



ENLIGHTENMENT

Architecture can serve to enlighten the body and soul through the pursuit of art, science, and entertainment. Away from the daily struggle of hunting or farming, civilization has always been open to the curiosities of nature and of humanity.

In Piazza Navona in the heart of Rome, a story unfolds between a church and a fountain. In the 15th century, this ruin of a Roman circus was transformed into a public space that would be the setting for a church by Francesco Borromini and a

fountain by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Both were architects and sculptors, but Bernini excelled as one of the great sculptors of his time and Borromini was hailed more as an exceptional Baroque architect. The drama that lay in wait for this open space would soon become apparent. Knowing that Borromini would be erecting the massive church for the square, Bernini chose to depict the characters of his fountain in front looking up at the church in horror so as to create a sense of drama. Borromini would finish his church afterward but managed to have the last word when he sculpted and positioned the statue of the Virgin Mary slightly askew and looking away from the mayhem below.

Staging is an integral part of architecture that can inform or entertain the individual or the masses. The dialogue between these two artists through architecture offers an intriguing story, and so should all architecture in one way or another.



Piazza Navona; David Robert Donatucci

Escapism

The playful aspects of architecture are often found in the structures and sites of gardens and theaters. Whether it takes the form of a grove in the forest or a make believe world upon a stage, escapism is a driving force of entertainment and recreation.

Gardens

Since the Garden of Eden, there has been a deep desire to escape to a simple world of nature or a realm of purity and possibility. The history of the garden has its beginnings in caves, grottos, groves, and fields of flowers. These places offered repose from work and a chance to reflect or meditate. Villas in the landscape outside the city were possible for the wealthy, but many found solace in the cloisters of a church or castle courtyard. In Japan, the quiet of a Zen garden might cradle the mind of a Samurai, and in England, the botanical gardens of the Crystal Palace might fascinate the curious mind. Ultimately, the architectural notion of garden led to times of reflection and knowledge.



Reflection

The architecture of the garden goes further than a simple enclosure or placement of flowers. It involves ideas of preservation and conservation of wildlife and plant life to study or for experimentation in an effort to gain a sense of belonging to the universe. The need to meander and meditate led to exploration and curiosity, where architecture supports places of reflection, enclosures of animals, or paths through nature.



Knowledge

While prehistoric civilizations had a fascination with the stars and painted on cave walls, during Greek and Roman times the architecture of knowledge was ever present in the schools and libraries that were part of the larger complex of buildings in the city. Art and science exploded after the dark ages and presented the world with new forms of architecture. These places of knowledge took shape over the years as anatomical theaters in hospitals or even zoological parks. Eventually the architecture included galleries, museums, and observatories. The focus of these structures was always to educate but also to reflect upon the science and beauty of the world. The forms of these buildings reinforced their use and sparked the imagination of student or visitor. Often a garden or lookout was part of the complex to encourage a connection to the site or landscape.

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Griffith Observatory, Los Angeles

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Getty Museum; David Robert Donatucci



Gardens at Getty Museum; Minna Donatucci

Entertainment

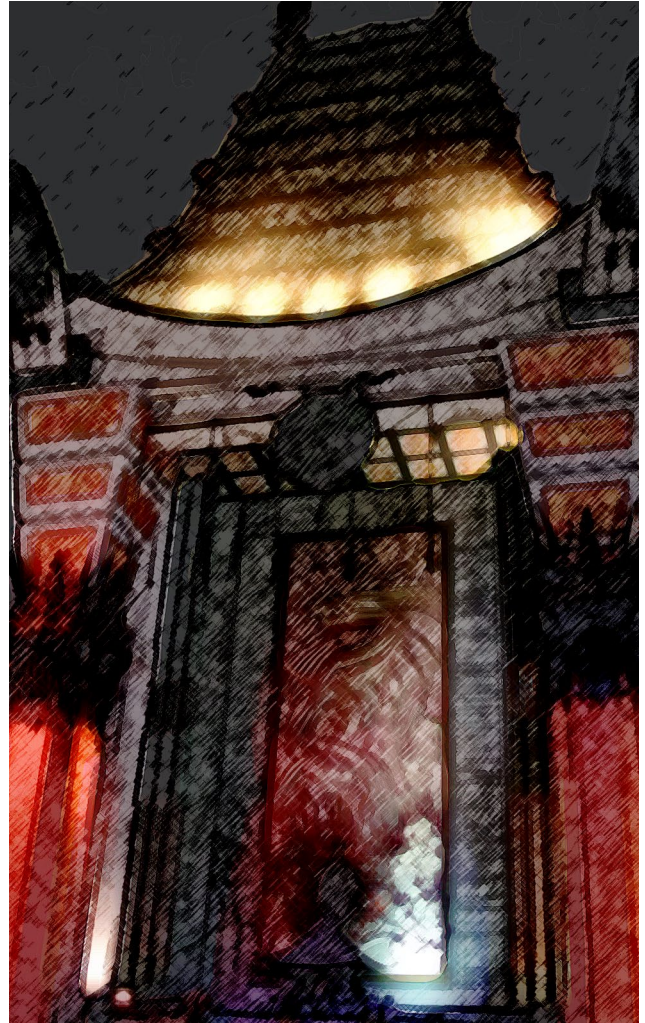
Since the days of Greek tragedy and the Olympics, architecture has evolved over time and given the world incredible structures that house these stories and spectacles. The Roman arenas such as the Coliseum and Circus Maximus staged some of the most dramatic displays of ferocity and speed the world has ever known. Through history, theater continued to be presented in structures such as the Shakespearean Globe Theatre, which entralls crowds with stories of love, history, and politics or under the big top of a traveling circus that features animals, acrobatics, and sideshow oddities. Architecture plays a vital role in the staging each of these types of entertainment.

Soon stadiums and opera houses were an essential part of any world-class city as they offer amusement to the masses through sport or song and dance.

With the arrival of film at the turn of the century, cinema became another driving force in architectural form and space. The elaborate sets of W.D. Griffith or Cecil B. De Mille films brought about the need for architects to begin creating special architecture for the booming industry.

With the perfection of set design techniques and the advent of computer generated imagery, architecture in film proved to be quite exhilarating with such films as *Blade Runner*, which staged some of its filming in the main lobby of the Bradbury Building in Los Angeles. The careful embellishment to the already existing classic Victorian atrium still resonates today.

Much of today's architecture now happens in virtual space but is always based in some way on the architectural principles of the architects that came before us.



Mann's Chinese Theatre; Minna Donatucci



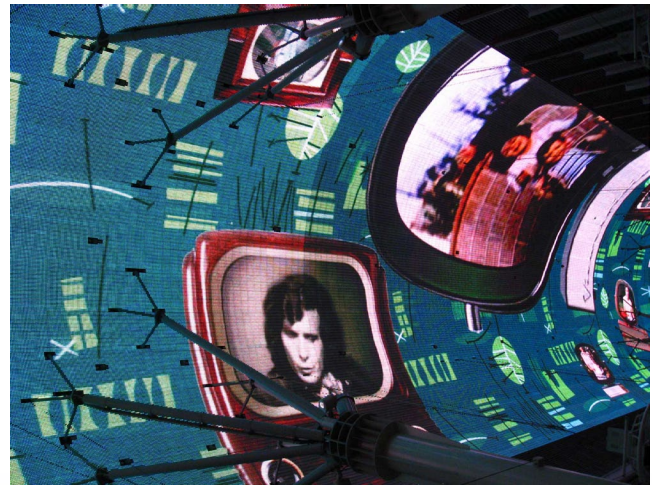
Apocalyptic City; David Robert Donatucci



Bradbury Building; David Robert Donatucci

Amusement

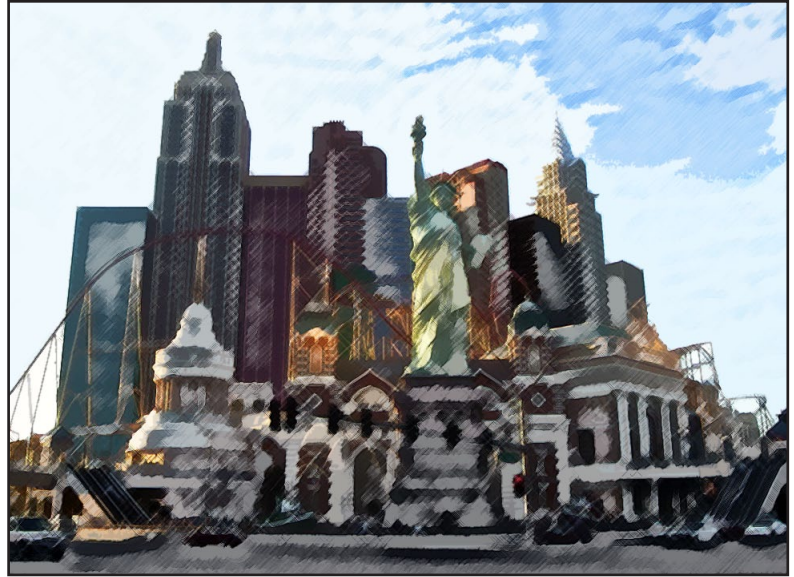
The current, desperate need for people to be entertained has ushered in an era of artificial architecture. Whether it is buildings shaped like dinosaurs or spectacular vaulted display panels covering a public promenade of casinos, architecture now finds itself at a point of self-reflection. The re-creation of structures and monuments from around the world found in the Las Vegas desert or the Disney World Resort is as much a testament to the enduring quality of the architecture chosen to replicate as it is an insulting gesture to present them with clean modern materials and at a diminished scale.



Fremont Street Experience, Las Vegas; Minna Donatucci



Palm Springs; David Robert Donatucci

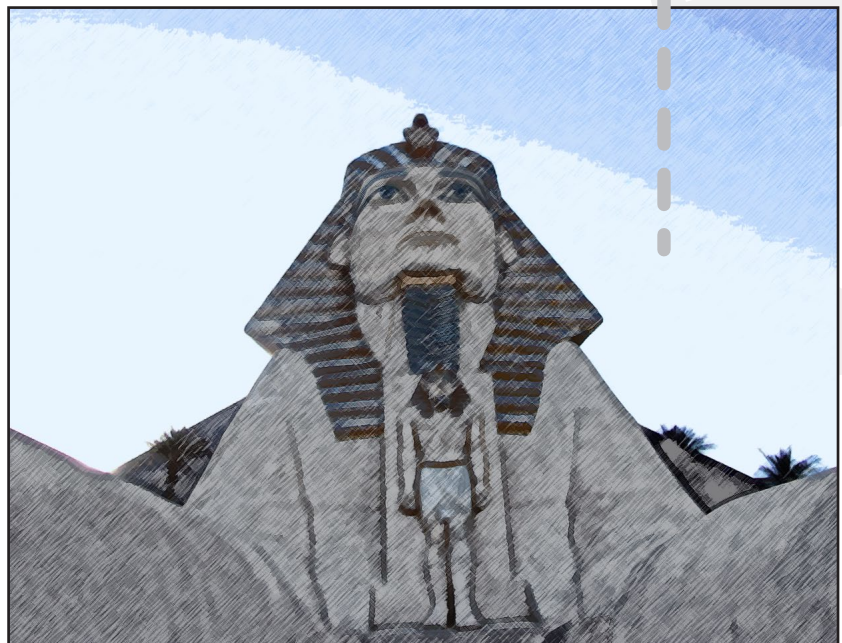


New York New York Las Vegas; David Robert Donatucci



Paris Las Vegas; David Robert Donatucci

...architecture now finds itself at a point of self-reflection.



Sphinx at Luxor Las Vegas; David Robert Donatucci