

Re-Viewing Space



Applications of Cognitive Linguistics

2

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Re-Viewing Space

Figurative Language
in Architects' Assessment of Built Space

by

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For José Vicente and Fiona

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This book is based on research done for my PhD dissertation *Cognition and shared cultural models. The role of metaphor in the discourse of architects*. In the four years that have passed, the views of architectural metaphors sustained there have changed considerably. As a result, this book offers a better and, I hope, more accurate description of how and why architects – or, as I refer to them, *architecti verborum* – use metaphor for commenting on their practice in building reviews.

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Chapter 1

What this book says about metaphor, architects, and the assessment of building design

1. Introduction

In his essay “An account of architects and architecture” introducing *A Parallel of the Ancient Architecture with the Modern* (the 1664 English translation of a book written in French by Roland Fréart), John Evelyn distinguished between four kinds of architect. The first of these, concerned with designing buildings, was *architectus ingenio*. The *architectus sumptuarius* was responsible for providing the financial means for their construction. The type referred to as *architectus manuarius* comprised the artisans and workers involved in the actual making of buildings. Last, but not least, the *architectus verborum* was skilled in the art of language and, therefore, was in charge of talking about buildings after their erection. This typology has, of course, become obsolete: architects neither sustain their own projects economically, nor are concerned with the manual side of building. However, by placing the task of *architectus verborum* on the same level of all other aspects involved in architectural practice, Evelyn’s classification remains useful in drawing attention to the importance of post-construction assessment in the discipline. It also suggests that, although architects may be seen as people who express themselves better through spatial artifacts than through words, the *ingenio* and *verborum* facets are, in fact, the two sides of the same coin.

This book explores the language and, more specifically, the figurative language used by *architectus verborum* for assessing the work of his/her peers in the building review, a genre that illustrates the evaluative textual practices of architects and is, indeed, the prototypical context where their *verborum* facet reveals itself. This programmatic statement raises two questions. The first and most obvious is, of all the devices that may contribute to describing and evaluating buildings, why focus principally on metaphorical language? The second question is, why choose a single genre for exploring metaphor in architectural discourse?

The answer to the first question is fairly simple: because architectural discourse is highly figurative, and the saliency of this characteristic makes

it worthy of note. The following examples may give an idea of how metaphors pervade architects' linguistic interaction:

- (1) The worst part is to remove the paunch in this wall (oral interaction, author's data)¹
- (2) The quality of the material, its surface structure and line patterns can only be appreciated at close range. Such intricate examination [of masonry walls] reveals pores, veins, folds and minute hairs, just like the human skin ... The structure of the masonry is as close to my skin as the weave of my vest. (Krier 1988: 28)
- (3) A building protects itself from water by wearing three garments. A vapor barrier lining creates a rain-coat around all extremities and appendages of the space, a rubberlike membrane provides a boot around the foot of the structure, and a variety of materials are stitched together to make an umbrella of protection around the top. Whether these garment-like layers begin as small units or as sheeting materials, their end results must take the form of homogenous coatings. (Centuori 1999: 2)
- (4) Moneo claims to have created a building "content in its role as spectator, without seeking the status of protagonist held by the cathedral and the palace." The building may have been cast as a supporting player in the urban drama of its surroundings, but it has strong character and authority. ... Within a single flat plane, Moneo's civic annex becomes as affected and self-conscious as the baroque cathedral – but never relinquishes its sense of order and rationality. ... Although Moneo wanted his addition to defer to its historic setting, it's not as reverent as he claims. The building makes a clever game of playing order against disorder to assert its own identity among its ornamented neighbors. (Church and State, *Architecture*, October 1999)

In these passages, buildings and building elements are portrayed as living or textile entities by using language more commonly associated with fields other than architecture like, for instance, anatomy and textiles. In other words, the examples illustrate that architects often draw upon activities and objects other than their own for commenting upon their work.

This is precisely what metaphor is about: a transfer of meaning between two disparate domains – the term metaphor being etymologically related to the Greek term *metapherein* roughly meaning 'transfer', 'carrying over'. By means of this transfer or *mapping*, as the process is referred to in cogni-

tive research after Lakoff and Johnson's influential book *Metaphors We Live by* (1980), some concepts, activities or things are figuratively understood in terms of other concepts, activities and things which, although apparently very different, lend some of their internal logic in the process. In verbal interaction, such metaphorical mappings may be expressed or realized by linguistic units of various sorts and ranks, all of which point to the figurative quality of a large amount of our understanding of the world.

Indeed, an approach to architectural texts in terms of conceptual metaphors involves regarding metaphorical language as symptomatic of particular and systematic ways of thinking rather than being a decorative device for stylistic purposes only. In this regard, I fully embrace the definition of metaphor as an essential cognitive tool helping us to conceptualize the world, as sustained by the Lakoffian trend of metaphor research postulated in Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987a), Lakoff and Turner (1989), and Gibbs (1994) among others. Looking at the figurative language used by architects will thus allow us to discover some of the metaphorical models or schemas helping them in their intellectual or *ingenio* facet. It will, for instance, reveal a community characterized by what some design scholars call *visual thinking*, as attested by the critical role played by the visually biased figurative language abundantly found in architectural texts. In this regard, one of the aims of this book is to underline the important role of visual or *image* metaphors in architectural thinking and communication versus prevailing views on them as fleeting cases of metaphor, prototypical of literary or advertising discourse, and neither productive nor conventional in the way that metaphors conveying abstract, conceptual knowledge are. In fact, architectural discourse appears to be one of those contexts where the proverbial unconventionality of image metaphors may be questioned, as this book will attempt to demonstrate.

However, the ideational dimension of figurative language is not only an intrinsic aspect of approaching metaphor from a cognitive perspective. Rather, understanding the contribution of metaphor to architects' thinking is also the inevitable consequence of approaching metaphor from a discourse perspective, a task that involves examining the figurative language found in real discourse contexts, the uses to which this may be put, the factors determining such uses, and, of course, the topics or ideas thus expressed. A discourse approach to metaphor in architecture, then, entails paying attention to the *what*, *how*, *when* and *what for* aspects involved, a research agenda that may be formulated in the following questions:

4 *What this book is about*

- Which are the metaphors that architects use most for discussing architectural design?
- What are they like and where do they come from?
- Why do architects use these metaphors and not others?
- How are they used?
- Do such metaphors illustrate a conventional way of thinking and talking about built space or, rather, are they ad-hoc devices exploited for particular purposes?
- Which are the purposes underlying the use of – ad-hoc or systematic – metaphors?

As one would expect, answering the questions above implies choosing a context that will ensure the validity of our results and, at the same time, be of manageable proportions. In this book it is argued that a particular genre within the discourse repertoire of architects supplies us with such a context while, at the same time, helping the researcher to develop an analytical framework for exploring metaphor in professional communication.

2. A genre approach to metaphor

Again in examining whether what has been said or done by someone is poetically right or not, we must not look merely to the particular act or saying, and ask whether it is poetically good or bad. We must also consider by whom it is said or done, to whom, when, by what means, or for what end. (Aristotle, *Poetics*. Section 3 Part XXV)²

An important achievement of cognitive linguists has been to draw attention to the poetic structure of mind as shown by the pervasiveness of figurative language in all kinds of discourse. Yet, there are still few studies that integrate insights from cognitive theory with discourse analytic procedures in order to provide a comprehensive view on the role of metaphor in communication. In their zeal to replace former notions of metaphor as a deviant and cosmetic use of language, many studies have been mainly concerned with what is conceptualized in terms of something else and how this process takes place at a conceptual level. In turn, the proliferation of definitions and classifications of metaphor available in the literature have, unfortunately, been too often substantiated by piecemeal evidence or illustrated by the figurative data that fits the model under discussion. In short, although common ground to cognitive scholars is that human reasoning is essentially

figurative, the attempts to reestablish the conceptual status of metaphor have, paradoxically, resulted in a diminished interest in its textual dimension – that is, metaphor's actual realization in discourse contexts.

This mismatch between the communicative significance attributed to figurative schemas and the number of metaphor approaches actually adopting a discourse vantage point is, nevertheless, being redressed. This is illustrated by the growing amount of work that focuses on the metaphors of particular discourse communities, and often combines a cognitive approach to figurative phenomena with discourse analysis tools and methods (e.g., Cameron 2003, Charteris-Black 2004, Koller 2004, Musolff 2004, to list some of the most recent publications). The shared assumption is that metaphor needs to be approached from a *situated*, culturally bound perspective – an assumption that, nevertheless, started as one of the claims explicitly voiced in the late 1990s by both cognitive and applied linguists (Chilton 1996; Goatly 1997; Cameron 1999a; Gibbs and Steen 1999).³ In this regard, many studies have set out to explain how particular communities use metaphor according to their specific rationales (cf. section 3.2. in Chapter 3). For however commonsensical and long standing this research program may actually be (it may, indeed, be traced back to Aristotle), it has too often been forgotten by other approaches claiming to explore metaphor from a discourse perspective, but which nevertheless discuss figurative language in terms of what it would mean if it occurred in a hypothetical and largely aseptic interaction between imaginary people.

The present discussion also starts from the assumption that the cognitive and pragmatic relevance of figurative devices of any sort should be considered within a *situated* framework because this has direct consequences for how people think and communicate through metaphor. Of course, the first question that needs to be clarified is what we mean by situated, since it may cover different – even if related – aspects of metaphor and, therefore, determine the procedures chosen for exploring it. Thus, if situated is understood broadly as 'culturally specific', the growing work on metaphor in professional discourse has largely paved the way for avoiding the aforementioned aseptic framework. If, in contrast, a situated approach is understood as more than the selection of a particular community to explore how certain metaphors articulate its worldview and are used in the communication among its members, analytical procedures need to be clearly established from the very beginning. The first requirement is to choose the discourse situation within which this use will be examined.

The proposal in this book is that genre provides an operative framework for investigating metaphor in discourse, and, particularly, for exploring the presence and role of metaphor in professional communication.¹ In the first place, a given genre within the range of discourse practices of a professional community constitutes a manageable research context, and one that helps researchers delimit the scope of their findings within a particular context or situation – therefore preventing them from making generalizations that might not be valid for other contexts. Furthermore, knowing how the chosen genre works would provide metaphor researchers with default assumptions on the topics, relationship between authors and audiences, rhetorical goals and prototypical textual organization from which his/her research may operate. This knowledge should then help analysts to build up a reasonable set of research hypotheses on the reasons for the use and textual instantiation of metaphor, and frame the results and ensuing discussion within such a culturally situated scenario. For, together with embodying fairly stable types of communicative interaction and yielding recognizable classes of text, genres also imply “particular processes of producing, distributing and consuming texts” (Fairclough 1992: 126), which allows generalizations to be drawn about how metaphorical language may be produced, distributed and consumed in a concomitant way.

Of course, claims that the notion of genre may provide a useful standpoint for approaching metaphor in discourse are far from new: they can be found in the discussion in Crider and Cirillo (1991), Goatly (1997), or Steen (1991, 1999a). However, it might also be the case that this notion would prove more advantageous in certain contexts rather than others. Among the diverse factors shaping genre activity, the type of audience implicit in each genre is particularly important since it may further determine the optimal usability of a genre approach for examining the role of metaphor in every possible discourse context. Take, for example, instances of general discourse like informal chats or TV interviews, literary genres, and advertising. The purposeful and patterned way in which all these activities take place may allow for a systematic approach to the metaphorical expressions that occur. These expressions, however, may very well be more varied and their interpretation more open, given the culturally heterogeneous nature of the participants involved (due to their diverse backgrounds, and hence diverse concerns and expectations when engaging in these genres). In contrast, a particular discourse community sharing professional interests represents a subculture within a much broader cultural frame, characterized by specific knowledge schemas, needs and interests. It seems

reasonable to expect, then, that the ways in which these are articulated through genre will help analysts reconstruct that specific worldview in a more accurate (and, indeed, situated) fashion.

Moreover, a genre perspective not only helps us grasp how a given community understands the world through metaphor, but also allows us to shift focus from *what* is conceptualized in figurative terms towards *why* and *how* this takes place. It therefore provides the means for going beyond the level of lexis (the metaphorical motivation of professional jargon or fixed linguistic chunks of different sorts) to placing the emphasis on how metaphor fulfils various rhetorical needs, and contributes to the unfolding of text in compliance with a set of conventions. This encompassing framework of analysis is ensured by the very nature of genre, defined by Devitt (1993: 580) in the following terms: "Genre is patterns and relationships, essentially semiotic ones, that are constructed when writers and groups of writers identify different writing tasks as being similar. Genre constructs and responds to recurring situations, becoming visible through perceived patterns in the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of particular texts. Genre is truly, therefore, a maker of meaning."

Thus, together with sharing a particular worldview, the members of a discourse (in our case, professional) community also share a particular way of doing things through language when engaging in the genres regulating and articulating their various communicative interactions. Just as participants use their (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of genres when engaging in them, metaphor scholars may use this knowledge for two related research purposes. On the one hand, as pointed out earlier they may build up some hypotheses about the type of metaphorical expressions likely to appear, or about the motivations underlying their presence as specified by the genre's rhetorical goals. On the other, analysts may check those hypotheses, and explain that presence and role in a more situated, informed way. They can therefore discuss the relevance of metaphorical language by relating it to the intentions underlying the author's use of metaphor and the audience's expectations when dealing with the texts (both constrained at a very basic, general level by the genre's rationale).

Another question that needs to be addressed when dealing with metaphor from a situated perspective concerns the way(s) in which researchers can identify the communicative function of metaphorical language in a systematic fashion. Here again genre may prove a workable framework of analysis, for the systematic way in which genre activity takes place usually results in a recognizable and patterned kind of text, comprising both a par-

ticular use of those linguistic resources – metaphor included – best suited for achieving communicative purposes, and a specific way of shaping them into textual form. Nevertheless, of all aspects involved in metaphor, its textual dimension appears to be most commonly overlooked. This neglect is especially noticeable in those cases that attempt to explore the import of figurative language in professional communication, and usually do so by analyzing a large number of texts (i.e., a corpus) which, more often than not, fall into a particular genre within those articulating the discourse of the community at issue. Given that the main assumption in genre research into professional communication is that the textual patterning of generic exemplars is constrained by and reflects ideational (topic) and interpersonal factors (audience and rhetorical goals), it seems odd that the interest in how metaphor fulfils both aspects in specific genres has not also provoked some reflection upon how it actually appears within their rhetorical structure.

In other words, the discourse management function of metaphor needs to be addressed in any research aimed at gaining some insights into its role in human communication. This is a central concern of this book, which describes how architects conceptualize and verbalize their particular experience(s) in the world through metaphor, paying due attention to all other factors that shape a specific instance of their discourse interaction. This requires noting the grammatical form, location, and density of metaphor in texts, relating the way these appear in their rhetorical structure to the specific goals of the participants in the interaction under analysis. This view of metaphor as functionally constrained both at conceptual and discourse levels contrasts with a view of metaphor as an independent mechanism reflecting subjective authorial choices, which would make it unpredictable and textually unconstrained.

In sum, the present work aims to show that genre offers a number of advantages for *applied* research on metaphor. In the first place, it allows the researcher to shift the focus from an idealized speaker to a concrete, albeit prototypical, user belonging to a disciplinary community and, therefore, reflecting a shared way of doing things through metaphor. The social context defined by genre therefore helps us to frame our discussion of the use of figurative language of different sorts in a fairly accurate, predictable, indeed situated way. The comprehensive nature of genre finally permits an exploration of the experiential, interpersonal, and textual functions of metaphor by relating these to a specific communicative situation as predicted by the requirements of the genre's rationale. The present discussion of how figurative language is used in architectural assessment, then, com-

bines theoretical and analytical tools from genre studies (while also drawing insights from related approaches within current trends of discourse analysis) and metaphor theory within cognitive linguistics. Metaphor is described according to how it is used to discuss certain architectural topics in a real communicative situation involving concrete participants, clear rhetorical goals, and recognizable textual artifacts. In this respect, the book aims at bringing together a genre approach to texts and a cognitive approach to metaphor in order to benefit from the insights of both, while, at the same time restoring as the centre of attention the linguistic and textual aspects of metaphor as an instrument of both cognition and communication.

The book is organized in two parts. The first part provides an introduction to architectural discourse (Chapter 2); a survey of research on metaphor, paying special attention to the experientialist trend of research followed in this book (Chapter 3); and a methodological chapter explaining the procedure followed to explore the figurative language used by English-speaking architects/reviewers in the genre chosen for analysis (Chapter 4). In the second part of the book we will see how architects use metaphorical language for assessing design solutions in building reviews, starting from an introduction of the metaphorical schemas articulating their worldview (Chapter 5), followed by a description of how these are linguistically realized in patterns of diverse sorts (Chapter 6), and a discussion of the role of metaphorical language in the texts in the corpus as determined by their generic ascription (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 provides a brief summary of the aspects of metaphor dwelt on in the previous chapters.

Chapter 2

Architectus Verborum. An introduction to architectural discourse

Architects, like many other professionals, make use of linguistic resources developed over time for the purpose of reflecting, in speech and writing, on the phenomena which are their distinctive concerns. ... Professional registers are often criticized as mystifying jargon whose main purpose is to exclude outsiders; but while that may indeed be one of their functions, they also allow a professional community's accumulated knowledge to be codified and transmitted in precise detail. In architecture as in medicine or law, 'learning the language' is inseparable from mastering the craft as a whole. (Markus and Cameron 2002: 2-3)

"Build – don't talk," a dictum attributed to Mies van der Rohe, encapsulates the main concern of architecture in the first half of the twentieth century, and also represents popular views of the discipline as a non-verbal affair. However, although buildings may be the medium through which architects (*architecti ingenio*) best express themselves, their work cannot be understood without the texts written both within and outside the realm of architecture. In the first place, more than one architect and scholar interested in the field has proved particularly productive in his/her written reflections on architectural design. This is illustrated by the prolific output of *architectus verborum*, both in the past and in the present. In the second place, the writings from disciplines such as philosophy, linguistics, sociology, or biology have had a considerable impact on contemporary architectural aesthetics. Moreover, as is well known, the architectural canon includes some seminal buildings that no longer exist as three-dimensional, actually built artifacts. A notable example is the Barcelona Pavilion. Designed by Mies van der Rohe in 1929 for the World Exposition at Barcelona, it only lasted in extant form for six months before disappearing on its return journey to Germany. Therefore, its status as one of the masterpieces of modern architecture rests solely on the many written and pictorial accounts of the building.

Among the texts written by and about architects and their work can be found a broad array of types (i.e., genres) that may be crudely divided into two groups. On the one hand, there exist theoretical texts in classical and

more updated versions, such as Vitruvius's *De Architectura*, or the construction and design manuals studied in modern polytechnics. On the other, there are the more applied or practical texts like design programs, technical reports, or building reviews, among others. These texts differ in their rhetorical purpose(s), in their intended audience(s), and, hence, in their textual organization. Nevertheless, these distinct genres share a number of traits that reflect the idiosyncrasy of the practice they help articulate. This is so whether their acknowledged aim is to furnish real or prospective architects with theoretical foundations and practical guidelines or whether they are concerned with critically assessing design practices.

One of these traits is that, in general, architectural texts are complex, modally heterogeneous artifacts aimed at a multi-literate audience trained to *read* both images and words. This combination of graphic and verbal representations has attracted a great deal of attention by scholars interested in the interaction between the visual and verbal modes in architectural communication (Ackerman and Oates 1996; Medway 1996, 2000; Forty 2000; Markus and Cameron 2002).

Imagery in architectural texts is, furthermore, not simply a property of graphic representation but also of the language used. For, as pointed out in the introduction to this book, figurative language is another outstanding characteristic of architectural discourse. Consider, for instance, professional terminology such as *bowels*, *cladding* or *skin*, which, as happens with many other terms conventionally used for referring to diverse parts of buildings, are unmistakably metaphorical. If, as linguists claim, professional vocabulary reflects how a given community of practice codes reality (Halliday and Martin 1993; Markus and Cameron 2002), then the figurative quality of a large amount of architectural jargon suggests that metaphor plays an important role in architects' thinking.

Indeed, metaphor has not only been an important heuristic tool at different stages of theory formation (Collins 1970; Forty 2000), but also plays an important role in the process of thinking a building, as has been stressed by scholars dealing with architectural design (Lawson and Ming Loke 1997; Casakin and Goldschmidt 1999; Medway and Clark 2003). They have drawn attention to the contribution of metaphor as a first-order design resource, one that is particularly useful in mediating the first, most creative and personal stage of design, as well as the successive reworkings of the preliminary design sketches.

Finally, a particularly important characteristic of much architectural discourse is its evaluative stance. The task of *architectus ingenio* suggests a

compromise between art and craft, personal inclinations, choices and interpretations of spatial form, as well as disciplinary conventions and social, functional, and technical requirements. Likewise, many genres and, specifically, those concerned with design assessment (the main activity of *architectus verborum*) reveal a tension between informativeness and interpretation that finds expression in the same visual-plus-verbal mixture and figurative means involved in the design process. A look at post-construction genres reveals the difficulties of distinguishing between objective descriptions of buildings and subjective views, an issue discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

This brief characterization of architectural discourse is fully explored in the following sections.

1. Rendering space:

The multimodal quality of architectural texts

I have no need whatsoever to draw my designs. Good architecture, how something is to be built, can be written. One can write the Parthenon. (Loos 1924: 139)

Not surprisingly, visual representations of spatial arrangements are crucial components of contemporary architectural texts, given the graphic nature of a large amount of architects' work. A design project usually starts with architects *translating* the wishes of their clients into drawn form by means of sketches which may be reworked as new ideas and requirements are discussed in the meeting(s) prior to signing a contract. These preliminary drawings are then successively elaborated after further discussion with both clients and the members of the architectural team. The ultimate version finally comprises a number of plans and, sometimes, three-dimensional models, the former supplying builders with construction guidelines. Should the building prove noteworthy, the photographs later published in magazines devoted to architectural design exemplify another type of visual representation.

As suggested by this schematic characterization of the design process, visuals in architecture comprise graphic representations of diverse sorts. They nevertheless may be explained as falling into two broad categories. First, we have discipline-specific images like sketches, scale drawings, diagrams, or perspectives. These can be freehand or computer generated, and may involve flat projections of built artifacts (plans, sections, or eleva-

tions) or may attempt to capture the three dimensions of spatial volumes (isometric and axonometric projections).⁵ Such images are a sophisticated coding system whereby architects represent space in a highly schematic way, and are a characteristic component of the most technical genres in the discipline (e.g. technical reports and construction projects). These visuals are also the best exponents of architects' idiosyncratic "orientation toward the world, a work-relevant way of seeing ... embedded within webs of socially organized, situated practices" (Goodwin 2001: 169). Moreover, pictorial devices of this kind not only capture the physical properties of built artifacts (that is, what they look or will look like, even if in a highly schematic form), but also, and most importantly, articulate the complex knowledge structure involved in their design (Larkin and Simon 1987; Tversky 1995; Suwa and Tversky 1997). The second broad type of visuals consists of photographs showing buildings in varying degrees of detail. Instead of schematically decomposing spatial artifacts into their underlying structural systems, these (non-specific) graphic representations capture what they look like after construction. Accordingly, they are a frequent adjunct of post-construction genres, particularly those driven by aesthetic concerns like building reviews, where photographs are as important quantitatively and qualitatively as technical drawings.

Despite their differences, discipline-specific images and photographs share a similar representational concern. Both offer a view of buildings that rests upon their qualities, class inclusion and compositionality or spatial relationships, a representation that allows viewers to define, analyze and/or classify the reality thus schematized in concomitant ways.⁶ Nevertheless, they involve different epistemic stances to the reality they encode or, as scholars dealing with visual design and communication describe it, realize two different kinds of *visual modality* (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Jewitt and Oyama 2001). On the one hand, technical images illustrate *scientific* modality, that is, they display a conventionalized way of configuring reality prototypical of science and technology in general. On the other, photographs are characterized by *naturalistic* modality since, in principle, they are more true to life. Such different epistemologies may explain the high percentage of photographs in aesthetically driven genres versus the preference of technical genres for highly schematic, drawn representations.

However, the fact that pictorial devices can capture both the visual and non-visual properties of buildings does not mean that architects' work is a non-verbal affair. For one thing, images are generally accompanied by some sort of verbal labeling or commentary, such as captions, which sug-

gests that they are not self-explanatory devices. Moreover, as pointed out earlier, architects not only draw their ideas, but also, and most importantly, discuss them throughout the design process.

This going back and forth from words to pictures is described by Ackerman and Oates (1996: 83) as follows:

For the architect, the design problem is both rhetorical and semiotic. The practicing architects that we studied were hired to translate the needs and routines of a client into a plan for a building. But their professional challenge was to read an audience and situation and to produce a design concept that fits their agenda as well as that of their client. This persuasive, rhetorical process involves working with and across a range of graphic and verbal signs. ... Architects begin with a lived or natural site and work back and forth, from image to text, from sketch to verbal description, until they negotiate a reconfiguration of that site.

In other words, although architects are specifically trained for graphic reasoning and communication, and in spite of views on drawing as *the* only medium in architecture, the discipline is also heavily dependent on verbal communication. In the first place, it should be noted that graphic representation is a fairly recent component of a craft transmitted in verbal form for most of its existence. At the same time, a great deal of architects' work involves interacting with people outside the community who, as Ackerman and Oates (1996: 92) put it, "don't see ... don't think visually." Indeed, design scholars have drawn attention to the potential of linguistic descriptions for conveying "shades of meaning not allowed by the drawing" (Lawson and Ming Loke 1997: 175). Likewise, Medway (1996: 36-37) explains the semiotic mixture characteristic of architectural discourse as a way of compensating for images' lack of illocutionary force when compared to linguistic utterances:

drawings just are; they do not say. ... Drawings cannot ... perform speech acts. Except for drawings that act in highly specific and conventionalised contexts as signs for words or categories ... drawings cannot warn, promise, instruct, suggest or assert. ... Just because drawings cannot perform speech acts, however, does not mean that they are devoid of rhetorical force. Certain ways of representing may persuade us to view a planned city square as light and airy, a public building as solid and dignified or a house in its landscape as dramatic. ... But language has a particular ability to convey mood

and meaning through the associations that words bring with them, and this seductive potentiality is particularly important in oral and written presentations of schemes to potential or actual clients. There are thus plenty of reasons why drawing will not on its own do the job architects require to be done and why they have recourse also to writing.

In short, the association between words and pictures characterizing architectural discourse in general has been explained both as a means of facilitating communication between architects and lay people, and as a way of compensating for the pragmatic weakness of graphic representations. However, the differing level of expertise of addresser and addressees is not the only factor contributing to the understanding of the use of images in architectural communication. Rather, the balance between words and pictures is also largely determined by genre. The specific rhetorical goals of any one genre are particularly important in this respect. Thus, those technical and academic texts produced before actual building design and construction, and driven by informative, explanatory concerns (e.g. manuals, treatises, and textbooks), tend to be more linguistically articulated than others. In contrast, post-construction texts with commercial or evaluative goals are profusely illustrated, the building review being a case in point. Academic and technical texts also favor discipline-specific images in contrast to the more artistic graphic representations (mostly photographs) of post-construction genres.

If word-image combinations do not constitute a single, unified semiotic construct, the ways they interact in textual contexts do not display a unique relational pattern either. Captions are particularly illustrative of this point, since their length and degree of elaboration appear to depend on the quality of their accompanying images. Thus, whereas plans and sections are scarcely explicated or verbally described (their captions mainly consisting of labels for the different elements schematized), sketches, scale drawings and, above all, photographs are usually lengthily commented upon in captions. In other words, the different ways in which information is linguistically conveyed in captions suggest that the more scientific the image's modality, the more self-sufficient it is.

Unlike captions, verbal accounts of spatial artifacts in the main text may relate to any image, irrespective of the type of visual representation it exemplifies. Of course, the length of whole texts when compared to captions allows authors to fully develop their views, yet also opens the door for communicative risks. This is particularly the case of evaluative genres like

the building review under discussion in this book. Here, the authorial commentary is often accompanied by such a profusion of graphic data that scholars dealing with such texts have asked, “Are these images read as illustrations of the linguistic text, or is the text a commentary on the images? ... do words and images converge towards similar meanings ... or diverge?” (Markus and Cameron 2002: 151).

Indeed, the highly pictorial – even glossy – quality of contemporary reviews implies that words may become subservient to pictures, rather than the other way round. This becomes more salient if we compare them to reviews dated before the late 1950s, all of which barely include two or three images consisting of free-hand drawings and, less frequently, black-and-white photographs of the building.⁷ Thus, although all in all the argumentative thrust in the genre may still be largely dependent upon verbal commentary, this commentary must refer readers to the images in the texts (carefully chosen by reviewers to back up their claims) given the visual bias of the discipline. This complex relationship between text and image may give rise to informative inconsistencies or problems of interpretation and, accordingly, needs to be taken into account both by writers and by analysts of building reviews, as will be discussed in later chapters.

2. Thinking and talking about space: Metaphors architects live by

Much of the interest of [architecture’s] critical vocabulary goes into the choice of particular metaphors to structure thought and experience. [The question is] why have some metaphors succeeded better than others? (Forty 2000: 43)

Architects have always made use of concepts and entities outside the realm of architecture in order to discuss space, a basic yet abstract and highly complex concept. It is by means of such borrowings from other domains of knowledge that architecture has, largely, reached its current wealth and complexity, and architects have met their rhetorical and practical needs, gradually building a discourse of their own.

A brief look at architectural texts from different periods also reveals that, as happens in other professional communities and disciplines, the figurative apparatus of contemporary architects is, to a large extent, the result of a long intertextual process. For instance, the still pervasive analogies