General Information

Source: NBC Today Show
Creator: Jane Pauley/Jim Bittermann
Event Date: 05/09/1988
Air/Publish Date: 05/09/1988

Resource Type: Video News Report
Copyright: NBCUniversal Media, LLC.
Copyright Date: 1988
Clip Length 00:03:16

Description

In Paris, controversy erupts over modern architecture including the pyramid entry to the Louvre.

Keywords


Citation

MLA
Like many things in Paris, the architecture here, there is more than meets the eye, as NBC correspondent Jim Bitterman shows us.

JIM BITTERMAN reporting:

There’s one thing upon which most everyone that lives here can agree, and that is a common love for the look of the city. But there’s rarely any agreement when one gets down to specifics. Because here, everyone thinks he’s an architect.

Rarely has that been more apparent over the past few years than when the construction men started moving into the forecourt of the Louvre Museum. From the very moment the building began on the new central entrance to the ancient royal palace, the arguments began as well. Because in a most imperial manner, the French president, without benefit of public hearing or competition, had decided to engage American architect I. M. Pei to construct a pyramid of glass to serve as the Louvre’s new entryway. Three years later the pyramid is nearing completion, but the arguing seems like it may go on forever. The architect’s son, C.C. Pei, says he knew the Parisians might be trouble.

C.C. PEI (I.M. Pei Architects): We were warned, we were told, you know, you should expect this kind of thing, but we were still surprised because we don’t get that kind of reaction in the States, it’s just--so it was stronger than we thought but we were warned, yes.

BITTERMAN: But it’s not just Pei and Son who caused a ruckus, there are a number of other huge construction projects that are raising dust: a modernist opera building, a gigantic steel and glass cube of somewhat ambiguous use, a flashy new university institute for Arab studies.

Some of the recent work imposed on the city by presidential fiat, like the restoration of the d’Orsay train station, has met with widespread approval, primarily because it doesn’t change anything. Sometimes, other modern construction after awhile is accepted, although you can still see people here who refer to the ten year old Beaubourg Museum as ‘that oil refinery.’ Even those who enjoy modern architecture though
worry that Paris is losing its capacity to absorb its modernistic traditions.
Mr. MICHAEL GUY (Former Cultural Minister): I think the problem is to try to keep a sort of spirit to a 
city and a sort of spirit to state. Otherwise, any city would look like any other city in the world.
BITTERMAN: Certainly Paris has not reached that point just yet; the city still looks like no other. For 