

Cheesecake Factory Restaurant
Fashion Valley Mall, San Diego, CA

"Cheesecake Factory designer Herman Ajamian described the style of the new restaurant as "classically contemporary,"
 – Jocelyn Dong, *Palo Alto Weekly*



Say Cheese!

Cheese Anyone?



By Umber Kazmi

The Cheesecake Factory is a restaurant located at Fashion Valley Mall on Friars Road in San Diego, Ca. It is a chain restaurant catering to the middle class public by providing an affordable yet large menu and a stimulating environment. Its eclectic design is playful and friendly. The

amount of architectural detailing both inside and out gives it a sense of integrity. People flock to the restaurant not only for gourmet food at reasonable prices but for the authentic atmosphere of indoor and outdoor dining. For a chain restaurant, the Factory has developed a uniquely stylish architecture that is difficult to define. Words like *Faux-Gaudi*, *funky* and *strangely exciting* are used by the customers to describe the space.

The building exterior is lined with paired Corinthian columns which serve no real structural purpose but their stone surface gives them sense of authenticity. The entrance is marked by a romantic façade with contemporary light fixture. The decorative granite floor entry way creates a heightened sense of richness. Inside, heavy Egyptian style columns with gargoylian capitals loom over the space. All providing a balanced clash between old and new, classical and contemporary. Who needs a trip to Europe or Africa when you can take a short trip to the Cheesecake Factory to get a glimpse of Egyptian and Roman temples all mixed in with contemporary world of funky light fixture and curvy metallic soffits.

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Even the menu stays true to the overstated theme of variety by offering pseudo cultural dishes ranging from Italian, Asian, Mexican, American, Hawaiian, and lets not forget the cheesecake along with much more.

In contrast to Benedikt's article 'Reality and Authenticity in the experience economy' where good architecture is defined by its authenticity and reality, perhaps contemporary restaurants such as the Cheesecake are exceptions to the rule. Here reality is not needed but rather fantasy and entertainment. Authenticity is achieved by staying true to the demand and function of the architecture. In doing so, the Factory embodies the four elemental components of realness as defined by Benedikt: presence (on the street), significance (in the community), materiality (through texture and form), and emptiness (by being full).



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Just how authentic is Cheesecake? Seems anything short of steel and glass is mere decoration nowadays. No need for heavy stone bearing walls or an architectural theory to define proportionality or massing. The Factory doesn't claim to be a great work of architecture, it merely provides a realm of entertainment for the locals to stop and enjoy. Similar to going to the cinema to watch a movie or to read



Cloning of Architecture

by: Umber Kazmi

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It all started with the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. The jumping metallically wrapped architecture of Frank O. Gehry was made a superstar. Remarkable for its time, innovative to the core and awe inspiring gesture of the grandeur of architecture, The Bilbao Guggenheim made a universal statement of how sculptural architecture can be. It was the architectural statement of the 20th century.

But as we all returned home to our own cities, we thought wouldn't it be great to have a Bilbao Guggenheim of our own? Why not? Why not Clone the Guggenheim! Thus began the odyssey. Every major city in the states wanted its very own metallic trophy. One after another the metal buildings spurted up like mushrooms or like tin-foil to be exact. One for Seattle, one for Los Angeles, oh and lets not forget one for Chicago. Anyone else?

The Critics applauded and set the stage as this grand architecture encouraging its versatility so that it could belong everywhere for everyone. Would a painter if commissioned paint the same painting over and over? What if there were five Mona Lisa's? All this demands the question Is this 'cloning business' ethical? Medical cloning is for some cause and medical cures. Architectural cloning now that is purely for materialistic reasons. The want and the need to have the diamond.

The influence of allied arts on architecture as a sculpture and a trophy has redefined form follows function such that the function becomes secondary to the aesthetical statement. One particular form can be applied to any building type that is needed. As Peter Collins put it in *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*, 'artistic merit' overrides practical use and performance. This idea is further reinforced by Kant's definition of 'truly beautiful' as something of quality that is appreciated by everyone regardless of its function. In the case of the Bilbao Guggenheim, its form has been used as a concert hall in LA, an outdoor concert stage in Chicago, and another art museum in Seattle.

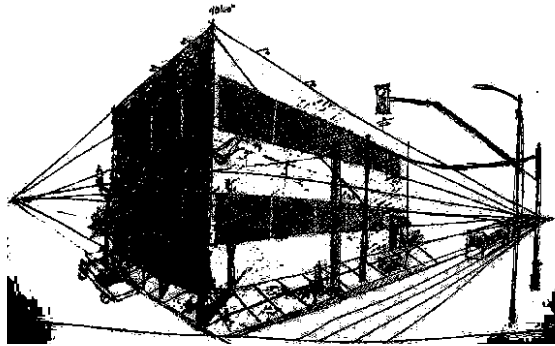
As alluded by Andrea Oppenheimer in *Listening to Critics: the stage is set* article of Architectural Record, a celebrity is needed in every profession to increase its dynamics. The Bilbao Guggenheim has peaked the star power and became a hero of both architects, critics, and public alike. But every city having its own version of the Bilbao Guggenheim decrease the value and uniqueness of the building. People will no longer have the excitement of traveling to far off lands to experience it as it will literally be down the street. One might say that this cloning of architecture seems unethical and lacks innovation but unfortunately cloning is the popular thing these days. Mass producing anything that sells until it is exhausted diminishes its uniqueness and, therefore, its value. The metallic buildings of Gehry serve as an example of the society and the time in which they are bred. Soon Gehry will have to open a factory to comply with demand. One can only hope that some lesson will be learned leading to the end of the commercial cloning process of architecture.

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Architecture³

by: Umber Kazmi



Newschool of Architecture & Design

The Newschool of Architecture is located in a thick shelled white box. It lacks contrast or color. It's just a box. According to Tom Wolfe in *From Bauhaus to Our House* the Bauhaus motto 'starting from zero' made a strong impact on architectural education today. The NSAD lacks any particular style or movement and stands free from influence. Here a student can imagine anything.

Architectural creativity in thought and process is relative to the individual following the principals of Relativism as discussed in lecture. There is no single way to build or criticize designs here.

Some what reminiscent of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoy minus the pilotis, the Newschool follows the line of thought of original great school of architecture such as the Bauhaus. Although in appearance it is plain white box, inside it holds many possibilities of creative thought and gesture. It is an ideal place to bring together students from all walks and races into a single point as it holds no bias and no prejudice in its physical design. It is an iconic image of a design school. Where painters, philosophers, writers, musicians and educators come together in one cube.

It is perfectly functional for its use as a design school and is situated amidst the urban fabric where architecture belongs.

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**Museum of Contemporary Art
La Jolla, CA**

'both-and' vs 'either-or'
Inclusive vs Exclusive

'X' Marks the Duck

by: Umber Kazmi

The Museum of Contemporary Art in La Jolla, Ca is a 1996 addition by Venturi to the original mission style Scripps House by Irving Gill. The museum follows post-modernism as it attempts to respect the local style of the neighborhood on one side and transitions to a contemporary style glass box on the oceanside. Applying contemporary materials and methods in both facades.

The MCA borrows design elements from the Women's Club and other local buildings. It mimics both scale and proportions of these buildings. The main façade has clear axially symmetrical geometry that misleads us. Upon approach the focus is directed to the center which is not the actual entrance to the building. The true entrance lies off to the side. Venturi has made a false statement of geometric balance. It is not true to its principle. The framed colonnade in the front further reinforces this false notion and leads into a wall.

The building details lack authenticity to original mission style that the building is trying to mimic. On the exterior, hollow prefabricated columns on unfinished concrete base do not appear authentic to the original load bearing columns of the mission style. They give a sense of temporary not longevity or permanence of original mission style. On the interior, perceptually ambiguous space of broken ceiling plane, round columns mixed in with square columns is located alongside minimalist space of continuous planes and geometry. This contrast in ideas creates a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity that promotes a hodgepodge of architectural principles.

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If it can be said that architecture evokes emotion and that good architecture provokes positive emotion such as enlightenment, confidence and clarity, then the MCA is not good architecture for it conveys a state of uncertainty and confusion. All this uncertainty falls in line with Venturi's ideological principals of complexity and contradiction where less is bore, contrast is better, 'both-and' rather than 'either-or'.

Contemporary art by nature defies normative boundaries by experimenting with innovative ideologies. MCA lacks innovation as it borrows from anything and everything. Thus resulting in an exclusive art in an inclusive building.

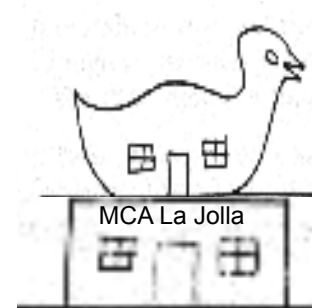
Further study of Venturi's doctrine *Learning from Las Vegas* states that modern buildings are so molded in form such that they resemble ducks on the street. While ordinary sheds with ornamentation are preferable as they fit in on the street through their ordinary nature. On these contexts, MCA complies literally with complexity and contradiction, 'both-and', ordinary and new, perceptual ambiguity by being inclusive.

In his attempt to reach contradiction at MCA Venturi has created a collage, a haphazard employment of ideologies and materials. The 'both-and' approach has, in turn, contradicted Venturi's own philosophies by placing a duck and a decorated shed in one building. Thus creating the Decorated Duck in La Jolla

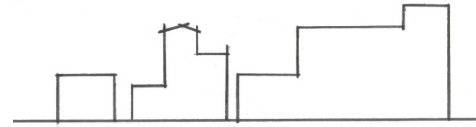
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Decorated
Shed



California Center of the Arts
Escondido, CA



Moore creates Bore

by: Umber Kazmi

A center for the arts by its nature should be a dynamic place. It should be a symbol for the arts that it serves. The California Center of the Arts in Escondido, Ca was designed by Charles Moore. It is designed as an ordinary complex with in coherent circulation and situation on the site. It lacks innovative thought and insincere to the allied arts its holds.

The CCA is not true to even Moore's own doctrine of creating buildings that "reflect the particular circumstances of place and use." it is not reflective of its in design or location. It turns its back to the community from the main road. The entrance to the complex is not at the corner but immediately off to the side. It doesn't attempt to draw the community into a complex designed for the community. Furthermore the physical relationship between the arts is flawed. The building are do not face each other and lack visual cohesion as an allied entity. Nor are the arts united by a circulation corridor. The CCA is a large scale complex that fails to make a statement for its place or function. It fails to respond to the arts and fails to pay homage to the community for which it stands.

Moore has created a boring complex for the exciting literary and visual arts in Escondido.



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