

Nelson Goodman and Architecture

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Source: *Assemblage*, No. 35 (Apr., 1998), pp. 18-35

Published by: The MIT Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3171236>

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1. Robert Venturi, Structure of Benjamin Franklin's House, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1973–76

Maurice Lagueux Nelson Goodman and Architecture

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Few philosophers have written books or even papers discussing architecture, and among them still fewer have been philosophers of the analytic tradition that has dominated twentieth-century Anglo-Saxon philosophy. Thus it is interesting to note that Nelson Goodman, one of the most important analytic philosophers, has devoted to the question of architecture one brief article entitled “How Buildings Mean” as well as, earlier, a few pages in his *Languages of Art*, the work in which he developed his theory of art in general.¹ Although Goodman's views on art as illustrated through painting, dance, and music have been extensively discussed, his views on architecture have been, for the most part, ignored. The difference in attention given to these various applications of his ideas is partially explained by the fact that Goodman is clearly much less sensitive to architecture than to other arts and that the architectural examples he chooses to illustrate his ideas are not very convincing. When examined in the context of his theses on art in general, however, his thinking about architecture is well worth revisiting. Despite the sketchiness of his discussion of the discipline, his original suggestions can be fruitfully reassessed by those interested in their application to architectural theory. Even when the limitations of these ideas are revealed — and these limitations will be underlined here — the conceptual apparatus on which they are based will



prove to be helpful, at least in characterizing some particular aspects of architecture and its relation to other arts.

To assess Goodman's views on architecture, it is important to recall the structure of *Languages of Art*; in particular, it is useful to remember that its main theses are presented as the respective answers to two questions that, as he himself admits, are relatively banal and only loosely linked together. The first question, which concerns representation in art, can be formulated in the following manner: In what sense does art *represent* nature, and if — as Goodman holds — it is not by imitation, how can we speak of a connection between art and the world to which it refers? This question leads him to define the proper place of representation among the various other symbolization modes actualized by painting and other arts. The second question, which concerns the authenticity of works of art, might be phrased as follows: Does it make sense for an art lover who would acknowledge his inability to distinguish between an original painting and its hypothetically perfect copy, but who knows that one of them is a forgery, to claim on a strictly aesthetic level that the forgery is less valuable than the original? This question leads him to seek differential criteria of authenticity for works of art depending on whether they belong to painting, music, or, eventually, architecture, and hence to discuss problems concerning their very identity. Goodman devotes the first two chapters of *Languages of Art* to the first question and a large part of the following three chapters to the second. In the sixth and final chapter, he shows that the ideas he has set forth in response to these questions clarify one another by constituting — and this is apparently the goal of the whole book — a basis for a theory of symbolic systems applicable to the analysis of aesthetic experience. I propose to examine Goodman's answers to each of these questions insofar as they bear on architecture, starting with the second, which, in contrast to the first, can be discussed before an analysis of his theory of symbolization as such.

The Identity and Authenticity of Works of Architecture

To the proposition that two physically indistinguishable paintings (an authentic one and a forgery that would be a perfect copy of it) *cannot*, on a strictly aesthetic level, be considered of equal value, Goodman responds that such a claim is legitimate. He bases his assertion on an interesting discussion whose conclusions alone will be reported here. For Goodman, the very notion of a painting's authenticity involved in this question presumes that the painting's own identity cannot be determined without reference to the historical conditions of its production. It is, indeed, to the historical conditions of the original painting's production that we refer when we maintain that the very fact that it was executed by the hand of a great master of the past excludes the possibility of considering as the *same* work a copy executed by a forger, as perfect as it might be. Were we to abstain from taking into consideration such historical conditions, we would be forced to conclude that the two paintings, exactly similar in all other regards, are two versions of the same work of art and that the problem of the authenticity of the so-called copy does not arise. For this reason, Goodman proposes the term *autographic* for those works of art, such as paintings, whose "most exact duplication of it does not thereby count as genuine," as opposed to *allographic* works of art, such as musical compositions, whose quite various renditions can be considered equally "authentic."² Naturally, that new renditions of musical works are not forgeries does not imply that these works fail to have their own identity. Thus Goodman claims that the identity of such allographic works is determined by their "compliance" with the requirements of a score that is written in a "notational" language.

After devoting a chapter of *Languages of Art* to the analysis of the properties of notational language and another to the

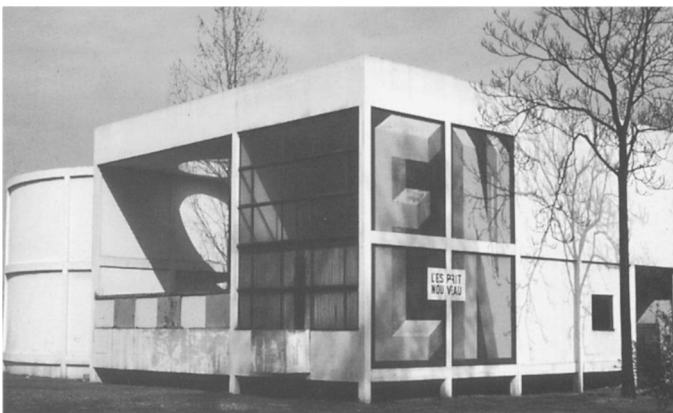
examination of various arts to establish the extent to which they are autographic or allographic, Goodman concludes this review of the arts with three pages on the special case of architecture. At first glance, this art seems to be closer to painting than to music and we would consider it autographic in that a building is the materialization and the final step of a long (historical) process that started with the architect's initial sketches and that was oriented toward the erection of a singular building on a particular site. But, Goodman argues, considering that in a housing scheme, houses like, say, "Smith-Jones Split-Level #17" comply with an architect's plans, we must admit "that architecture has a reasonably appropriate notational system and that some of its works are unmistakably allographic."³ Thus architecture is, in some sense, an allographic art like music. Goodman clearly betrays some hesitations on this ground, however; and, after observing that a copy of the Taj Mahal could hardly be characterized as an "instance of the same work," he acknowledges that "architecture is a mixed and transitional case." Without underestimating the importance of these nuances in Goodman's mind, it seems fair to say that his most original contention on this subject is that the architect's plans can define a work of architecture as a specific work, insofar as this work must comply with their requirements, much as the rendition of a musical work has to comply with those of a musical score.⁴

Let us expand a little further the discussion of the somewhat paradoxical aspect of the alleged allographic character of architectural works.⁵ Although it is entirely in accordance with current usage to consider different renditions of the same symphony (as long as the score is more or less followed) as instances of the same work just as much as the rendition directed by the composer himself, it is far more difficult to allow that a faithful copy of a work of architecture constitutes an instance of the work in question to the same degree as the work we feel obliged to term the "origi-

nal." Certainly, a work of architecture shares with a work of music the property of not being, as a general rule, immediately executed by its creator. In this way, a work of architecture may be posthumous in a sense that can hardly be applied to pictorial work. The Grande Arche de la Défense, for example, is not considered an "unfinished" work, even though Johan Otto von Spreckelsen, its architect, died (having completed the essential plans) during the first stages of its construction. It is even true that the construction of a work can be postponed for a very long time, although not without causing certain theoretical problems that arise when classifying it among the works that together make up the architect's corpus. For example, it was by the end of the 1980s that the Essen Opera House, which Alvar Aalto (who died in 1976) had designed for the same site in the early 1960s, was constructed. This project had been canceled for financial reasons, but was revitalized and realized with the help of Aalto's firm more than a decade after its author's death. Now we can quite easily grant that we are dealing here with an authentic work by Aalto; but if such is the case, why could not any project or even any building come back to life after having been declared genuinely "dead"? In this manner, the famous Barcelona Pavilion built by Mies van der Rohe for the International Exposition of 1929, held in the city that gave it its name, was disassembled shortly afterwards — under conditions such that the materials from which it was constructed disappeared mysteriously — but was recently rebuilt on the site in accordance with its architect's plans using similar materials. Here we can state that the 1929 and 1989 pavilions, which are undoubtedly much more alike than are some interpretations of the same symphony, constitute two instances of the same work and can be identified allographically, even if, when faced with purists upset at not being able to admire Mies's *own* work, we might hesitate to assure them that these are equivalent instances of the same building.



2. Alvar Aalto, Opera House, Essen, Germany, plans by Aalto, 1961–64, constructed 1988



3. Le Corbusier, L'Esprit Nouveau pavilion reconstructed in Bologna, Italy, by José Oubrerie and Giuliano Gresleri, 1977

In other instances of reconstruction, the materials remain identical but the site changes: for example, the USSR Pavilion at Montreal Expo 67, reerected in Moscow, or the medieval church transplanted from the Rhône Valley to Milwaukee, Wisconsin.⁶ Is it reasonable to say that we have visited a medieval church in the American Great Lakes area? In still other cases, both the materials and the site are different, as with the Esprit Nouveau Pavilion built for the Paris Exposition of 1925 by Le Corbusier and rebuilt fifty-two years later in Bologna with the help of one of the architect's assistants and in accordance with the original plans. Is there a difference between the attitude, well described by Goodman, of a person who would refuse to accept that a perfect copy of a Rembrandt is worth as much aesthetically as the original painting by the master and the attitude of one who would not be satisfied with admiring his favorite architect's work in Bologna? How would we react to a fund-raising campaign to *save* the Bologna reconstruction, which is presently deteriorating, when we know that many other works built directly by Le Corbusier desperately need repair as well? Would it not be odd to hold that such reconstructions complying with the original plans are authentic works of an architect, when we tend to downgrade as inauthentic the often admirable reconstruction of the many works of medieval and classical architecture "irremediably" destroyed by war?

Thus, despite the notational nature of architectural plans, that a piece of architecture might be seen as allographic is more difficult to maintain than Goodman seems to suggest.⁷ Of course, this may very well be because in architecture the site is an integral part of the work (a fact almost totally ignored by Goodman). Some works, such as Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater House, illustrate this with *éclat*: could we seriously maintain that a reconstruction of this work anywhere but over its stream constitutes an equivalent instance of it? But it is by no means necessary to resort to such spec-

tacular examples. Contemporary architecture is increasingly sensitive to its dependence on context in a way that does not apply to painting and music; yet we can detect it as well in much older architecture: the Church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane is one of Borromini's masterpieces because it takes brilliant advantage of a particularly bleak site. Were it faithfully duplicated elsewhere, it would become a rather awkward and uselessly distorted building. Or, in a different light, think of the sports arena built by Davis and Brody at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, whose shape echoes in one of its angles the acclaimed shape of the stair along Aalto's Baker House Dormitory, which fronts it. To maintain its (allographic) identity, would a reconstruction of this building elsewhere require a reconstruction of Aalto's building as well? This issue becomes more complicated when a modern work is an annex to an existing building or when it is developed from an older building that has been preserved.⁸ In other and still more difficult cases, the context to which a building is dependent might be largely symbolic: consider Egon Eiermann's Gedächtniskirche, whose modern structure adjoined to the ruins of the original Memorial Church on the Kurfürstendamm has become one of Berlin's most striking architectural symbols. If we were to suppose that a wealthy admirer of this work had erected an exact copy of it somewhere in the New World, even allowing that the architect would have agreed to direct the construction of this "exact" copy, how could we speak of another instance of the same work when the copy has been stripped of all the potential meaning attached to the church in Berlin? As a limiting case, we might imagine the problem of copying the hollow structure that Robert Venturi erected on the site of Benjamin Franklin's house in Philadelphia, since this piece of architecture is nothing but a framed site, or better, nothing but its own symbolic context.

Now, some works of music were conceived to be presented on the occasion of great festivities and their interpretations



4. Davis and Brody, MIT Hockey Rink and Field House, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980–81, view of corner reflecting, in the background, Aalto's Baker House Dormitory, 1947–49

in a different context might be stripped of the symbolic potential that the works would have had on these occasions; nonetheless, these interpretations are authentic renditions of the same work. But the same cannot be said of architectural works. We would not say that we have experienced the feeling associated with Eiermann's church after having visited its hypothetical American reconstruction, while we would acknowledge without hesitation on leaving a concert that we had heard, for example, an interpretation of Handel's *Water Music*, though we did not take part in the festivities that this work was designed to embellish. A musical work might take into account the context present at the time of its creation, but, with the exception of the unrealistic hypothesis according to which a work would have been created only to be destroyed and forgotten after its first rendition, music is not created to exist in a single, particular context. Furthermore, this context is actually outside it, in that the splashes of water jets and the explosion of fireworks would not be considered by its composer an integral part of a musical work like *Water Music*. With a work of architecture, on the other hand, the architect would normally conceive as an integral part of his design, say, the surrounding gardens. Even adjacent woodlands or buildings become part of the work of the architect who makes a point of placing existing trees or neighboring buildings somewhere in his site plans in continuity with what he is designing. True, such a context can be (progressively or abruptly) modified, but the works in question might then be distorted and even destroyed in the eyes of many purists. Is it still possible to admire the architectural charm of villas suffocated by concrete buildings erected where their gardens formerly extended? Certainly, some architectural works have been designed to be produced serially and not for a specific context, not only the reproducible Split-Level referred to by Goodman, but also more respected works like Le Corbusier's Domino House or Buckminster Fuller's

Dymaxion House. But these architectural achievements, which might be seen as interesting ideas rather than genuine works of art, are clearly atypical of architecture.

Hence, works of architecture can hardly be characterized as allographic, since, if we disregard a few atypical exceptions, the strictest fidelity to its plans will not be enough to turn a "reconstruction" of a building into another instance of it. Yet neither are they autographic, since their identity is not really defined by the historical conditions of their production, unless we consider that the site is in some way included in what Goodman means by the "historical conditions" of the production of a work of art. But if such is the proper interpretation of Goodman's views, it would cease to be obvious that paintings could qualify as autographic; for unless they are structurally linked with architecture (like frescoes or altar-pieces), they are typically context independent and can be exhibited anywhere in the world without loss of authenticity. If it turns out that the immediate involvement of the architect in the process of production is less important than the context of its building when it comes to rejecting the strictly allographic character of a "mixed and transitional case" like architecture, the bipolar character of Goodman's distinction might well be questioned. Be that as it may, the point here is not so much to challenge Goodman's distinction between autographic and allographic arts, but rather, to show how such a discussion can be used to better grasp what makes an art like architecture quite different from other arts. Indeed, despite this interrogation, the distinction as such will not be a less helpful tool for characterizing what makes the authenticity and the identity of a building in contrast with that of a painting or a musical work.

Goodman's Theory of Symbolization

It is unsurprising that Goodman, who has been interested for quite some time in linguistic systems, has attempted to

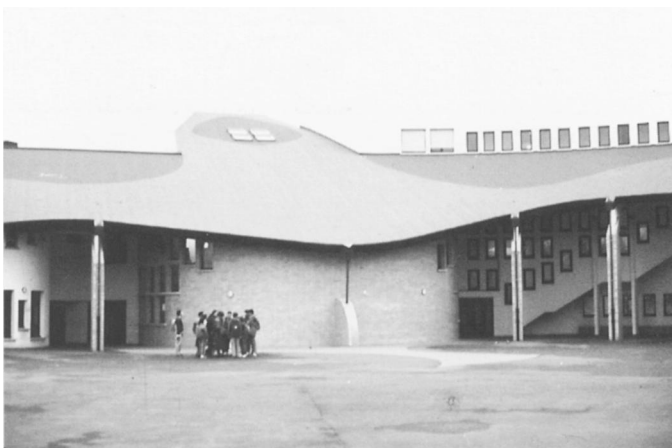
bring out the systematic dimensions of symbolism when analyzing aesthetic experience. Indeed, he developed a general theory of symbolization (which, in his mind, is nothing else than a general theory of reference) in seeking to address aesthetic questions with the aid of theoretical instruments similar to those he had used previously when examining various questions in the philosophy of science and the philosophy of language.⁹ Yet to conclude from all this that Goodman's philosophy of art is simply the application of his philosophy of language to art would be unjust and deceptive. For although he holds that a painting that is a work of art is clearly based on a "depiction system," he refuses to consider this system a language.¹⁰ In his view, there can be no question here of analyzing painting as a language, but rather of analyzing it in a similar way to language, without presupposing that language takes priority in this matter. In brief, painting and language are both systems of symbolization. It is in this context that Goodman claims to clarify, by unearthing the rules of such systems, the question of the *representation* of nature by art.

Representation, for Goodman, is simply one means of symbolization, and this is true even at a second degree: On the one hand, representation is but one mode of denotation among others, like verbal description, musical notation, and quotation. On the other hand, denotation itself is but one mode of symbolization (or reference) among others, like exemplification, expression, and chains of complex symbolization derived from them. Goodman holds that denotation occurs when a symbol of any kind is applied to an object or an event; for example, when, to characterize an animal, we use the word *dog* or draw a picture of a dog. By contrast, exemplification corresponds to the inversion (from the point of view of the referential direction) of an act of denotation: that which is denoted can refer to that which denotes it by exemplifying it. For example, a dog called Rex

exemplifies the property that the word *dog* and our drawing aim to convey. Yet it is important to see that this distinction between these two referential directions is based on a fundamental asymmetry. Logically, denotation precedes exemplification and constitutes a necessary condition of it. But it is not the case that everything denoted exemplifies that which denotes it.¹¹ Within the linguistic context in which the notion of denotation was invented, the basic idea is as follows: A predicate denotes a property belonging to various objects; because of this, any one of these objects can *in principle* exemplify the predicate that denotes one of its properties or, said more briefly, can exemplify this property. Yet Goodman warns us that to exemplify, it is not sufficient for an object to have one of its properties denoted. Rather, this object must also *refer explicitly* to the predicate that denotes this property. And given that, for Goodman, reference and symbolization are equivalent notions, such an explicit reference — such an exemplification — can be considered as a mode of symbolization totally distinct from denotation.

To illustrate what this different mode of symbolization might be, Goodman makes constant use of a particular example; namely, the tailor's fabric sample. This sample refers explicitly to something that it in no way denotes. But to what does it refer? Clearly, to some of its own properties (color, texture, etc.) to the exclusion of others (dimension, shape, etc.). Thus he would say that the sample *is denoted* by predicates ("yellow," "silky," etc.) to which *it refers according to the mode of exemplification*. Therefore, in his more general (that is, not strictly linguistic) theory of symbolization, Goodman retains the term *sample* to designate that which exemplifies (thus possessing at least one property denoted by a predicate or label), and he adopts the term *label* to designate that which is exemplified (and which necessarily *denotes* one of the sample's properties). A label conceived in this manner is not necessarily verbal, but

it has the same characteristics as a predicate. For instance, Goodman maintains that the gestures of an orchestra conductor are labels denoting the sounds that he expects, even if, occasionally, these gestures might exemplify some of their properties, such as a particular cadence of which, in that case, they are a sample.¹² In fact, if they generally only *denote* sounds, it is because they are not themselves such sounds, in contrast — to use his example — to the gestures of a physical training instructor, which are clearly samples of the movements the instructor wants to see executed. In brief, Goodman is stating that labels denote whereas samples illustrate. Note that these two terms are relatively appropriate for his general theory of symbolization, since “label” has the advantage of referring less directly to an entirely linguistic universe of discourse than “predicate,” and since “sample” has the advantage of being both perfectly general and evocative of the illuminating example of the fabric sample. Having clarified the distinction between denotation and exemplification, we will explicate the meaning, according to Goodman, of other modes of symbolization through a discussion of their potential application to architecture.



5. Ricardo Porro with A. de la Noue, Elsa Triolet College, St. Denis, France, 1989

Exemplification, Expression, and Architecture

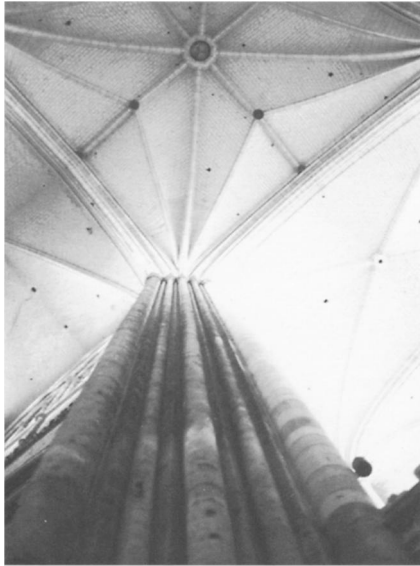
To grasp the pertinence of this general theory of symbolization to reflection on art, suffice it to say that it allows us to account, in an analytically coherent language, for various types of symbolism that might confer an aesthetic dimension on works of art. And for self-evident reasons, such a complex theory of symbolization seems particularly welcome when dealing with nonrepresentational arts like music or architecture, which can refer to the world through denotation (namely, through representation) only in very exceptional cases. In the short article that he dedicated to architecture, Goodman mentions some of these exceptions:

Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House and Antonio Gaudí's Sagrada Família, which might represent, respectively, a group of sailboats and the peaks of Montserrat.¹³ Other architectural masterpieces that Goodman does not mention are still less equivocal: for example, both the famous TWA Terminal Building by Eero Saarinen at Kennedy Airport in New York and the less widely known school by Ricardo Porro in Saint-Denis to the north of Paris explicitly *represent* great birds, in the first instance, an eagle ready to take off and, in the second, a dove striving to impart peaceful sentiments to children in the playground. We might also think, as Goodman does, of a popular type of architecture that literally takes the shape, usually for advertising purposes, of animals or of edible goods, such as the pathetic duck in Riverside, Long Island, rendered famous by Venturi (who made it the magnified prototype of what he called "duck" buildings). But these are the rare exceptions.

For this reason, an analysis that highlights exemplification as a quite different type of reference accounts much more effectively for the ways in which works of architecture symbolize things. In this context, Goodman gives some examples that do not strike me as among the best available. According to him, the Schroeder House in Utrecht by Gerrit Rietveld exemplifies "certain characteristics of its structure," while the Church of Vierzehnheiligen in Northern Bavaria exemplifies a structure derived from a cruciform plan.¹⁴ The Rietveld house is surely an excellent example in some respects, although, at least where structural characteristics are concerned, that it was, for economic reasons, constructed in stucco-covered bricks imitating concrete renders it a delicate one. As for the Vierzehnheiligen church, one of the most remarkable works of the German baroque, its cruciform plan is so altered by its interplay with circles and ellipses that the example seems to illustrate less a case of exemplification as such than the complex interrelations to which it might very



6. Richard Rogers, P.A.
Technology Center, Highstown,
New Jersey, 1982



7. Amiens Cathedral, France, thirteenth century, view of one of the pillars at the crossing



8. Günther Domenig, Central Savings Bank, Vienna, Austria, 1975–79

subtly give rise. Nonetheless, the cases of exemplification of more salient traits in great works of architecture remain multiple. Certainly, we might think of high-tech works that proudly display their structure, like Richard Rogers’s Pompidou Centre in Paris (with Renzo Piano), his Lloyd’s of London Building, or his P.A. Technology Center in Highstown, New Jersey. Or we might think of more “brutalist” works, including numerous stadiums and arenas with visible concrete ribs. All of these works exemplify their structural properties by rendering them obvious. But it would be enough to point out that most Gothic cathedrals spectacularly exemplify the manner in which the impressive weight of their vaults, arching toward heaven, is distributed through a system of articulated buttresses along the paths designed for grounding it securely.

And it is not only such structural features that can be thus exemplified. In architecture as in painting, a spot of color, whose effect has been carefully foreseen by the architect, allows for the exemplification of the qualities of this particular color in a specific context; as is illustrated by the Schroeder House itself and more clearly by Aalto’s Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Paimio, the vibrant color of which, superimposed on a perfectly white surface, immediately captures the attention of any visitor. A whole range of building characteristics are exemplified in this manner. Solidity is eloquently exemplified by most of what H. H. Richardson built. Verticality is dramatically exemplified by countless Gothic cathedrals, such as Amiens or Cologne, as well as by innumerable modern skyscrapers.¹⁵ Horizontality is clearly exemplified by Wright’s “Prairie Style” houses as well as by Mies’s Crown Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology or his New National Gallery in Berlin. To complete this geometrical register, even obliqueness is exemplified, in a disconcerting manner, by the forty-five-degree-angle houses built by Piet Blom in the Netherlands, at Helmond and at Rotterdam.

What is still more interesting in Goodman's analysis is that his general theory of reference makes room for another symbolization mode, expression, which, in his view, is simply the exemplification of a property possessed *metaphorically* rather than literally. It is in this metaphorical manner that so many Romanesque churches, as well as, in a somewhat unexpected fashion, certain company headquarters located in the countryside, express tranquillity. Conversely, so many baroque churches express movement; as do, in more recent examples, Günther Domenig's curious bank in Vienna, with its dynamically undulating façade, or Raili and Reima Piëttilä's library in Tampere, Finland — even if some of their very functions, prayer or reading, say, rather evoke calmness. Here again, Goodman has chosen different examples, but the important point is that the *expressed* property is possessed in a uniquely metaphorical sense, since inanimate and stationary buildings can no more be calm than in movement.

This definition of exemplification strictly based on the possession of a quality raises, however, an apparent theoretical problem, especially in the case of architecture, and this needs some clarification. Goodman assures us that a symbol only exemplifies or expresses properties that it *has*, whether literally as in exemplification or metaphorically as in expression.¹⁶ But is this really tenable? In architecture, at least, it certainly seems that some buildings exemplify or express properties that they *do not* possess. A fairly typical case of exemplification may help us to see the problem: Many buildings built by Mies after his arrival in North America — especially since his groundbreaking Lake Shore Drive Apartments in Chicago — are characterized by I-beams that are literally applied outside of the walls, along the length of the supporting pillars down to the base of the lower-level windows. Although this architectural device is not justified structurally, we must nevertheless affirm that it strongly contributes to the vigorous manifestation of the undeniable structural purity of these buildings. Thus we might say that, because of this trick, the buildings



9. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Lake Shore Drive Apartments, Chicago, Illinois, 1949–51, view of corner I-beam.



10. Bramante, Santa Maria presso San Satiro, Milan, Italy, 1482–86, view of trompe-l'oeil choir.

clearly exemplify these properties. Here, this trick merely adds to the exemplification of a property actually possessed by the building. Yet, since it is a trick, it might equally have expressed a property *not* possessed by the building. This is illustrated by the many instances of trompe-l'oeil that we find in architecture.¹⁷ It is well known that the architects of ancient Greece developed the art of arranging temple columns so that, through systematic modifications that compensated for various optical deformations, they created the illusion of a mathematical regularity that, given this very intervention, was clearly not present.¹⁸ During the high Renaissance, when trompe-l'oeil was still exceptional, Bramante, lacking room to provide a regular choir to the church Santa Maria presso San Satiro in Milan, did not hesitate to use painting to create a perspectival illusion to suggest that the church was a good example of a cruciform structure.¹⁹ But by contrast with most churches, Bramante's church does not possess this quality since its plan is T-shaped. During the baroque period, of course, such techniques became the rule; yet let us consider another example from a country that has tended to be especially resistant to the baroque and to trompe-l'oeil. The Hôtel de Matignon, presently the official residence of the French prime minister, had to be built on a site that prevented its façades — overlooking, respectively, courtyard and garden — from both being symmetrically designed in relation to a single central axis. Since a well-balanced axis was associated with the image of nobility, Jean Courtonne accentuated the symmetry of each of the façades so as to suggest the existence of such an ideal axiality of the whole building. Although the Hôtel de Matignon does not possess this property, its clever architect gave the impression that its façades, uncentered as they may be one in relation with the other, “exemplify” most eloquently the axiality of this type of building.²⁰

It is important to recognize that the above-cited examples of trompe-l'oeil are, in no sense, cases of *metaphorical* posses-

sion of a property. To help us understand what he means by this, Goodman explains that an object possesses a property metaphorically when this property can only be attributed to it by virtue of a type of intentional “category mistake” through which we attempt to expand the power of words.²¹ His favorite illustration of such a thing is the painting that is said to express a certain sense of sadness. If this painting expresses sadness, it is because, in a sense, we can say that this very painting *is* sad and thus possesses the property of sadness. But the painting can only possess this property metaphorically, since, being incapable of feelings, it cannot literally be called “sad” without our committing a category mistake. We are clearly faced with a type of category mistake when stating that a church is calm or that a bank is nervous, but it is hard to say how this would be the case when stating that the Hôtel de Matignon is perfectly axially organized in its plans and in its construction. This last judgment would not be a category mistake, it would simply be a falsity. It sounds quite reasonable indeed to say metaphorically, Domenig’s bank is as nervous as a building can be, but it would be absurd to say that the Hôtel de Matignon is as axial as a building can be. If its architect nonetheless managed to make the Hôtel de Matignon express a kind of axial quality, it cannot be according to Goodman’s sense of “expression,” because the property expressed here is possessed neither literally nor metaphorically.

Here again my goal is less to challenge Goodman’s analysis than to adapt it to the peculiarities of architecture. As he is primarily concerned with highlighting the complexity of symbolization, nothing prevents us from imagining that, besides denotation and exemplification, there are other ways to symbolize that he does not explicitly characterize in his discussion of aesthetic experience. In any case, Goodman clearly allows for such a possibility since he does not limit the modes of symbolization to those he applies to art. In-

deed, he refers to multiple “routes of reference” and especially to complex modes of symbolization that are reducible to simple ones through more or less complex chains of reference.²² In this context, to cover the trompe-l’oeil cases that are so important in architecture, it might be useful to define explicitly such a complex mode of symbolization — one that I propose to call *suggestion*. Let us say that an object can symbolically suggest a property that it *does not* really possess, if it possesses some other feature through which it represents (or denotes in some other way) a third object that itself possesses and exemplifies the suggested property. For example, San Satiro symbolically suggests the property of being cruciform, which it does not really possess, because it possesses the property of being painted in some illusionistic way through which it represents a typical cruciform church that itself possesses and exemplifies the property of being cruciform. But can we say that San Satiro represents a cruciform church? Certainly, the painting on its front wall represents an apsidal choir, but can we say that the *whole* church represents a cruciform church? If we do, should we not say as well that any cruciform church represents any other one? The only way to save the idea that San Satiro, but not any cruciform church, represents a church that exemplifies cruciformity is by insisting that through its front painting, San Satiro manifests the *intention* to represent a cruciform church; whereas in other churches there is no intention to represent anything else. But this would introduce intentionality into the very notion of representation. If such is the case, this attempt to reduce “suggestion” to a composite mode of symbolization (to the representation of a sample) would reveal that there is no real symbolization without an intent to symbolize. After all, any clothespin does not represent any other one, but Claes Oldenberg’s giant *Clothespin* in Philadelphia represents a clothespin because, as a work of art, it manifests an intention to do so. Be that as it may, the merit of Goodman’s conceptual apparatus is less to re-

veal this trait of symbolization than to characterize and to distinguish with some precision the various ways through which a work of art symbolizes.

For example, it is interesting to distinguish exemplification from what I have just called “suggestion,” even if suggestion, like exemplification and expression — and in contrast to denotation, which takes the opposite route — goes from the object of art toward the symbolized property. Indeed, exemplification is usefully characterized as an inversion of the referential movement of a denotation and there can be no denoting of a property without its being possessed by that which is denoted. Now, in the case of *trompe-l’oeil*, there can be no question of the *inversion* of the referential movement of any denotation. The predicate *axial*, indeed, does not denote the Hôtel de Matignon, since the Hôtel de Matignon does not *possess* axiality, neither literally nor metaphorically. Yet this building is no less eloquently *suggestive* of an axial organization than the Lake Shore Drive Apartments are suggestive of structural purity. If the present analysis is well founded, we have to conclude that the ways of symbolizing at work in aesthetic experience are relatively complex and that this increases the usefulness of Goodman’s groundbreaking attempt to use analytical means to describe the richness of the symbolic world.

Naturally, we can object that most of such aesthetic symbolization can also be described with more natural language. Aesthetic experiences derived from *trompe-l’oeil*, like the experience provided by San Satiro, can be quite satisfactorily described by phenomenological or psychological means. But the point of a systematic approach like Goodman’s is not to reveal for each of these modes of symbolization dimensions that cannot otherwise be perceived. Rather, if Goodman’s analysis is worth revisiting, it is because it offers a conceptual apparatus that permits us to compare symbolization as it works in various arts and even

to relate aesthetic symbolization with other forms of reference occurring in other fields of experience.

When is Architecture?

It is true that Goodman, somewhat ambitiously, expects still more from his analysis. According to him, such a theory of symbolizing could considerably help to solve one of the most fundamental problems of aesthetics; namely, knowing what characterizes a work of *art*. While this question — which Goodman has aptly reformulated as, when is art? —²³ is hard to solve for any art, it seems even less answerable when considering functional arts like architecture. We cannot answer it simply by saying that architecture is identified with what professional architects build. Indeed, it may be possible for a respected architect to build functional buildings without aiming to “do architecture,” whereas it is much more difficult to imagine that a professional painter could spend a lifetime applying color to a canvas without aiming to do painting. In such a context, it is difficult to determine which buildings executed by entrepreneurs and engineers from architects’ plans are to be counted as works of architecture (or as works of art) and which should be considered as mere functional buildings without artistic pretensions. The answer that Goodman’s analysis claims to vindicate relies on symbolism as the criterion of judgment: “a building is a work of art only insofar as it signifies, means, refers, symbolizes in some way.”²⁴

At first glance, it seems indeed that the conceptual precision and coherence of Goodman’s theoretical framework, which, in many regards, differentiates it from more literary approaches to symbolism, might constitute a helpful tool in distinguishing a true work of art from a purely functional object. As promising as it may look, this approach will not do, nonetheless, without allowing for at least two problematic ambiguities, the first related to the asymmetrical structure of the various modes of symbolization and the second to the con-

nection between art and symbolism. In observing that very few buildings represent something, as we have seen, Goodman concludes that architecturally significant buildings symbolize (or mean) through other modes, essentially derived from exemplification. But we have also seen that exemplification is based on an asymmetrical relationship and that it is not necessarily the case that everything denoted exemplifies that which denotes it. Goodman, however, sometimes seems to hesitate on this point. He states, for example, that monosyllabic words like *short* and *long* are denoted by the word *short* and that they are samples of this word that they exemplify.²⁵ Yet to affirm this, we must take for granted that the second condition required for exemplification — namely, reference to a given property — is present here. But, in what sense might we claim that the short length of the words *short* and *long* actually *refers* to what is meant by the word *short*? Could these short words be considered so clearly symbols of shortness that we could correctly say that they *exemplify* this property? By considering that their very shortness is sufficient to qualify such words as samples of shortness, Goodman seems to suggest that possessing a quality (being denoted) is sufficient for exemplifying (being a sample).²⁶ It is not in such a loose way that he uses the fabric sample to *refer explicitly* to the color yellow. It is a more restrained sense of the word *exemplification* that is illustrated by this example and it is only in this more restrained sense that exemplification is a fruitful concept for analyzing the type of symbolizing that characterizes art and architecture.²⁷

So, to exemplify, that which is denoted must also *refer* to that which denotes it, and refer to it in a particular mode defined as “exemplification.” Yet the criterion that would allow us to recognize the presence of this particular mode is by no means clear. Not being in a position to provide us with such a criterion, Goodman instead offers the illuminating example of the fabric sample; but, unfortunately,

this example cannot be considered representative of what is going on in art. Indeed, as Goodman has clearly shown, the sample exemplifies its color and texture, properties that it does possess, rather than other properties, like its shape and size, that it equally possesses, because it shares the first properties and not the second with the garment that the tailor wishes to make. Thus the relationship between a sample and a label (“yellow” or “silky”) is determined, in a sense, with the help of a third term; namely, the garment. Now, in representational art, it is *also* the case that the work of art exemplifies a property that belongs to a third term; namely, the depicted object. But in nonrepresentational art, and especially in architecture, which is so rarely representational, this is not typically the case. And remember it is precisely in dealing with nonrepresentational art that exemplification and expression take such a central place in Goodman’s analysis of art and architecture. Amiens Cathedral exemplifies its verticality, a property that it undoubtedly possesses given that its columns soar in a single jet to the summit of the nave. But if this cathedral exemplifies these properties rather than others such as heaviness, which it equally possesses, it is *not* by virtue of the fact that it shares the first property but not the second with something else. The cathedral is a sample of verticality, but if it is not, for example, a sample of heaviness in the same way, this is because it does not symbolize heaviness in the same way as verticality, as can only be indicated by an aesthetic sense or by a symbolic view of the world, which cannot be clarified by Goodman’s analysis of exemplification. Here again, it seems that there is exemplification when an intention to exemplify is involved, but this can hardly provide an easily applicable criterion.²⁸ In such a context, to answer the crucial question of when is art? we must first answer the question of when actually is exemplification? And to such a question, the answer remains largely open.

A similar problem arises when we consider expression instead of literal exemplification. It is true that we do not face, as

such, the problem raised by asymmetry. Indeed, even if an object does not necessarily exemplify any property it really possesses, such an object seems necessarily to *express* any property it *metaphorically* possesses. If we say metaphorically that movement is everywhere in a baroque church, it is because it expresses movement. The problem of finding what characterizes a work of art is not necessarily made easier, however. In this context, indeed, to answer the question, when is art? requires that we first answer the question, when is a property metaphorically possessed and actually expressed? And to such a question also the answer remains largely open.

The second ambiguity that poses a problem for Goodman's solution to this fundamental problem of aesthetics stems from the condition that things that clearly exemplify or express some property do not necessarily exemplify or express in an *aesthetic* manner. As Goodman himself states, "Of course, not all symbolic functioning is aesthetic."²⁹ American theme parks, for example, are full of "kitsch" buildings that are highly symbolic in Goodman's sense — they represent, exemplify, or express many things — but that are characterized as kitsch precisely by those who want to deny their truly aesthetic character or to deny that they can count as real "architecture." Incidentally, we find ourselves confronted with this particular ambiguity when, in order to overcome the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of exemplification, we look for an example in architecture that might exemplify as unequivocally as Goodman's fabric sample. The building world seems to provide such an example in the model house in an entrepreneurial housing development. Such a model serves exactly the same role as the sample: it exemplifies some of companion houses' properties (general plan, dimensions, quality of materials, etc.) to the exclusion of others (site, orientation, colors, etc.). Yet, even if the model house exemplifies as unequivocally as the fabric sample, it clearly does not exemplify in an

aesthetic manner and therefore does not constitute an example of a work of "architecture."

In the end, Goodman's criterion of symbolization does not really permit us to solve the formidable problem of the specificity of a work of art or work of architecture. So what is its use? When applied to architecture, Goodman's analysis provides a set of technical concepts that allows us to clarify the issue and to construct a framework for further discussion. Even if further attempts to answer the question of when is architecture? turn out to be a dead end, we have seen that Goodman's theory of symbolization and his distinction between autographic and allographic art can help to characterize, respectively, the specificity of the symbolization involved in architecture and the specific dimensions of the identity of an architectural work. While such conceptual clarifications tend to open a program of research rather than to provide a set of definitive statements, they represent, in some sense, one of the most fascinating contributions of philosophical analysis — and especially of analytic philosophy — to the theory of architecture.

Notes

I would like to thank Mary Baker, Andrew Connochie, Stéphan D'Amour, Olaf De Winter, Daniel Dumouchel, Nelson Goodman, Marc Grignon, Jim McGillivray, Lucie K. Morisset, Luc Noppen, and Bruce Toombs for their very useful comments and Erik Litwack who did a first translation from the French of an earlier unpublished sketch of this paper. Financial support from the SSHRC, Ottawa, and the Fonds FCAR, Quebec, has also been very useful.

1. "How Buildings Mean," published earlier in *Domus* (May 1986), has been reprinted in Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z.

Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1988). Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), has been discussed in a great number of papers among which none, to my knowledge, considered specifically the case of architecture.

2. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 113.

3. *Ibid.*, 221.

4. *Ibid.*, 218–21. In a similar way, Robert Wicks compares architecture to music and architectural plans to musical scores to discuss the problem of a building's authen-

ticity in the context of its restoration. See "Architectural Restoration: Resurrection or Replication?" *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34, no. 2 (April 1994): 163–69. See also a reply to this paper, A. MacC.

Armstrong, "The Identity of a Work of Architecture," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 35, no. 2 (April 1995): 165–67.

5. Goodman's only examples in these pages are, in fact, Smith-Jones Split-Level #17 and the Taj Mahal; see *Languages of Art*, 221.

6. I refer to the St. Joan of Arc Chapel reerected on the campus of Marquette University in Milwaukee. Strictly speaking, only the essential materials of these buildings remain identical, since the solders of the pavilion and the mortar of the church were, no doubt, partially replaced.

7. Naturally, the problem is quite different if we refer to drawn, by contrast with built, architecture.

8. Examples of the former might be the wings that Robert Venturi added to Cass Gilbert's Museum in Oberlin, Ohio, and later to the National Gallery in London; an example of the later, the Orsay Museum in Paris.

9. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 169.

10. *Ibid.*, 41.

11. *Ibid.*, 58–59.

12. *Ibid.*, 61–62.

13. Goodman, *Reconceptions in Philosophy*, 34.

14. *Ibid.*, 38.

15. Incidentally, such examples illustrate quite well what Goodman means by the asymmetry of exemplification: Amiens Cathedral is an extremely heavy monument along with being strikingly vertical; however, it

exemplifies its verticality yet in no way its heaviness.

16. See, for example Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 85.

17. In architecture, art often consists in proceeding in such a manner as to make buildings appear to be other than what they are. When an architect succeeds in giving us the impression that a building is larger or higher than it really is, he can view himself as having gotten the most out of his art. Such a conception of architecture was eloquently heralded, long ago, by Geoffrey Scott in the fifth chapter of *The Architecture of Humanism* (1914; New York: Norton, 1974).

18. On this point, we can consult A. W. Lawrence, *Greek Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957), chap. 15, or any other of the classical analyses of this phenomenon, starting with Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, bk. 3, chap. 3, 11–13, and bk. 4, chap. 4, 2–3.

19. See Peter Murray, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance*, 3d ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 113–15. This church is frequently, and more simply, designated by the name "San Satiro," which is, strictly speaking, the name of the old chapel it has integrated to its transept.

20. See Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, 7th ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 334–35.

21. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 73.

22. See Nelson Goodman, "Routes of Reference," in *Of Mind and Other Matters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 55–71.

23. Since, according to Goodman, any object might, under some cir-

cumstances, begin to manifest aesthetic symbolism and, from this fact, to function as a work of art, the important issue is to know under which circumstances (or when) such a thing happens. See Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), pt. 4, 57–70.

24. Goodman, *Reconceptions in Philosophy*, 33.

25. Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 59.

26. This ambiguity has not been overlooked by Goodman's critics, but its problematic character for Goodman's answer to the question of when is art? has to be especially underlined at this point.

27. Naturally, the point is not to deny that, in logical analysis, it might be highly convenient that a term like *exemplification* be available to designate a relation that is simply the opposite of denotation. In this logical sense, anything denoted would exemplify that which denotes it, but it is not the case with the concept that Goodman applies to art after illustrating it with the fabric sample.

28. This point has been especially suggested to me by Jim McGillivray.

29. Goodman, *Reconceptions in Philosophy*, 33.

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