

National Architectural Competitions and the Ideology of the Pritzker Prize for Architecture: An Analytical-Comparative Approach

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ABSTRACT

The unprecedented growth of architectural competitions in recent years promises serious attention to architecture and specialized valuation of this cultural art. The increasing tendency to hold these competitions, especially in Iran, has caused the quality of the designs to decrease and the mission of architecture to be forgotten in some designs. This issue it possible to use the ideology of valid foreign competitions to solve this problem or not, it has not been proven yet. In this paper with analytical-comparative method we will express the theoretical foundations of the most important architectural competition in the world that is the criterion for selecting top people is according to this sentence; "The award is intended to honor living architects that their work will make a significant contribution to human life and the environment around them." In this research, we intend to examine the architectural and social dimensions of some of the top works of this event during its 4 decades of activity, find the criteria for the "Pritzker" and to make it a leader in the selection of architectural works in domestic competitions, which can be one of the components of overcoming the identity crisis in the contemporary architecture of our country. Findings show that one of the most important criteria for selecting the best people in the Nobel Prize in Architecture is the full attention of the designer to the "society needs". In other words; Architecture should be created entirely for "man and his high position in the world".

Keywords: Architecture, Architecture Competition, Pritzker, Identity, Human

Introduction

The growing tendency to hold competitions - whether in exclusive or free-audience design – is not limited to Iran, as this growth has been stark in the international community during the last decade. “Organizers”, “participants” and “policy makers” are the three main groups of stakeholders that are vital to the formation of such competitions (Musapour, 2017). Some of the organizers are, in fact, private or public (i.e. governmental) investors that hold competitions at the domestic and international levels with the purpose of a discovering specific design or design group. The next key stockholders are selected and

experienced architects who periodically select and introduce the best architects or their implemented designs with specific functional, content and temporal criteria, often being sponsored by various specialized associations and economic institutions (Ismaili, 2008), one of the most distinguished of which is the “Pritzker Architecture Prize”, often referred to as the Nobel Prize of architecture. In each competition, paying attention to the facilities, correct information, specialized organization and organization, specialized information, proper ideogram, prizes and executive guarantees contribute to the prestige and credibility of the organizer and as a result of the competition itself. Architectural competitions are divided in two categories: (1) competitions with conceptual design; and (2) design of specific buildings. Conceptual design with the aim of freedom of thought and extensive activity are among the most attractive architectural and urban planning competitions in the world (Sander, 2017). Flamaki argues that, in this type of design, organizers deal with space, their abstract meaning and concept, even before the formation of architecture in its specific sense.” Instances include the 2019 eVolo architectural competition entitled “Ephemere High-Rise: Floating Power Station & Liquid Metal Battery Charging Station” or the Schindler “Access for All’ Award Architecture Competition 2005. On the other hand, design competitions for specific buildings which are more appealing to masses can have their own charms owing to the fact that the top designs in these tournaments are implementable in the real world (Islami, 2012). The Pritzker Architecture Award is a summary of all of the above, such that that according to the “selection criteria” listed in the framework of the rules of this competition, prizes will be awarded to a collection of living architects who have made significant contributions to the development of architecture (Pritzker official site, 2019). Owing to its comprehensiveness and inclusiveness, the Nobel Prize in Architecture is examined for selection criteria of the best architect, so that by analyzing its selected works, a unique model for identity-oriented design in national design competitions is achieved.

Problem statement:

The identity crisis in most of the designed projects in the country (Table 1) can be attributed to the challenges that our contemporary architecture still faces (Toloo’ Del, 2017). As previously mentioned, the unprecedented rise in number of architectural competitions in recent years promises serious attention to architecture and hence proper valuation of this culture-making art (Musapour, 2017), which will in turn help alleviate identity crisis and thus save architecture. Contrary to this statement, Bernard Choumi believes that “Architectural competitions are not beneficial as designing takes a Pacey course.” As such, Le Corbusier also argues that architecture arises in a moment of creativity that seeks to form ideas in moments, regardless of time. Therefore, architecture can be represented a long experience that emerges in a short time befitting the definition of any project (Tajik, 2018).

Table 1: Challenges of Contemporary Iranian Architecture (Source: Toloo Del, 2017)

Challenges of the contemporary architecture	The penetration of positivism in architecture
	Problems of architectural education in the educational system
	Lack of mastery of designers in architectural principles
	Cultural invasion of the western architecture and negligence of domestic culture
	Plagiarism of non-local works and negligence of local architecture
	Non-familiarity of policy-makers with the value of architecture

Thus far, no practical approach has been presented from the ideologies of the world's most prestigious architectural competitions to better organize Iran national competitions. Architecture and urban planning competitions, along with its significant multiplicity and expansion, have invariably been accompanied by a plethora of challenges, the most important of which can be lack of clear criteria in accepting projects, inadequacy of the organizers, lack of sufficient documents by the organizers of the competition, hasty and clueless refereeing and, most importantly, lack of a unified theoretical basis in most design competitions. On the other hand, various scientific and experimental solutions have been proposed to alleviate these shortcomings (Ismaili, 2008). One such solution is to obtain the criteria and ideology of project approvals in prestigious international competitions and employing comparative analogy and

eventually implementing them in national competitions. The author has sought the most prestigious international competition to this end.

Research question

The aim of the ever-increasing development of international architectural design competitions is to create a healthy and constructive competition, in which novel architectural ideas and superior design quality are shaped and hence the interests of employers are served. This study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the reasons for the failure of some architectural competitions in Iran. This issue is of particular interest in Iran as after a while – in some cases only a few years - a contest is repeated again with the same name or other names, while most participants submit the same duplicate designs with a new edition and layout. Also, the authors examine whether studying in Pritzker Architecture Prize it provides us with the basics and approaches for solving this crisis.

Research Methodology

From the past, architectural competitions have been a way to achieve the best design for a building. Just as proper holding of competitions promotes and advances the level of architecture within the country, the emergence of deficiencies in the structure of holding competitions can bring about adverse effects and consequences to historical and indigenous identity of Iranian architecture, while wasting cost and energy as well (Tajik, 2018). One of the reasons for the low-quality of national interior architecture competitions is the lack of a single prevailing ideology and the conformity of the competition goals thereto. In the meantime, Pritzker has always been considered as one of the most significant and prestigious architectural design competitions in the world. In this article, the author employs analytical-comparative methods and documentary and library studies to study and analyze the competition with the purpose realizing the component or components of selection criteria in comparison with those of our domestic competitions, which is expected to improve their quality.

Research background

Competition is a dynamic process for discovering the unknown, during which superior methods, ideas and concepts emerge. Most of human scientific and practical breakthroughs thus far have been historically the result of competition between different individuals and groups. In architecture, the emergence of fair platform in a competitive environment can encourage designers to take more proactive approaches. As mentioned earlier, there has been a lot of research on the analysis of domestic design competitions. In a study entitled “Analytical Approach to Holding Architectural Competitions in Iran” Gholamreza Eslami analyzed the components of the best domestic competitions, while Morteza Esmaili did the same in an article focusing on “Architecture, competitions and experience. On the other hand, Fatemeh Tajik examined the issues and requirements of world-class competitions in her book “Architecture and Urbanism Competitions; Global Experiences, Requirements and Recommendations”. In his book “Architectural Competitions: Analysis of Iranian and World Architectural Competitions”, Mahmoud Golabchi explored different dimensions of this issue. It is evident that no study has been conducted based on research into the theoretical foundations of a prestigious global competition so far, along with its analysis and adaptation to the ideologies of domestic design competitions. The current research aims to achieve this important issue.

Domestic architecture competitions in Iran

Architecture is an ancient art whose roots can be traced back to the formation of human life on Earth. The distinction between architecture and other artforms is its high integration with everyday human life, as such that the civilized man today is invariably in touch with artificial environments in his daily life and therefore with a plethora of elements stemming from architecture. Human’s continuous interaction with architecture has highly distinguished it from other arts like painting and literature, transforming it from non-essential and optional form of art to a phenomenon with must-have effects on human life. This integration and constant presence have led to the emergence of great effects of architecture on human life, indicating its importance more than ever. The famous phrase of the British politician Churchill, "We build

cities and then cities build us", which is a mere translation of another famous phrase from Ibn Arabi, "every cause is the effect of its effect" clearly illustrates the special place of architecture in human life. The cultural role of architecture, the high cost of constructing building along with aesthetic issues are among the arguments that point to significance of selecting the best design for the construction as a whole. As such, the importance of the formation of architectural competitions is highlighted more than ever. In ancient Iran, there is no written record of holding any forms of architectural competitions, but rulers and kings of every era invited famous artists to design their palaces, a manifestation of competition for the best. With the emergence of the modernism movement in Iran during the Pahlavi period, architectural competitions gained ground in the country. In the 1960s and 1970s, and following the formation of the first generations of domestically-educated architects, the economic growth of the country, and the change in the economic and social structure of cities, architectural competitions also sought better structures and forms. Among the most famous of these such were the International Design Competition of the National Library of Iran and the design of the Azadi Tower (Javaherian, 2008). With the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, the beginning of Iran-Iraq war and the emergence of fundamental changes and transformations in the country in the 1980s, architecture also experienced profound changes. As a result of the war, construction in the country halted down for almost a decade. With the end of the war and the resumption of construction in the country in the early 1990s, the country's architecture resumed its development and, as such, architectural competitions gradually found their way back to the centerstage. In the past, architectural competitions have been a method of identifying the best design for a building. In 2002, an act was approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution with the purpose of better organizing the competitions and hence achieving their predetermined goals. But today, more than a decade after the regulations were passed, there are still many issues of organizing, referring, and holding competitions still standing. The scope of these problems can be further studied in four areas, namely leadership, management, scheduling, and planning. In the next section, these competitions are further analyzed

Analysis and criticism of the architectural competitions in Iran

Every topic of architectural analysis is inherently a branch of theoretical issues of architectural that emphasizes more on the act than simple refereeing and thus is an important part of the theoretical foundations of architecture, in that any development in various fields of architecture is said to be based on architectural analyses. Analyses has an undeniably significant status in our architectural life. Architectural competitions are one of the emerging points of the realm of architectural analysis. These contests are often followed by extensive, and at times heated, debates over how to referee and comment on the works, which indicates the serious presence of critique. Just as proper holding of competitions can significantly promote and advance the architectural level of the country, drawbacks in the structure of holding competitions can often inflict adverse effects and consequences to historical and indigenous identity of Iranian architecture while wasting cost and energy. Most architectural competitions in the country clearly highlight the dominance of their weaknesses over the strength, to the point that competitions are often renewed several times due to lack of attention to fundamental gaps in the field of standards, laws and regulations governing them.

Table 2: Cultural gaps in the field of control and supervision of architectural competitions in Iran

Scope	Audience	Type of gap	Description
Control and supervision	Rules, regulations and standards	Conceptual	The current rules and regulations are at cases inconsistent with the spirit of its original purpose
		Adaptive	Rules adapted from other countries are not in line with the particular culture of our country, leading to lack of public appeal.
		Unity and harmony	At cases, rules and regulations are contradicting
		Technical	Technical weakness and legal loopholes are predominant in control and supervision
		Legal	Drawbacks in the legal bases in the legal system of the country and lack of comprehensive rules for urbanization

Works from every form of art, architecture being one of them, have varying semantic aspects that the audience receives some in light of a single perception. When confronted with the work, the audience only recognizes the aspects that their perceptual realm allows them to. On the other hand, the perceptual world of individuals is unique to them and varies among individuals. This causes the perceptions of audiences and critics in many semantic aspects of a single work to be at times very different from each other. This difference can undermine the credibility of critical debates. Therefore, the emergence of a comprehensive meaning that is, firstly, beyond the perceptual world of the critic and contain as much as possible the semantic aspects of the work and, secondly, its accuracy is agreed upon by the parties to the debate is of utmost importance for improving the validity of architectural analyses. In this regard, the following questions are raised from the aforementioned comprehensive: How can a comprehensive rational meaning be achieved that has a greater semantic scope than personal perceptions? How can this meaning be agreed upon by the audience of the architectural work? The meaning of an architectural work is often personal and limited, which confines the scientific validity of its argument in the perceptual realm of that particular person. This limits the theories presented in that critique to the scope (normative theories) of the least valid reference theories. Normative theories have always been the subject of many theoretical debates that seek to prove their own existence instead of progressing the evolution of architecture as a human living environment. However, there is less disagreement in scientific analyses that lead to theories with higher scientific validity, and the results of such analyses are reliable thus posing as a foundation for future discussions and novel achievements. On the other hand, in controversial analyses and discussion between several theorists, sometimes the debate ends in vain owing to the very large perceptual chasms between the parties to that debate. Here, discovering a comprehensive and universal meaning of the work that, while being understandable, can be accurately discussed and analyzed gains great significance (Nik Fitrat, 2017). Architectural criticism is undeniably in direct contact with current knowledge and awareness and aristocracy on the history and theory of architecture. Architectural theory, architectural history, aesthetics, and social values form the essence of good criticism, through which critics who are free from bias, personal experience, and subjective perceptions, offer honest criticism that enhances the quality of architecture. The main role of architectural analysis is enlightenment, education and comparison of architectural examples, with the purpose of evaluating the quality of the project, from the earliest stages of formation to the completion of work, the ultimate result of which would be to affect the community and daily life of its users (Sharp, 2018).

Architectural criticism has been less studied as a systematic and organized process, perhaps because has not yet reached its full-potential stage. The absence of a single authoritative body, which can be relied on in critical discussions and analyzes of the architectural realm, is itself evidence to this claim. Criticism needs to be guiding rather than merely protesting or emotionally confirmatory. In other words, the results of architectural analyses should be highly prospective and consequential (Otto, 2009). Architectural criticism is one of the rather neglected and forgotten topics of our society, to such extent that is safe to say that no serious and appropriate research has been performed on thus far. Not only is there no centralized study and research on the theoretical foundations of architectural criticism, but also criticizing and analyzing architectural works has not become very common in the practical sphere (Raisi, 2013). In the eye of the public, Criticism is same as complaining and reproach. However, what is perceived from the term in more specialized content is of a broader meaning. Criticism of an architectural work is often is said to mean describing, interpreting and evaluating it, in that all three aspects must be present in any through critical text. Although some consider criticism to be the same as judging the aesthetic quality and value of any work, as voting and judging on the good and the bad requires a correct and accurate knowledge of such matters, it is possible to offer an all-inclusive definition for the criticism of architecture, which is recognizing the work of architecture based one's knowledge and insight. This means that criticism and analysis of an architectural work is a quest for finding the truth search for its truth. In this regard, recognizing various types of criticism and their weaknesses is of paramount significance. One of the most important types of criticisms used in this study is interpretive criticism. Interpretive criticism inherently may be emotionally evocative, memorable, or defensive. In interpretive criticism, whether a designed environment or a set of predetermined criteria is met or not is insignificant,

but the designed environment should be understood by the audience from a specific perspective (Otto, 2009).

Outside Iran, International architectural competitions are one of the main ways of outsourcing architectural projects. The largest consulting companies and the most famous architects in the world, win a large portion of their projects through architectural competitions. Examination of the results of competitions in our country indicates that following the Islamic Revolution and with the re-formation of competitions, especially in the early 1990s, consulting companies tried to find their way into the new architectural landscape of the country by participating in competitions. Thus, these firms were among the participants and eventual winners of architectural competitions, resulting in the increased quality of competitions in this period. After a decade-long recession and the re-emergence of the construction market in the country, consulting firms were gradually able to win projects in the market in a plethora of ways other than participating in free architecture competitions, hence losing interest therein. Today, most of the country's consulting firms are only willing to participate in limited and invitational architectural competitions, where employers often pay for the initial design, itself indicating structural drawbacks in the architectural competitions of the country. Of course, lack of trust in the referring process and non-compliance of the organizer to the obligations have been influential in this regard. Thus, today, most of the participants in the competitions are inexperienced and novice professionals, which has only resulted in a decrease in the quality of the competitions and has led to the separation of design and implementation projects. Undeniably, the emergence of young faces is an influential factor in the emergence of creativity and new ideas in the country's architecture, but the participation of consulting and specialized firms has not only increased the quality of competitions, but also because of their connections with the country's executive official, projects are more implementable (Ismaili, 2008). Architectural works are the result of mutual and constructive interaction between the designer and the employer (Hojjat, 2008), whose effect is clearly evident in competitions. Factors contributing the performance of each can be separately debated as well. As can be seen from Table 3, current domestic architectural competitions engage more participants in two areas of architecture groups and students, while other sections, including consulting firms are significantly less involved in the contests.

Table 3: Participants of the competition

Participants of the competition		
	Participants in the competition	Superior ranks of the competition
Consulting firms	25%	19%
Architecture Groups	75%	81%

As for organizers it is evident from Table 4 that the government plays the most significant role, and the private sector is clearly less involved, while the greater activity of this sector can also shape up more dynamism in and during the competitions.

Table 4: Organizers of the competition

Organizers of the competition		
	Private companies	Public institutions
First period (1980-1996)	14%	86%
First period (1980-1996)	29%	71%

With all the above-mentioned shortcomings in holding domestic competitions, the main problem is that the final product, with all the ups and downs it goes through, is finally implemented and is often not welcomed by the society and is rejected by it. To investigate this cause, we will interpret the most important architectural event in the world.

Pritzker

The Pritzker Architecture Prize the award is funded by the Pritzker family and sponsored by the Hyatt Foundation “to honor a living architect or architects whose built work demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision and commitment, which has produced consistent and significant

contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture.” (Pritzker Official Website, 2019). It is considered to be one of the world's premier architecture prizes, and is often referred to as the Nobel Prize of architecture. The award is named after the Pritzker family who were involved in international business activities in Chicago (Tajik, 2018). They have long been known for supporting educational, social, scientific, medical, and cultural activities. Pritzker Architecture Prize recipients receive US\$100,000, a citation certificate, and since 1987, designs on which are inspired by the work of architect Louis Sullivan. Before 1987, a limited-edition Henry Moore sculpture accompanied the monetary prize. Nominees for this award are not limited to a specific nationality, from government officials, writers, critics, to academic architects, experimental architects, architectural craftsmen and societies and with a concern for better architectural development. It is also awarded regardless of nationality, race, beliefs or ideology. The ceremony is held annually and close to November. There are usually around 500 nominees from 47 countries. The final selection is made by an international jury with full reflection and confidential selection (Pritzker official site, 2019).

Pre-November speculations

Previously, the Pritzker Architecture Prize was awarded to prominent architects with a variety of styles and lines of thought. From American deconstructionist architect Frank Gehry and Japanese modernist Kenzo Tange to Brazilian Oscar Niemeyer, who was interested in creating special volumes with concrete, Minimalist Swiss Peter Zumthor, and Philip Johnson or Richard Meyer, the White Knight of American postmodern school with their white concrete buildings. With the arrival of November every year, speculation about the award winner of that year rises. Whether this year, like in 2015, the award will be given to someone like Frei Otto (Figure 1), a German with a solid line of design, or, like 2016, to Alejandro Aravena (Figure 2), a Chilean who employs distinct ideas and innovations in each of his designs, remains a mystery.

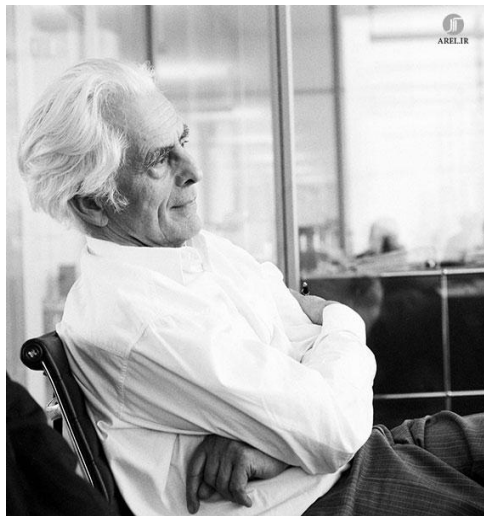
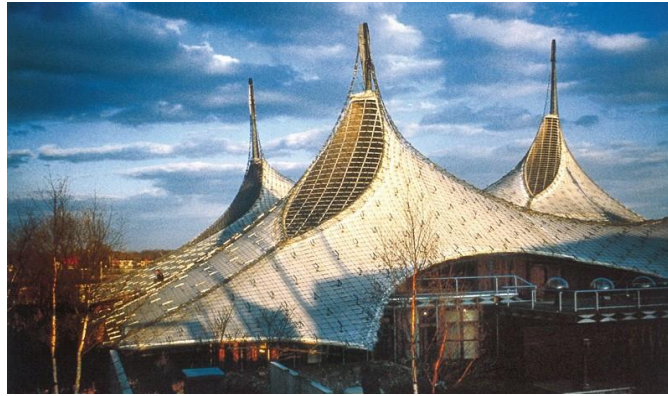


Figure 1: Frei Otto – recipient of the 2015 Pritzker Prize



Figure 2: Alejandro Aravena– recipient of the 2016 Pritzker Prize

Frei Otto (31 May 1925 – 9 March 2015) was a German architect and one of the masters in the field of tensile and membrane structures. In most of his activities, he has shown interest in using cable-tent structures.



Expo 67 German Pavilion



Olympiastadion (Munich, 1972)

On the other hand, Alejandro Aravena (b. 1967) is a young Chilean architect. In each of his works, he seeks to employ new ideas and more creativity than his previous works, i.e. innovations in the field of architecture, as well as meeting today's economic and social challenges. As an instance, in the design of the Siamese Towers (Figures 3 and 4) in Chile, he employed the second view and vacuum as an important principle in sustainable architecture with the aim of conserving energy.



Figure 3: Siamese Towers – 2005



Figure 4: Siamese Towers – 2005

Preliminary Discussion and Conclusion:

Given the aforementioned discussion, and by thorough examination of architects who have won the Nobel Prize in Architecture, it can be concluded that compulsory adherence to a particular style or school of architecture is not a criterion for selecting the recipient of the Pritzker Award. On the other hand, comparing and examining the works of Otto and Aravena implies that in receiving the so-called Nobel Prize in Architecture, employing new or original ideas and, conversely, continuing pre-defined or routine lines of thought is not of interest to the refereeing board.

Analysis of the works of Pritzker architects:

As mentioned before, the Pritzker Prize was inaugurated as the most significant architectural event in the world, four decades ago (i.e. 1980 AD) (Ismaili, 2008). In this research, an architect from every decade and his most prominent work (equaling to a work in every decade) is evaluated, which is performed without focusing on the body, issues and architectural elements of the project, will be done to analyze the hidden thinking behind the design or in other words, the "turning point" of the construction of such works.

The 80s: The High Museum of Art

The High Museum of Art (Figures 5 and 6) in Atlanta is a work of prominent American architect Richard Meier, which was built in 1983 using postmodern styles. Meier is proponent of employing white

color in architecture (Gupte, 2005), as he believes that “white color improves the quality of light in space, while embedding white bodies in a green landscape is like placing jewels in the heart of nature.”



Figure 5: The High Museum of Art - 1983



Figure 6: The High Museum of Art - 1983

The High Museum of Art has employed the following design features:

- Accessibility: constructed in the vicinity of the public transport system
- Great attention to space: integration of light, order in space and proper movement flows
- Simple and understandable geometry
- Repeated use of white color
- Placing white bodies in a green landscape
- An inviting entrance, which is built linearly from the heart of the building to the sidewalk, enticing passers-by to visit.

Interpretive Criticism: According to Meier, creating square hollow frames inside the building makes views of the city visible from inside the museum. On the other hand, the entrance is connected to the sidewalk of the city, hence inviting regular people to visit the museum. He believes that his plan seeks to reduce the gap between the city (people) and art (culture).

• **The 90s: National Gallery, Sainsbury Wing**

Famous American architect Robert Venturi is the creator of this work, which was built in 1991 in London. Decorations are highly valued in his works as he argues that architecture is not just about technique and technology (having coined the maxim “Less is a bore”, Venturi, 1966). He was highly interested in reviving history in the building and the repetition and symmetry of the elements in the outermost shell of the building. Venturi does not believe in the international style and emphasizes “contextualism”, in that each building must be formed according to the surrounding site, history and culture of that area.

The main features employed in the design of this building are:

- Easy access, built in the city center
- This building has three main façades that have been designed and executed separately according to the surrounding site. As if each façade is meant for a separate building. With huge stone half-columns, the main façade (Fig. 7) is reminiscent of grandeur and history, the rear façade of the building (Fig. 8), which is built from a combination of stone and brick (mostly brick) owing to its closeness to a brick museum, and the alley façade (Fig. 9), which is consistent with the neighboring building, both in the materials of the façade and in the shape, size and color of the windows.



Figure 7: Main façade



Figure 8: Rear façade



Figure 9: Alley façade

Interpretive Criticism: The architect famously stated that: “What matters to me are the houses on the slopes of Italy which built according to the needs of the people and the climate.” His most important concern is often cited to be the consistency of the design with the surrounding site. On the other hand, based on the aforementioned discussion on the design of Sainsbury wing, its most significant design element can be considered “preventing visual anomalies from the people and respecting the project site.”

• The 2000s: Sydney Opera House

In 1954, The Government of New South Wales, led by the premier, Joseph Cahill, authorized work to build a multi-venue performing arts center, and as such, an international competition was held to design the complex owing to the lack of such a center in the city and the public dissatisfaction with the lack thereof (Duek-Cohen, 1998). The Sydney Opera House (Figure 10) is one of the most famous iconic projects in the world, designed in 1973 Danish architect Jørn Utzon, who was awarded the 2003 Nobel Prize in Architecture.

The Sydney Opera House employs the following architectural features:

- Using patterning of repetition and harmony in design
- Embedding multiple theaters with 300 to 3,000 seats
- Inspiration from seashells. Spiral-shaped shell with irregular arches consisting of 1 million and 56 thousand pieces of Swedish granite
- Interior spaces are made of concrete, while for acoustics and aesthetics, the interior is built from laminated multi-layered wood boards, which are considered native materials.
- It has one of the heaviest roofs in the world, supported by 6,000 concrete formwork and 350 km of steel cables.

Interpretive Criticism: even though its construction suffered excessive cost and scheduling overruns (change of construction time from 8 years to 14 years and consequently change of cost estimate from \$7 million to \$102 million), the construction and development of this huge collection continued with full gear owing the necessity of such venue in the city and dissatisfaction of general public form lack thereof.



Figure 10: The Sydney Opera House

• The 2010s: 7132 Thermal Baths

One of the most prominent works of the famous Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, built in 1997, is the Therme Vals (Figure 11) in the Graubünden canton in Switzerland. The architect received the Pritzker Prize in 2010. Zumthor is highly known as a minimalist architecture interested in simplicity in design. His designs are often unadorned, and his definition of aesthetics is simply getting in line with the environment and playing with light and shadow. (Nik Fitrat, 2015). One of the most important features of the design of Therme Vals are:

- Empty of intricacies and embellishments, built with extreme of simplicity;
- Simple rectangular cube employing full and empty volumes;
- Integration in the surrounding environment and settlement under a meadow roof (minimal exposure of façade, buried in the landscape);

Made of local igneous rock called “quartz waltz” that have been used by the natives to cover roofs for a hundred years. Zumthor was the first architect to exhibit their beauty, which did so by placing them alongside water. (Interest in showing history and originality)

Minimal use of artificial light. This complex directs direct light in due to having grooves on the roof between the meadows (Figure 12).



Figure 11: 7132 Thermal Baths (Source: URL3)



Figure 12: Natural light from the grooves in the ceiling (Source: URL3)

Interpretive Criticism: The use of natural light, indigenous stones, the consistency of the design with the environment, and the emergence of the natural hot springs from the heart of the mountain all contribute to the rich atmosphere of this complex. Regarding the project, Zumthor says: “I wanted to instill in the users of this space a particular sense of recognition, something I pursued by placing native and original stones next to natural lighting (directing light in different directions and colors), shadows, and open and closed spaces among others.” He argues that any architectural work can only have the required qualities when the combination of its forms and contents creates a rich and powerful atmosphere, not just pleasing to eye, but also touching the soul.

2019 - Qatar National Convention Center:

The Nobel Prize in Architecture in 2019 was awarded to Arata Isozaki, the Japanese architect of the Qatar National Convention Center (Figure 13). The building was built in 2011 in a modern and iconic style. The project has been awarded the Gold Label for Energy Management and Environmental Design from the American Green Buildings Committee, hence making it the first building of its kind. 3500 square meters of its roof is covered with solar panels, providing 12.5% of the electrical energy required by the building. Other features that contribute to the sustainability of the building include LED lights for lighting, air conditioning, carbon dioxide sensors, heat sensors and optimal water supply. The most important feature in the design of this building is its entrance. It resembles a large tree that can withstand the load of the roof has risen in front of the entrance.



Figure 13: Qatar National Convention Center (Source: URL2)

Interpretive Criticism: Regarding the design of the building, Isozaki writes: “The entrance should have been very inviting. On the other hand, the people of Doha are religious people who believe in the God and the Prophet. Therefore, we placed a religious symbolic element that was modernized in large dimensions, like a pillar in front of the entrance, while the weight of the roof was shouldered upon it.”

The manifestation of the ultimate respect of the architect for the beliefs, traditions and culture of the people of an area is easily traceable in the design of this convention center.

Data collection and conclusion:

Despite the abundance of competitions held in our country in recent years, the Iranian society should seek to discover the necessary capacities to hold competitions in the best possible manner and be able to alleviate them to the desired quality level. This unprecedented growth and consequently the focus on quantity instead of quality has led to a large number of design competitions shifting their selection criteria from architectural quality, advancing the country's architecture and improving the quality of sociology to personal reasons and individualism (Islami, 2012). Lack of clear and effective rules, low knowledge and experience of the organizers, duplication of plans presented by participants, and hasty and poor referring are some of the issues that undermine the validity of such competitions (Tajik, 2018). The end result of these numerous events and special ideology in selecting the top designs is the emergence of what is known as the identity crisis in the current architecture and urban landscape. Identity is the most important social dimension of architecture that indicates the originality of a region. The following points were concluded by social analysis and purposeful study of Pritzker and its works, as the most prestigious architectural competition in the world:

- By examining the selected architects of this competition from different styles and schools, it can be concluded that that no specific style of architecture is more valued than others in this competition and works from any school are eligible to receive the award
- From works Frei Otto and Alejandro Aravena, one can see that both new and pure ideas and predefined policies could be awarded the Prize.
- The milestone of Richard Meier's High Museum of Art was to reduce the gap between people and the city and art.
- The milestone of Robert Venturi's National Gallery, Sainsbury Wing was to prevent people from getting visual anomalies and to design each view in a site-related way.
- The point of interest in Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House was that the costly and time-consuming complex was simply constructed owing to the public dissatisfaction with the lack of multi-purpose halls.
- The milestone of the Peter Zumthor's Therme Vals was to instill a sense of space in the people who used the thermal baths.
- The turning point of the Arata Isozaki's work was to design with respect and consideration for the beliefs of the people of Doha.

According to the above conclusion, the application of the research findings to the weaknesses of the domestic competitions and ultimately, reflecting on Pritzker's motto, i.e. “This award is not for the works of architects but for what is called the architect's impact on the architectural community”, clearly reveals that The Pritzker Prize is awarded annually to an architect or architects whose work have made a worthy contribution to the progress of humanity, artificial environment, creativity, concern for the growth of architecture, and quality among others, while their attention, thinking and ideation is centered on man, his high position and satisfying its need. Prioritizing such arguments can yield the desired structure, management and result, and the design is accepted by the community after undertaking correction and implementation phases

The technological advances in architecture of the modern era, on the one hand, and the abundance of design competitions and conferences on the other hand have led to constant construction of highly-modern, iconic and sometimes eye-catching buildings in the country. It is safe to say that humans, paying attention to their needs and consideration of sociological dimensions in architecture and urban planning are the only issues that are highly neglected in most design competitions in the country, itself leading to a plethora of resources – both time and capital – being spent to hold an architectural competition, with numerous aesthetically proper designs being overlooked, and the competition being renewed, simply because our city and architecture are suffering from an identity crisis. Although in some cases, innovative designs are presented, not considering the trivial issue of sociology and man therein simply renders them not capable of inducing a sense of space.

Table 5: Comparison acceptance criteria between Pritzker and domestic competitions

	Criteria	Importance				Criteria	Importance		
		High	Medium	Low			High	Medium	Low
Pritzker	Progression of humanity				Domestic competition	Progression of humanity			
	Specialized style					Specialized style			
	Innovation					Innovation			
	Cost-effectivity					Cost-effectivity			
	Quality of the built environment					Quality of the built environment			
	Number of implemented projects					Number of implemented projects			
	Architectural growth					Architectural growth			
	Culture and traditions					Culture and traditions			
	Being famous					Being famous			
	Climate					Climate			
	Comfort of users					Comfort of users			

Subscripts:

1. eVolo
2. Schindler
3. Swiss architect and writer, follower of deconstruction school.
4. Founder of the Nobel Prize in Architecture, consisting of the Pritzker family.
5. Twentieth-century American architect, nicknamed the father of skyscrapers.
6. One of the famous artists of the school of sculpture.
7. Landmark buildings, Landmark.
8. This association was formed to manage and measure sustainable buildings in the United States.

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