

SECTION C

301/C

Detailing as a means of expressing a design concept

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Within the context of architecture, 'detailing' is often misinterpreted as the stylistic decoration or non-decoration in resolution of joints or interfacing of different materials, and considered as a matter of lesser significance to be dealt with at a latter stage of designing. Yet architectural detailing has a much deeper, meaningful function fundamental to its existence. An artifact of architecture is conceived in an evolving process step by step until it is whole and mature. In this evolutionary process, the connection of mind, the spirit of design, with its matter or materiality is nurtured through its physical detailing. Detailing transforms design ideas into a buildable reality. Hence, architecture is perceived because of the existence of detailing itself. In that effect detailing is 'the' means of expression in architecture. Detailing, therefore, becomes the function of expression, with much to do with process and content; and less to do as an addition or after thought. The coherence of detail illuminates the concept on the whole, thus achieving the intended through architecture.

Fitness for the intended purpose is a necessary but insufficient criterion of architectural detailing, in engaging expression through a work of architecture. The present attitude toward architectural detailing, complies with minimum technical requirements, codes or standards. The detail may be technically competent but have little to say beyond, such as a typical wall section, competent but uninspiring, and admittedly non-expressive. In view of a details' potential in expression it is unfortunate to note the deficiency of significance attached to architectural detailing in contemporary practice. Detailing is transplanted as mere feature into a different time or location with no bearing of being unique to its context. And its resulting purpose remains decorative, imitative or at its best adoptive in character but by little means essential. In this context detailing is considered an unimportant extended treatment of particulars, to be copied, omitted or otherwise given less regard in the physical manifestation of architecture. It has become common practice for an architectural office to repeat its favourite details or even try to make do without.

The frequently misunderstood architectural aesthetic application of details contributes to dilute the perceived conception of an architectural expression. Thus, confusion about expression and meaning is sustained. This issue is in need of being addressed or the sensory experience and expression in architecture maybe lost and wrong interpretations derived.

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