

# ARCHITECTURE: MUSEUM AS MUSE

## **Presentation 1: Introduction to Architecture + Phenomenology**

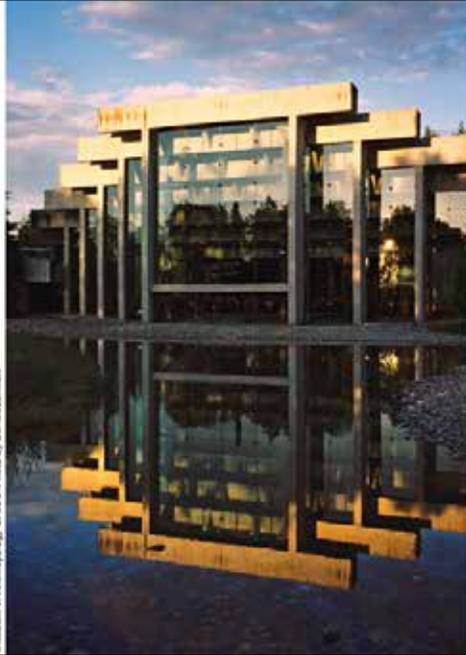
Museum of Anthropology at UBC  
A place of world arts + cultures



Welcome to *Presentation 1: Introduction to Architecture + Phenomenology*. This is the first presentation in the *Architecture: Museum as Muse* unit developed by the Museum of Anthropology at UBC. During this presentation, we will introduce key terms for the unit and begin exploring how we experience our built environments through our senses. This will provide the basic tools for understanding the examples given in Presentations 2 and 3.

# What is Architecture?

Write down any words or thoughts  
that come to mind



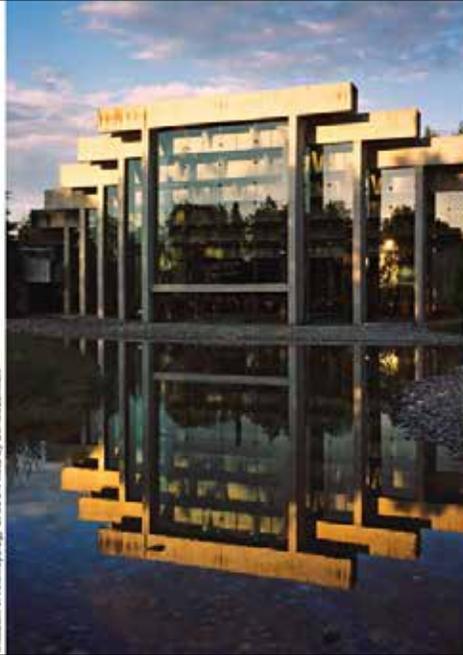
Museum of Anthropology at UBC. Photo by Bill McLennan.



What is architecture? Where have you heard this word before? Take a moment to reflect on this word. Pause this video, and write down any words or thoughts that come to mind when you think of architecture.

## What is Architecture?

- Art/science of arranging the structure and design of a building
- Both a product + an interdisciplinary process



Museum of Anthropology at UBC. Photo by Bill McLennan.



Architecture is the art or science of arranging the structure and design of a building. Architecture is both a product – the actual built structure – and an interdisciplinary process. It integrates art, science, and engineering together. Architecture may serve as a cultural symbol, a political monument, or a response to a societal issue or need. Architecture can embody the technological capabilities of a place or time, whether historical or contemporary.

Photo by Sergio Rydin

- Where do you think this photo was taken?
- What type of building could it be?
- What forms, materials, + shapes do you see in its architecture?



MOA

Take a look at this photograph taken inside of a building. Where do you think this is? What type of building could it be? What forms, materials, and shapes do you see in its architecture? Pause this video, and write down any words that could be used to describe your observations of this building.

## The Louvre Pyramid

- Designed by architect I. M. Pei
- Opened in 1989
- Delicate form that wouldn't clash with surrounding architecture
- Transparent glass, colour-matched steel



Photo by Stephen Huber



Photo by Silvia Trigo



This is the interior of the Louvre Pyramid, the largest art museum in the world. Located in Paris, France, the Louvre holds thousands of artworks from around the globe. Composed of glass and steel, the Louvre Pyramid is an addition designed by Chinese-American architect I. M. Pei as part of a project to modernize the museum's architecture. It was opened to the public in 1989.



I. M. Pei wanted to design a structure with a delicate form that wouldn't clash with the older buildings around it. He selected transparent glass and colour-matched the steel of the pyramid with the surrounding rooftops, so as not to disrupt one's experience of the historical architecture. Pei's design was initially met with much controversy, with many criticizing his initial plans as being too garish and disruptive. One journalist even referred to his design as an "architectural joke." However, the Louvre Pyramid is now considered an iconic element of the Parisian cityscape.

## What is a Muse?

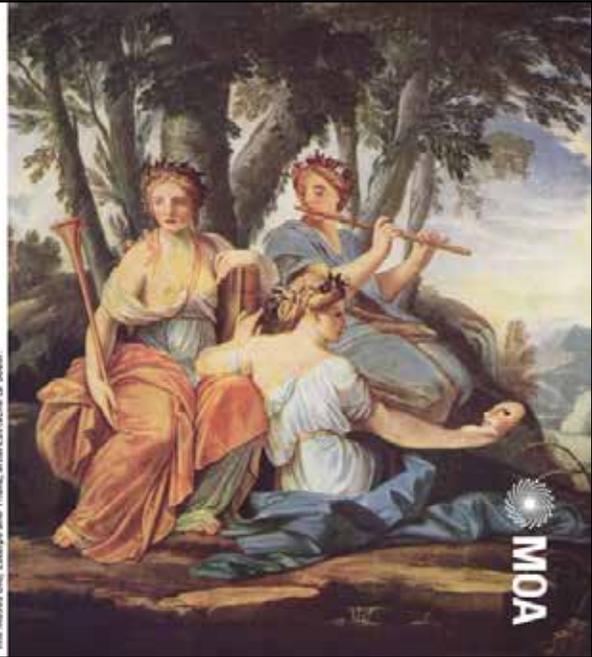
- Architecture: Museum as **Muse**
- What other words does 'muse' remind you of?



This unit is titled *Architecture: Museum as Muse*. What – or who – is a muse?  
What other words does this word remind you of?

## What is a Muse?

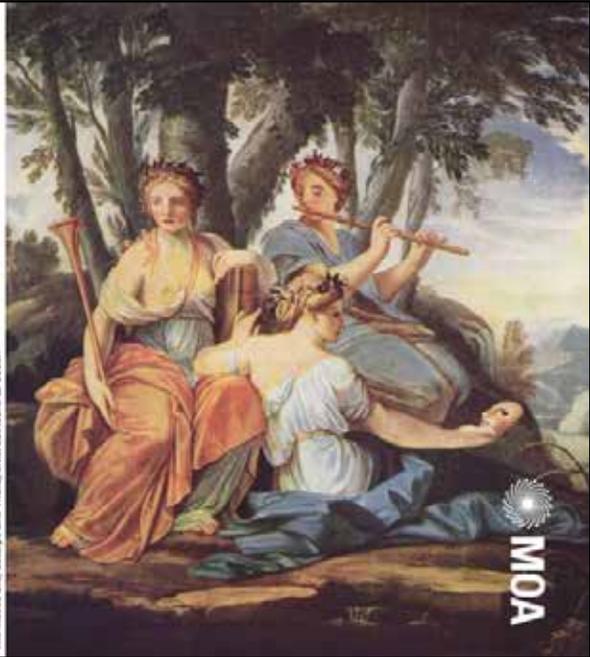
- Goddesses from Greek mythology, poetry + literature
- Inspire poetry, literature, + art



Muses are goddesses from Ancient Greek mythology, poetry, and literature. They inspire the creation of poetry, literature, and art, and can be understood as a supernatural source for an artist's inspiration and human creativity. If something or someone is serving as your muse, they are your inspiration.

## What is a Muse?

- 'Museum'
- 'Amuse'
- 'Music'
- **Museum as Muse**



One word derived from 'muse' is 'Museum'; in Ancient Greece, a *musaeum* was a building dedicated to the Muses or to the arts inspired by them. Another related word is 'amuse,' which means to occupy or engage the attention of someone, to pleasantly divert attention, or to entertain. Finally, 'music' is also derived from the word muse. Classical muses often inspired the musicians, writers, and composers. The goal of this unit is to use museums as muses – as inspiration – for learning about architecture and creatively imagining new possibilities for design.

## Elements of Architectural Design

- Structure
- Space
- Focus
- Materials
- Texture
- Surface
- Perspective
- Scale
- Light
- Colour
- Movement
- Form
- Shape
- Balance
- Contrast
- Unity



Architects don't just make buildings; they create sensory experiences for those interacting with the built environments they design. They do so by choosing certain features for the building, depending on its function and how they want it to be experienced. These features are the fundamental elements of architectural design. It's important to know some of these elements before critically looking at museums through the eyes of an architect.

# Structure



In architecture, **structure** refers to the basic building blocks of a design. These elements include openings (such as doorways and windows), defined areas of ground, paths, and roofs.

# Space



**Space** is the area within a built environment, ranging from wide open spaces, to enclosed, confined spaces. The height, breadth, and depth of a space will vary depending on the atmosphere an architect is intending to create.

## Focus



*The Raven and the First Men*, artist Bill Reid, Haida, 1960, MOA No1 481. Photo by Goh Iramoto.



The **focus** of a design is what draws attention within a space. This could be an architectural feature, an item of decor, a particular view, or something else present.

# Materials



**Materials** are what a building is made of. A building's materials can impact its function, atmosphere, and longevity. Factors influencing the selection of materials include aesthetics, cost, sustainability, and availability in a given place.

# Texture



**Texture** is the feel or appearance of a surface, which can impact the atmosphere of a space. Light and colour can enhance or mask the appearance of texture.

## Surface



The **surface** of a building is its outdoor-facing layer. The surface can communicate the building's function while also protecting its contents from external factors, such as weather.

# Perspective



Photo by Dmitry Zolotarev



**Perspective** is the point of view from a given location inside a built environment, including both what is visible and what is hidden.

## Scale



**Scale** is the size of a building or element in relation to something else, such as another building, another element, or the individual experiencing the building.

# Light



Photo by Robert Schröder.



**Light** is used in a space to highlight a focus, create an atmosphere, delineate space, or reveal or hide texture. Both light and shadow can be manipulated by the architect for these purposes.

# Colour



In architecture, **colour** is used to give a sense of balance, contrast, unity, or to create a certain mood. Colours may hold symbolic meanings that are culturally mediated.

# Movement



**Movement** refers to one's path through a space. An architect can design a continuous sequence of movement, a fragmented sequence of movement, or even a random sequence of movement through a space.

## Form + Shape



**Form** refers to the shape or structure of a three-dimensional design feature, whereas **shape** is a geometric feature (such as an angular or round shape) that is incorporated into a design.

## Balance



**Balance** is the even distribution of elements to create a visually or physically stable design. It includes designs that are symmetrical or that have an even distribution of colour.

## Contrast



Photo by Trenchard Lantano



**Contrast** refers to a noticeable difference between two or more elements, achieved using different colours, materials, or other design features. Contrast can be intentionally used to create a striking or impactful design.

# Unity



**Unity** in architectural design is the consistency in use of colour, texture, material, or other design elements. Unity can be used to create a balanced design.

## What is Phenomenology?

- **Phenomenon:** something experienced by the senses
- **Phenomenology:** the study, exploration and description of something experienced by the **senses**
- “HOW someone experiences a space – their emotional and physical responses” (J. W. Rudd, 1985)



Architects consider how the structures they design will function, but they must also consider how individuals will experience these structures as well. A useful way of understanding architecture is through phenomenology. A ‘phenomenon’ is something experienced by the senses, and ‘phenomenology’ is the study, exploration, and description of something experienced by the senses. In the context of architecture, different people will have different interpretations of and responses to a space because they bring their own histories, preferences, and past to their experience.

## **What is Phenomenology?**

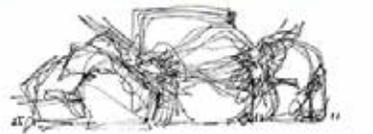
- What do you see, hear, feel, smell around you now?
- What are you experiencing through your senses?



Take a moment to observe your built environment, using as many senses as possible. What do you sense around you now? What do you see, hear, feel, smell? Pause this video, and spend a few minutes reflecting on what you are experiencing through your senses, writing down or drawing some of your observations.

- How would you describe this building?

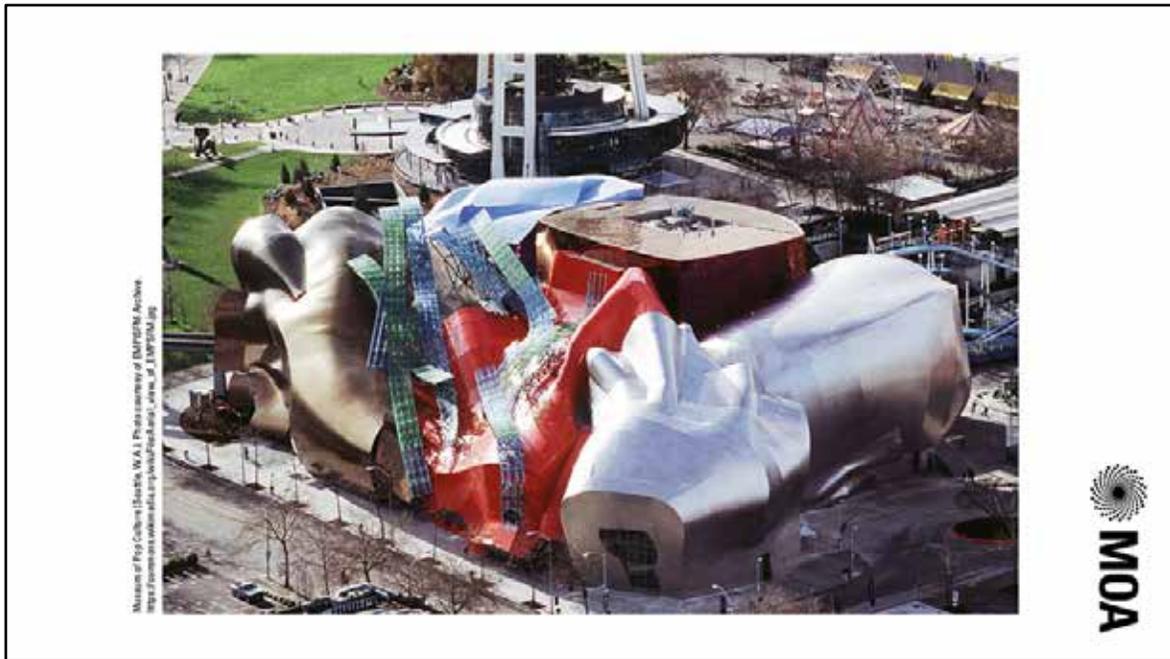
Museum of Pop Culture (Seattle, WA) | Photo courtesy of EMU/EMU Archives  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MoPOP.jpg>



Sketches by architect Frank Gehry



Phenomenology uses descriptive words or forms to find patterns or commonalities in how people experience phenomena. The bottom sketch is by world-famous architect Frank Gehry, who designed the Museum of Pop Culture (formerly the Experience Music Project) in Seattle, Washington, pictured here. Gehry's design method sometimes included crumpling pieces of paper and sketching from those forms. How would you describe this building? Consider some of the elements of design introduced earlier. Think about how this building compares to I. M. Pei's Louvre Pyramid.



The Museum of Pop Culture houses over 80,000 items of rock music history, including rock memorabilia and technology-intensive multimedia displays. The form of the building is meant to embody the 'essence' of rock music – fluid, rhythmic, vibrant, and alive. The building's materials include stone, twisted glass, titanium, and crimson stainless steel to create a smooth, sleek texture like that of an electric guitar.

- What other words could be used to describe a space?
- E.g. rough, slick, fresh, bright, tranquil...

MOA Great Hall. Photo by Chris Focosa.



How else could one describe a space? Start to build a list of words that can be used to describe your experience of architecture. Include the words you used to describe the Louvre Pyramid and the Museum of Pop Culture. This vocabulary you're building will be useful for a Phenomenology Activity introduced later in this unit.

## End of Presentation 1

Thank you!



You have reached the end of *Presentation 1: Introduction to Architecture and Phenomenology*. We hope this inspired you to reflect on how you sense your built environment. In *Presentation 2: Museums of the World*, you'll use these fundamentals of architectural design to review examples of international museum architecture.