Early Museum as Symbol of National Identity

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ABSTRACT:- This paper traces the role of the museum as a tool in the formation of national identity, in Bavarian kingdom, during the late eighteen and early nineteenth centuries. The importance of the museums in Berlin and Munich, built under the rule of Ludwig I, is that they helped to forge the new museum typology that were applied to other European cities with the same intent. The paper examines three museums from Munich and Berlin: The Altes Museum, the Glyptothek and the Alte Pinakothek. It seeks to establish the relationship between the content or the collection and the container or the building itself as well as the expression of this phenomena into the architectural language.

Keywords:- Museum, Collective Identity, Civic Architecture, Nationalism, Cultural Buildings

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the notion of the museum became increasingly important and its role diversified. Its architecture explored a range of stylistic expressions and it started to include a wide range of social, economical and urban functions which has made the museum a key study subject for a number of different fields, including architecture, urban planning, economics and cultural anthropology. As a result, a large body of research and literature has been published on the topic and it continues to be a topic of discussion today. One of the current-day leading museum studies academics, the cultural anthropologist Sharon MacDonald, argues that the crucial question for museums today concerns their role in a world in where globalization is causing nationalistic identities to be challenged. (Macdonald, 2016) She calls upon us to reconsider the potential of museums for articulating new, post-national and transcultural identities. In order to understand how museums could evolve to the state which MacDonald calls for, it is imperative to first understand their conception and their early role as the national symbols of collective national identity.

The public museum as an institution, which became the embodiment of Western society, started during the Renaissance time with the dissolution of monarchy and the rise of national identities (Anderson, 1983). This symbol, that the museum came to be, is complex and multi-layered with attributes of both domination and liberation where learning and leisure occur simultaneously. the nineteenth with the rise of nation-state, that idiom became the primary creation of collective identity. Thus the popularization of museums, also in the nineteenth century, was related to the formation and solidification of nation-states primarily in Western Europe.

II. SETTING THE PERIMETRES

The most impressive example of a late eighteenth-century museum is the Musée Français, the former French royal collection that was turned over to the public and installed in the Louvre. The museum was opened to the public on a symbolic date in August 1793, the first anniversary of the abolition of the monarchy. (McClellan, 1994) The opening of this museum was a strong political statement where the former privilege of the few had become the property of the young French republic. The Musée Français, which was installed in a former palace, did not significantly contribute

to the history of museum architecture, but it signaled the museum's enormous political potential as a governmental instrument. It played a big role in legitimizing the political ambitions of the new republic. The collection was organized in a linear linear art-historical narrative thus visualizing the abstract idea of a civic populous. It also became a showcase for the republic's successful war efforts. As a result of Napoleon's extensive military campaigns, the Musée Français (which was renamed Musée Napoleon in 1804) became the largest and most impressive collection of art objects ever amassed (McClellan, 1994). However, the collection did not survive the fall of Napoleon. After the Vienna Congress of 1815, almost half the works were repatriated and the return of looted art works generated a museum building boom across Europe. Therefore, the political legacy of the Musée Français lived on in these new institutions. The returned treasures were no longer just royal or princely collections but were increasingly perceived as national assets to which the population was to have full access.

During the nineteenth century, the Bavarian kingdom (present-day Germany) experienced a great museum boom and it played a big role in the architectural development of the museum architectural typology. This is largely due to the ambitions of its ruler, Ludwig and his ambitions towards opposing the Napoleonic rule and establishing a strong Bavarian identity. Born in 1786, Crown Prince Ludwig succeeded his father in 1825 as King of Bavaria. Although he held a certain amount of respect for Napoleon (he modelled his robes, regalia, and throne at his coronation in a Napoleonic fashion), he was at the same time bitterly shocked upon his visit to Berlin in 1807 where he found that the royal family exiled to Königsberg after the its humiliating occupation by the forces of Napoleon. He had himself reluctantly been forced to fight in the French army, which heightened his nationalism. He described Napoleon as the 'Arch Enemy of the German nation' because he abolished the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, replacing it with 'modern bureaucratic vassal states.'

Crown Prince Ludwig began to conceive the ambition of embellishing Munich with three new public buildings in a mood of nationalist and cultural buoyancy, and persuaded the Royal Bavarian Academy of Art to announce a competition for them in 1814. This followed Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig in 1813, when the King of Bavaria had switched sides to join Napoleon's enemies. Ludwig was greatly inspired by a visit to Rome, decided that Munich, also needed a museum. As such very quickly he set forth to plan three key museums: the Glyptothek (1815–30) for the display of sculpture; Alte Pinakothek (1826–36) a picture gallery; and Neue Pinakothek (1846–53) a museum for contemporary art.

III. CASE STUDIES.

Inspired by his visit to Rome, Prince Ludwig decided that Munich, also needed a museum that would reflect the Bavarian identity. As such very quickly he set forth to plan three key museums: the Glyptothek (1815–30) for the display of sculpture; Alte Pinakothek (1826–36) a picture gallery; and Neue Pinakothek (1846–53) a museum for contemporary art. Since the first two of the above mentioned museums, as well as the Altes Museum in Berlin, have played the most significant role in the development of the museum typology, we shall look at these three buildings as case studies.

A. The Case of Glypothek (Munich)

Fig. 1. : Front Elevation of the Glyptothek Museum, source: http://www.glyptoteket.com

In 1814, he put forth a competition of the first key museum, the Glyptothek. Leo von Klenze who was a young architect at the time, won the competition for the Glyptothek. Although, the layout was firmly rooted in eighteenth-century tradition, it was Klenze's conception of the façade that was innovative for the time period. On the facades, he combined the elements of different time periods resulting in an amalgamation of stylistic modes -- Greek, Roman and Renaissance (*see Fig.1.*). He referenced the important ties to these time periods. He saw the Greek temple as both a shrine to cult objects and ornamented with sculpture; the Roman baths had also served as public display spaces for sculpture; while the Renaissance was the great age of collecting.
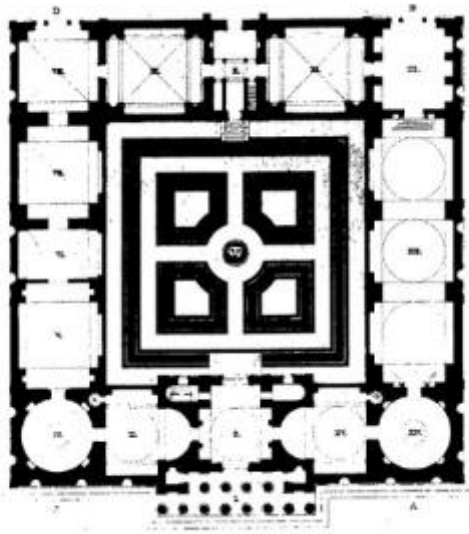
Fig. 2. : Glyptothek Museum Floor Plan**,** source: http://www.glyptoteket.com/

However, during the planning stages, the layout was significantly altered. The rectangular plan was replaced by a four-wing plan which in turned was modeled on Durand's ideal design (*see Fig. 2.*). However, the Greek cross and central domed rotunda from Durand's ideal design have been omitted. Because the museum was intended to showcase the genuine Greek sculptures, the stylistic expression for the facade was chosen to be the classical Greek. The front facade was designed with a central portico that has eight Ionic columns and the pediment sculptures represent Greek sculptors at work, showing the different production processes of sculpture in various materials.

The interior was a subject for great debated during construction. While Klenze proposed richly ornamental display spaces, the scholarly advisor wanted the galleries to be a combination of light wall colors with even lighting that was typical of on the sparse interiors of academy or studio at the time. However, in the end, the architect's vision prevailed: the interiors showed a rich, dark decoration scheme. The walls of each gallery were painted in a monochrome color -- mostly red or green -- while the ceilings and floors were heavily patterned. These ornaments were both decorative and didactic, intended to add period flavor and provide historical context for the works on display.

Once inside the museum, there was a plaque reminding the visitors that the collection and galleries had been funded by the generosity of Ludwig I, king of Bavaria. Although open to the public, the collections were still seen as the background to a princely way of life. In the centre of the north part of the plan, a private porte-cochère, led into two lavished rooms for Ludwig's entertainments and dinners. Indeed, he tended to use the entire building for his festivities and elaborate parties.

In terms of the regular visitor experience, the four wings provided a linear route through the collection. It started in the entrance hall and moved clockwise, with the chronological journey of the sculpture displays. First were the galleries housing ancient Egyptian, Greek – subdivided chronologically and typologically – followed by Roman works and then a gallery for sculpture in colored stone and bronze. The final gallery contained works by contemporary artists popular at the time. They were Canova, Thorwaldsen, Shadow, and Rauch. At the far end of the building – directly opposite the main entrance – the sequence of galleries was interrupted by a second, smaller entrance and two adjoining banqueting rooms. As mentioned earlier, these were the rooms often used by the king himself for festivities. Here, he commissioned the leading Nazarene artist, Peter Cornelius, to fresco the ceilings with scenes from the Trojan War and Greek mythology.

Reserved for royal entertainment, these rooms served as a potent reminder of the museum's architectural lineage. In a gesture of political power, the palace had traditionally provided spaces that combined the functions of display and entertainment and this notion of display and entertainment was transferred onto the museum as well. Although the museum promoted chronological and contextual displays which were cutting edge at the time that the collection was installed, it also remained indebted to earlier display modes, even if the royal privilege was rarely exercised.The Glyptothek formed part of a new urban development and (together with the neighbouring structures) it invoked a classical past that helped to validate the recent political transformation of Bavaria. It stood at one side of Königsplatz, and it stood next to tempo-Acropolis, which marked the city's new entrance. At the centre of the square, a monument commemorated the foundation of the Bavaria kingdom in 1806. Furthermore, with its collection of classical and contemporary sculpture, the Glyptothek forged an active link between the achievements of classical civilization and contemporary art.

A. The Case of Altes (Berlin)
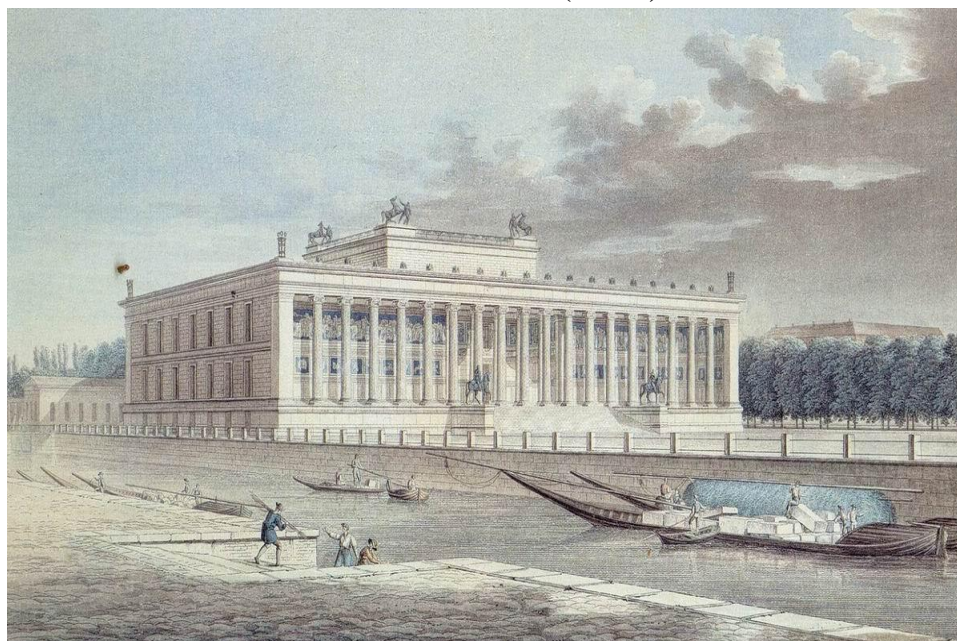
Fig. 3.: Altes Museum in Berlin as illustrated in an etching in Museumsinsel Berlin, source: https://www.museumsinsel-berlin.de

Just like the Glyptothek in Munich, with its strategic urban location, a similarly symbolic location was allotted to the Altes Museum (1823–30) in Berlin. The museum was situated on the north side of Schlossplatz, across the square from the royal palace, flanked by cathedral, arsenal, and university. In this case, the museum was placed alongside the markers of Prussia's societal powers: monarchy, church, military, and bourgeois intelligentsia.

Karl Friedrich von Schinkel's was selected as the architect for Altes museum. His design also represented a variation on Durand's blueprint that was the blueprint for museums in Europe at the time. While the Klenze's Glyptothek was a reduced version of the Durand's plan, Schinkel's Altes plan on the other hand was reworked more extensive. Unlike Klenze, he did retain the central rotunda, but he also halved the square outline to form a rectangular ground-floor plan instead of the square. Unlike Duran and Klenze before him, Schinkel arranged the gallery spaces on two floors.

Upon approach, the museum sits on a plinth-like podium which one ascends via wide stairs in order to get to the main entrance (*see Fig.3.*). The main entrance --on the raised ground floor-- takes

the visitor straight to the heart of the building which is the rotunda. The rotunda is an impressive two-stories high space topped with a dome. This central space has a complex architectural lineage and was heavily inspired by the Italian architecture (proportions from the galleries in the Vatican museum as well as the magnificent interior of the Pantheon in Rome), and also by Durand's influential plan. As a transitional space, this central hall, also fulfills an important psychological function. In the rotunda, visitors are supposed to leave behind the everyday world and prepare themselves for the contemplation of art.

Along the length of the main façade, behind the large Ionic columns, a monumental staircase provides access to the upper story (*See Fig. 4.*). Ascending the stairs, visitors are given the view of the royal palace and the cathedral. Across the Kupfergraben they can see the arsenal and university. In this unusual ascent to the upper-floor galleries, which allows a range of vistas, the museum proclaimed and consolidated its position in the urban fabric of Prussia's capital.The raised ground floor housed the Greco-Roman and while the paintings were on display on the first floor. The collections followed an arrangement similar to that of the works displayed in the Glyptothek where it followed a roughly chronological sequence in the clockwise route through the galleries. As was the case in Munich, here too the debates ensued over the interior decoration. In Berlin the architect's vision also prevailed over a more modest setting modeled on academy and studio.
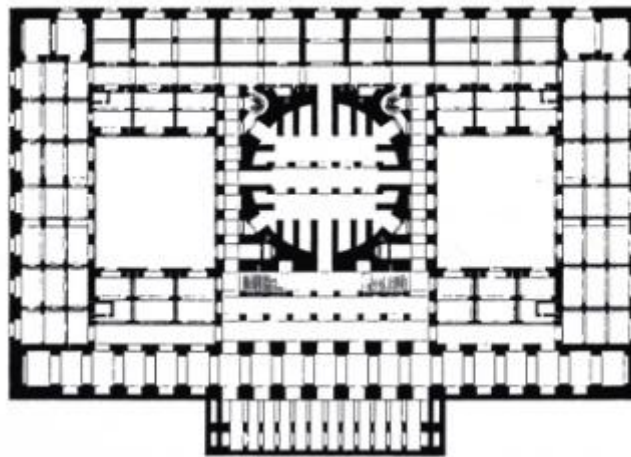
Fig. 4. : Floor Plan of Altes Museum, source: https://www.museumsinsel-berlin.de

Although centrally located in the city, the museum also functioned as a piece of Arcadia echoing ancient Greek urban principles. Its outline invoked the Acropolis, which was the cultural symbol towering above classical Athens. During the nineteenth century, a cultural complex developed behind the Altes Museum. It consisted of the Neues Museum (1841–59), National Gallery (1866–76), Kaiser Friedrich-Museum (now Bode-Museum, 1904), and Pergamon Museum (1930).

As in Munich, Berlin's cultural institutions were grouped together and thus created the notion of one of the first museum clusters. The aim of the cluster was to invoke the mythical virtues of classical antiquity that of learning and civic values.

B. The Case of Alte Pinakothek (Munich)

Fig. 5 : Front View of the Alte Pinakothek Museum, source: https://www.pinakothek.de

After successfully completing the Glyptothek, Klenze was now asked to design a gallery for the royal collection of paintings to be added to the Munich mosaic. In the Alte Pinakothek (1826–36), instead of Ancient Greece, Klenze used a Renaissance idiom for the façade. The building was completely differently conceptualized from Glyptothek or Altes in Berlin (*see Fig. 5.*). The museum consists of a structure of twenty-five bays with small corner pavilions at either end. The ground floor houses administration, reserve collections, and store rooms while all of the display galleries being located on the first floor (*see Fig. 6.*). The entrance to the main collection was situated at the east end. Once the visitor had ascended the staircase, an uninterrupted set of large galleries unfolded in a linear sequence. These were flanked by small galleries on the north and a corridor on the south side. For the galleries themselves, Klenze created large, top-lit rooms for the large-scale works. For the small scale work, he created cabinet-sized, side-lit rooms.

This distinction of scales, along with the shift to linear arrangement of galleries, became the new model for the nineteenth-century picture gallery. Similar museums include Gottfried Semper's Picture Gallery, Dresden (1847–55), Klenze's new wing for the Hermitage, St Petersburg (1842–51), August von Voit's Neue Pinakothek, Munich (1846–53, destroyed) and Oskar Sommer's Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt (1878).
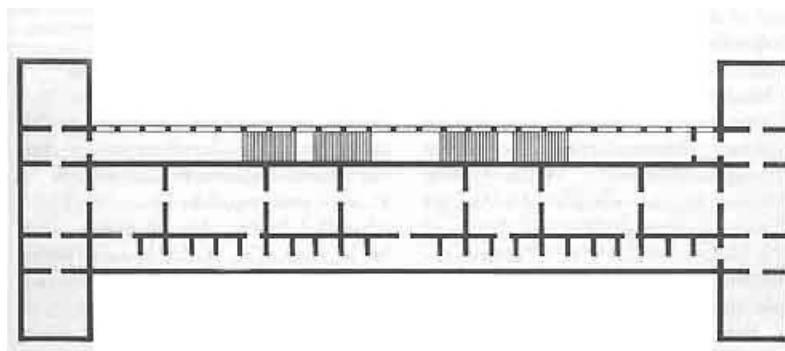
Fig. 6. : Floor Plan of the Alte Pinakothek Museum, source: https://www.pinakothek.de/en

The aspiration towards the Renaissance ideals in the building was further strengthened by the foundation stone that was laid on April 7, 1982. This is the birthday of one of the most revered Renaissance painters, Raphael.   Furthermore, Raphael's works were displayed in a side room of the wet pavilion, out of sequence with the rest of the collection as the collection was arranged chronologically. This was done to save the experience of his paintings for the end of the visit, as the final highlight of the whole collection. The corridor was decorated with frescos illustrating the history of art and in such way it complemented the actual displays. The corridor was inspired loggia in the Vatican done by Raphael. It in the Alte Pinakothek, the history of art was illustrated in two ways: an exemplary selection of works and a painted plethora of immense masters (both arranged according to national schools).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The significance behind the museums in Berlin and Munich during the rule of Ludwig I, is that they helped to forge the new museum type. The Altes Museum and the Glyptothek both modified Durand's influential design for an ideal museum. They presented the display of art as a linear, progressive history which the visitor traversed and physically re-enacted. While the Alte Pinakothek broke away and introduced a more Renaissance inspired model of museum building.

All three buildings discussed here constructed a close relationship between the content and the container. The symbolic language of their architecture was in tune with the collections. The display spaces were fixed as the history of art was not subjected to revisions and interpretations Instead, it was presented as universal, chronological, and progressive. The architecture of the museum underscored the institution's function as a monument to culture.

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