

A Qualitative Study of Aesthetic Visual Preferences for Domed Buildings from the Viewpoints of Art and Non-Art Students

Massud Wahdattalab*¹; Touraj Hashemi², Somayyeh Ghadimzadeh³

Submitted: 2019-06-20

Accepted: 2019-10-30

Abstract

Domed buildings and, in particular, domed squares are among the most important visual elements in the public view of the cities. Despite the importance of the domed square in Iranian architecture, there has not been much studying related to the aesthetic evaluation, through the mental approach for these buildings. Due to the fact that domed structures are associated with the historical memory and identity of the people, it is important to identify the factors that have the greatest impact on their aesthetic preferences. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors of aesthetic desirability of a domed square from the viewpoint of students in two groups of artistic and non-artistic disciplines and is trying to answer the question of “which factors contribute to the preferences of the people for the form of domed buildings?” Another question is about the impact of arts education on these preferences. The research is conducted based on a qualitative approach. The data is obtained via using Q-sort technique and semi-structured interviewing tool. The participants are consisted of 46 students (23 art disciplines and 23 non-art disciplines students). They were selected from students of Tabriz University and Tabriz Islamic Art University via the convenience sampling method, and the sample size was determined by data saturation. In order to provide visual stimuli, at first, 16 domed buildings (with curved domes) were selected in various shapes from the famous and historical mausoleums as mentioned in the resources related to Iranian -Islamic architecture. Then, their general form that consists of three parts of the dome, the drum, and the base were simulated using AutoCAD software. The buildings’ height was considered to be the same for all of them. Visual stimuli were presented to participants in four categories. After ranking the stimuli in two stages, they were asked to give reasons for their preference for each of the four top selected buildings. Data analysis was performed using the qualitative method of thematic analysis. Eight main themes and 27 subthemes were extracted. Based on the results, the desirability of the form of domed building is clustered around four general concepts including visual richness, size and proportion, simplicity, and style of the building (related to familiarity and novelty). The motion or variety factor that appeared in the form of a polygonal base or drum versus rectangular shape have an important role in the desirability of the form. Also, good proportions were very important for most participants. They compared the three main parts of the buildings in terms of size and chose more natural and balanced proportions. Although the preferences of two groups of art and non-art students were based on almost common themes and, three of the four top choices were shared between them; art students showed a tendency toward simplicity and volumetric purity and at the other hand, the visual richness related to the features of elegance, and complexity was more preferred by non-art students. The results of this research can be helpful for designers of monuments and urban important buildings in terms of predicting preferential factors.

Keyword: Aesthetics, Visual Preferences, Iranian Architecture, Architectural Form, Domed building.

¹ Assistant Professor, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Tabriz Islamic Art University, Tabriz, Iran

² Professor, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran

³ Ph.D. Student of Islamic architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Tabriz Islamic Art University, Tabriz, Iran