

The Metabolists/Post-  
Modernism/  
Architecture and  
Popular Culture  
*(1960's-70's-80's)*

Archigram

The Metabolists

Venturi, Rauch, Scott-Brown

Charles Moore

Taller Bofill

Michael Graves

Kohn Pederson Fox

Cesar Pelli

# Utopia and Pop Culture

- Reaction against recent urban renewal projects and bland translations of the International Style as well as the heaviness of Brutalism.
- Architecture should demonstrate visual interest and employ high technology.

# Archigram

## Sir Peter Cook

(1936 - )

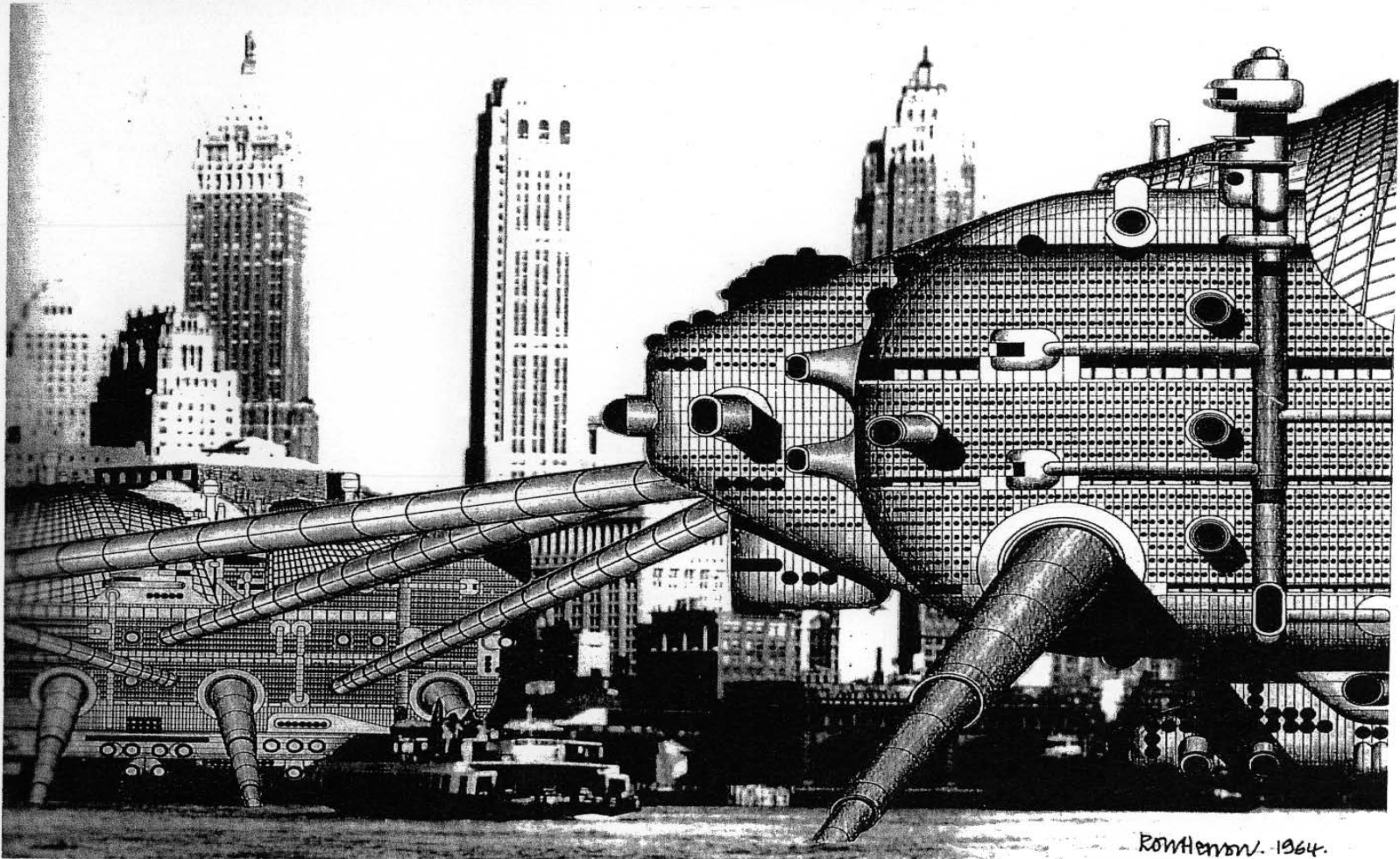


《モンテカルロ・プロジェクト》1969  
ピーター・クック、デニス・クロンプトン、ロン・ヘロン (アーキグラム)  
Image: Archigram Archives

Land Beach Collage

Photo: The Design Council

# Archigram (Sir Peter Cook)



## Instant City Illustration

Photo: The Design Council

# Archigram (Sir Peter Cook)



## Instant City Illustration

Photo: The Design Council

# The Metabolists

- In the late 1950s a small group of young Japanese architects and designers joined forces under the title of "Metabolism" to envision cities of the future. Their designs were characterized by large scale, flexible, and expandable structures that evoked the processes of organic growth. In their view, the traditional laws of fixed form and function were obsolete.
- Their work has often been compared to the unbuilt designs of Archigram.

# Kenzo Tange



Shizooka Press, Tokyo, Japan

1967



# Nakagin Capsule Tower, Tokyo



Kisho Kurokawa, 1972

The 14-story tower, built between 1970 and 1972, consists of 140 individual capsules that function as apartments and business offices.



# Post Modernism

Post Modernism, which can be considered a reaction to modernism, is a loose term that incorporates a great number of disparate architects and their buildings beginning in the mid 1960s.

Many post-modernists and architectural critics claim that the movement is a rejection of the cold 'modernism' of the International School. Of course, when post-modernists denigrate modernism they refer not to the architecture of Le Corbusier but to the many lesser imitators of the style and to the cold boxes that dot the urban landscape.

## Post Modernism cont'd

The post-modernists claim that the functionalists (or rationalists) have cut architecture from its historical and cultural roots. These roots are important because they tie us to the past, remind us of who we are and make us feel comfortable. For example, it is important to have a chimney on our roof and a fireplace in the living room (even if we never light a fire) because these are the symbols of home and hearth.

This tiny country bank used architectural symbolism to instill confidence in their depositors.



Security Marine Bank, Wisconsin

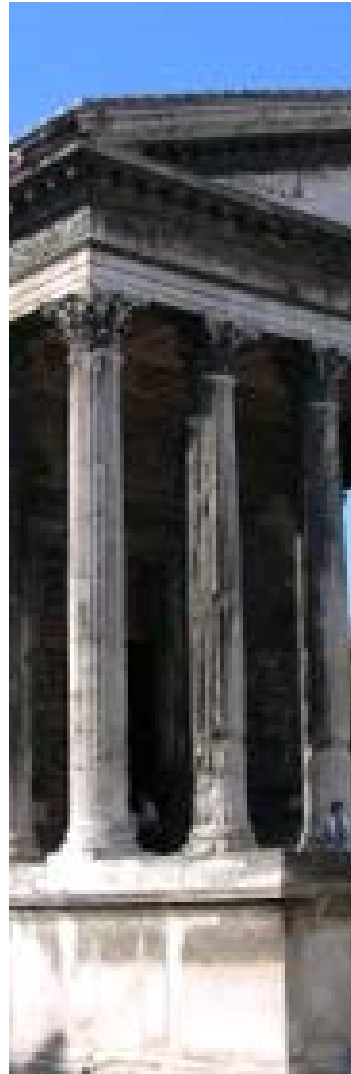
1971

Photo: Wyane Attoe (Jencks: The Paradigm in Architecture)

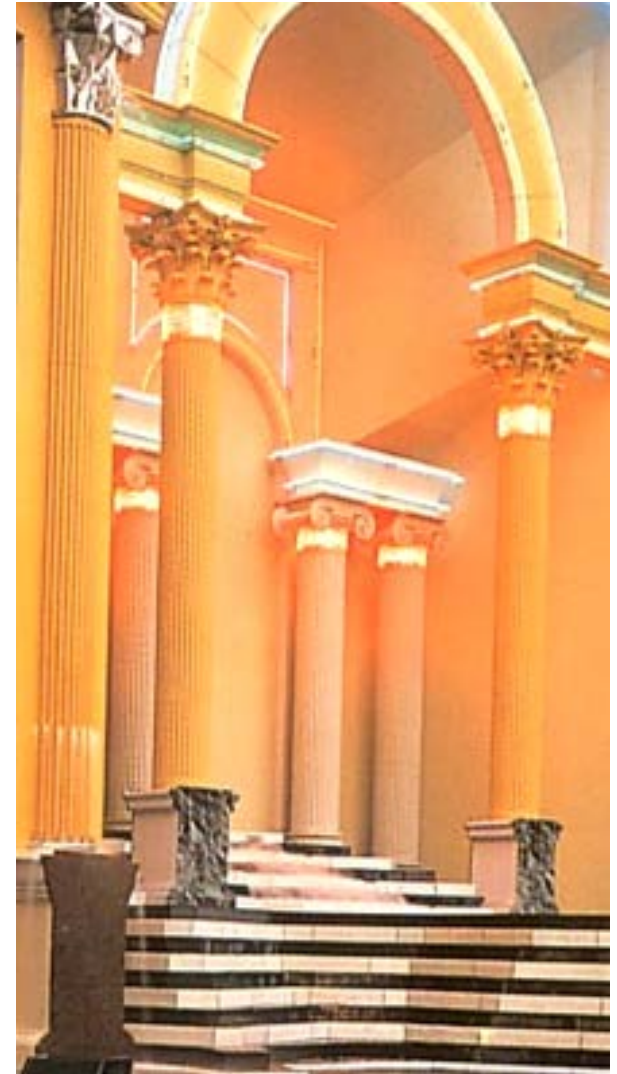
Some of these symbols, such as classically-inspired columns, are historical.

Historical reference plays a large part in Post Modernism.

The best of the practitioners 'hint' at (or allude to) historical buildings or elements taken from traditional prototypes such as the arch or the broken pediment. They claim that these cultural 'codes' provide comfort to the viewer because they connect the new building to past buildings. These historical references are often used in ways that amuse.



Maison Carre,  
Nimes (20 BCE)



Piazza d'Italia,  
New Orleans (1976)

**Robert Venturi** (1925- )

***Complexity and Contradiction in Modern Architecture*** (published in 1966) by Robert Venturi, was well received by young architects/students looking for a new creative direction in the mid-60s.

1. He rejected the corporatization of Modernist ideas, which had reduced the International Style to a series of uninspired design moves.
2. He sought to bring back interest in the bearing wall as opposed to the curtain wall, pointing to the potential rich complexity of cladding.
3. He sought to bring back a connection to the true life of the city and historical architecture, which had been rejected entirely by Modernist architects.

# Robert Venturi

“less is a bore!”

In *Complexity and Contradiction in Modern Architecture* (published in 1966) Venturi challenged modern architecture by advancing the notion that clarity is boring, and complexity much more interesting. He also promoted the historical symbols that people had come to recognize and urged architects to incorporate these historical references into their buildings.

The architecture of Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown sports playful historical elements. I call them ‘playful’ because Venturi/Scottt-Brown are *not* using these arches in serious or structural ways, but as decorative elements that are *obviously* non-structural.

One of Venturi’s first buildings was the house he designed for his mother. In it he uses a broken pediment\* over the entry and other historical, decorative elements on the façade. The interior is anything but traditional.

\*Pediment: a triangular decorative piece over a doorway



# Robert Venturi



Vanna Venturi House,  
Photo: Richard Bryant

1964

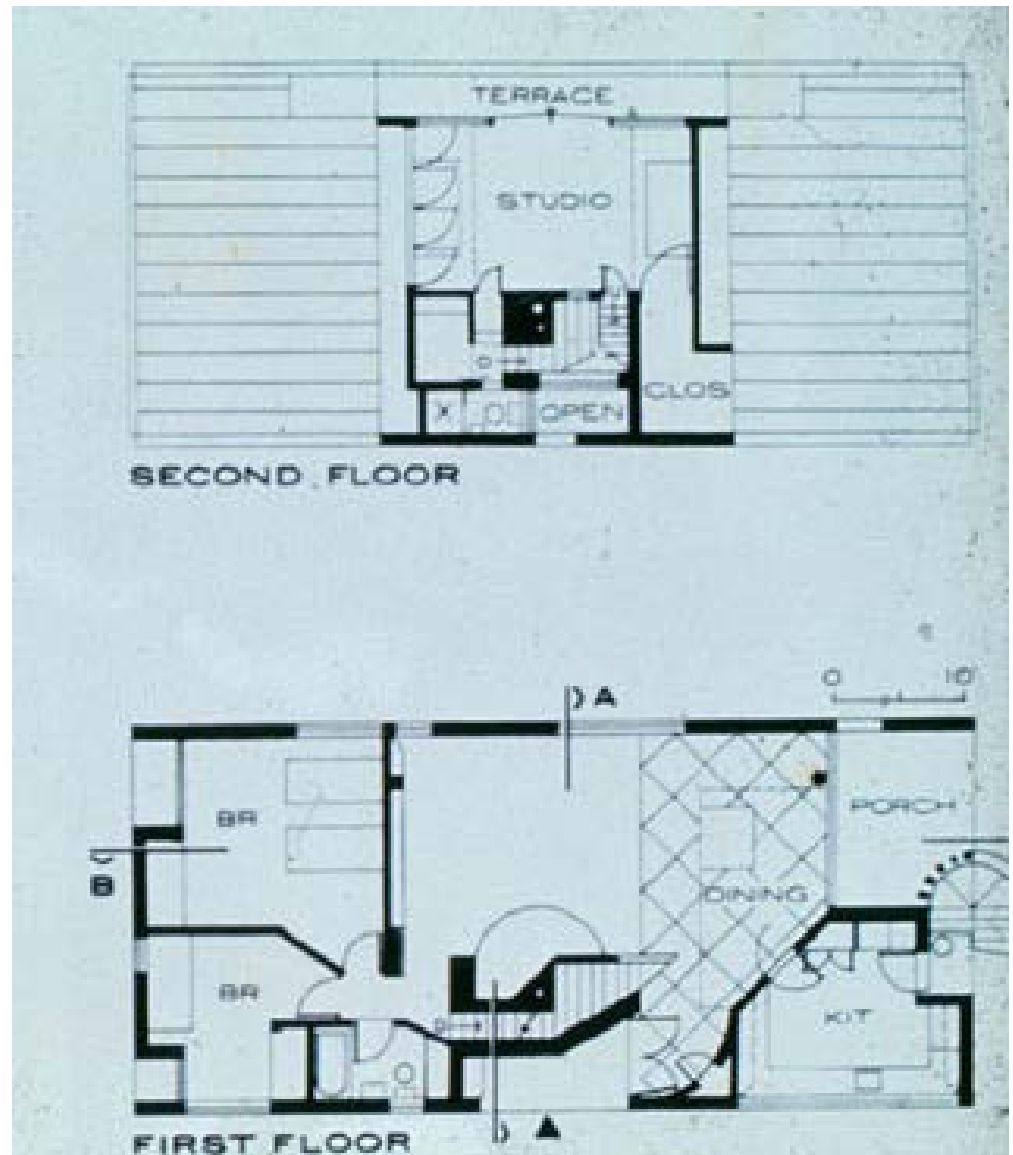
# Robert Venturi

This house exemplifies the contradictions (and complexities) that Venturi discusses in his book. Although the house appears both traditional and symmetrical on the outside, the plan is not traditional nor is it symmetrical. Although the entry leads you to believe that the house has a central hall, there is none. The front door is located off to the side of the portico and leads into the dining room.

Since it is wider than it is deep the house looks a lot bigger than it actually is.

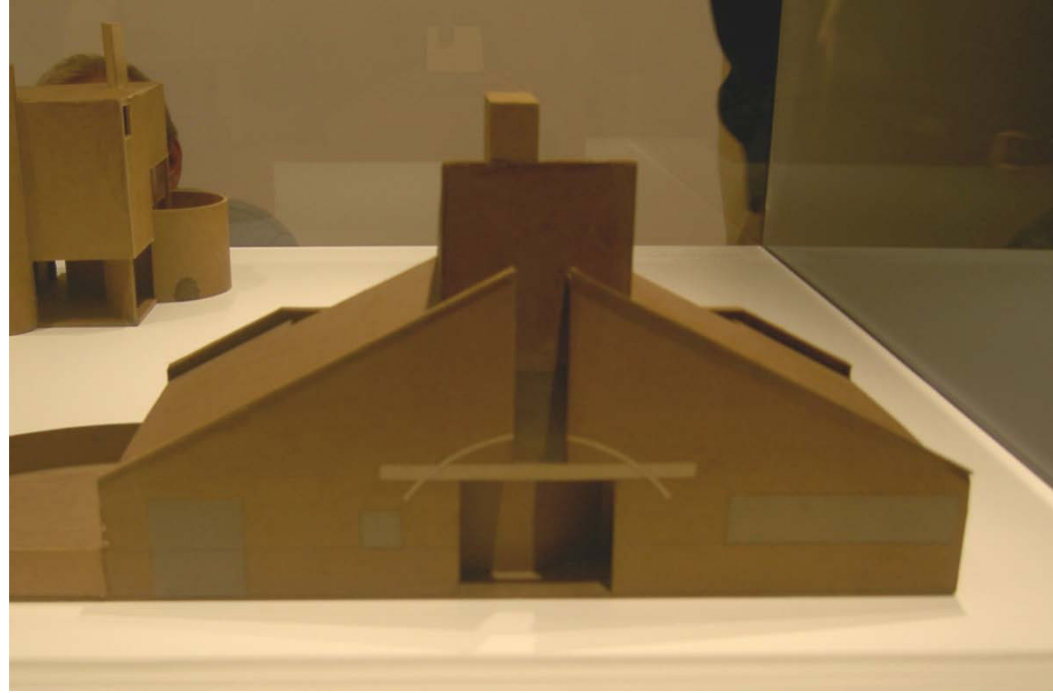
Vanna Venturi House,

Photo: web



1964

# Robert Venturi



Vanna Venturi House,  
Photo: Richard Bryant

1964

# Robert Venturi



Vanna Venturi House,

Photo: web

1964

# Robert Venturi



Vanna Venturi House,  
Photo: Richard Bryant

1964

# Venturi, Scott, Brown



Guild House, Philadelphia, PA

Photo: web

1962-66

# Robert Venturi



Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington

1984-91

Photo: H. Sands

# Robert Venturi

Note the obviously loose attachment of the arches. Venturi wants us to know that they are not to be considered structural.



Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington

1984-91

Photo: H. Sands



# Robert Venturi

The brick arch over the front door is plainly not needed structurally as an arch; it does not rest on the piers. **Just in case you did not get the point that this arch is 'fake', Venturi puts a column right smack in the middle of the arch.**



Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington

1984-91

Photo: H. Sands

# Venturi, Rauch and Scott-Brown



Gordon Wu Dining Hall, Princeton, NJ

1981

Photo: the architects

From Robert Venturi's "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture"

*"Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern architecture."*

*"I like elements which are hybrid rather than 'pure', compromising rather than 'clean', distorted rather than 'straightforward', ambiguous rather than 'articulated', I am for messy vitality over obvious unity.*

*I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning... "*

*"Orthodox Modern architects have tended to recognize complexity insufficiently or inconsistently. In their attempt to break with tradition and start all over again, they idealized the primitive and elementary at the expense of the diverse and the sophisticated... In their role as reformers, they puritanically advocated the separation and exclusion of elements, rather than the inclusion of various requirements and juxtapositions....."*

# Characteristics of Post Modern architecture:

- A sense of "anything goes": forms filled with humor, irony, ambiguity, contradiction.
- A juxtaposition of styles: blend of traditional, contemporary, and newly-invented forms (double coding).
- An exaggeration or abstraction of traditional detailing.
- Local materials and traditions are not necessarily used or considered.

Venturi has been called the father of post-modernism, a title that he disdains. About ten years after he published his first edition of "Complexity and Contradiction in Modern Architecture" he admitted to being sorry for having inspired this movement that had churned out so many silly po-mo buildings.

# PO MO

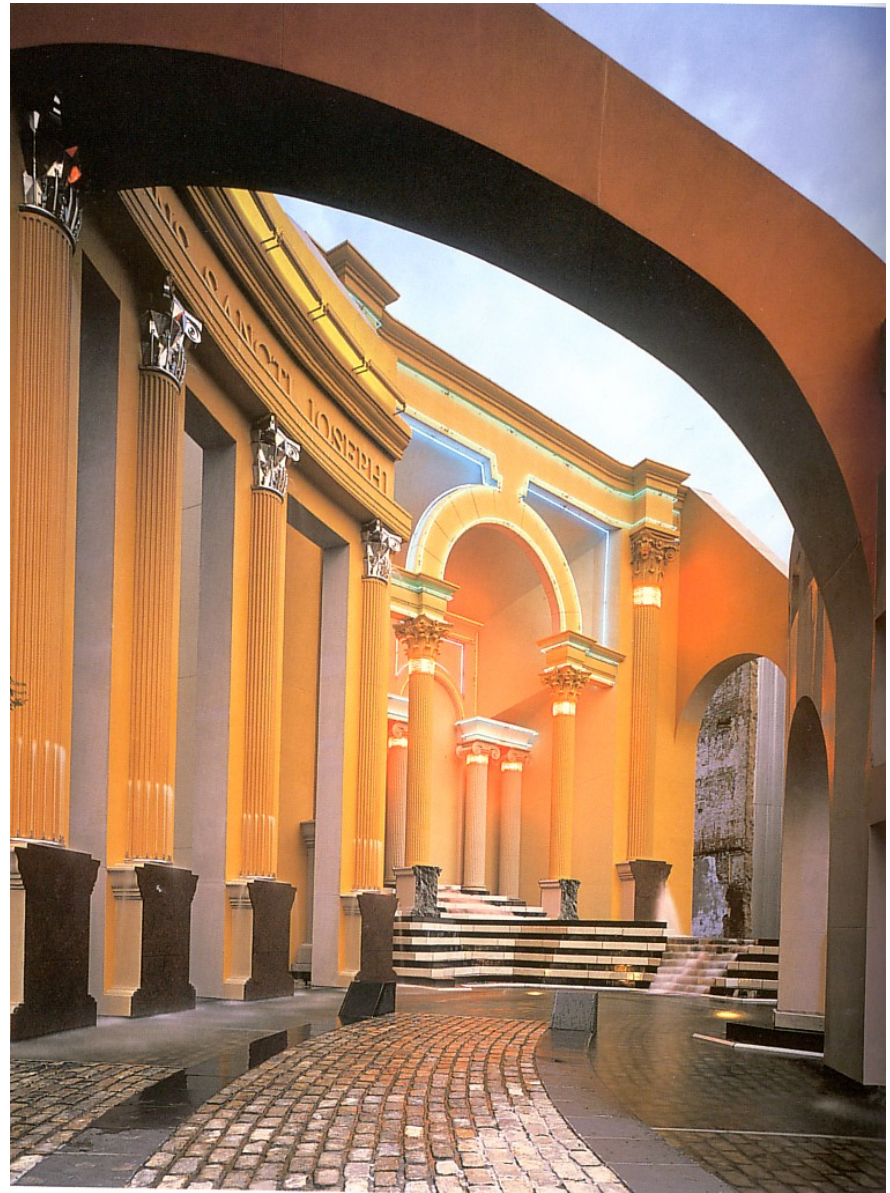
**Po-Mo is the term used for the exaggerated form of Post Modernism.**

It includes work by Charles Moore (particularly the Piazza d'Italia) and Michael Graves (particularly his ridiculously painted Portland 'lunch box' and his work for the Disney Corporation.)

Although Post Modernism (and particularly Po Mo) was mostly an American aberration, there were some European followers, such as the Taller Bofill (Ricardo Bofill Studio).

# Charles Moore

(1925-1993)



Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans, Louisiana

1976-79

Photo: Norman McGrath

# Charles Moore



Church of the Nativity, La Jolla, CA

( ? )

Photo credit: Internet

# Michael Graves

( 1934- )



Portland Building, Portland, Oregon

1980

Photo: (Bullfinch)



# Michael Graves

226 MICHAEL GRAVES, *San Juan Capistrano Public Library*, 1981–83. The Spanish Mission style of the area is alluded to with the pantiles, high light hoods, flat walls and heavy curves; but these signs of context are merged with other Classical ones to become more general. (Acme Photo).



San Juan de Capistrano Library, California 1981-85

Photo: Acme

# Michael Graves



Humana Corp. Medical Headquarters, Louisville 1982-86

Photo: Paschall/Taylor

# Michael Graves

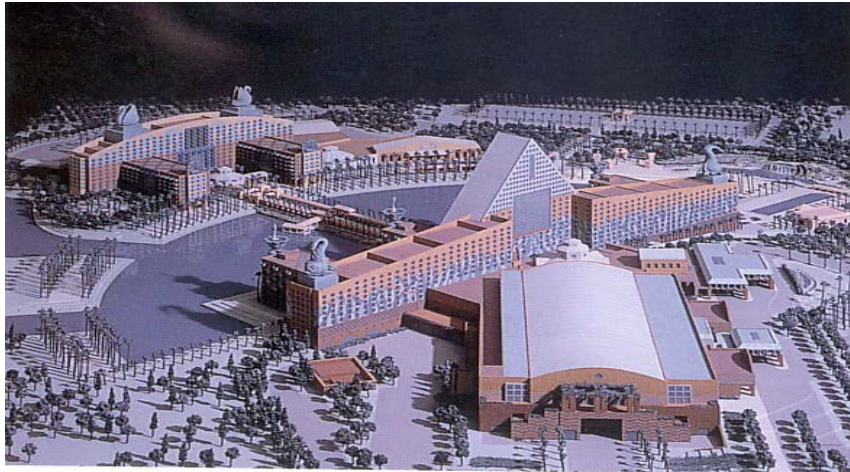


Swan Hotel in Disneyworld, Florida

1987

Photo: Steven Brooks

# Michael Graves



Swan Hotel in Disneyworld, Florida

1987

Photo: Steven Brooks

# Michael Graves



Dolphin Hotel in Disneyworld, Florida

Photo: W. Taylor

1987

# Taller Bofill (Studio Bofill)



Arch and Theatre of Abraxas (housing) near Paris 1978

Photo: (Jencks)

# Taller Bofill (Studio Bofill)



Arch and Theatre of Abraxas (housing) near Paris 1978

Photo: (Jencks)

## Late Post Modernism:

Kohn, Pederson, Fox and Cesar Pelli had more moderate interpretations, incorporating elements of Post Modernism to decorate their otherwise modern buildings.



# Kohn Pedersen Fox



Procter and Gamble, Cincinnati, Ohio

1982-86

Photo: (Jencks)

# Cesar Pelli & Charles Moore



World Financial Center Tower and Housing, NYC 1987

Photo: (Jencks)

# Cesar Pelli



Carnegie Hall Extension, New York City

1986

Photo: Pelli

More reading:

The post modern mood was one of a number of revisionist tendencies which came to the fore from the mid-seventies onwards. ....The increase in historical self-consciousness was .....related to an erosion in faith concerning the validity and relevance of an abstract and unadorned aesthetic,.....an undermining of the 'modern movement assumptions'.

(Post modern theorists preached that) buildings ought to be regarded as communication devices employing well-known and easily understood 'codes'. Historical quotations were also to be encouraged on the grounds that these would enrich architectural vocabulary. Eclecticism was no longer to be sneered at, indeed mannerized commentaries on earlier architecture were to be considered valuable as a source of meaning. ...One thing was clear..... the movement showed little concern with the questions of expressive authenticity – the buildings illustrated a tendency towards superficiality which took earlier architectural precedents as a sounding-board for references and quotations, but not much else.

.....Indeed, the new traditionalist mood was not much troubled by a search for rigor, and for that reason often degenerated into eclectic candy-floss. Imagery was high in its priorities; functional resolution was low. Formal sophistication was praised; social concern was denigrated. Conceptual exploration was prized; structural necessity was sneered at. ....Although the new trends were not restricted to the United States, they were strongest there and seemed to mirror a preoccupation with colorful packaging and bright imagery.

*From Modern Architecture since 1900: William JR Curtis*

James Stirling employed overt metaphors and historical references in his designs, and a sort of 'collage' method of composition.....Stirling was also seeking inspiration from such things as ancient Roman plans with their sequences of curved rooms flowing into one another.