

John Ruskin: *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1851)
New York: Dover, 1989.

The Lamp of Truth

Architectural Deceits are broadly to be considered under three heads:

- 1st The suggestion of a mode of structure or support, other than true one....
- 2nd The painting of surfaces to represent some other material than that of which they actually consist ... or the deceptive representation of sculptured ornament....
- 3rd The use of cast or machine-made ornaments of any kind.

Structural Deceits. I have limited these to the determined and purposed suggestion of a mode of support other than the true one. The architect is not *bound* to exhibit structure; nor are we to complain of him for concealing it, any more than we should regret that the outer surfaces of the human frame conceal much of its anatomy; nevertheless, that building will generally be the noblest, which to an intelligent eye discovers the great secrets of its structure, as an animal form does, although from a careless observer they may be concealed.

Perhaps the most fruitful source of these kinds of corruption which we have to guard against in recent times, is one which, nevertheless, comes in a "questionable shape," and of which it is not easy to determine the proper laws and limits; I mean the use of iron....

The last form of fallacy which it will be remembered we had to deprecate, was the substitution of cast or machine work for that of the hand, generally expressible as *Operative Deceit*.

There are two reasons, both weighty, against this practice: one, that all cast and machine work is bad, as work; the other, that it is dishonest.

Ornament, as I have often before observed, has two entirely distinct sources of agreeableness: ... [1.] the abstract beauty of its forms, which, for the present, we will suppose to be the same whether they come from the hand or the machine; [and 2.] the sense of human labor and care spent upon it.... Its true delightfulness depends on our discerning in it the record of thoughts, and intents, and trials, and heartbreakings [and of joyful success]: all this *can* be traced by a practiced eye.... The worth of a diamond is simply the understanding of the time it must take to look for it before it is found; and the worth of an ornament is the time it must take before it can be cut....

This, then, being our general law, and I hold it for a more imperative one than any other I have asserted; and this kind of dishonesty the meanest, as the least necessary; for ornament is an extravagant and inessential thing; and therefore, if fallacious, utterly base.