

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING ARCHITECTURAL THEORY: A REVIEW ON 'READING' ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on understanding the meaning behind architecture. It reviews and examines a collation of ideas as to what happens at the crucial point of design conceptualization or form generation in architecture which is theory. In other to understand theory, there is a need to first extrapolate it from the built form which is referred to in this context as reading. This review also focuses on the concept of reading and examines attempts over the years to develop a universal language first based on rules during the renaissance and more recently based on the science of signs and codes as seen through semiotics. However, not everyone reads architecture the same way and as such the study reviews the reasons for arbitrariness in the reading of architectural built forms and discusses three possible factors, namely; positionality, perception and legibility. It concludes that the language of architecture is not constant through time and may exist for certain periods in history. It also infers that while the use of rules and codes in reading architecture may still be valid, factors such as positionality, perception and legibility contribute to subjectivity in reading based on diversity in human experiences. As such, this ultimately affects understanding meaning or theory in architecture.

Keywords: Reading architecture; Architectural theory; Semiotics; Meaning, Codes and Rules.