

Architecture

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

Architecture, or the contemporary idea of architecture, applies to any kind of house. However, not every house in your neighborhood has a symbolic meaning. In this lesson you will learn about:

1. Architecture As Symbolism



BIG IDEA

Architecture has a symbolic meaning and has inspired and been inspired by other visual arts.

Like other forms of art, **architecture** can represent more than just its physical features. Architecture often has symbolic meaning. Important questions to ask yourself when looking at an example of architecture include:

- What does it represent?
- Why was it made?

IN CONTEXT

Use these two questions as you observe the images below. The first is an image of the Great Pyramids of Giza, which were built as funerary tombs for the pharaohs, or kings, of ancient Egypt.



Great Pyramids

The next image is the Parthenon. This was built during the time of ancient Greece to honor the Greek goddess Athena. Temples such as this were thought to be the physical home of the gods on Earth.



Parthenon

In this next image, you will see the cathedrals that were commissioned by the Church for a place of worship and to house the relics of important people associated with the Church. They also existed as a physical manifestation of heaven on Earth.

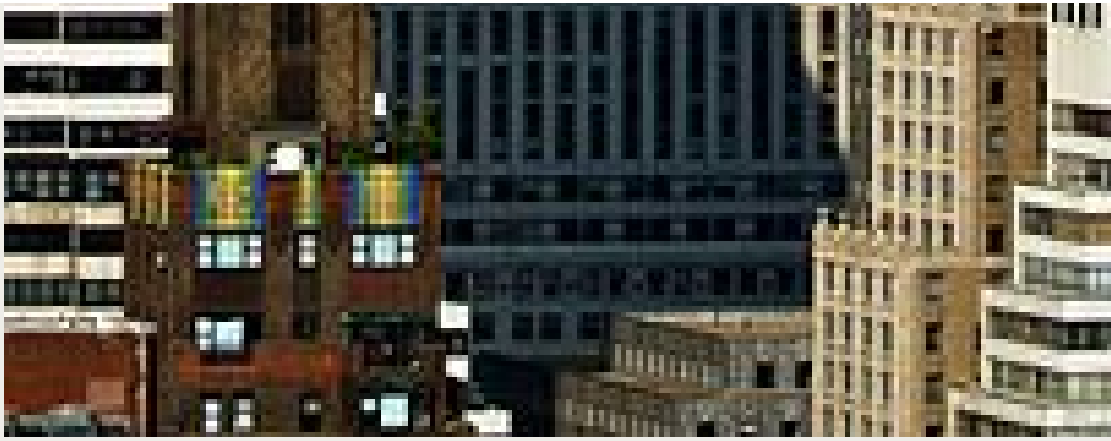


Chartres Cathedral

And finally, an image of modern architecture, the Chrysler Building in New York. For some, this structure might symbolize corporate power, prestige, and wealth.







Chrysler Building



TERM TO KNOW

Architecture

The art or practice of designing buildings

2. Renaissance Architecture

Art and architecture were not always looked at as different disciplines, but instead were actually considered the same thing. Many of the artists discussed in this lesson were both traditional artists and architects. Michelangelo and Brunelleschi were two Italian Renaissance artists that crossed over into architecture.

IN CONTEXT

Michelangelo was one of many artists contracted to supervise construction of parts of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. Below is a picture of the basilica, supervised by Michelangelo.



Saint Peter's Basilica

Brunelleschi designed a magnificent dome on the Florence Cathedral in Florence, Italy. Below is a picture of this stunning dome.



Florence Cathedral

3. Interiors and Exteriors

External ornamentation of architecture often represents a theme and contributes to the overall symbolism the architecture portrays. Internal spaces are carefully considered in order to create a cohesive space that supports and enhances the aesthetics of the building.

IN CONTEXT

External ornamentation encompasses many different types of structures. Below are several images that are considered external ornamentation.

First, a picture of gargoyles:



Gargoyles of Notre Dame Cathedral

Statues are another example of external ornamentation.



Moses by Michelangelo

Reliefs, pictured below, are another type of external ornamentation.



Elgin marble

Pilasters are yet another example of external ornamentation.



Pilasters

Lastly, pediments, which are one more type of external orientation. These might include reliefs, statues, or artwork situated within a triangular shape at the top of classical architecture in ancient Greece and Rome.



L'église de la Madeleine



DID YOU KNOW

Pilasters, which look like columns, are used for ornamentation; they do not provide any kind of functional support.

In contrast to external ornamentation, observe the next two examples of internal space and its design. The example, pictured below, is from Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. This is where the Pope lives.



Saint Peter's Basilica

The second image below is Fallingwater.



Interior of Fallingwater House



DID YOU KNOW

Frank Lloyd Wright designed not just the building itself, but the interior design of the building to create a harmonious piece of functional art.

4. Architecture and Site Specificity

Site specificity refers to how some architecture can be appreciated only in the surrounding environment in which it was built. In other words, to move it or recreate it elsewhere would diminish the effect. Sometimes the intention is to create a piece of architecture where the building appears to emerge from its environment, rather than being simply plopped into the environment. In this case, to remove it from that environment would really diminish or defeat the purpose of building it in the first place.

➞ **EXAMPLE** The image below is of the external architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater. This is a perfect example of site specificity. The building appears to emerge from its environment.



Fallingwater House



TERM TO KNOW

Site Specificity

When the relationship between a work of art or architecture is so strong that it would be impossible to move or reconstruct that object in another location



SUMMARY

Examples of architecture are all around us. In this lesson, you learned about **architecture as symbolism**, and how it can represent more than just its physical features. Many times architecture is inspired by other visual artists. **Renaissance architecture** can be seen in examples such as the work of Michelangelo and Brunelleschi, two Renaissance artists that crossed over into architecture.

Exteriors and interiors and the differences in the architecture of the two were covered in this lesson. External ornamentation of architecture often represents a theme, and internal spaces are carefully considered to create a cohesive space.

Finally, at times it is impossible to move or reconstruct a work of art or architecture without diminishing the effect. This is called **site specificity**, and you looked at the example of Fallingwater, by Frank Lloyd Wright, in this lesson.

Source: THIS TUTORIAL WAS AUTHORED BY IAN MCCONNELL FOR SOPHIA LEARNING. Please see our [Terms of Use](#).



TERMS TO KNOW

Architecture

The art or practice of designing buildings.

Site Specificity

When the relationship between a work of art or architecture is so strong that it would be impossible to move or reconstruct that object in another location.