
Christof Ehrlich

Distinguishing Technology and Architecture

Abstract

The concept of technology is frequently used in architecture—but often in a negligent way. The missing distinction between building and architecture leads to the assumption that technology and building are related in the same way as technology and architecture are. Whenever technology deals with more than the material aspects of building but with the signifying aspects of architecture, architecture becomes prone to ideological interpretation, which also finds its reflection in the architectural discourse. To understand technology and architecture as separate cultural forms in their own right may help to overcome this shortfall. Applying Cassirer’s concept of the “symbolic forms,” architecture and technology can be differentiated by their individual methods and goals of providing knowledge. Assuming this, the methods and goals of a technological manifestation focus on function whereas the means, methods and goals of architecture try to achieve cultural identification in dwelling. It becomes obvious that technology in architecture can only be the presentation of technology.

Keywords

Symbolic Form; Cultural Form; Meaning; Dwelling.