident in middle-income goals, which also include smart home technologies for convenience and connection elements like fast internet and walkable areas. A

desire for technologically advanced, opulent, and effortless living is reflected in high-income visions, which place an emphasis on seamless, app-controlled environments, sustainability (solar panels, EV stations), and comprehensive, cutting-edge technological integration that permeates every aspect of home and community life. In every aspect of life, technology becomes an imperceptible layer that improves convenience and luxury.

4.3 Common Ground for Ideal Housing Across Income Levels

Although there are notable differences in the ways that each income group imagines their ideal home, the thematic analysis does identify a commonality: basic human needs and aspirations that are valued at all income levels. Since each theme reflects a commonly desired feature of a living environment, but manifested differently depending on socioeconomic context, this common ground can be communicated through the overarching themes themselves. Below is a summary of the themes that the thematic analysis found to be common, emphasizing the central desire that each subject has that appeals to people of all economic levels:

1. **Desire for Functional and Optimized Living Space:** At its core, everyone wants a home that meets their needs and manages space well, regardless of their financial situation. Whether it means creating vast and flexible layouts for high-income households, optimizing limited space for low-income families, or developing specialized functional sections for middle-class individuals, the basic objective is to build a home that supports the everyday activities and lives of its residents. Functionality and effective use of available space are prioritized.
2. **Appreciation for Aesthetic Appeal:** Everyone, regardless of finances, wants a home that is aesthetically pleasant, while different people have different ideas about what "pleasing" means. The value of visual appeal is seen in everything from low-income groups' fundamental aesthetic enhancements like color and cleanliness to middle-class people's customized design aesthetics and high-income people's more elaborated sense of aesthetics. The intrinsic human desire for living in aesthetically pleasing environments is what binds them

together. Everyone values aesthetics, regardless of differences in abilities and taste.

3. **Longing for Community and Social Connection:** Although the desired type of community varies, a basic need for community and social well-being exists across all income levels. The fundamental desire for social connection and belonging endures, regardless of whether it is provided by organized social engagement in middle-class communities, basic neighborly assistance and shared resources for low-income communities, or exclusive and carefully curated communities for high-income communities. The common ground is the inherent human need for community and social interaction within their residential environment.
4. **Desire for Connection with Nature:** All income levels appreciate having a connection to nature and green places, however they do so in different ways and on varied scales. The underlying human desire to interact with nature is continuous, regardless of the level of wealth, from low-income people having basic access to greenery and fresh air to middle-class people using nature for recreation to high-income people enjoying enormous, carefully curated natural landscapes. Humans' natural desire to integrate green elements into their living spaces and establish a connection with nature is what unites them.
5. **Need for Safety, Security, and Privacy:** Despite differences in perceived dangers and desired levels of security and privacy, everyone has a basic need for protection, security, and privacy. The fundamental demand for a safe and private living space is always there, ranging from low-income people's basic physical safety and noise reduction to middle-class people's personal privacy and quiet, and high-income people's high-level security and exclusivity. The inherent human need for a private, safe, and secure living environment, regardless of how it is expressed unites them and seems universal.
6. **Appreciation for Modern Amenities and Technology:** All income levels value modern amenities and technological integration to improve their quality of life, but to various degrees. The need for modern conveniences is universal, ranging from low-income people's fundamental energy efficiency and dependable infrastructure to middle-class people's smart home conveniences and high-income people's complete technological integration. The

appreciation that people have for contemporary conveniences and technology that enhance their houses' efficiency, comfort, and convenience is what unites them.

Although the realization of these housing ideals is influenced by financial capacity, the basic goals are the same regardless of socioeconomic background. Though they are implemented differently, everyone wants functionality, aesthetics, community, nature, security, and contemporary amenities. Knowing these common goals can help architects and interior designers develop inclusive, flexible, and aspirational living environments for people of all income levels.

4.4 Bridging of Thematic Analysis Outcome with Rational Aesthetic Approach

The Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) proposes a comprehensive approach for designing homes that aims to improve quality of life by addressing psychological well-being in particular context and fusing aesthetic appeal with functionality.

Contextualism, Transhumanism, and Phenomenology are the three foundations which RAA is based on. A thematic study of future home visions across various income levels was carried out to evaluate the viability of RAA as a systematic and human-centered framework.

The thematic analysis of future home visions, despite income-based variations in expression, revealed a striking common ground. Across all income levels, six fundamental common desires consistently emerged as crucial elements of an ideal home:

- Desire for Functional and Optimized Living Space
- Appreciation for Aesthetic Appeal
- Longing for Community and Social Connection
- Desire for Connection with Nature
- Need for Safety, Security, and Privacy
- Appreciation for Modern Amenities and Technology

To evaluate RAA, I will now systematically demonstrate how each of its core principles directly addresses and supports these six commonly desired aspects of housing.

Contextualism: Contextualism, emphasizing harmony between people and surroundings, directly relates with the following themes:

- **Community and Social Connection (Direct support):** Designs that are considered the social and cultural environment in which they are placed are crucial, according to RAA's Contextualism. A sense of community and belonging is naturally fostered by contextualism, which is in line with community traditions, values, and social dynamics. Designs that are woven into the fabric of everyday life and represent the particular requirements and interactions of the neighborhood are more likely to increase interaction and collaboration.
- **Connection with Nature (Direct Support):** The respect for nature is related to contextualism, which emphasizes integrating and valuing the natural world and promotes designs that integrate natural components like green areas, water features, and native plants by acknowledging and appreciating regional biological systems. This strategy guarantees that the constructed environment complements the surrounding landscape in addition to coexisting with it. This strategy addresses the popular need for green spaces and a closer relationship with nature among all groups, particularly in housing projects. The human experience is also improved by this incorporation of nature into design, which raises livability and general quality of life by encouraging comfort, tranquility, and well-being.
- **Safety, Security, and Privacy (Indirect support):** Contextualism, which aims to understand the unique social and environmental context of a given location, may guide design decisions aimed at improving locally essential elements of safety, security, and privacy. Contextual concerns like social dynamics or environmental threats guide safety measures, whereas cultural norms and local expectations greatly influence privacy requirements. Architects can design urban living situations that inherently improve safety by applying contextualism to understand the local needs and weaknesses. This

awareness also makes it possible to include ideas from other foundations such transhumanism, which use systems and technology to directly assist safety. Although contextualism does not directly propose specific security technologies or strategies, its contribution remains indirect, guiding design choices that align with the broader cultural and environmental context.

Transhumanism: Transhumanism, advocating for the integration of technology and sustainability, directly addresses:

- **Modern Amenities and Technological Integration (Direct Support)**: The Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA), especially in its Transhumanism foundation, addresses the appreciation of modern amenities and technology through groups. RAA recognizes the critical role that modern technologies play in designing functional, comfortable, and efficient living environments. It highlights how these technologies are seamlessly involved in design while also interacting with aesthetic principles to improve human experience and quality of life. By emphasizing both practicality and aesthetic balance, RAA directly addresses the rising need for homes that satisfy the need for a technologically sophisticated culture.
- **Functionality and Space Optimization (Direct Support):** One of the fundamental principles of transhumanism is the creation of living environments that are effective and functional, and technology is becoming essential to this process. By integrating smart home systems, energy-efficient appliances, and sustainable design technologies, homes that promote functionality, resource efficiency, and space optimization may meet this changing need. Although these systems have been more common in housings environments with higher incomes, many of these systems have become more accessible and affordable, enabling low-income households to take advantage of improvements in home technology. This change is part of a larger movement to open up innovation, making smart, sustainable, and efficient living spaces accessible to a larger group of people.
- **Safety, Security, and Privacy (Direct and Indirect Support):** Transhumanism improves the lived experience of safety, security, and privacy. A transhumanist approach not only establishes a technologically safe

environment, but it also cultivates a feeling of control and safety. Advanced systems like biometric access, AI-driven surveillance, and adaptive architecture make security measures more intuitively comforting and effective. Additionally, cost-effective solutions such as smart locks, motion-sensor lighting, and community-based surveillance apps provide accessible security enhancements without a high financial burden.

Phenomenology: Phenomenology, focusing on subjective perceptions and emotional connection through aesthetics, strongly validates:

- **Aesthetic Appeal (Direct Support):** The core principle of the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) is the common desire for aesthetic. RAA prioritizes phenomenological and visual elements in order to create houses that are both aesthetically pleasing and emotionally meaningful. By doing this, it serves the fundamental human desire for aesthetic value and produces environments that enhance human experience and the quality of life.
- **Functionality and Space Optimization (Indirect Support):** Although functional environments are built for optimal use, they may overlook the integration of features that cater to human sensory experiences. Phenomenologically built environments that are designed with a focus on user experience are both practically effective and provide a sense of satisfaction, emotions, interpretations and enjoyment. In addition to visual aesthetics which help the environment to be designed in a more clear, useful, and organized manner, that triggers human sensory experiences.

This systematic analysis of RAA's principles in relation to communal housing desires confirms that RAA provides a well-rounded approach that balances functional, aesthetic, technological, and contextual needs for improved quality of life and livability. Central to RAA is the recognition that, while human desires are fundamentally universal, their expression, prioritization, and interpretation differ according to the socioeconomical, cultural, and experiential contexts of each group. These desires such as the need for safety, identity, space optimization, technological integration etc. are framed differently across groups due to their uniquely lived realities.

RAA introduces a structured process of evaluating and situational framing, where communal desires are analyzed and interpreted within the specific background of each targeted group. This enables the development of tailored housing environments that are perceived by each group not as generic solutions, but as deeply aligned with their needs and aspirations.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

Based on the concept mapping, testing the alignment between the core foundations of the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) and the six desired aspects of housing identified through thematic analysis, we conclude that when designing homes, the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) offers a systematic but flexible framework that strikes a balance between psychological wellness, functionality, and aesthetics. Six strong desires found through the thematic analysis of future home visions are systematically addressed by RAA through the integration of Contextualism, Transhumanism, and Phenomenology.

Following this process, a conceptual map is created to visually represent the relationships between the identified themes and how these themes varied across different income groups. This map provides insight into the relative importance of various housing features for different income levels.

The result from the thematic analysis is compared and overlapped with the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA)'s conceptual components to highlight any alignments or discrepancies. Finally, an integrated conceptual map is developed, combining the themes from participants' narratives with conceptual framework of the RAA. This map provides an overview of housing aspirations across income levels and how they relate to the RAA's concept set.

However, not all themes support the principles with equal strength. While some only offer indirect reinforcement, others have a clear and fundamental link to particular principles. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that income-based disparities exist because some concepts may be more appropriate or applicable to particular income groups than to all socioeconomic levels, nevertheless, communities can still achieve aesthetical urban housing environments that enhance inhabitants' quality of life despite

income alone. The Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) shows that every income group can achieve such environments, as long as the design matches their needs, desires, and available resources.

A crucial conceptual framework covered previously in Chapter 2 is persuasively reaffirmed by the thematic analysis's findings: the two axes of aesthetic discourse in architecture which are the visual-compositional and the experiential-emotional. What initially appeared as a theoretical distinction now finds vivid expression in the lived experiences and aspirations of the participants. Across income levels, aesthetic perception is shown to be deeply rooted in the emotional and experiential dimensions of space; however, the route to this emotional resonance diverges depending on socioeconomic context. For participants in lower-income brackets, the need for classical visual composition, such as clarity, order, and proportion, emerges as a necessary foundation for achieving emotional wellbeing and a sense of belonging. As Participant 02 stated, their current building feels like "boring concrete boxes," and they long for "some color added to the façade" or "window planters filled with flowers" to inject joy and community identity. Participant 03 emphasized that even in the absence of luxury, "designing neat and organized facades is affordable," pointing to the basic human desire for visual order as a prerequisite to social and emotional stability. Similarly, Participant 01's longing for "an open floor plan" was rooted not merely in functionality but in the hope of fostering deeper familial connections. In contrast, middle- and high-income participants, who already live in environments that largely fulfill compositional expectations, articulated desires that leaned more heavily on the experiential-emotional axis. Participant 13 envisioned "large floor-to-ceiling windows" and "an open-concept design" not for visual spectacle alone but for how these features enhance light, flow, and psychological comfort. Participant 17 similarly described a desire for a "contemporary home with a minimalist design" located in "a vibrant, artistic neighborhood," underscoring a more direct pursuit of emotional enrichment and self-expression. Taken together, these narratives suggest that while the end goal of a meaningful, emotionally resonant living environment is shared, lower-income inhabitants often regard visual composition as a bridge to this goal, whereas higher-income residents are positioned to access experiential values more immediately. This layered dynamic not only validates the dual-axis framework but also points to the socio-spatial conditions that mediate aesthetic experience itself.

Additionally, although contextualism has varying effects on privacy and safety depending on geographical and cultural situations, it strongly promotes social connection and a link with nature. While transhumanism directly promotes modern amenities, technological integration, and security, its impact varies according to accessibility and affordability, being more noticeable in higher-income groups. While phenomenology is important in determining sensory experiences and aesthetic appeal, how well they integrate with functional efficiency can differ depending on the economic sector.

In conclusion, RAA provides a methodical approach to evaluate housing that satisfies basic human requirements while taking into account the subtle differences in how these demands appear for various economic brackets. RAA continues to be a flexible and context-sensitive method that improves quality of life through logical and aesthetically driven design by recognizing the differing degrees of influence among the principles and themes.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

The crucial connection between human well-being and architectural aesthetics in urban housing environments has been demonstrated through this thesis. The findings show that efficiency and functionality are often given priority over aesthetics in modern residential developments, leading to standardized and uninspired architectural urban housing environments which fail in establishing deep connections with the inhabitants.

A systematic analysis of foundational theories and empirical evidence has addressed the primary research question regarding the effective integration of aesthetic principles into urban housing environments to enhance inhabitants' perception, behavior, and overall quality of life. The analysis indicates that architectural uniformity in cities has predominantly stemmed from globalization, eroding distinct community identities and diminishing citizens' engagement with their environments. This thesis critiques architectural paradigms that prioritize functionality over aesthetics and propose evidence-based foundations for more visually considerate housing projects.

A recurring conflict between subjective and objective ideas of beauty has been discovered by examining the philosophical foundations established by philosophers ranging from Plato and Aristotle to Baumgarten, Hume, Kant, and Nietzsche. This thesis suggests an objective foundation for aesthetic appreciation that can guide architectural practice. Although there is no denying that subjective perception affects aesthetic judgment, the evidence points to some common principles across cultural contexts and personal preferences, suggesting an objective basis for aesthetic appreciation.

Due to the complexities of architectural aesthetics, professionals must strike a balance between a number of factors, including balancing practical livability with subjective beauty, working within financial constraints without compromising design integrity, attending to the various needs of residents, blending in with the surrounding contexts, producing timeless designs that are resistant to stylistic obsolescence, and

incorporating sustainable elements that improve both environmental performance and aesthetic appeal. A methodical approach to tackling these issues is proposed by the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) framework, which was created as a result of this thesis. But a key finding from our thematic analysis is that the idea of "broadly applicable" principles is more complex and multi-layered than previously believed. Although some functional and aesthetic objectives are common to all populations, their precise expressions differ greatly depending on demographic variables such as income levels. Practical, cost-effective solutions that maximize limited finances are always given priority by low-income groups. Spacious, cutting-edge facilities with high-end design elements and unique community features are usually preferred by high-income groups. Between these two stances, middle-class tastes typically strike a balance between aspirational beauty and pragmatic considerations.

The usual view of commonality in architectural theory is called into question by these findings. We must acknowledge that communal desires emerge within specific, stratified groups rather than aiming for a single, universal approach to housing construction. In addition to offering methodical guidelines for developing urban housing that improves quality of life, the RAA framework highlights the need to investigate the preferences of the particular population for which a design is aimed for. In addition to being visually appealing, housing designs that improve human well-being, community cohesion, and general quality of life are made possible by the dynamic interaction between group preferences. Instead of imposing universalized design solutions that might not resonate with their intended inhabitants, this research ultimately advocates for an informed pluralism in architectural practice, which elevates human experience through targeted design approaches calibrated to the particular needs, resources, and aspirations of each community group.

The Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) is a comprehensive framework for housing design that enhances quality of life by integrating aesthetics with functionality. RAA provides a well-rounded solution based on three fundamental ideas: contextualism, which stresses harmony with the environment and enhances residents' sense of place and identity; transhumanism, which combines sustainability and technology to create living spaces that are ready for the future, and facilitates human daily activities through technology; and phenomenology, which takes into account

residents' subjective experiences by incorporating thoughtful design elements that stimulate pleasant feelings and memories. By creating environments that occupants may develop strong emotional bonds with, this integrative approach acknowledges that genuinely successful housing architecture must go beyond simple functioning to promote wellbeing and a sense of belonging. The RAA gives architects an organized yet flexible framework for designing urban housing that is not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing and emotionally impactful by using reason and logic to analyze aesthetic appreciation while remaining flexible to project-specific factors and resident demographics.

Final Reflection

As this research reaches its end, it is my aspiration that architects, urban designers, policymakers, and community leaders consider the findings of this study and recognize the significance of integrating the Rational Aesthetic Approach (RAA) into urban housing projects. The approach underscores the importance of aligning design with both functional and aesthetic principles to create spaces that resonate with the needs and aspirations of their inhabitants.

Furthermore, I encourage individuals to embrace aesthetics in their daily lives, as it has the potential to enhance the outcomes of various activities, from work to sports and beyond. As Friedrich Nietzsche insightfully observed in The Gay Science (1882), "If you kill a cockroach, you are a hero; if you kill a butterfly, you are evil." This profound statement underscores how morality itself is influenced by aesthetic judgment. If aesthetics guides our moral values, what can you say about informing other aspects of our lives?

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