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## Research Article

# METAPHORICAL APPROACHES IN MEANING ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTION

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### ABSTRACT

This paper tries to look at the concept of metaphor for the formation of meaning in architectural production. The study follows a theoretical and analytical research method in order to develop discursive formation and an attempt is made to create a conceptual discussion environment through the samples. The qualitative data of the work are derived from the contemporary architectural literature. And the notion of metaphors is approached through selected examples of contemporary architecture and this concept is discussed through the implications of design. What is important here is the question of the relation of the metaphor to the whole architecture and how the metaphor should affect the architectural meaning. Or, in other words, how necessary and effective the metaphor is for the work to be understood by the reader and for the creation of an aesthetic clause. In this context, the question of how metaphor use plays a role in architectural production can be regarded as always questionable.

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## INTRODUCTION

According to Plato (B.C. 427-347), everything in nature is the shadow of absolute forms, ideals. Good is considered a universal perfection. Art imitates just that perfection. On the other hand, according to Aristotle (B.C. 384-322), objects that exist in nature are not perfect, and art perfects nature. From Plato and Aristotle to the day, people are inevitably in the effort to perceive, interpret and give meaning to the environment, the world, the universe. Even today the concept of aesthetics corresponds to the beauty definition of everyday use, it can be considered as intermediate cross-sections of meaning and interpretation in human-environment relations. When art production is concerned this understanding and meaning occur by inspiring by some objects present in nature (live or inanimate) like Plato's imitation of excellence or an effort to create more meaningful productions by going through various interpretations on the existence of these objects as Aristotle's perfection of nature with art.

When something begins to be produced, it is embodied in the reality of representation, whether by the simplest expansion, by inspiration or by interpretation, and this situation has led to the formation of different languages in the architecture. Looking at the architectural design in the direction of creativity, it can be seen that today many architects emphasize that they have developed some approaches in various manifolds in the

manifestos they have published and in the buildings they have designed. While this relationship is occasionally a decorative copy of items in the form of metaphorical use based on the form, there sometimes appears to be confusion in the facade and mass design, in the interpretation of the concept, maturity or object as colour, texture, and pattern and sometimes as structure. This article offers a medium where concepts of designs in popular architectural productions are discussed under the light of metaphors. In other words, the notion of metaphors is approached through selected examples of contemporary architecture.

### *Understanding the Concept of Metaphors*

The meaning of the metaphor ("meta: metaphysics" and "pherine: transport, the combination of words of worship") means "to take from one place to another" verbal and non-verbal knowledge of phenomena on physical and metaphysical dimensions is the transfer of hermeneutical experiences through language from one area to another, emotionally, intuitively and logically in form-content integrity in personally (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The meaning here is a very permanent, rooted, rather than a temporary meaning.

The traditional metaphoric review is usually limited to literature, and for many people, the metaphor is a poetic image and rhetoric. In fact, the metaphor is typically seen as a

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characteristic of language, not a feature of thoughts and actions but of words.

However, the metaphors in the 20th century and the theory called "Contemporary Metaphor Theory", which Lakoff and Johnson published in 1980 as "Metaphors We Live By", has now placed the concept of metaphor at the center of cognition and communication studies with interdisciplinary practices.

According to the contemporary metaphor theory in the field of cognitive semantics, the metaphor is not just on the language but also, the conceptual system we use in thought and action is basically has a metaphorical nature (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). In other words, the metaphor, which is a material of thought in the contemporary metaphor theory, is seen not only as a form of human comprehension, but also as a figure of thought, but also in other fields such as art and architecture as a 'thought figure'.

With metaphors considered as a form of conceptual/intellectual representation, the potential of symbolization emerges in discourse. Thus, the metaphor of discourse is placed in the central position of the semantic and critical paradigm in the externalization of the idea of architectural design in the practice of speech, writing, text, and contemporaneous expression in the spoken language. The affirmative point of view allows for the identification of the infinite meaning interpretations in the externalizations, to be identified, to be limited to similarities - to be "framed" - and formalized, as an ontological metaphorical definition. In summary; the architectural design process is a "discursive formation" (Foucault, 1971) and metaphoric (Sayın, 2007).

The metaphor is to understand and experience something according to something else. In the event of moving beyond what is understood and experienced, life repeats itself (Nietzsche) as a continual transfer of experience. While comments are being reviewed and updated and the information is structured; emotions and body are active along with the mind (Sayın, 2007). The modern metaphor theory also shows that metaphor is not just a word art, it is one of the most basic forms of language and the human mind. It is also possible to see that one of the main differences between languages is that nature is at the point of comprehension, and conceptualizing the world metaphorically (Akşehirli, 2005).

In aesthetic experience, points of similarity, difference, separation and cohesion between past, present, and future is expressed within symbols and concepts (Yıldırım, 2004). The approaches in architecture are also used as a means of representation through symbols and representations, at the same time in a language that the thought and the thinker determine in the inter-subject environment gains meaning by revealing itself. The object of architectural design, as anything on the agenda of the subject, is not a universal invariant; relative and interpretive. Therefore, it is desirable to realize the details of the ignored reality for universalization in the analysis. This is a problem of relative understanding rather than a universal perception (Sayın, 2007).

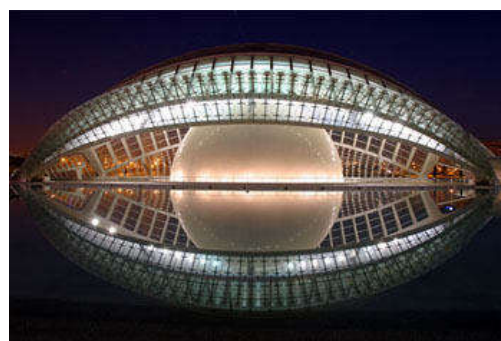
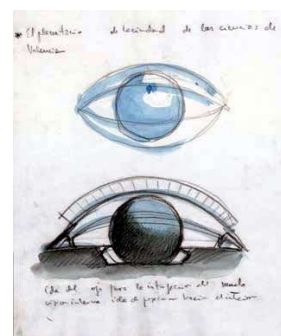
### ***The Aesthetics View of the Architectural Product***

The aesthetic object of the architectural design emerges in the experience that transcends all intellectual and effective

integrity. Integration is the combination of subjects into life as an interrelationship of experiences. In the process of architectural design, the whole process of recognizing, discovering, and revitalizing is influenced by objectified essence and objective essence and personal essence. The whole objective in life, the non-existence of any form of subject matter to the agenda, is linked to a spiritual, personal and sensually comprehended life. In this whole, the spiritual entity is carried by metaphorical, interpretive objects (Yılmaz, 2004).

The objectivity that stands upon us and metaphoric semantics of the whole of architecture, as a form language is on the front the history of architecture and the criticism of architecture. Especially since the 1960s, the view of architecture as text in the linguistic and semiotic interpretations of post-structuralist thinking has led to the study of architectural designs within linguistic and semiotic theories. The metaphor which is taken as a figure of language; occurs in architectural design critiques and interpretations as the perception of the creation of sensual impressions/associations in the rhetorical and poetic area.

In the post-structuralist thinking, depending on the form having multiple semantic contents, interpretations of the infinite meaning of the architectural design language; it becomes the expression of discourse containing the text. As opposed to having the meaning of architecture as an extension of form beyond the display; it is time to produce a form that expresses the meaning of cultural life/experience from the dimension of the indicator to the dimension of the discourse (Hadid, 2007). In addition to the linguistic use of metaphors, they also emerge in analogical designs in the historical evolution of architectural design. It can be said that in architectural design-production process, the ways of inspiration, learning, adaptation, and application are handled in two ways: The first is to take the natural objects form and transfer it to the structure with formal concerns and an analogy, the other is the formation form observed in the structure; (material, form, and structure formation process) into experimental form to architectural form (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Santiago Calatrava, City of Arts and Sciences, Valencia

In addition to the form-based metaphors created by the architect, it can be argued that most popular buildings carry interesting metaphors open to interpretation. Le Corbusier's Ronchamp Chapel (Figure 2), despite the fact that the architect does not mention any metaphors, is now confronted with various metaphoric interpretations. Due to its soft, folded surfaces, it is being attempted to be understood by those who try to read an unusual form of different languages, such as a hand, a ship, a sword or a hat.

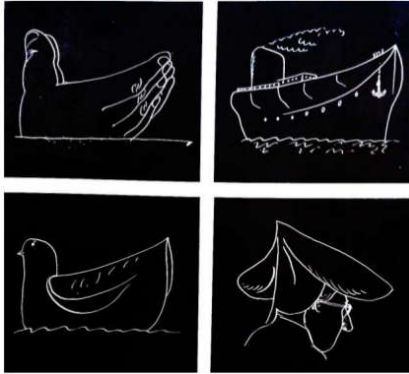


Figure 2 Le Corbusier Ronchamp Chapel, 1955 - examples of highly interpreted metaphors.

It is seen that architecture is used more as a metaphor than all other disciplines in the texts of antiquity, which form the cornerstones of the contemporary Western philosophy and thought system, especially in the daily works of Plato and Aristotle. While philosophy uses the metaphor of architecture during its definition, most architects today use philosophy as a metaphor. Especially metaphorical descriptions made by architects can also influence the aesthetic judgment on the structure by playing an effective role in making sense of it. The use of metaphors in architectural examples that are accepted as successful today shows the transition from one-to-one form production to conceptual production examples.

Koolhaas refers to the relationship of modern architecture to metaphors, emphasizing that today's architects must concentrate on producing architectural metaphors that shape the society rather than resolving the technical details of the building (Koolhaas, 2014). Derrida's claim of "architecture is transformed into a metaphor, and philosophy is in front of or above it" is also an example of the importance of the use of metaphors in architectural production by the Bernard Tschumi project, which they are working with, in the production of form, away from form production (Yilmaz, 2004).

When Tschumi is considered independently of the narrative designed for Parc De La Villette, the emphasis of the amorphous, mutually independent fixed and open structures of "foli", the openness to future probabilities of unscheduled different actions into different spaces, plays an effective role in understanding the park by the reader (Figure 3). The metaphorical discourses used at this point are determinative in constructing meaning about the structure.

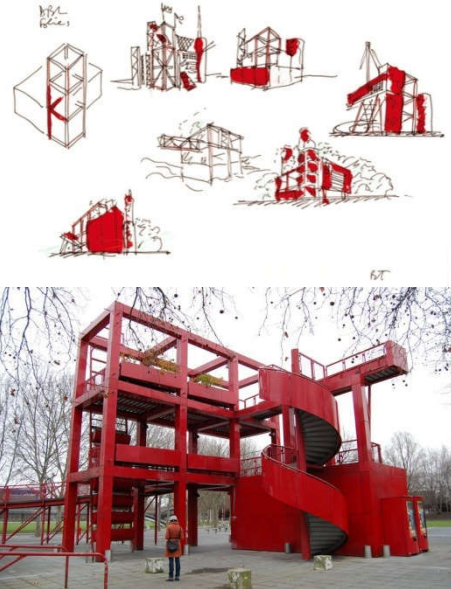


Figure 3 Bernard Tschumi, Parc de La Villette, "Les folies"

ZahaHadid's work, which included deconstructivist flow, was used as a metaphor in the design of the Contemporary Art Museum in Cincinnati (Figure 4) as a metaphor for her use of the urban carpet concept as an emphasis on building the ground completely as a public space.

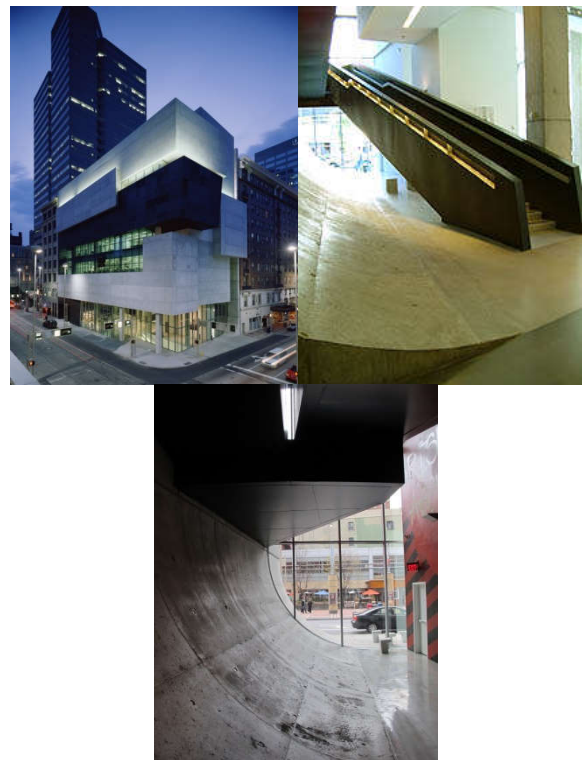


Figure 4 ZahaHadid, "Urban Carpet" Contemporary Arts Center Cincinnati

The architect expresses the diversity of interior space with the staircases perceived as being like beams due to the changing positions of the galleries on each floor and the massive structure, and it reflects the richness of interior space to the interior by shifting the masses constituting the spaces to different directions (Hadid, 2007). The "Urban carpet" consists of a glazed concrete floor surface starting from the corridor and sliding towards the main lobby. The experience of building with the designer's definition begins at this point. The content is no longer in the built environment that physically surrounds the building, but in details that make sense of it. The interpretation of this part of Hadid's structure through metaphors also allows for a reading of the concept in the building's experience. The form created by the designer in the frame of this discourse can play an impressive role in understanding the form in the aesthetic judgment that arises when reading together with a definite metaphorical description. Likewise, she emphasizes that the cross-section of the Maxxi Museum in Rome (Figure 5), has changed from place to place and, indicating that she never used a 90 degree angle in the museum and that it created a design to embody the chaotic fluidity of modern life. This statement can be an example of the abstract description of new fluid kind of spatiality of multiple perspective points and fragmented geometry that the architect uses in her discourses.



Figure 5 Zaha Hadid, "The chaotic fluidity of modern life" Maxxi Museum, Rome

As another example, in the Seattle Central Library project, the definition of "living room" is used by Koolhaas in a similar way to Hadid's definition of "urban carpet". The wide area on the third floor is designed as an open area for the visual interaction of the users. Emphasizing that Koolhaas thinks this space as a living room has an irreplaceable influence on the aesthetic judgment that occurs when reading the space.



Figure 6 Rem Koolhaas, "Living Room" Seattle Central Library

The building, which resembles a beautifully cut precious stone, allows itself to be interpreted in the sense of this definition, in that the stack of stacked books piled up over the top of the stack of books stacks up and the transparency of the structure emphasizes that there is nothing hidden inside.

The architecture of Peter Zumthor, a Swiss architect, is also described as a matter-and-state relation. In Bilgin's (2015) definition Zumthor's architecture is a statement rather than; item, component, joint, detail, form, etc. it is an item that includes program, place, function, behavior etc.



Figure 7 Peter Zumthor, "Weathering" House for the Elderly

As an example of Zumthor's architecture; House of the Elderly in Switzerland's Chur (Figure 7), is a metaphorical conception of the image of the elderly person. Travertine and wood used in the surfaces, trabecular surfaces used in the surfaces, holes in the trabecular surface itself, wood strata and their color change with "weather" conditions can be described as metaphors of aging skin conditions. Although these metaphoric descriptions are not made by the architect himself, they have an important role in the development of such sensible literature, the sensible attitude of the architect against the elements and materials in their designs.

The connection of meaning to metaphorical discourse in the production of architecture can also be seen in the description of Steven Holl's work as an architect who applies phenomenological approaches to architectural productions. For Holl, which uses narrative metaphors as well as productive in their work, metaphors often form as the starting point. When connecting the project in the physical or metaphysical sense - the first phase - the "anchor" forms a more conceptual framework for the meaning of the project. In a sense, productive metaphors drive the project and then disappears while the narrative metaphors become apparent in the project. Holl calls the second stage the state-situation- or the meaning of the situation collecting-gathering-. According to him, if the building and the situation successfully intertwine in a successful architectural work, a third state-phenomenon occurs. Moreover, the sensory effect of the architect on the person is expressed as a metaphor over the phenomenon. Holl says that in this way he tries to connect contextual strategies with phenomenal effects (Holl, 2003). Also, he states that "Phenomenology concerns the study of essences; architecture has the potential to put essences back into existence. By weaving form, space, and light, architecture can elevate the experience of daily life through the various phenomena that emerge from specific sites, programs, and architectures. On one level, an idea-force drives architecture; on another, structure, material space, color, light, and shadow intertwine in the fabrication of architecture" (Holl, 1996).

In the Hamsun Center in Switzerland in 2009, Holl defines the structure as "building as body", which creates the battlefield against the invisible forces of architecture as well as the physical experience of architecture. He says that circulation sites function in the center of the structure as a backbone and that the structure itself can also be treated as a body. Again, the wooden exterior with unrecognized slits on the form is also identified as an empty violin box by the architect because it provides phenomenal acoustic features, while the viewing balcony is depicted as a plastered girl with arms polished in yellow compartments (Figure 8).

When we look at all these approaches from the aesthetical frame of view, metaphor which is a linguistic game comes out as a method which is tried to gain meaning by transferring the content in the form of an architectural product. In order to realize the aesthetic life in the architectural form, the idea (content) desired to be transferred with the artwork takes place in the way of the expression tool (form) required by the art branch and the transfer to the art recipient (subject) (Yıldırım, 2004).

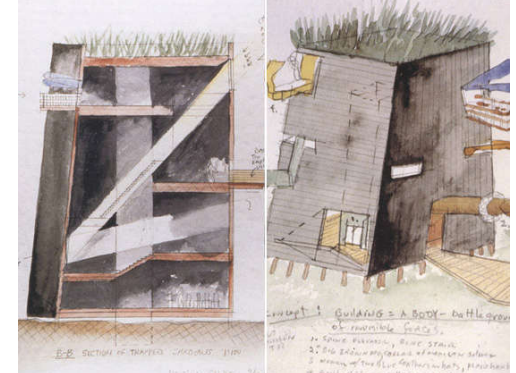


Figure 8 Steven Holl, Hamsun Center, "The girl with sleeves rolled up polished yellow panes"

On the other hand, recent design approaches around the world has become an inspiration from nature; *biomimicry*. The Shi Ling Bridge, designed by Tonkin Liu is based on *Shell Lace Structure*- a technique inspired by nature (Figure 9). The design uses an optimized curvilinear geometry in conjuncture with corrugation to provide stiffness and it focuses on areas of biomimicry for both the structure and the passive performance. Biomimicry is an approach to the design and production of materials, structures, and systems that are modelled on biological entities and processes. In the scope of sustainable

design biomimicry in architecture and manufacturing has become the practice of designing buildings and products that simulate or co-opt processes that occur in nature.

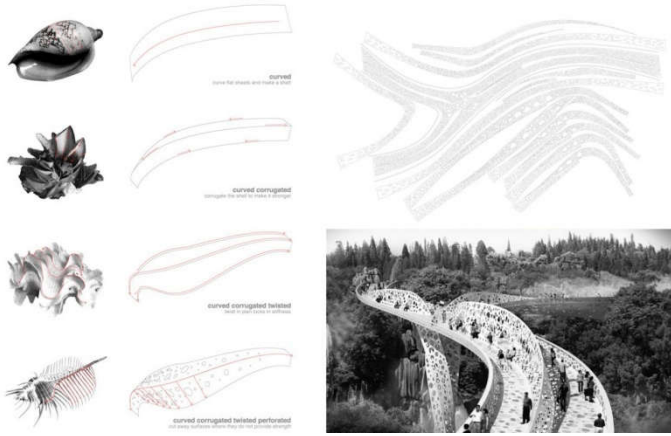


Figure 9 Shi-Ling Bridge-Tonkin Liu Architects, "Form of a seashell"

## CONCLUSION

According to Karatani (2006), buildings are theories. The expression of theories with the metaphors of "structure" and its derivations stems from the fact that each "theory" is contained in a construction that establishes its own internal consistency.

These types of illustrations as Hadid's 'Urban Carpet' or Holl's 'Building as Body' made by the designer on the produced forms can have an effect on the aesthetic pleasure of the reader. An architectural reading that is independent of speech is often inadequate and can cause the designer's sense of design be unnoticed. For this reason, today, most architects are embroidering metaphorical definitions that are used in the main discourse, whether they are in samples or not, independent of it, and try to deepen the whole in conceptual definitions.

On the other hand the use of metaphors in architectural design is also an upcoming approach in architectural education for students to 'think outside of the box'. Creating a concept which is derived from metaphors before the needs of the building has become a thinking methodology.

In the case of architectural products that are considered successful, there may be situations where such discourses are prevented from being constructed and simplified meaning or vice versa. At this stage, the effect of the use of metaphors on meaning in architectural production over contemporary architectural examples, without reaching a definite judgment can have an effect on the aesthetic pleasure of the reader.

An architectural reading that is independent of speech is often inadequate and can cause the designer's sense to be unnoticeable. For this reason, most architects today are embroidering their discourses with metaphorical definitions that are used independently or dependently in the main discourse, and try to deepen the whole in conceptual definitions.

Of course, it is quite dangerous and misleading to try to read an entire architectural whole through metaphors. What is important here is the question of the relation of the metaphor to the whole architecture and how the metaphor should affect the architectural meaning. Or, in other words, how necessary and effective the metaphor is for the work to be understood by the reader and for the creation of an aesthetic clause. In this context, the question of how the use of metaphors plays a role in architectural production will always be a question that remains valid.

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