

The teaching experience and reflection of foreign architectural history in the information age brought by Deleuze

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Abstract. This article, based on the philosophical theories of Gilles Deleuze, explores the challenges, opportunities, and potential disciplinary shifts in the teaching of Chinese and foreign architectural history in the current era of deepening information technology and the post-pandemic era. It also discusses the trends in the transformation of teaching environments, where information and knowledge dissemination and acquisition tend to become fragmented, diversified, and niche.

1 In the teaching of architectural history in the new era, the issue of diverse information and understanding differences refers to the challenges posed by the proliferation of various sources of information and the resulting disparities in how students and educators interpret and comprehend architectural history

Since 2019, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on every aspect of our lives, changing our behaviors and thought patterns to such an extent that it has seemingly accelerated the transition to a fully digital society overnight. This rapid shift has been particularly evident and challenging in the field of education. The prolonged period of online teaching and remote learning has led to a lack of effective communication between teachers and students. However, it has also provided more opportunities to access the internet and digital resources, rapidly diversifying and expanding the ways in which knowledge is acquired. The emergence of various theoretical perspectives and information has continuously challenged the long-established, authoritative "single-thread" and one-way teaching systems and content frameworks. This impact is particularly intense in the discipline of architectural history, where conceptual speculation, formal interpretation, and expressive judgment form the backbone of the knowledge system.

In a context of diverse expressions and cognitive backgrounds, a lack of introspection and reflection can make it difficult to establish an independent stance and gain recognition for the system. This article will use the teaching practice of the course "History of Chinese and Foreign Architecture" as an example to explore related issues and the exploration of possible solutions.

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The pandemic has highlighted the need for a more flexible and adaptive educational approach that can accommodate the rapid changes in technology and learning environments. It has also underscored the importance of developing critical thinking skills and the ability to discern credible information from the vast array of sources available online. Educators in the field of architectural history must rethink their teaching methods to engage students in a more interactive and dynamic learning experience that encourages self-reflection and the development of independent thought. The exploration of these issues involves considering how to integrate digital tools and resources into the curriculum, how to foster a more inclusive and diverse learning environment, and how to prepare students to navigate the complexities of a global and interconnected architectural history. By doing so, educators can help students develop a deeper understanding of architectural history that is not only grounded in traditional knowledge but also open to new perspectives and interpretations.

In the architectural history education system at Shenyang Jianzhu University, "History of Chinese and Foreign Architecture" is a compulsory course for urban and rural planning majors, totaling 48 class hours. It summarizes the core content of the history of Chinese and foreign architecture. The aim is to guide students, at the beginning of their involvement in the design of human settlement spaces, to develop their design thinking abilities, learning methods, and positive professional concepts. It lays the foundation for professional literacy and serves as an important teaching link between professional basic education and professional design practice. From its course setting, it can be understood that this course involves a large number of definitions, morphological examples, and social and spatiotemporal relationships, as well as the continuous enrichment, dialectics, and differentiated logical reasoning of the scope, connotation, logic, and conceptual system of the concept of "architecture." The short duration and complex subject matter require a comprehensive and thorough explanation that is both easy to understand and in-depth, which inevitably involves subjective and personalized knowledge expression. When students bring more theoretical perspectives and expression systems into the teaching process, the diversity, questioning, and cognitive confusion will inevitably become more complex, posing obstacles and even impacts on the implementation of the course system.

-In the context of self-directed learning, the uncritical acceptance of theoretical perspectives and misinterpretations can lead to misunderstandings of the course content. With the diversification of information dissemination channels, the expression and spread of information have become simpler and more casual. This has resulted in a mix of information with different purposes, diverse viewpoints, obscure intentions, and varying quality, leading to the proliferation of immature ideas on the internet. Students, lacking effective judgment and analytical skills, are often swayed by these novel theories and widespread skepticism, which makes it difficult for them to form a coherent and correct system of knowledge and cognitive logic.

-The diversification of learning media and mobile information acquisition methods has indeed made the process of acquiring knowledge more casual, with fleeting interests and unexpected distractions. The various sensory stimuli that tear at the fabric of our daily lives lead to the fragmentation of knowledge, making it difficult to achieve depth and continuity. The scattered focus and lack of a coherent stance limit the construction of a meaningful and logical knowledge system, causing the concept of "the history of architecture" to lack a holistic framework and objective connections in students' cognition.

-In the absence of a self-standing position and judgment, one's sense of self can become disoriented within the structure of forms, making it difficult to clarify the significance of individual relationships. Without personally engaging with and discerning "space" and "style," knowledge can appear hollow, arbitrary, and prone to empty formalism.

Drawing from the past to understand the present and to reach into the future, a learning process that does not delve into the fundamentals merely scratches the surface, leading to a

lack of profound understanding and reflection. This superficial approach can result in a dismissive attitude towards the history of architecture, viewing it as nihilistic or useless, and can lead to empty discussions about style, misinterpretation of concepts, dogmatic adherence, and misuse of formal language. In the new era, the "discourse power" that architecture history teachers preset to students' conceptual systems is facing challenges stemming from diverse and personalized cognitive patterns.

2 The cognitive differences in architectural history knowledge and the generation of concepts are central to understanding how individuals interpret and engage with the subject matter. Here's how these two aspects interact and influence the learning process

The premise that "architecture" refers to a category of human habitation spaces sets the stage for understanding the evolution of its concepts and forms as the core content of architectural history. The authoritative consciousness inherent in specific discourses inevitably permeates the transition from "representation" to "expression." Within this framework, the discourse of power organizes meaning and bestows stability in form and structural systems upon the objects of reference, shaping, regulating, and guiding related thoughts and actions through an authoritarian and standardized mode of expression.

In the new cognitive environment, the process of knowledge acquisition tends to rely more on intuitive pathways, with both subjective and objective understandings leaning towards privatization. This can lead to the object of study being subjected to fragmented, tunnel-visioned, biased, and induced cognitive conditions. Consequently, the knowledge system based on discourse consciousness—comprising content organization and narrative methods—faces challenges of ambiguity and reflection.

Gilles Deleuze's philosophy indeed offers valuable insights for understanding and addressing the issues of diversity, difference, conceptual deterritorialization, and generation. Deleuze's work emphasizes the importance of difference and the generative potential that arises from it.

Time propels history to flow in such a manner, and under the focus of intention, the highlighted objects thereby acquire the objectivity of content and structure, as well as the thematic "style" that emerges concretely. As a collective phenomenon, it permeates and constructs the overall atmosphere of a specific spatiotemporal environment. On this premise, based on an inherent commonality, complex, dispersed, and creative individual expressions fill the space, with nuances and evidence clarifying the conceptual domain and making their expressions subjectively describable content. Historical precedents form the basis for thematic exchanges, and specific forms, atmospheres, or what can be generally referred to as the nature of mood, give them the cohesive power to focus cognition. The formal system, premised on complex behavioral structures, generates emotional and rational stirrings, resonance, and identification in communication based on the experience and understanding of behavioral patterns, maintaining the natural tension and order that sustain the conceptual domain existence above the coexistence of complex individuals' diverse and dispersed concrete expressions. Just as the "Gothic" style, within the limits of the basic conceptual domain, triggers many distinctively individual expressions due to the differences in ancient and modern interpretations (Figures 1, 2). Within Deleuze's horizon, the "Gothic" style, like a creative "hand (touching, exploring, and even the medium of creation)," stirs light and lines, surging forward, and from the quiet classical order, achieves the desire for transcendence and liberation.



Fig. 1. Gothic expression



Fig. 2. Cybergothic style

Secondly, differential cognition points to the form of generating specific content expressions, where each cognition and judgment constructs an "intimate" expressive bridge with the cognitive object. By presetting the form rules and logic of a specific architectural "style" as the narrative of knowledge content, what is ultimately recognized is merely the analytical nature of the rules themselves, often severing the logical connection between reference, content, and expression (Figure 3). Respecting individual cognition and adopting the historical methodology of interpretive imagery expression as an important aspect of teaching, we can fully utilize the broader perspectives brought to us by informatization. Students can explore more appropriate content and plan their learning and practice processes from their own cognitive qualities, research orientations, and interests, establishing an independent and comprehensive understanding of knowledge.

In addition, in the cognitive process of human settlement phenomena, the more our analytical tools, thought positions, and narrative methods emphasize the value of the individual, the more the content of cognition tends to be influenced by the cognitive environment and modalities, moving towards the thematization and domainization of concepts. In the formal analysis of historical human settlement spaces, empirical construction and rule concepts are brought together into a logical intersection of "truth". In the course of teaching, both teachers and students can face up to individual differences, using the objectivity of human settlement space as a medium to interpret the logical framework mapped onto the physical form, and to communicate, judge, and compare real situations, forming a coherent knowledge expression. Returning to the exploration of architectural forms themselves, architectural history teachers can thus turn their roles back to "architect-teachers", engaging in more practical discussions on design, analysis, understanding, and methods of formal expression and logical thinking, ultimately abandoning the mockery of "empty talk" and "meaningless words".

The diversification of information media, such as the proliferation of mobile network devices like smartphones and tablet computers, has made the scenarios for knowledge acquisition increasingly diverse and complex, leading to a dispersion of attention and a disturbance in cognitive themes. Attention finds it difficult to focus stably and comprehensively on a particular point of interest. From cognitive content, cognitive processes, cognitive expressions, to the cognitive objects in consciousness, they are all, to a large extent, fragmented and symbolized, flickering as 无暇深究, diluted in the unclear mixture of conscious relationships, losing the depth of meaning that can be perceived and judged.

Considering this, we can shift our perspective and introduce Deleuze's concept of "singularities" into our related experiences. Each fragmented knowledge focus is tied to the

cognitive subject's emotional flutter, stimulating thought to open towards a specific cognitive domain. Each point of interest is a situation that is obscure in the conceptual domain, from the standpoint of the cognitive subject, allowing its content to generate order as a medium, relating it to other singularities, and in dynamics, demarcating a spatiotemporal slice with a tendency, which is also a block with situational depth involving content. This is organized by conceptual coding within the commonality of "periodic repetition," realized as content defined by differences and relations, which Deleuze calls an environment.

"The distinct and incommensurable relationships between environments — create domains, and at the same time what is also born is the expressive quality that defines possession." [1] This characteristic is primarily "a kind of proclamation, a poster." The autonomy and uncertainty of reality are the essence of the domain, which defines the ever-changing multifaceted nature within a unified relationship, manifesting as a formal feature of ritualistic, holistic, and regularized counterpoint between external environments and internal impulses. This domain-like form is not a concept in the sense of reference but a "style" concept. Effectively stimulating points of interest and guiding sparks of cognitive experience, after judgment from one's own standpoint, plays the role of "order points," deterritorializing and re-encoding each fragmented cognition and knowledge content, expressing as a self-consistent thematic slice interwoven in a vertical knowledge system, constructing knowledge about specific historical "style" expressions in specific spatiotemporal environments.

Relatively speaking, from the standpoint of a narrator in the field of architectural history, facing the changes in the current teaching environment, the approach of a teacher should shift from narration to demonstration, aiming to promote understanding and inspiration, and to introduce, moving from linear knowledge transmission to a method of formal phenomenon analysis and expression

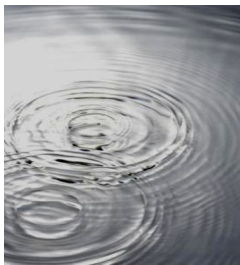


Fig. 3.Conceptual domain



Fig. 4. Resonance

3 Contingent thinking in teaching methods

Integrating the issues faced in the new era of teaching processes with insights gained from Deleuze, in recent years, the author has also been continuously reflecting on and experimenting with teaching ideas and methods in practice, accumulating the following experiences:

3.1 Emphasizing the diachronic role of the narrator's view of architectural history

History is the memory that fixes time at discrete points, scattered across the corresponding vertical and horizontal axes of space and time, organized or cut by focused cognition into

thick slices of images with characteristics, and the thickness of the "history" concept is reflected in the logical narrative nature that is filled with similarities, accidents, and individual content differences on the objective real image. The narrative perspective of the vertical timeline in architectural history, from the macro changes in architectural culture to the rise and fall of micro-style features, can all show a coherent and narratable context, which is clearly divided and limited. This statement highlights the importance of integrating students' own historical knowledge with an understanding of the social context to establish relevant situational associations and resonance. It suggests that by connecting what they have learned about history with the broader societal backdrop, students can develop a deeper understanding and a more personal connection to the subject matter. This approach can enhance their learning experience by making historical events and concepts more relatable and meaningful, fostering a sense of empathy and engagement with the material. In this context, history flows like a long river, the content narrated by the teacher, the focused "object-points" are like ripples that transform into the expression of forms, colliding and agitating with the students' "cognitive-interest points" ripples, historical examples and current experiences echo each other, continuously generating vivid and illusory expressions in the differentiation of similarities and accidents (Fig3). The architectural style, like a line attracting a bird to perch, chirping birds attract more accidental stops, and in the warm spring breeze and sunshine, a narratable context thickness is shaped (Fig4). Therefore, in the horizontal style comparison, students can be encouraged to rely on a vast amount of information, using situational and formal interpretation methods to analyze, judge complex and variable formal comparisons, and understand the methods, effects, and meanings in the transformation process of formal language.

Under the logical thread of the development of architectural history, teachers highlight the core viewpoints and construct a historical context framework with clear expressions, helping students to establish their own critical perspectives. Students can then reorganize and systematize the acquired knowledge to form an independent understanding and judgment of architectural knowledge structures.

Furthermore, in conjunction with the classroom knowledge framework, teachers can flexibly utilize knowledge supplementation, practice, and investigation outside the classroom. By combining rich and diverse materials and information resources, they can fill the gaps in the breadth and depth of knowledge. At the same time, they can adapt to and encourage students to develop their personalities, interests, and concerns, making the accumulation of knowledge more diverse and vivid.

3.2 Strengthening the teaching orientation of situational perception and formal analysis

Emphasizing situational course expression lies in highlighting the background knowledge prelude, logical thread, and the effective organization and application of situational information through various methods of expression within the course narrative. This helps students build empathy, understanding, and enthusiasm, thereby promoting knowledge comprehension, stimulating interest in learning, and strengthening architectural critical consciousness, enabling them to consciously and thoroughly analyze form and phenomenon.

In the teaching process, a wealth of online resources can be utilized to guide students in collecting, summarizing, and judging, allowing them to practically master the methods of knowledge analysis and cognition. Classic architectural works analysis, thesis writing, classroom presentations, discussions, and debates can be employed to facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge exchange. Additionally, continuously developing innovative tutorial and assessment models is essential. For instance, assignment systems that include thematic design, visits and experiences in architectural and spatial

environments, VLOG spatial cognition expressions in historical contexts (including performance expressions, scriptwriting, storyboard design, etc.), and flash mob activities and image representations revealing specific spatial places and spaces can guide students in perfecting their knowledge structure, strengthening self-learning abilities and critical consciousness. This promotes the emergence and development of their personalized understanding of living spaces, enhances their analytical and critical abilities regarding spatial forms, and makes the learning process engaging and enjoyable.

3.3 Develop and encourage teaching methods that promote mutual learning and independent thinking

One of the important characteristics that distinguishes the history of architecture from archaeological history is that the semantic threshold of its style concepts often originates from authoritative discourse. Differences in perspectives, personal experiences, and understandings can all influence the formation of these concepts. In my narrative, I take "expression" as the core element of stylistic consciousness, using it to introduce objective situational logic, revealing its intrinsic conditions, means, and purposes of expression, and the orientation expressed through architectural discourse. Based on this, I propose the logical thread and core viewpoints of the course, organizing through effective and clear critical threads and typical situational frameworks to guide students in establishing their own critical perspectives, forming an independent knowledge structure for recognizing and judging architecture.

Emphasizing the contextualization of historical course narratives, focusing on the environment, culture, and behavioral logic of specific stylistic situational slices, as well as their modes of expression within the course delivery, effectively analyzes, organizes, and utilizes situational information. This approach enables students to develop empathy, understanding, and enthusiasm, thereby facilitating knowledge comprehension, stimulating interest in learning, promoting architectural critical awareness, and nurturing a perspective on the history of architecture that can thoroughly analyze form and phenomenon.

3.4 Emphasizing themed knowledge cognition and expression

"Every species is in the same universe", Deleuze points out, "yet in individually different, subjectively determined environments." History is expressed by a system of signs that carry differential expressions, reflecting autonomous objective expressions within the cognitive individual's knowledge system. The thematization of the teaching-cognitive process means that the focal points of interest, through objective exploration, enter an open state that transcends conceptual constraints and mechanical definitions, consciously seeking appropriate contexts and experiences that resonate with relevant logical attributions. Relying on this starting point, the factors of similarity that are of concern are identified and summarized within different degrees of differential domains, making the distinctions between domains more distinct and easier to vividly perceive and understand. Within the individually defined historical domain, through thematization, the reality and concreteness of the speakable situations discussed in resonance and exchange are manifested, and the objective essence that is spoken and communicated for recognition becomes more targeted and clear, facilitating the promotion of exchange and reflection between teachers and students.

3.5 Emphasizing situational cognition and analytical skills to improve the practical aspect of architectural history

The history of architecture is distinct from pure historical research because it focuses on the morphology of expression, which inevitably imbues its understanding, conceptualization, and articulation with subjectivity grounded in authoritative discourse. It also differs from pure architectural theory research, leaning towards evidence-based dialectics, holistic concreteness, and systematic objective analysis. This course, tailored to the characteristics of urban and rural planning, demands the completion of a comprehensive architectural history teaching system within a concise framework. It undoubtedly necessitates a deep reflection, organization, and design regarding the knowledge content, narrative structure, and the analysis and theoretical methods for the concrete modalities of historical styles.

By integrating the vertical and chronological logic of human settlement spatial development with the spatiotemporal context in which various architectural styles emerged, we aim to establish an empathetic architectural history knowledge system that emphasizes context. Building on this foundation, we strive to develop students' understanding of historical perspectives and the ability to perceive and analyze spatial forms. This enables them to truly 'learn from history,' comprehending the rise and fall of styles, the continuity of forms, and the successes and failures of expressions. In doing so, we fulfill the course's mission to instill professional beliefs, clarify professional responsibilities, expand professional horizons, and cultivate professional literacy.

4 Conclusion

Cognition is a personalized expression, filled with innate qualities and revealing constraints. In the contemporary era, brimming with diverse possibilities, we are all striving to explore ways to ride the winds and break the waves. Limited by my own level of argumentation and the scope and depth of related theoretical research and practice, this article, based on my understanding and experience, reflects on the issues I have contemplated in my work over the past two to three years. Drawing on the concepts of G. Deleuze, I have engaged in a speculative and exploratory journey that is far from mature. I hope to evoke some resonance, receive some corrections, and strive for the care and assistance needed to fulfill my duties and achieve my aspirations.

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