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ARCHITECTURAL VALUE AND THE ARTISTIC VALUE OF ARCHITECTURE

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*This paper seeks to refute the claim that architectural value is one and the same value as the artistic value of architecture. As few scholars explicitly endorse this claim, instead tacitly holding it, I term it **the implicit claim**. Three potential motivations for **the implicit claim** are offered before it is shown that, contrary to supporting the claim, they set the foundations for considering architectural value and the artistic value of architecture to be distinct. After refuting the potential motivations and offering some counterexamples to the claim, I provide some comments upon the interaction(s) between aesthetic, artistic, and architectural values, which are benefitted and supported by Louise Hanson's discussion of attributive value in the artistic domain.*

1 Introduction

In the aesthetics of architecture, there is a tendency to employ the terms ‘architectural value’ and ‘artistic value for architecture’ with no clear distinction between the two. Indeed, the two terms are frequently used interchangeably as though identical. Despite this, to my knowledge, there are no explicit endorsements of such an identity. As a result, the claim that architectural value and the artistic value of architecture are the same will be referred to as *the implicit claim*. In the following, I aim to show that the implicit claim is false and that our assessments of architectural value must pay respect to architecture as a discipline with its own narrative beyond the artworld.

I commence by motivating architecture’s claim to having artistic value in spite of some scepticism about its status as art. This teases out the origins of the implicit claim. Subsequently, I provide reasons as to why we might hold the implicit claim. For ease of exposition, these reasons will be referred to as the *categories argument*, the *attributive argument*, and the *constitution argument*. Interestingly, fleshing out these motivations makes it clearer that architectural value and the artistic value of architecture are distinct. These supposed motivations, in fact, set the groundwork for denying the implicit claim. I show this by scrutinizing each argument in turn, before offering counterexamples (instances where the aforementioned values diverge) to the implicit claim. To conclude, I offer some thoughts regarding the intersection and divergence of values, focusing on the need to acknowledge the disciplinary orientation of architectural value.

2 Motivating the Implicit Claim

We often prefer to speak of a construction’s architectural value, rather than its artistic value, most likely due to the uncertainty surrounding architecture’s classification as art. Architecture’s position amongst the arts is unstable, and its claim to artistic status is contested. Scepticism

about architecture's status as an art primarily derives from its functional heteronomy and restrictions within the discipline, for example, planning restrictions and material considerations. Architecture does not possess the *autonomy* that being an artform requires. The concern that follows is that if the sceptic is right and architecture cannot be art, then architecture cannot possess artistic value. If architecture cannot possess artistic value, then there is no distinction between the values in question and, subsequently, the proceeding discussion is futile. For Davies, this uncertainty is resolved by distinguishing between *artwork* and *artform*; architectural productions can be artworks, but architecture as a discipline is not itself an artform (2007, 129, 136). Hence, the set of architectural works contains within it a (smaller) set of architectural works that are also artworks. This aids the case for our discussion, as shall become apparent.

The idea that anything that is not an artwork cannot have artistic value is supported by Hanson's (2017) claim that artistic value is attributive goodness. As I will make extensive use of Hanson's paper throughout my own, it is useful to summarize her claim. Attributive goodness contrasts with predicative goodness insofar as the former is goodness with regard to some kind, whereas the latter is goodness 'in general' (regardless of any kind) or, in Hanson's terms, goodness *simpliciter* (2017, 417). Hanson identifies three cases to demonstrate that artistic value is attributive goodness. Firstly, the formation of assessments indicates attributive goodness as they are assessments *as* or *qua* art(-work). Secondly, artistic value being attributive goodness accounts for why artistic value is possessed by all and only artworks. Thirdly, not every artwork is good *simpliciter* but may be good as art, or attributively. This is to say that morally bankrupt paintings may be good *artworks*, but they are not 'good' in an overall sense. Hanson derives multiple intuitive and convincing identifications from this thesis. The three most notable ones are: (i) that some artwork's having higher artistic value than another is simply the former being a better artwork than the latter; (ii)

artistic value is not a *kind* of value but instead should be understood as constituted by different kinds of value, such as aesthetic, cognitive and so forth, and, crucially; (iii) not all valuable things about an artwork are determinant of its artistic value. For example, one might value a sculpture as a good doorstop, but it is unlikely this value would feature in determining the sculpture's artistic value.

Returning to the case of architecture's undetermined status as an art, there are three methods of resistance that, I suggest, shift the burden of proof onto the sceptic when it comes to architecture's artistic value. Firstly, our preference for using 'architectural value' over 'architecture's artistic value' in our discussions is just that, a preference. This preference should not determine whether architecture does or does not indeed have artistic value. Secondly, the narrative rests upon an understanding of artistic value as an attribute of all and only artworks. Though Hanson (2017) provides a convincing account when she suggests that artistic value is attributive goodness, that this is the case is not a fact beyond dispute. Indeed, John (2014) provides a case for attributing artistic value to experiences besides artworks, such as meals. Thirdly, and most importantly, even if it *is* the case that all and only artworks can have artistic value, the artform-artwork discussion, *qua* Davies, holds that some buildings can be artworks despite architecture's not being an artform. Davies' worry is that declaring architecture an artform will result in all constructions by architects being artworks, good or bad. However, architecture's *not* being an artform would not entirely preclude *some* constructions from simultaneously being artworks (Davies 2007, 136). Resultantly, if (at least) some constructions are artworks, they can, *qua* Hanson, possess artistic value. Indeed, the claim that no architectural products are works of art would require a strongly autonomous art for art's sake position and rejection of the craft arts, art as entertainment, decorative arts, and so on. Such a position has already been challenged by the existence of conceptual, anti-aesthetic art, alongside other issues with aesthetic-purist theories of art.

That architecture is useful, functional, and public does not preclude it from possessing arthood.

The implicit claim revolves around this point, perhaps due to the uncertainty around architecture's status as art, high art, or non-art. To my knowledge, there are no explicit endorsements of the implicit claim beyond passing, seemingly non-controversial comments such as: "I will take the expression '*architectural value*' to refer to the artistic value of a building" (Sauchelli 2011, 142; original emphasis). The claim lingers on in conversations about architectural aesthetics. For example, in his application of the *moderate moralist* approach from the generally artistic domain to the discipline of architecture, Carroll is careful about speaking in terms of "architecture-as-an-art" and "architectural art" (2016). Likewise, the claim manifests itself when we attempt to distinguish between architecture and 'mere building or construction', where the distinction may lie in the fact that mere building is not the same as "the *art of architecture*" (Graham 2006, 243; my emphasis).

Overall, this terminological uncertainty or simple lack of clarity unquestionably favours the approbation of the implicit claim. Throughout Haldane's analysis of the history of the philosophy of architecture, his terminological commitment varies. When arguing that, "aesthetic experiences of architecture [...] accommodate the fact that buildings are functional objects" (Haldane 1999, 9), he merges functional-architectural concerns into the aesthetic.¹ This overreaching absorption of concerns for the functional into the aesthetic is accompanied by his use of terms such as "aesthetic experiences of architecture", "architectural values", and "perceptible and intelligible forms of things", causing further confusion before he merges architecture's aesthetic and political concerns in a different paper, perhaps implying a broad notion of the aesthetic (Haldane 1990). Winters (1996) provides an "aesthetic theory"

1 My comments upon the relationship between aesthetic, artistic, and architectural values become apparent in Section IV.

of “architectural understanding” that involves “artistic qualities”, conflating aesthetic, artistic, and architectural values and concerns without the caution required for matters of aesthetics.

What may motivate the implicit claim? The first potential motivation for holding the implicit claim is what we can term the *categories argument*. This argument would start with the aforementioned distinction between ‘mere buildings’ and architecture. If we suppose that ‘architecture’ denotes all and only those constructions that are at the same time artworks, and artistic value is the assessment of something as an artwork, then it looks as though architectural value will be alike to the artistic value of constructions. In other words, the *artistic nature* of architectural constructions is the sole factor that distinguishes them from ‘mere’ buildings. If this is the case, then we have at least some reason to think that the implicit claim is true.

We might strengthen this argument further by identifying some analogies between artistic and architectural value. As aforementioned, Hanson (2017) provides a convincing case for artistic value as a form of attributive goodness. As a result, assessments of artistic value are just the extent to which some artwork is good or bad when considered in the artistic domain, such that one artwork having greater artistic value than another is simply the former being a better *artwork*. It would not be controversial to say that the same applies for architectural value. For example, unlike monetary value, we do not ‘quantify’ or ‘point out degrees of’ architectural value. Rather, architectural value fits with Hanson’s comparative notion insofar as having greater architectural value seems to be just being better as architecture. A case of higher architectural value is not the same as having twenty architecture points versus having fifteen. If architectural value is simply the artistic value of architecture, this would explain its attributive and comparative character. Call this reliance on both values being attributive the *weak attributive argument*. However, it can be noted that in being attributive goodness,

something is *goodness as x*. If architecture is a sub-category of artworks denoting constructions possessing arthood, as per the *categories argument*, then we can replace the term 'architecture' with 'constructions as art'. Architectural value, we can say, is *goodness as architecture*, which in turn is *goodness as a construction as art*. Call this compounding of the weaker form with the *categories argument* the *strong attributive argument*.

Finally, there are similarities between the kinds of values that we think determine artistic value, and those that we think determine architectural value. When considering architectural value, what sorts of values do we take into account? Aesthetic value would certainly be amongst the constitutive elements. We want the architecture that comprises our cities, neighbourhoods, and towns to 'look good'; architecture's public heteronomy and reflection of our own citizenship ensures this. Indeed, the aesthetic element is crucial in its reflection of our humanity and the need for architecture to fit into (Scruton 1979), or perhaps challenge, existing landscapes. Moral value, too, may be amongst the constitutive considerations of our assessments of architectural value. Carroll's (2016) *moderate moralism* towards architecture sheds light on the importance of the intertwining of ethics and form. The timeline and history of architecture as a discipline, too, seem appropriate to include. Interestingly, these are the same constitutive values that would appear to bear weight in our assessments of artistic value more generally. For example, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon's* (1907) aesthetic (de-)merits, moral agenda, and importance for the art-historical and cubist, timeline contribute to our overall assessment of its artistic value. As the types of value that enter into artistic and architectural value appear to be similar, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the latter is a type of the former. Let us call this the *constitution argument*.

Taking stock, the implicit claim holds that architectural value is the same value as architecture's artistic value. Three plausible motivations

for holding the implicit claim have been provided. Firstly, the *categories argument*, which suggests that architecture falls into the category of artworks only insofar as these constructions are distinguished from ‘mere’ buildings through their arthood. This notion implies that architectural value might be the artistic value of architecture. Secondly, the *attributive argument*, which in its weaker form identifies the similarity in operation of architectural value and artistic value, and in its stronger form unites with the *categories argument* to form a convincing case for the implicit claim. Finally, the *constitution argument*, which recognizes the likeness of the considerations taken into account in our assessments of architectural value and architecture’s artistic value.

3 Discrepancies and Denying the Implicit Claim

These motivations are relatively convincing reasons to hold the implicit claim. Furthermore, holding the implicit claim would relieve the burden on foregoing discussions that have proceeded with its assumption. For example, the non-identity of architectural value and architecture’s artistic value might require Sauchelli (2011) to reassess whether the moral value of a construction’s function should indeed be a determinant of aesthetic and artistic value, or whether it should now be located within architectural value. Though the arguments that are supposed to support the implicit claim are intuitively appealing, they actually act as the starting point for teasing out why the two values should be considered distinct. I shall now scrutinize each argument in turn, before considering the implications of the redundancy of the implicit claim upon the intersection of values.

The *categories argument* originates from a relatively popular starting point: the assumption that ‘architecture’ is the term we use to denote the art of construction and building. ‘Architecture’ is a skilful process that requires dedication, creativity, and intelligence, amongst other factors. The issues with the *categories argument* are that, firstly, the distinction between architecture and mere building is not as concrete as is

needed for the argument to succeed. Secondly, the argument relies on the idea that the art status is what distinguishes architecture from mere construction and, contrarily to our intuitions, precludes non-artistic constructions from having architectural value.

As Shiner correctly summarizes, architecture and building's "polarity appears to be an evaluative continuum masquerading as a categorical disjunction" (2011, 38). The division between architecture and mere building rests in the oscillation between form and function. The strong disjunction relies on the supposition that those constructions that are overtly and pronouncedly aesthetic are works of art (of architecture), whilst the everyday and mundane household is a work of 'mere building' with functionality at its core. Yet, as Shiner points out, this does not serve as a "categorical disjunction" as mere buildings can be aesthetic, whilst constructions we consider to be artworks are still functional dwellings. Therefore, architecture and mere building are not as clearly distinguished and polarized as the *categories argument* requires. For example, it seems uncontroversial to say that the local bridge has some degree of architectural merit insofar as it is structurally sound and fulfils its purpose of allowing passage. Similarly, a block of apartments in the city may be said to exhibit interesting architectural solutions insofar as it allows for some improvements in modern living. If such locutions seem plausible, then we could consider these works to be architectural to some degree and, therefore, possess some degree of architectural value. It would be a stretch, however, to identify these constructions as artworks.

This consideration gives us reason to doubt that architecture denotes with clarity the category of constructions that are at the same time artworks. If architectural value is attributive goodness and architecture extends beyond the domain of constructions that are art, then there are buildings that possess architectural value but not artistic value. This idea aligns with Davies' (2007) distinction between art-*form* and

art-work. Resultantly, we cannot uphold the *categories argument* as an endorsement of the implicit claim. This, in turn, presents problems for the *attributive argument*. If a value is attributive, that is, *goodness as k*, then that value cannot be an identical value to another attributive value for kind *x*, when *k* and *x* are not identical. By itself, this distinction is a *prima facie* reason to doubt that architectural value and the artistic value of architecture are the same, as art and architecture are different domains, therefore threatening the *weaker* claim of the *attributive argument*. The inability to equate architecture with *constructions as art* only increases this doubt. If there are constructions outside the artistic domain that possess architectural value, the claim that *goodness as constructions as art* derives from *architecture* does not hold up and dismantles the *stronger* form of the *attributive argument*.

The domains of architecture and art are distinct because they differ in their constitutive factors, which leads us to finally consider the *constitution argument*. It is undeniable that there are factors taken into account when assessing architectural value that are also present in our assessments of artistic value including, for example, moral and aesthetic values. Nonetheless, there are factors that (i) are present in the assessment of architectural value but not artistic value for architecture (and vice versa), and (ii) are of greater significance when assessing architectural value than the artistic value of architecture (and vice versa). For example, structural soundness, environmental impact, sustainability, and the fulfilment of the patron-client relationship towards agreeable outcomes are likely to play a role in the attribution of architectural value but rarely, if at all, would such factors contribute to the assessment of artistic value. Likewise, the transition of arts such as painting and music into autonomous realms, away from specific functions such as the social and religious, indicates that a fulfilment of function, if present at all, bears less weight in the assessment of artistic value and so too, then, in architecture. However, architectural value is inextricably tied to the fulfilment of function, no matter if practical, symbolic, or environmental.

Indeed, the functional nature of architecture secures the falsity of the *constitution argument*. If the implicit claim is true, then any factor of judgement necessary for the attribution of architectural value must be necessary for the assessment of architecture's artistic value, and vice versa. As attributive values, the assessments are assessments of goodness within the kinds of architecture and art, and, as we have seen, the domain of the artworld does not necessitate function, though architecture does. The *constitution argument*, therefore, folds where the following holds:

- 1.If architectural value and architecture's artistic value are one and the same value, then any factor constitutively necessary for the assessment of one will be constitutively necessary for both.
 - 2.The capacity for architecture to fulfil, or allow the fulfilment of, some practical function is constitutively necessary for the assessment of architectural value.
 3. The capacity for architecture to fulfil, or allow the fulfilment of, some practical function is not constitutively necessary for the assessment of artistic value for architecture.
- C. Therefore, architectural value and artistic value for architecture are not one and the same value.

Finally, if the implicit claim is true, then there should be no instance in which an assessment of architectural value deviates from an assessment of artistic value for the same construction. However, this is simply not the case. There are buildings (factories, slaughterhouses, supermarkets, for example) that one might declare devoid of artistic value, yet they are exceptionally efficient, sustainable, and structurally sound, and as such may possess a high degree of architectural value. Vice versa, there are constructions that will be attributed a high degree of artistic value due to their expression and unique manipulation of material but are func-

tionally futile and so possess minimal architectural value. Shiner's (2011) cases of "spectacle art museums" may serve as good examples of diverging architectural and artistic values. Those museums that we observe in awe do not allow for a successful viewing experience of the artworks held within. Conversely, Lincoln Plaza holds 'awards' for being unsightly, but its reviews as a residential building and hotel suggest it is truly fit for purpose and thus good architecture.

It is, therefore, the case that, as I have presented and assessed them, the *categories argument*, the *attributive argument*, and the *constitution argument* do not provide sound reasons to adopt the implicit claim. Furthermore, it has been shown that these arguments lay the foundation for fleshing out the distinction between the two values at stake, accomplishing the opposite of their intention. Resultantly, we have good reason to think that the implicit claim is false, and that architectural value and the artistic value of architecture are not one and the same value.

4 Conclusion: Aesthetic, Artistic, Architectural

The implicit claim's falsity requires us to take the distinction between architecture's artistic and architectural values seriously, and allows us to explore where these values may intersect as well as diverge. Both architectural and artistic value being attributive has the consequence that high architectural value does not necessitate high artistic value and vice versa, nor do the determinants granting high value in one domain render the building highly valuable in the other. That is, being good architecture does not guarantee being a good artwork, nor does being a good artwork mean being good architecture. Equally, being good *simpliciter* does not guarantee being good architecture or art, *qua* Hanson's cases. Likewise, being functionally efficient does not guarantee goodness as architecture, nor does high aesthetic value entail high artistic value. As noted, a consequence of Hanson's identification is that not all valuable things about an instance of a kind, in terms of attributive goodness, contribute to said goodness. For example, a work of architecture that

blocks out the sun on one's daily walk to work might be valuable, but this is not a determinant of its architectural value (nor, most likely, its aesthetic or artistic value).

The responses to the *constitution argument* give cause for the divergence of these values, but the motivations for the *implicit claim* and even its implicit adoption vouch for the intersections. What I would suggest is that, when adopting the narrative of the implicit claim, one adopts the 'seen' or 'perceptual' approach of artistic and aesthetic value and (mistakenly) transfers this to architectural value. Indeed, the distinction between aesthetic and artistic value outside the architectural domain is rather lacking, and clarity upon it may benefit aesthetics in general and, subsequently, the aesthetics of architecture. Assessments of architectural value command a scope beyond, but inclusive of, mere perceptual experience, towards functional and practical commitments that are particular to the architectural domain. We should laud longevity, celebrate craftsmanship, and be wary of leaning towers, while respecting the architectural process and its constitutive elements from the initial sketch to the potential demolition. Davies (2007, 137) argues against the notion that architecture is an artform by focusing on the discipline's constraints. This argument might be useful when proposing where the determinants of architectural value diverge from those of artistic value. Namely, physical, legal, political, and useful constraints are determinants of architectural value, but are excluded from our assessments of artistic value. If an architectural work achieves structural soundness within legal and commissioned constraints, alongside sound facilitation of function, then there is a good chance it is good *qua* architecture. However, these values do not need to and will not influence the evaluation of the same work's artistic value as, *qua* Hanson, not all valuable things about an artwork are determinants of its artistic value.

One also needs to pay attention to the 'spirit of the place' as architec-

ture must make aesthetic commitments that align with the humanistic values of those it serves, alongside sculpting itself into the environment in which it is placed. Scruton (1979) advances this line of thought through architecture's necessary publicity. For Goodman, architecture sculpts our physical experience whilst simultaneously "inform[ing] and reorganiz[ing] our *entire* experience" (Goodman 1985, 652; my emphasis). Architecture must, therefore, make moral commitments and, if it falls short, they may be of detriment to its aesthetic value (Carroll 2016). Resultantly, matters of function and morality can weave together to manipulate aesthetic, artistic, and architectural values. For example, Apple Park's stylistic isolation from Cupertino's extant architecture represents an aesthetic and moral fault in *architectural* terms. Yet, *outside* of this public relation, this same neo-futurist, innovative, formal determinant contributes to its aesthetic, artistic, and architectural goodness. This contribution amounts to further evidence that determinants vary across values, which do not need to be determinants of other values, but can also act as determinants spanning many values. Identifying where artistic value and architectural value converge might serve as an indicator of where constructions that are artworks diverge from 'mere' constructions. As one can imagine, aesthetic value claims significant occupancy of this area.

Throughout these efforts, though, we must acknowledge the falsity of the implicit claim and the accompanying identifications fleshed out through the dismantling of the three arguments. The notion that aesthetic, artistic, and architectural values can merge and rise or fall together does not eradicate the need to consider the varying weightings, degrees, and presence of constitutive factors for the attribution. Goodman's observations are useful here as, similarly to Davies, he acknowledges the existence of architectural art, though he is cautious to note that "not all buildings are works of art", and that buildings can *mean* in ways that extend beyond the scope of the artistic domain (Goodman 1985, 643). Judgements of architectural value must pay tribute to the

architectural discipline, its unique processes and independence from the other arts, and therein lies the importance of respecting the distinction between architectural value and architecture's artistic value. It is important, however, for the sake of adequately understanding architectural value, artistic value, and the ties between constructions and arthood, that we do not use the implicit claim's falsity to eradicate any remaining fruitful similarities and unity.

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