Urban Design History

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Renaissance | Counter-Reformation

Institute of Urbanism
Renaissance

- the art-historical period (14th to 16th century) of cultural revival and rediscovery of the ideals of Ancient Greece and Rome
- based on the political development towards individual freedom and the birth of civil society

The Baroque

Art-historical movement (1575-1770), dominant during the political periods of
  - the Counter-Reformation and
  - Absolutism
Absolutism

- form of government defined by an absolute ruler without the participation of corporative institutions in the 17th and 18th century (the Age of Absolutism – 1646-1789)

- Absolutism is served artistically by the predominant forms and means of expression of the Baroque period

- process of nationalisation:
  - establishment of regular armies
  - incorporation of the church into the political system
  - mercantile economic system
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The Age of Enlightenment (Zeit der Aufklärung)

Late Absolutism – French Revolution 1789

Urban Design (Stadtbaukunst)

The application of artistic rules in the planning of urban space

Synthesis of the Arts (Gesamtkunstwerk)

An art product synthesising the different art genres which in turn complement each other
Mainstream Culture (Hochkultur)

- cultural movement dominating the individual cultural expressions
- mainstream culture tends to absorb individual expressions
- the stronger mainstream cultures develop, the harder it is to maintain individual positions
- mainstream cultures lead to crises
The change of ideas and the birth of the Renaissance in the 14th century

- man becomes the focus of philosophy
- the world is explained with the means of science and not of religion
- rational patterns start defining life
- social position based on profession and education
- the perspective is introduced
- goal: a fully planned and functional city
The conditions for the development of the Renaissance

- independent development influenced by classical antiquity (the rational component)
- contact with the rational achievements of the Arab-Islamic world during the Crusades
- cities have political advantages because of the conflict between the Pope and the Emperor (Kaiser)
- autonomy of urban families that own large tracts of land
Areas of urban design in the Renaissance period

- fortification systems
- regeneration of parts of cities by the creation of new public spaces and related streets
- restructuring of existing cities by the construction of new main streets which extended to the city’s limits and continued as regional routes; these new streets frequently generated further growth
- addition of extensive new districts, usually for residential purposes
- in some cases, completely new towns were designed
Components of urban design in the Renaissance period

- the straight main street
- the grid-iron district (history’s oldest urban form regulator)
- enclosed space (squares)
Ideal cities of the Renaissance

- Vitruvius
- Alberti
- Filarete – “Trattato dell’Architettura”
- Leonardo
- Cataneo – 8 books “L’Architettura”
- Scamozzi – Palma Nuova (“L’idea dell’Architettura Universale”)
- Lorini
Italian Renaissance
In the 16th century Paris is the capital of an effectively united nation and the location of its splendid royal court
- Place d’Auphine and Pont Neuf (1578)
- Place Royale (1605)
- Palais de Tuileries (1563)
Paris in the 16th century:
- Place Royale (1605)
  - prototype of a residential square
  - bringing the aristocracy under the control of the king
- the construction of the Palais de Tuileries (1563) and its Italian Renaissance Garden by Catharina de Medici (arch. Philippe Delorme) set the course for a westward development
New Renaissance towns in France

- Neuf-Brisach
- Nancy – medieval nucleus and Ville-Neuve
During the Counter-Reformation (15th–16th century), Baroque design was characterized by the central role of the Church, while during the Age of Absolutism, design was defined by the ruler and his residence.
Development tendencies from the Renaissance to the Baroque

- the bourgeois culture of the Renaissance creates a geometric urban shape and expresses the idea of an unified urban form
- the elements of the urban shape are equal parts of one wholeness (primus inter pares)
- the autonomy of the Renaissance City declines in the period of the Counter-Reformation due to the power of the Church
- in the Baroque period the upper classes create urban ensembles to demonstrate their high-ranking social status and stress their uniqueness
- the Baroque urban design ideas are enforced by the restriction of the individual artistic freedom
- Baroque urbanism is an expression of spectacle and ceremony (the city as a synthesis of the arts)
The principals of Renaissance urban planning, architectural design and aesthetic theory are directed by identical ideas:
- discipline and order, in contrast to the relative irregularity of medieval space
- compositional balance
- emphasis was placed on the horizontal instead of the vertical
- permanence

Baroque urban design is the result of the centralised church and autocratic power
- hierarchy of meanings
- definite sense of spatial direction
- Piazza del Popolo (1589)
- Scala di Spagna/Piazza di Spagna (1721-1725), Sixtus V, Fontana
- The Capitol Piazza, Michelangelo (1537)
- Piazza Navonna
Baroque in Rome

- Piazza del Popolo (1589)
- Scala di Spagna/Piazza di Spagna (1721-1725), Sixtus V, Fontana
- The Capitol Piazza, Michelangelo (1537)
- Piazza Navonna
Since the 16th century colonial cities in America were based on the “Leyes de las Indias” of the Spanish king Philipp II

Grid-cities according to the unified patterns of the Renaissance:

- the planning instrument is an orthogonal network of streets with relatively square housing blocks; public spaces are formed by reducing or leaving out blocks
- the grid can be extended unlimitedly; the transition from city to nature is not expressed as clearly as in Europe
- the grid makes it impossible to adapt the city’s shape to the landscape; therefore the city’s shape lacks character in comparison with European cities
Colonial cities in America – Philadelphia
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Late Renaissance - Amsterdam
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