

Chamber Pot, Urn and Their Proper Uses

NASSIR ZARRIN-PANAH

Abstract

It is assumed by functionalists that every object of use – such as a building – has a single mode of use which best meets the purpose for which it is designed and that this unique concept of use exerts a significant influence on the form and appearance of the object. Based on Adolf Loos' view on art and architecture, Karl Kraus attempted once to distinguish objects from one another by identifying a ›proper use‹ for each. According to him, the distinction between an urn and a chamber pot lies in their dissimilar uses. In this essay, I will first present Kraus' approach to the question of proper use and then examine his position with the theories of Adolf Loos, Umberto Eco, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. In my examination, I will basically attempt to undermine Kraus' critique of ›improper use‹ and clarify the nature of the distinction between utilitarian objects.