

IN PERSPECTIVE

FALL 2023



WHERE DID IT ALL COME FROM?

Since ancient times people have made objects depicting various aspects of their lives. Tombs sometimes contain models of houses and other structures. Although their purpose is largely spiritual, they also reveal cultural and technical details about the building practices of the time.



Latial hut urn with columned porch, excavated at Campofattore, Italy.

Information of this type is an important base for our understanding of the development of architecture.

Today these artifacts are usually preserved in museum collections. In fact, over the past two centuries a number of museums have been

established to focus on architecture. The collections policies vary from taking a general approach to focusing on the work of a particular architect or a specific building type.

Given the ubiquity of architecture and the broad role it plays in all cultures, it is surprising that there are so few museums of architecture. Favour Oluwayomi, a fourth year student at the McEwen School of Architecture at Laurentian University has researched the subject and summarized it for our Newsletter.



Favour Oluwayomi.

- Peter Brueckner

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE MUSEUMS

It is generally acknowledged that the first architecture museum was created by Sir John Soane in the late 18th century. A person of some means, he was an avid collector of architectural artifacts, plans, drawings, models, books, paintings and sculptures, that he put on display in his residence at Lincoln's Inn Fields in London (it is not recorded what his wife said about all this). Soane permitted the public, especially architects, to access his extensive collection so that his home had become a museum by the time of his death in 1837.



Sir John Soane (1753 – 1837).

Unlike most subjects of museum collections, buildings are large and usually must be displayed as scale models or images. Nevertheless the Cité de l'architecture et du Patrimoine in Paris showcases several full sized replicas as well as original decorative components of architectural works.

Established in 1882, it is among the oldest of architecture museums and through development and expansion is now also one of the largest. Its comprehensive coverage of the subject is supported by a library and research facilities.



Cité de l'architecture et du Patrimoine.

Most architecture museums were established in the twentieth century. While national institutions tend to focus on local building and design practices some are known for particular displays. The Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt, for example, portrays the history of western architecture in its exhibit “From Ancient Huts to Skyscrapers”.

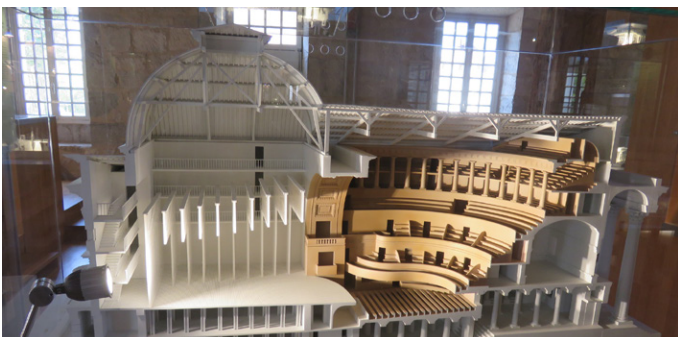
Architecture museums function as cultural institutions by fostering education and appreciation of diverse societies. The Chicago Architecture Center features a captivating scale model of downtown, highlighting architectural landmarks while other displays explain the development of the city. Very popular boat tours and walking tours provide visitors with direct views of the city’s seminal architectural heritage.



Chicago in miniature at the Chicago Architecture Center.

The innovative implementation of technology enables visitors to the National Building Museum in Washington to explore floor plans and interior design choices with the help of touch screens, digital projections and multimedia displays.

Museums dedicated to the work of a particular architect or a specific type of architecture are a variation on the general theme. The Musée Ledoux in Arc-et-Senans, France and the Skyscraper Museum in New York are examples.



Model of Opera Theatre, Musée Ledoux.

Others, such as the Pavilion Le Corbusier on the shore of the Lake of Zurich and the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal are institutions to promote the study of architectural concepts.



The Pavilion Le Corbusier, Zurich.

The inclusion of architecture displays in exhibits at a number of art museums highlights the aesthetic aspect of architecture. A notable example is the Frank Lloyd Wright Room in New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art that features the original living room of the Francis W. Little House, designed by Wright in 1912.

Recently established, and still under development, the Canadian Museum of Architecture explores architecture as a discipline – how it came about, its practise and the way it shapes our culture. Given the enormous impact of the built environment on our natural environment, an understanding of the role of architecture is essential for effective decision making in an increasingly complex world.

The Canadian Museum of Architecture, together with other museums, addresses this need with informative exhibits directed to the general public.

- Favour Oluwayomi

Image 1: Latial Hut Urn. Dan Diffendale. flickr.com/photos/dandiffendale/50297416093

Image 3: Sir John Soane. Hohum. commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas_Lawrence_John_Soane.JPG

Image 4: La Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine. Jean-Pierre Dalbéra. flickr.com/photos/dalbera/31278329448

Image 5: Chicago Architecture Centre. James Steinkamp. architecture.org/exhibits/exhibit/chicago-city-model-experience/

Image 6: Musée Architecture Ledoux. Arnaud 25. commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mus%C3%A9_architecture_Ledoux_038.JPG

Image 7: Seefeld Centre Le Courbusier. Roland zh. commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Z%C3%BCrich_-_Seefeld_-_Centre_Le_Courbusier_IMG_1112_ShiftN.jpg