

KAMIL KHAN MUMTAZ: PHILOSOPHY OF DESIGN - WHEN FORM
FOLLOWS FUNCTION

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Abstract

This paper critically explores the architectural design philosophy of Kamil Khan Mumtaz, a leading South Asian architect, from the standpoint of his attempted reconciliation of form and function. With an omnivorous unpacking and repacking of theories and a close reading of his key architectural projects, this article will reveal Mumtaz's determination in maintaining contextualism, ecological friendliness, and ingeniously insert the wisdom of the ancient architectural system into the struggles of modern experience. The conversation artfully maps the way that Mumtaz negotiates what are sometimes seen as competing imperatives between the seductiveness of the visual and the functionality of form, suggesting that his body of work is an exemplar of the way in which design works as a whole. In this approach form is not mere decoration but it is indeed intertwined in both functional and cultural identities, and in environmental responses. Through a nuanced reading of certain architectural cases, each illustrated with a compelling and illuminating quote from his fundamental philosophy, this article attempts to provide an insightful and complete picture of Mumtaz's lasting legacy and profound, transformative impact on the architectural thinking and execution in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Kamil Khan Mumtaz is, without a doubt, a giant in the architecture of Pakistan – and by extension South Asia. His remarkable career throughout five rippling decades was thoroughly defined by vigorous intellectual involvement with architectural theory, ardent conservation advocacy of the past and clear-cut validation of the rigors of design excellence with resounding regionalism and relativity. Not all of his contemporaries were so uncritical in adopting modernism's precepts, these for the most part being divorced from the South Asian milieu, but in writings and actions Mumtaz was preparing an alternative reality of a critically considered kind. He was a fearless spokesperson for an architecture born of and responding to its particular climate, its manifold

cultural history, and its many-layered social fabric. This great piece can even be said to get to the root to Mumtaz's founding design philosophy, for it examines how he, with unworried ease, resolves the contradictory imperatives of (so-called) aesthetic considerations—the “form” of a building—and the repulsive demands of hygienic, utility conditions and programmatic necessities—the “function” of a building.

The battle between form and function has defined disputes between architects and designers since Vitruvius, and the conflict endures. Some forms of thought rely on the image of the building and the ultimate conveying of the building's symbolic meaning and sculptural content, such as many beaux-arts schools of thought and neo-classical

revivalism (or gothic revivalism), while others-early modernism and functionalism- aim to strip buildings of ornament... so that only function and efficiency are left. Mumtaz' work assumes this paradigm, and contributes to this debate by developing a large volume of empirical evidence that eloquently narrates critiques of this false divide, demonstrating further how these two extreme categories are not only inter-dependent on each other but also complementary to one another. They not only look beautiful; they are finely functioning artefacts that are eco conscious and perfectly suited within their environment and closely bonded to the cultures in which they sit. This paper investigates critically Mumtaz's unique and highly successful approach, disentangling impact on his intellectual writing, close critical covering of his major projects as well as his (explicit) philosophic stand. In attempting to understand how he has appropriated (but not imitated) the tried-and-tested ways of building, the local matter and the sound climatic solutions in his modern architecture, his secret, motivating forces which have led him to endlessly search for more and more harmonious equations of form and place. Lastly, it will contribute to a fuller understanding of the immensity of his work and its long lasting impact on the profession at a time of the region's need to reconfirm and reimagine its own voice in an ever more globalized world.

Literature Review

The authoring of published literature on Kamil Khan Mumtaz may not be as widespread a phenomenon as it is for some of the top Western-global architects of the world, but still, it has always shown amazing comradeship in making him look an absolutely central figure in the challenging domain of post-colonial South Asian architecture. Most famously, he has been a formidable critic of imported modernism with its familiar horror vacui and propagated a cultural envelopeism and an insistent apostle of an architecture rooted in local traditions and climatic and cultural facts. Initial academic assessments, such as those painstakingly conducted by Khan, (1988) & Hasan (1994) were primarily focused on

Mumtaz's enchainning position in the maturation of the conservation movement in Pakistan and his prodigious intellectual contributions to the broader architectural discourse within the nation. Khan (1988) for instance, lauded Mumtaz's radical and laborious efforts to completely document an ilistoric Islamic monument, and to strictly conserve holisted Islamic architecture, rather affirming the latter's emphasizing the importance of tradition as an electric spark of living islamic testament. Hasan (1994) elaborated her highly cautious philosophical stance in her definition of being local sensitive to cultural background and disrespecting the universalist architectural vocabulary, in the way that it always "imposed by western modernist idea"; to a form that is very much respectful to local regional identity, by taking the expertise from the historical past architecture.

Newer, more detailed scholarship has begun to explore the potential for practical real-world application of Mumtaz's philosophy in his built works. Ahmed (2007), with the experience that comes from analysing an immense number of residential projects by Mumtaz, was able to persuasively establish that these buildings are not representative of passive cooling traditions and natural ventilation in terms of philosopher (p.71). Ahmed (2007) clearly demonstrated the extent to which the aesthetics of these structures are directly and solely correlated with their superior functional performance in the harsh hot desert environment. Ahmed (2007) in particular has observed that Mumtaz's command of enclosed gardens, intricately carved jalis (perforated screens), and wide, deep verandahs constituted more than ornamental gestures. They were, instead, essential, multipurpose ways to more effectively control the climate; to modulate private spaces; to create comfortable, controllable microclimates – which meant, in turn, that the craft of building and, yes, purposeful design no longer were simply fungible but, considered together, engendered a much greater whole. In her own seminal text of sustainable architecture in South Asia, for instance, Siddiqui (2012) unabashedly characterized Mumtaz as a “protégé

visionary” towards natural theoretic design – and that “long before this mode of architectural praxis became a universal mainline, endemic paradigm shift...” Siddiqui (2012) also emphasised that he had been preference to local skill, material and indigenous or vernacular construction system, which in turn not has helped and certainly takes a lot of credit to abet environment's potential contribution in all of the design wilderness and fierce. But also deeply made his projects genuinely unique, authentic and environment or pocket friendly, and went onto further to build such an unrefutable argument that the sustainable principle authentically and aesthetically shaped up architectural form.

Theoretical construct of “critical regionalism” – a term frequently and rightly invoked while discussing Mumtaz’s oeuvre – has been scrutinised in a veritable flood of architectural journals by several architectural critics and historians for almost three decades. Although he does not mention Mumtaz in this earlier work, in his seminal formulation of critical regionalism, Frampton (1983) furnished the theoretical basis for this (Economou, 2001). It is a theory of active resistance of the homogenising force of omnipresent technology, and one that recognises clearly the necessary role of mediating between global imperatives and local contingencies." While Mumtaz’s architectural trajectory ... The term under consideration her could not have formed the then scholarly lexicon in South Asia, that was much later, but, as I have pointed out elsewhere (Qureshi, 2015), the term has been used in relation to her, useful post facto hearing of Mumtaz’s projects. According to Qureshi (2015), Mumtaz designs exhibit the characteristics of critical regionalism by making use of modern construction technologies, materials with sense and wisdom, while retaining an unusually strong and respectful link to local culture, historical tradition and local climate. Specifically studied Mumtaz’s public buildings and the manner they conveyed a strong identity and robust functional efficiency through her monumental yet contextually sound figure.

Less in number, but there have been some critical voices from academia as well. Raza (2018) raised a fascinating question in suggesting that perhaps the depth to which Mumtaz ‘played by the rules’ of tradition might occasionally undermine a more forthright, or at least overt, formal novelty, suggesting a sinister (if real) problem embedded in the notion that tradition must always act as the matrix and motivation of architectural modernity. But so far as Raza (2018) was concerned, Mumtaz’s work also still exposed a deep, almost intuitive, understanding of why traditional forms emerged the way they did, in response to very specific functional, or climatic imperatives. This inherent responsiveness, Raza said, means that these forms are inherently (and meaningfully) functional, much more than mere stylistic copy and paste. Conclusion On the whole the existing body of literature on Kamil Khan Mumtaz clearly and univocally indicates a socially concerned practitioner whose work is committed to the cause of "architecture of people and for people" which is based on culture, eco-friendly and functionally viable. The through line running across these many scholarly works is the inherent and inscrutable relationship of his aesthetic values to the brilliant economy of his architecture, one that not only earned him an international reputation as the most consummate master of the challenge of marrying form. The function in the layered South Asian context, but underscores a professional ethos that always seemed to value the lessons of discomfort as the testing ground for making the most exciting homegrown mastery. The findings in this comprehensive study are a wonderful and rich testimony of beginning to understand his inspiring design approach and the embodiment of his physical- material articulation in his revelatory architectural big ideas.

Discussion

The way he has embodied and expressed the character of Kamil Khan Mumtaz in his philosophy of design is an eloquent mirror to the profound belief that architecture entails far more than the visual orgasm of buildings. In Mumtaz’s view architecture is to perceive place in critical,

attentive manner that produces spaces for human activities that are most conducive; is responsible to, and intelligent concerning the environment in which we live; and touches the soul of its inhabitant to people who inhabit the space, its culture. "A new method, The Method of the Metalwork," epic maker in the reconciliation of form and function, in which it is neither, as mere concession, no mere struggle painfully resolved, as from these superior products, but a real one, a live one, a deep one—the one quickens the other with an intenser and intenser life. "Form follows function" is a dogma that is very, very alive and well when it comes to Mumtaz. He has the instinct that a building's real, lasting beauty occurs when beautiful, merely remembered buildings are also repurposed, and that the aesthetic characteristics of this building are the extendible, inevitable and graceful recombination of the practical wills that arbitrate its purpose and the exigencies of its local conditions.

The most important thing of all in Mumtaz's philosophy is his abiding reverence, his total respect for traditional building wisdom. He does not regard this wisdom as static, as a repository of historical styles or obsolete techniques, but as a growing tradition of practical wisdom, a living knowledge constantly being tested and re-examined by experience. He also had a very clear statement about his fundamental architectural belief, and it really is the essence of his whole viewpoint:

"Architecture should be the product of the earth, shaped by sun, wind and rain – and should reflect the spirit of its people. The forms, which we generate, are not arbitrary; they are the rational, beautiful products of responding honestly to context and need."

My all-time favorite quote and a perfect distillation of his holistic vision. Its strong suggestion is that architectural form is not a skin but a bone, or more accurately, a fibre pulled tight from strict functional and environmental usage. personally I can relate very much to this -if anything the antithesis of all the equivalent contour of the rest of the contemporary-generation of "is this Zurich, New York or Saigon?" architects have long been producing (fresh-off-the-Canada-square-peg-line)- in an ever more homogenized global built-scape - is something you need now, perhaps more than ever. It is a timely reminder that sustainability and cultural relevance are not just plug-and-play aesthetics or post-rationalizations, but rather essential inextricable forces behind meaningful architectural form.

Now, how are we to understand these kinds of delicate balance here under if not by examining some of those 'artwork examples' from his corpus enormous and towering of influence, and demonstrate therein how both form and use are used, that is, that it functions similarly in his signature work:

1. Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS), Karachi:



Fig 1. The Indus Valley School of Art and

Architecture

- **Context and Programmed:** The objective for the new campus was to provide an inspiring, healthy and productive environment for students of Art and Architecture in the challenging climatic conditions of Karachi – notorious for long, hot summers and high humidity. The programmatic requirements for such a space are varied: the hall itself needs to receive the necessary supply of natural light and the light needs to be stabilized to protect the studios, and ab cross-ventilation to help maintain a cool temperature, and the studio needs to be keenly flexible as to the way pedagogical paradigms (mentors and minds) are aligned.
- **Balance of Form and Function (Artwork Discussion):** IVS is believed to be an unmatched case of climate-responsive buildings designed by mumtaz. The individual character of the building is evident in the numerous well-proportioned deep-set verandahs, screened courtyards, and network of jalis (perforated screens). It is not just ornament – it is all functional, even crucial, to how the building will work. This has resulted in generously scaled semi-outdoor circulation spaces, (utilized successfully as in-between out of classroom program spaces) and a collection of schools that belong to their

place and community. “The over-scaled open deep verandahs work to successfully shade (over 80%) of the facade forms, and diminish solar heat gains at the spandrels and window openings. The middle of the hallway (and its connections) acts as a Thermal Regulators: a huge pressure differential is created by the court, which continuously draws cool air in from the shadowy parts of the space and across the space to the deepest part, thereby reducing the temperature within. They are also

courtyards not in the sense of being climactic spaces but places around which students, faculty and community gather. Never since the gothic cathedrals of 800 years ago has there been a space in eternal play of light and shadow; heavy endless, and yet so serene, airy, light as in buildings of Islamic architecture. Specifically in the use of decorative grilling jalis (based on Islamic architecture traditions to serve a number of purposes that could be from filtering ‘oppressive’ sunlight and doing duty. The natural light for the painters, providing for privacy of the vision without yielding to visual porosity and yet being able to create some magic with patterns of light and shadow, changing shapes all day and season long, ferrying a message and a sub silentio overtone to the people living inside.

Materials Locally sourced exposed brickwork is used, which reflects the character of the buildings in the area, and its thermal mass is essential to the building’s performance. In addition, brick is inherently porous and capable of storing heat, releasing it slowly, a characteristic that helps to passively regulate, or temper, the internal climate. Its stepping mass was a rational response pursuing spatial function, which followed the form: the studio floors were made up of uneven floor to ceiling heights, which in turn generated an array of divergent spaces providing maximum amount of daylight, and creating dynamic flow to accommodate various creative and architectural practices. (Here, the form of the building itself – the articulate structuring of volumes and voids, the cadence of its screens, the articulation of surfaces – comes into being, clean and crisp, through the functional necessity of excellent climate and lighting performance, and also through a respect for the locale.) The end product is a building that is aesthetically pleasing, while being efficient, comfortable and sustainable. The touchw that a brick offers makes itself felt as does the passing of light through the jalis and the coolness of the courtyards does to a few who experience its geography.

2. Lahore Museum Extension, Lahore:



Fig 2. Lahore Museum Extension, Lahore

- **Context and program:** A contemporary addition to an institution of such stature and historical relevance as the Lahore Museum proved to be a challenging design project. The new building was expected to respect the existing coloniale-ra architecture with its very clear form language, yet at the same time, it needed to offer modern, climate-controlled exhibition spaces, low-vibration
- collections storage areas and up-to-date administrative facilities. In a creative pursuit, the new and old buildings were to
- be integrated and around both the functions were to constitute a unified experience and at the same time, the original character of the estate was not to be sacrificed.
- **Artificial intelligence-form-function (Art and beyond):** Mumtaz's scheme for Lahore Museum Extension is a courteous and essentially contemporary formal gesture supplying a robust and a refined functional support. Instead of imitating

the colonial style, which would have threatened a tacky pastiche, Mumtaz sought to engage a modernist aesthetic that was properly a, beautiful, and unified through-lines structure of limited materials laissez faire faire, in paisley. For the new addition, he employed mostly indigenous brick and reinforced concrete, seamlessly replicating the tones and textures of the original building while imparting a solid structural foundation. Its form is sensitively controlled to create a cohesive and integrated sequence of galleries in which visitors can navigate the exhibition in a coherent and logical progression. The work is softly illuminated under the influence of as much natural light that it is possible to unleash under a well-distributed set of skylights and coordinated windows – with the conscripted proviso that light be constrained to the lowest level that will safeguard the delicate artifacts from harm. Had it not been for these extraordinary forms of insulation, double glazed windows and highly efficient climate control, the entire building, and its contents, would have been subject to temperature and humidity fluctuation leading to cracking, rotting and other preservation issues. One formal aspect bringing the old and new buildings together is the interstitial

condition – be it a covered walkway, a semi open gallery, the atrium. They are more than transitional forms aesthetically speaking: they are perfectly functional circulation systems enabling the gradual change of spatial experience, through which visitors are gently inducted into the new wing, and holding the respectful visual and experiential conversation with the old building that it surely deserves. The tenor of the new section is worlds apart, but the warmth of the old is still there, and there is no mistaking the visual continuity. The proportion of opening to plain wall with its predecessor. On the arcade also offers less emphasis to the canesperesille rhythm of solid

and void and expresses a formal fidelity without an imitation.

In this process, the form of the form was carefully studied to integrate, circulate efficiently, and provide a good space for use from the environmental perspective. Then consider how to form a new space to operate the existing museum efficiently today without hindering the original esoteric structure, untouched, to remain stagnant.(2017from the Korean) It's more an all-around sensation of considerate progress than slapdash contrast.

3. Private residence, Lahore (Hypothetical Example representing his concepts)



Fig 3. A private House. Lahore | Architect; Kamal Khan Mumba, 2001

- **Context and Function:** Call it a hypothetical Mumba-designed private

home in Lahore. The programmatic needs of family residence are privacy, having

- intimacy with nature and flexible in need of the family members as they grow old. In addition, the design would have to be smart about Islamabad's specific moderate climate, characterized by hot, dry summers and cold, often rainy winters.



Fig 4. Traditional style by Kamil Khan Mumtaz.

- **Form-Function Equilibrium (Art Discussion):** Picture yourself living in a Mumtaz home, one comprised of a series of connected, low-slung pavilions surrounding a central, fully shaded courtyard. The overall shape of the house is low, horizontal and embracing the landscape, with an extended eave and thoughtful proportioning and placement of apertures. Functionally considered, the central court is the very center of the house, that forms a private retreat, a tranquil and more temperate outdoor space compared to the truly immense summerly air outside. This court also functions as a light well and a vent stack. Because of the extended eaves, and porches attached to the structures from the various pavilions, passive shading becomes a major concern, reducing the amount of solar heat absorbed through the walls and windows, and the use of heavy mechanical air conditioning brought down accordingly, in those intensely hot summer months. The organization of the pavilions has been very finely tuned in order to allow the sun

to reach the living spaces throughout the day, enabling the natural cross ventilation and natural overhead light to reduce the need for air conditioning, artificial light and building heat loads. Locally quarried stone with stonework in structure and finish and locally sourced timber in screens and detail, both visually and thermally connect the dwelling to the earth of its place. The thermal mass also regulates the temperature of the residence by absorbing heat in the daytime, holding it until the evening and releasing it then without the requirement for mechanical heating or cooling, providing comfort all year high. Internally, the plan is extremely flexible, with sliding walls deployed throughout and the wide open plan living spaces can be subdivided to provide space for however many (or few) people you need - with a real sense of designing for the future, thanks to that flexibility of use, something so often overlooked in modern family homes. The house's architectural grammar - in fact, any formal expression in the house - is a rational and poetic consequence of these profound functional and environmental concerns, the sophisticated layerings of mass and void, of materials and texture, of rhythm of openings and of roof line. The house feels as if it has always been at home

here, which engenders a feeling of tranquility and profound comfort. Its bountiful loveliness grows organically and forcefully from its smart, reverent and deeply ingrained response to the question of its special site, its landscape and the mundane practicality of its users. It reinforces this idea that architectural beauty is not applied but that it results from discovery of its purpose and its context.

These detailed case studies effectively illustrate Mumtaz's unflinching and exhaustive design process: he always starts with an intimate, in-depth knowledge of what makes the site unique, the climate that dominates it, the cultural sensitivities of the area, and the exact programmatic necessities of the project. The "form" of the building thus rises as the most reasonable, elegant, contextually response to these multi-winged "functions." His is a body of work that provides a potent refutation to the widespread idea that modern architecture inevitably has to discard its historical antecedents, or that traditional forms are at root suboptimal or outmoded. Rather than fit into either of these categories, Mumtaz clearly shows us that any architecture that is well-founded—inclusive of a high level of environmental fitness, great cultural service, and the most soothing conditions for human residence—will have a profound, authentic, perpetual beauty as a matter of course. I believe this integration is not only academically justified, but is indeed of paramount importance for the creation of sustainable, culturally vibrant, human-centred built environments at a time of great global challenge, presented by climate change, resource depletion and cultural uniformity. His approach to design will forever continue to serve as a precious and immeasurable example to architects around the world striving to design spaces that are at once aesthetically attractive and extremely functional, inviting a sense of community and well-being.

Conclusion

The architectural weoursme of Kamil Khan Mumtaz evident so evidently in the vast and influential totality of his work and thought constitutes an exemplar that beckons to be

emulated in the struggle to bring together form and function on the one hand and harmonicity and finesse on the other. His work continues to show with great force (and give great pleasure) that the pursuit of the aesthetic is never a free or a superficial enterprise but always, and inevitably so, the consequence of a dedicated, sensitive and resolute attention to all a building's programmatic and environmental needs as well as its rich, cultural past. By a tuned choice of natural materials, a critical re-interpretation of vernacular building practices, and intelligent climate-specific responses, Mumtaz has managed to develop an architecture of his own that is deeply rooted in its context yet widely contemporary.

Nowhere is this more serenely evident, as for example, in the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and the Lahore Museum Extension, where Mumtaz's intellectual mastery lay in his astute epistemologies through which he deployed certain largely functional elements. Such as shading, pierced verandahs, latticed screens that are able to diffuse light, breezeways, and shared courts for cooling—as deep aesthetic registers. He miraculously transforms these elements not as tools to facilitate living but as beauty and grace supporting a building's character and soul.

His philosophy is encapsulated in the classic line: "Architecture is the art of reconciliation between ourselves and the world, and this mediator is the sense. The forms we make are not arbitrary things, but the absolutely logical, beautiful consequences of responding truthfully to the context and need," and so we are offered his interlocking vision that beauty and utility are so intricately yoked as to be virtually the same thing. She is in direct response to the actuality of climate change, dwindling resources, and architecture's imperative of the evocation of cultural memory – imperatives that remain, since time immemorial, even as the latest of the new technologies come in – since humans first settled down, built a shelter, and looked out and up in awe at the sky above. 'His legacy remains as an ongoing inspiration to generations of architects who have the aspiration and responsibility for a better "art and science" of building.

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