



Canadian Social Science
Vol. 11, No. 7, 2015, pp. 117-129
DOI: 10.3968/7240

ISSN 1712-8056[Print]
ISSN 1923-6697[Online]
www.cscanada.net
www.cscanada.org

Deconstructivism: Translation From Philosophy to Architecture

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Received 4 April 2015; accepted 8 June 2015

Published online 26 July 2015

Abstract

There has always been a significant interaction between architecture and the human sciences, such as philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Intellectual and especially philosophical currents of thought have influenced architecture at the time that it was created. This research article examines the study of the philosophical current of “deconstruction” and its relation to deconstructivist architecture. First, the research explains the basic principles of this philosophy, which began with the work of Jacques Derrida. Next, it defines the basic terms and vocabulary of this philosophy. Then, this research identifies the deconstruction concepts that were transferred to architecture and became the basis of deconstructivist architectural styles. Deconstructivist projects and buildings initially seem to be fragmented and lack any visual logic; however, they are unified under the principles and concepts of deconstruction philosophy. The “transfer” of the concepts of deconstruction to architecture was not direct and literal; some concepts were modified and renamed to suit architecture. Moreover, iconic deconstructivist architects were not committed to all concepts of this philosophy; they were known to focus on one or two concepts in deconstruction and make them fundamental principles of their personal styles in architecture. Peter Eisenman focused on the concepts of presentness and trace, Daniel Libeskind concentrated on the concept of absence, and Frank Gehry focused on binary oppositions and free play. Finally, a deconstructivist architect is not as free as a reader or a philosopher; not all that one can do or apply in language and philosophy can be done and applied in architecture.

Key words: Deconstruction; Deconstructivism; Jacques Derrida; Peter Eisenman; Presentness; Trace

Hoteit, A. (2015). Deconstructivism: Translation From Philosophy to Architecture. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(7), 117-129. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/7240> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7240>

INTRODUCTION

Architecture is one of the oldest human crafts. It began with the birth of man and accompanied him through the different stages of his development, changed as he changed and mirrored his different influences. Therefore, architecture, similar to man, is influenced by society, customs, traditions, intellect, politics and economics (Hoteit, 2015).

Architecture is not just a physical art; it is a social humane art. Consequently, any new idea or principle that is present in a certain society is reflected in its architecture. In fact, architectural designs are similar to writings. By reading them, we can understand the structure of the society where they were built, its social relationships, and its overview of life and the outside world (Hoteit, 2015; Hoteit & Fares, 2014). From here, there has always been a significant interaction between architecture and the human sciences, such as philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Intellectual, especially philosophical, currents of thought have always influenced architecture at the time it was created (Hoteit, 2015). Thus, philosophy employs architecture to represent its ideas, whereas architecture exploits philosophy to create an existence that carries profound implications and dimensions that ultimately allow it to transcend the definitiveness of matter (Wigely, 1993; Hoteit, 2009).

This research examines the study of deconstruction and its relation to deconstructivist architecture. First, the

research explains the basic principles of this philosophy – which are led by Jacques Derrida. Next, it defines the basic terms and vocabulary of this philosophy. Then, this research observes the process of translating (transferring) the ideas of deconstruction to architecture and the suitable intellectual environment that allowed this transfer. Subsequently, it identifies the deconstruction concepts that were transferred to architecture and became the basis of deconstructivist architectural styles. The research also explains how these concepts were reflected in the architectural styles of many iconic architects of deconstructivism. Finally, it discusses these ideas, their compatibility with the essence of architecture, and their applicability to different domains of architecture.

1. DECONSTRUCTION

Deconstruction is a “post-structuralism” school of philosophy and literary criticism that began in the late 1960’s. Deconstruction caused controversy among Western intellectuals who were divided into the advocates and the critics of deconstruction. Nevertheless, deconstruction has changed the concepts of many intellectuals, theorists, and academics, and it impacted many creative domains, especially novels, poetry, architecture, the fine arts, music, etc..

The term “deconstruction” was used for the first time by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his book “*De La Grammatologie*” (1967). This book not only was the reason behind Derrida’s fame but also was considered the fundamental text of deconstruction criticism.

Through its founder, Jacques Derrida, deconstruction calls for many unconventional ideas and principles that, at the time, stirred many discussions and sometimes, misconceptions among intellectuals. These ideas did not arise from nothing. On the contrary, deconstructionists either reinvented the ideas of prior philosophers (Nietzsche, Heidegger) or refuted them (Hegel, Husserl).

Deconstruction attempts to dismantle Western metaphysics, which is based on fixed and unsurpassable convictions. To do that, Derrida doubted every conviction of the Western philosophical tradition, beginning with the convictions of Plato.

The most significant domains tackled by deconstruction can be summarized by a) the centrality of presence; b) logocentrism; c) phonocentrism; d) the centrality of language; e) binary oppositions; and f) the undecidables.

2. THE CENTRALITY OF PRESENCE

Since Plato and until Hegel, Western metaphysics was based on the centrality of presence, i.e., that existence lies in presence; “The determination of being as presence in all the senses of this word” (Heidegger, 1962).

According to metaphysics, presence is defined and contained in the present or the “now”. Only the present moment exists, whereas the past and the future are absent because the past has already ended, and the future is yet to come (Derrida, 1972). Derrida rejects this concept because both the past and the present depend on the presence of the present. Accordingly, the future is an anticipated presence, whereas the past is a previous presence, and explaining what is currently happening requires conjuring absent (un-present) moments (Munawar, 1996).

The centrality of presence encapsulates the self as the conscious, the ego, the “I”. Thus, in all its aspects, consciousness is self-presence, i.e., it is the self-perception of presence (Derrida, 1972). Accordingly, presence means the closeness of the self to itself, i.e., unifying the self with the selves that are identical to it (*Le Même*). Thus, we can say that metaphysics is the perception of presence or the perception of the identical.

Derrida (1995) rejects the philosophy of presence; he believes in the philosophy of absence that ultimately involves the presence of an unconscious part of the self, which is the subconscious that was discovered by Freud. The subconscious is essential to the perception of consciousness. It is the memory of absence and forgetting.

Derrida’s objective was not privileging absence over presence, but it was deconstructing the idea of the centrality of presence through a constant attachment of presence to absence. There is no absolute presence or absolute absence, but there is the ‘trace’. “Every so-called ‘present’, or ‘now’ point, is always already compromised by a trace, or a residue of a previous experience, that precludes us ever being in a self-contained ‘now’ moment” (Derrida, 1973).

2.1 Logocentrism

Deconstruction requires rejecting Logocentrism, an idea that Western tradition agreed on even before Plato’s time until Saussure. Originally, ‘logos’ was a Greek word. It is one of the most confusing words in Western philosophy and theology because its meaning can range from god, transcendental signified, comprehensive mind, divine decree, discourse, reason, language, etc. (Powell, 1997). The word “logos” also implies the existence of an authority or an external center that gives credibility to thoughts, expressions and patterns. This center is self-evident and unquestioned.

Consequently, Western philosophy has presumed that the presence of structure (structure means the network of relations that man perceives after observing reality and the law that govern these relations) involves a center. This “center” (sometimes called the “transcendental signified”) is an absolute, self-contained entity. It necessitates existence, and the world cannot be seen without it. This center cannot be analyzed because finding a structure of the center necessitates finding another center of this structure (Derrida, 1976). Man’s desire to find this center

reflects his wish to prove existence. Derrida attempted to destruct this idea by establishing an inter-changeable relation. According to this relation, the center can be changed to a margin and vice versa. This process is explained by using the term “supplement”, which involves supplementing and substituting.

2.2 Phonocentrism

Western metaphysics has privileged speech over writing. The importance of speech was centralized because the speaker is simultaneously present for the listener, which enables the speaker to clear any misunderstanding (Gross, 1986). When writing, however, a writer records his words on paper and isolates them from himself. Therefore, writing obliterates the spontaneous interaction between the reader and the writer and leaves the intended meaning susceptible to various interpretations. As a result, writing was marginalized in the Western tradition because of its interpretability that can ultimately lead to the loss of the original meaning.

Subsequently, Western philosophers called writing a “vulgar” phenomenon. They centralized the meaning (the signified) and marginalized the signifier; writing was considered inferior to speech. In this perspective, Derrida (1967) says: “Writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, has always been considered by Western tradition as the body and matter external to the spirit, to breath, to speech, and to the logos” (Derrida, 1967).

Accordingly, we conclude that speech or discourse is a type of presence because the speaker is simultaneously present with the listener, whereas writing is a type of absence because the writer is absent in the process of reading. Derrida attempted to deconstruct phonocentrism using the concept of “différance”, which will be discussed later.

2.3 The Centrality of Language

According to Saussure (2002), a sign is the unification of a sound image, the signifier, with a concept, the signified. The meaning of the word, the referent, is an arbitrary link between the signifier and the signified. Saussure (2002) illustrates by saying that there is no underlying connection between the concept of the word ‘sister’, the signified, and the string of sounds (S-I-S-T-E-R), the signifier. Evidently, we can represent the concept of sister using any other different strings of sounds offered by various languages. Saussure states that in the same manner, one cannot separate two sides of a paper; the signifier cannot be separated from the signified in the course of language.

Deconstruction attempts to dismantle the concept of sign and to refute the pair signifier/signified that is rooted in the Western metaphysical tradition. The concept that presumes the presence of a relation between the signifier and the significant ceases to exist. In contrast, the sign is deconstructed. Moreover, its elements (the signifier and the signified) participate in a continuous free play

that allows iteration, which creates new signs in a text through writing. Accordingly, the iteration of writing in different informational patterns creates new contradictory meanings and various possibilities that ultimately disturb the stability of a text. Therefore, language becomes a mere collection of signifiers, with each signifier infinitely referring to another signifier, which makes stabilizing the meaning of a text impossible. Therefore, the text is left susceptible to many interpretations (Cossette & Guillemelle, 2006).

2.4 Binary Oppositions

According to Derrida, binary oppositions are rooted in the Western tradition. Some examples of these oppositions include reason/passion, presence/absence, the self/the other, speech/writing, inside/outside, signifier/signified, and man/woman; the first component of the pair is always privileged over the second (Benjamin & Graves, 1998). Deconstruction attempts to expose these binary dualisms and deconstruct them without privileging one component over the other by asserting the truth of the uncertain hesitant (Al Zain, 2002).

2.5 The Undecidables

Before discussing the strategy of deconstruction, certain Derridean concepts are crucial to understand the deconstruction approach. Actually, these concepts do not represent truths or convictions. Their significations remain undecidable because each one can simultaneously carry various and different implications (Hepburn, 1999). The undecidables represent an “infrastructure: (Derrida, 1978). This infrastructure, however, is completely non-materialistic and non-existent such as trace, différance, dissemination, and supplement.

2.5.1 La Différance

Différance is a French word that was coined by Derrida and merges the French word “differ”, which means deferment, with the word “difference”, which means distinction. This concept is perhaps the most important and the most controversial of deconstruction. By changing the spelling of the word difference, substituting its second “e” with an “a” and making it “différance”, Derrida coined a concept that simultaneously carries two referents, or significations. The first signification is different, and the second is deferment (Derrida, 1982). Deferment is a concept crucial to literary criticism because the significance of each sign (word) in a literary text is deferred with each reading. Consequently, the linguistic relation through the context of a text surpasses the determination of the significance (Norris, 2002). Thus, Derrida changed the spelling of difference to have it embody deferment. This concept expounds the relation of language to the outside world (Al Sayid, 2011).

Mohamad Anani comments on this idea:

Whereas deferment is the opposite of presence which means that we refer to a thing or a thought of a word when we can't find

it. Then signs are used temporarily, just until we can find our desired thought or thing. Based on this, language is a deferred presence of things or meanings that can't be actually present in language. (Anani, 1996)

The word “différance” does not actually exist in the French language. Therefore, *différance* is neither a word nor a concept (Derrida, 1982); it is a neologism that was coined by Derrida and written with an “a” instead of an “e” to call attention to the inaudibility of the “a”, which makes writing the word the only way to comprehend its meaning.

Through this example, Derrida first wanted to dismantle phonocentrism by asserting the importance of writing and the role it plays in clarifying the meaning of a word and increasing the effectiveness of the written word in philosophy and fiction. In addition, Derrida attempted to prove that the meaning of a word is realized through the distinction of two signifiers. Although signifiers are distinct from one another, there is a connection among them. Each signifier's meaning is identified through a network of inter-relations among other signifiers. However, the meaning of each signifier is never completely present at any moment (because it is absent despite its presence). Consequently, *différance* is distinct from presence or absence; it precedes them (Al Masiri, 1999).

2.5.2 Dissemination

Dissemination was derived from the verb “disseminate”, which means to disperse seeds. Dissemination indicates that the meaning of a text, similar to scatter seeds in a field, is dispersed throughout a text. It also refers to the fragmentation of the meaning of a text and its proliferation in an uncontrollable way. This proliferation ultimately alludes to free play, which is not governed by any rules that can limit its continuous movement. This movement ultimately invokes pleasure, instability, and mutability (Al Rowaily & Al Bazi'ai, 1994). The concept of dissemination is closely related to literary text; Derrida implies the latter to be continuously disseminating and fragmenting. The sign (word) creates new shadows and meanings with every new reading *ad infinitum* (Al Sayid, 2011). Eventually, a text is somehow fragmented between presence and absence (Kosh, 2002).

2.5.3 The Supplement

Following Derrida's line of thought, the supplement can be defined as an extra element that is added to a structure or a textual system where the supplement is secondary in importance to the structure; the latter is considered complete in itself (Arnason, 1997). With this concept, Derrida wanted to prove that there is no self-contained structure or phenomenon; structures consistently need a supplement or a complement. Therefore, the role of the supplement is not secondary (Derrida, 1978).

Furthermore, Derrida rejects the center/margin duality. There is no such thing as a European centrality, for

example, because it requires margins that are third-world countries. In fact, a margin is not a margin if its presence is necessary to the existence of a center (Al Sayid, 2011). Here, we notice Derrida's intended controversial relation among different elements of life that are based on movement and instability. There is neither a fixed center nor a fixed margin because a center can become a margin at any time and vice versa.

2.5.4 Iterability

Iterability is a sign's feature or capability that is to be realized and repeated through different contexts. In this frame, a sign's iterability does not depend on the presence of whatever it eludes to or the presence of the intention of using it (Growther, 2003).

Derrida's famous statement, “iterability alters” (Derrida, 1988), means that each reading of a text through a new context produces new meanings of this text. These meanings can be either distinct from the original meaning or partially similar to a previous interpretation of it. The term ‘play’ is sometimes used to describe the state of instability of a text's meaning that results from iterability (Balkin, 1996).

Finally, this concept derives its importance from its relation to the concept of *différance*. These concepts are interrelated by causality because *différance* causes iterability that, in turn, produces *différance* again and so on. Therefore, iterability shows *différance*.

2.5.5 The Trace

The trace is the last deconstruction concept that will be discussed before addressing the strategy of deconstruction. Trace involves two processes, namely, the erasing and the residue, i.e., a thing is effaced but simultaneously preserved through its residual marks. These processes ultimately cause the intertwining of texts and residual marks that can conflict with latent residual marks (Coffman and Laporte, 1994).

According to Derrida (1978), “Each element (...) is constituted of the trace within it or the other elements of the chain or system.” Thus, the trace, through its various possibilities, determines the structure of what exists as a possibility of existence; it precedes this existence. Derrida notes this: “we must think of the trace before the existence” (1976). Consequently, there is no existence without a trace, and there is no trace without a residue of a prior trace; origin can only exist through the un-original.

The concept of trace denies the presence of an origin, i.e. text, discourse, or language are residues of traces. Therefore, Guillemelle and Cossette assert that there is no such thing as an original text or discourse (2006).

According to deconstruction, the concept of trace is connected to the concept of presence because presence involves a trace of its absence or its constant change. Thus, a concept can only be present through the absence it contains. A trace is a “mark of the absence of a presence, an always-already absent present” (Derrida, 1976).

Finally, according to Derrida, trace is neither presence nor absence. There is no origin. Origin is simply a matter of traces; some traces give the possible quality of presence, whereas other traces remain in a state of latency and deferment.

3. THE STRATEGY OF DECONSTRUCTIVISM

Deconstruction is a distinctive strategy in philosophical and literary approaches. It refutes prior intellectual, linguistic, and literary regulations by questioning the basic structure on which they were founded. Deconstruction stands in stark opposition to structuralism. Structuralism necessitates the presence of a central structure of each text, whereas deconstruction considers a multitude of various structures in a text. According to deconstruction, a text self-deconstructs. However, this process of deconstruction is not governed by any definitive strategy because deconstruction is not a method; it is a changeable and a modifiable strategy (Derrida, 1988), that is dissimilar from the concept of a fixed and stable method.

Derrida chose the word “deconstruction” as an alternative to Heidegger’s “destruction” and “*abbou*”, which denote the process that is practiced on the “structure” of Western metaphysical concepts. Derrida excluded the French word “destruction” because it carries negative connotations of demolition, which makes it closer to Nietzsche’s demolition (Derrida, 1988). Thus, these words failed to deliver his message. Deconstruction does not mean demolition, and its objective is not negative. However, it shakes the residual layers to show what is beneath it before reconstructing it again.

Nevertheless, Derrida uses negation instead of affirmation. He sows suspicion in every piece of evidence and eventually dismantles them all. Derrida refuses all infinite and Unitarian concepts and everything that are related to the father or logos. In fact, he attempts to question these concepts to uncover the metaphysical convictions that haunt the text.

Derrida intends to create a philosophical, critical practice that challenges all the texts that are connected to a specific and final signifier. By the word text, Derrida refers to any real possible economic, social, or institutional structure, i.e., all that is cultural and intellectual or every state that can be susceptible to deconstruction (Derrida, 2001).

Derrida introduces deconstruction as a strategy that deconstructs what was present and defers it to an absence and brings what was absent to the present. Thus, deconstruction obliterates the meaning of a center and dislocates the margin that brings it closer to the surface. What results is not a surface, a margin, or a center.

According to Derrida (1988), deconstruction is not an analysis, criticism, or a system. It is a method or a strategy

in reading. It addresses literary texts based on the idea that they are dissimilar and contain deconstruction agents. According to him, the strategy of this work entails the stability that is inside the dissimilar structure of a text, and locating tensions and inner contradictions through which the text is to be read, leading to its self-deconstruction (Derrida, 1978).

The first step in deconstructing a text is to shake the binary oppositions and break up their metaphysical logic. However, this process does not mean inverting these dualities and privileging the margin pole over the center. This process means neither merging the two poles in one nor omitting them. Deconstructing a binary opposition, according to Derrida, means: “Neither this nor that.” Thus, the two poles become in a state of free play that leaves the text open to many readings and interpretations. The meaning is then disseminated, and the text is freed of one-way readings. The decision, then, belongs only to the text that nothing exists outside it (Derrida, 1976).

Here, deconstruction gives the real authority to the reader, not the writer. It, in fact, announces the death of the writer and the absence of the text, which makes reading the only presence of the text. There is no such thing as a closed text or a final reading, but there are as many texts as the number of readers in one text. Accordingly, every reading produces a new creative text (Hamouda, 1998).

4. DECONSTRUCTIVISM: FROM PHILOSOPHY TO ARCHITECTURE

According to Nilsson (2004), architecture is simultaneously a structural metaphor in philosophical thought and an expression of multiple ways of thinking.

The interaction between architecture and philosophy was not only evident in Derrida’s writings but was also obvious through Derrida’s cooperation with architects such as Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi in designing the “Parc de la Villette” in 1982. Because of their strong relationship, Eisenman invited Jacques Derrida to join him in proposing ideas for designing this park according to the principles of deconstructivism that Eisenman had already begun to formulate. The design of the “Follies” marked the first direct cooperation between these two men. The collaboration was documented in their book, “Chora L Works” (Derrida & Eisenman, 1997).

The fact that Eisenman is a theorist, in addition to being an architect, has facilitated the translation of deconstruction to architecture. Eisenman has also contributed to the defining and expounding of deconstruction’s central concepts. He was mostly interested in the controversy concerning presence and absence and its embodiment in architecture through the solid and the void. Both Derrida and Eisenman consider that the locus, the place of presence, is architecture and that architecture is a language of communication and

meaning; thus, architecture can be explained by using the deconstruction method.

5. DECONSTRUCTIVISM

The term “deconstructivism” was first used at the end of the 1980s to denote an architectural style that was embodied in the works of architects from all over the world. Their works were premised on the ideas of the philosophical current of deconstruction. Particularly in 1988, an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art was organized by Philip Johnson and Mark Wigely. The exhibition showcased the works of Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Reem Kolhas, Coop Himmelbue, and Bernard Tschumi, among others.

For the exhibition, Wigley (1988) chose projects that disturbed thoughts and dismantled the idea of total and pure form, and he classified these projects as deconstructive architecture.

There were opposing perspectives on the criteria used to classify a project as deconstructivist. There were no clear criteria that defined a work as deconstructive architecture.

According to Derrida,

It is not simply the technique of an architect who knows how to deconstruct what has been constructed but a probing which touches upon the technique itself, upon the authority of the architectural metaphor and thereby constitutes its own architectural rhetoric. (Derrida, 1986)

In contrast, Wigely (1993) defines a deconstructive architect as follows: “A deconstructive architect is therefore not who dismantles buildings but one who locates the inherent dilemmas within the buildings, the structural flaws... the form is literally interrogated”.

Actually, curvilinear forms and complicated shapes do not define a project as deconstructive. Only a practicing architect can determine whether his/her work is deconstructivist by questioning his/her design, i.e., by deconstructing the dualities of function and aesthetics, among others.

Deconstructive buildings may initially seem to be fragmented and lacking any visual logic. These buildings also comprise dissimilar and incompatible fragments that further intensify this feeling. Nevertheless, these fragments are united through the principles and concepts of deconstruction. These concepts would later be observed and discussed in the works of prominent deconstructive architects.

5.1 Deconstructing Traditional Architectural Discourse

Deconstructive philosophy attempted to dismantle the fixed conventions of Western metaphysics. In the same manner, deconstructivist architecture requires dismantling all the Euclidian geometric principles that

include compatibility, unity, and stability. Deconstructivist architecture also calls for distorting the relation between the interior and the exterior.

According to Derrida, deconstructivist architecture is analogous to questions the architect asks and tries answers such as the following: “Could architecture be freed from the prevalence of the principles of classical aesthetics? Could architecture abandon functionalism?” Moreover, an architect must question all the conventional principles and fundamentals in architectural design such as balance, horizontal and vertical lines, etc.. In Derrida’s opinion, to answer these questions, one must discard old concepts to be free to create new forms and spaces.

How do we deconstruct? Can every architectural project be deconstructed?

According to Derrida (1976), reading texts that are constructed in a classical way is easier for deconstruction. Likewise, deconstructivist architecture requires the existence of a definite archetypal construction, so that it can be deconstructed.

The best example of this principle is “Santa Monica Residence”, which was designed by Frank Gehry. The building is considered a typical deconstructive building and was based on dismantling or deconstructing a prototypical suburban house. Gehry intended to change its massing, spatial envelopes, planes, and its remaining elements through deconstruction (Figure 1).



Figure 1
Gehry House, 1978, Frank Gehry, Santa Monica, CA
Note. Retrieved 20/5/2015 from <https://www.studyblue.com>

5.2 The Non-Centrality of Construction

This feature reflects the Derridean idea concerning dismantling Western centrality. According to Derrida, there is a controversial relation among different elements of life based on displacement and instability. Consequently, there is no such thing as a fixed center or a fixed margin, because a center can be a margin and vice versa. Therefore, we do not find a visible center in most deconstructive architecture.

5.3 Presentness

Eisenman is considered the main contributor of translating deconstruction to architecture. His architectural works are a manifestation of the deconstruction current in philosophy, and he was never ashamed of this idea

(Sultani, 2000). Eisenman has concentrated most on the metaphysics of presence.

Eisenman quotes Derrida: "Architecture is a locus of the metaphysics of presence." Both Eisenman and Derrida believe that architecture is a place of presence. Therefore, deconstruction attempts to dismantle the controversy concerning presence and absence that are manifested in architecture.

However, approaching this duality in architecture differs from approaching it in language. Eisenman clarifies this point in the reply letter he sent to Derrida (1990). He confirms that the signified can be easily separated from the signifier in language without causing any problems, but this issue is completely different in architecture because present prevails on architecture through the strong presence of the signified. "In architecture there is no such thing as the sign of a column or a window without the actual presence of a column or a window" (Eisenman, 1990). Because the sign of the object is the object, Eisenman concludes that the relation between the signified and the signifier follows a different process in language than in architecture.

Thus, a deconstructivist architect must separate the signifier from the signified and from its presence (signified) as a condition. For example, if there is an opening in a plane or a vertical element, it should be separated not only from the signifier such as the window or the column but also from the condition of its existence as the sign of providing light and air and the structure. This separation should occur without causing the room to become dark or the building to collapse (Eisenman, 1990).

Deconstruction in architecture and dismantling presence can only be performed through the breaking of the strong bond between form and function; Eisenman's "presentness" is a condition to the success of this breaking. Presentness, as Eisenman defines it, is "a third condition in architecture that dissolves the two term dialectic of presence versus absence" (1990). Presentness is "neither absence nor presence, form nor function, neither the particular use of a sign nor the crude existence of reality, but rather an excessive condition between sign and the Heideggerian notion of being" (Eisenman, 1990).

In his non-classical view of architecture, Eisenman does not deny the functional role of architecture, but he suggests that architecture serves this role without symbolizing it (1990). He has always rejected the presence of any symbolic meaning in his architecture through a direct relation between the signifier and the signified (1990). For example, although there is a convention that the rectangular stones in the Berlin Holocaust Memorial are gravestones, Eisenman insists that it is a place of no meaning (Figure 2). To him, this meaningless is a deconstruction of the pair signifier/signified. Eisenman often refers to this pair as form/

function; the form is the signifier, and the function is the signified. Meaninglessness, in contrast, is the absence of a form's meaning, which leaves a meaningless form. In this way, Eisenman architecturally translates what Derrida meant by the following: "The substitution of signs for the absence of objects makes up for that absence by representing presence" (Wigley, 1993). This idea explains the presence of many incomprehensible, meaningless, and useless elements in deconstructivist projects because these elements are used merely to reject and deconstruct familiar architectural concepts. For example, the main objective of the group of houses that were designed and built by Eisenman in the 1960's was not to provide relaxation and luxury but to separate form from function. Eisenman used columns as signs of architectural order. These columns never had any structural function; i.e., they were never weight-bearing. Some columns were even situated in the middle of a large staircase without considering the disruption that they would cause the users. Moreover, certain vertical elements and openings in planes that are not columns or windows can be found (Eisenman, 2007).



Figure 2
Berlin- German Jewish Holocaust Memorial
Note. Retrieved 20/5/2015 from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>

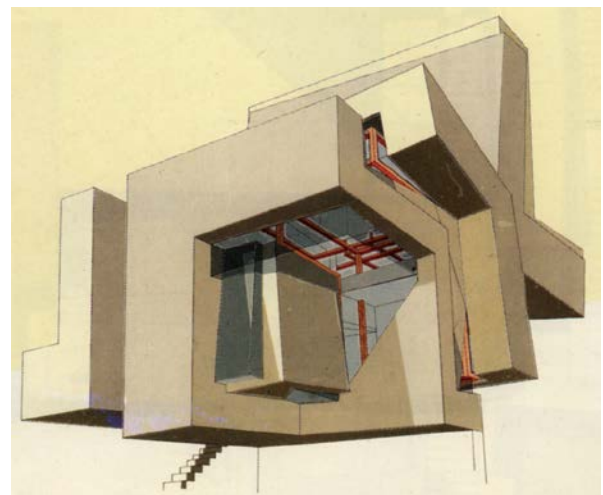


Figure 3
Guardiola House
Note. Retrieved 20/5/2015 from <http://thedesignspace.net/>

In the “Gaurdiola House” (Figure 3), the windows were built on the floors, and the floors were unlevelled. The walls were sometimes used for compositional aim rather than to separate useful space. Another example is House IV. There, a green staircase that is intended for use is contradicted by another red and virtual one. The red staircase ironically and consciously contradicts the green one to refute or reject any architectural compatibility (Figure 4) (Moffett, Fazio, & Wodehouse, 2003).



Figure 4
Peter Eisenman House VI
Note. Retrieved 20/5/2015 from <http://www.pinterest.com>

5.4 Free-floating Signifiers

Eisenman has always admitted that Derrida left a significant impression on his architectural works and writings. According to Derrida, in language, you can always separate the signifier and the signified and the thing from its sign. A column, for example, can represent a column as an element of construction or as a vertical element. A wall also either carries the meaning and the function of a wall, which separates spaces, or it is just a sign of a wall.

In his House II (Figure 5), Eisenman used two systems of construction. The first was a wall-bearing system, and the second was a column-system. Redundancy was the product of the two systems. The walls and the columns were either structural elements or signs (Ansari, 2013); one was necessary, whereas another was not. This created a paradox between the wall and the column and their respective purposes and separated the sign from the signifier, which, in turn, generated the so-called, free-floating signifiers (Ansari, 2013).

Adapted by many deconstructivist architects, this concept makes projects appear mysterious and incomprehensible, as if they were meaningless. Actually, this sense of confusion is mostly intended by the architect who attempts to simulate a certain experience or generate a specific feeling in the visitor/user of the building. For example, the Berlin Holocaust Memorial was designed to

inspire feelings of incomprehensiveness, alienation, and meaninglessness (it is a free-floating signifier) (Eisenman, 2012). Eisenman intended to mimic for the visitor the experience of the Jews who were in concentration camps (see Figure 2).



Figure 5
Peter Eisenman's House II
Note. Retrieved 22/5/2015 from <http://www.arc1.uniroma1.it>

5.5 Paradoxes

Deconstructivist architects have included a multitude of paradoxes to dismantle binary oppositions. These paradoxes play an essential role in deconstructivism because it questions contradicting dualities and hierarchies. According to Eisenman, when one feels the incompleteness of a finished structure, then one is under the influence of a paradoxical experience. When the parts that constitute the whole are clashing, the feeling of incompleteness contradicts the reality that the structure is, in fact, a finished and fully enclosed space (Hartz, 2012). This feeling ultimately leads to suspicion. There is no absolute presence; something is always absent. This idea reflects deconstruction philosophy's belief that there is nothing constant or absolute. Nothing is absolutely right or wrong. Everything is susceptible to judgment. A clear example of the use of paradoxes is in the Wexner Center, where Eisenman left the scaffolding permanent so that it becomes part of the building and creates a paradox between completion and incompleteness (Figure 6) (Proimos, 2009).



Figure 6
Wexner Center for the Arts
Note. Retrieved 22/5/2015 from <http://www.archdaily.com>

5.6 Trace

In the context of Derrida's concept of presence and absence, Eisenman views the discourse of absence in the concept of trace. He considers trace to be a basic and important factor in building design. Eisenman says: "The discourse of absence is very important in the ground projects and in the idea of the trace" (Ansari, 2013). According to Derrida, nothing can be wholly present or wholly absent at any given time. However, there is always a trace of both presence and absence. From here, it is the architect's job to find traces (residues) of a certain presence from which the process of designing commences.

"Using the trace as a key, as a beginning to project something, to make a project..." (Ansari, 2013).

Accordingly, most of Eisenman's projects have begun from the trace. In fact, he paid close attention to the development process of physical traces that remain at a site. Then, he used these traces as his starting point in designing his projects. The site where any project is to be built is never a tabula rasa. According to Eisenman, a site is haunted by an invisible past, which is known as the "spectrality of the site", in Derrida's words. Thus, a deconstructivist architect searches for inevitable traces on which he/she will base his/her work.

Make sure that the font is synchronous all throughout the text.

Daniel Libeskind has also discussed trace. According to him, each project holds a new place and new people, but we never start with nothing. There are always traces to be found: traces of symbols, stories, and dreams. Architecture is a story, and his projects tell stories of a certain place (Belogolovsky, 2011). Each site, person, or scheme has a story. The architect must listen carefully because he/she is not the writer of this story. Each building has its own story or it will turn into mere pieces of metal, glass, baton, cement and nothing else (Belogolovsky, 2011). Trace is mainly evident in his work on architectural memorials. In particular, the Jewish Museum in Berlin shows the concept of trace and the erasing of the Holocaust to make it clearer and more impressive.

Other memorials such as Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans' Memorial and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe are known to manifest the concept of "trace and erasing".

Using trace as a basic in design does not merely attempt to create distinctive, unconventional architecture as much as it unveils the architect's desire to draw the audience's attention to traces. These architects want visitors to realize, experience, and decipher the mysteries of traces.

5.7 Superimposition of Layers

According to Eisenman, the site is a locus of possibilities. It is his starting point when approaching any project. For

Eisenman, the site is more than a visual surrounding or a context. Thus, he pivotally focuses on the materialistic and archaeological layers of the site in particular and the entire location in general. "The beginning, therefore, is not the actual site, but the traces of the site in the Derridean sense" (Ansari, 2013).

To follow a trace, an architect must dig deep in the near and distant past. This process can conjure various contradictory elements. To not centralize one element and marginalize another, some deconstructivist architects superimpose these findings. Thus, the design is produced, and the idea follows as its result.

Eisenman was mostly known for using the superimposition of layers. In his building, Santiago (Figure 7), Eisenman determined the following four local traces: The downtown's historical street grid; the typography of a hill; the abstract Cartesian grid; and the symbol of the city of Santiago, which is the scallop shell. Then, he superimposed these four abstracted traces to create an imaginary site condition, which became a real site for his project (Belogolovsky, 2009).

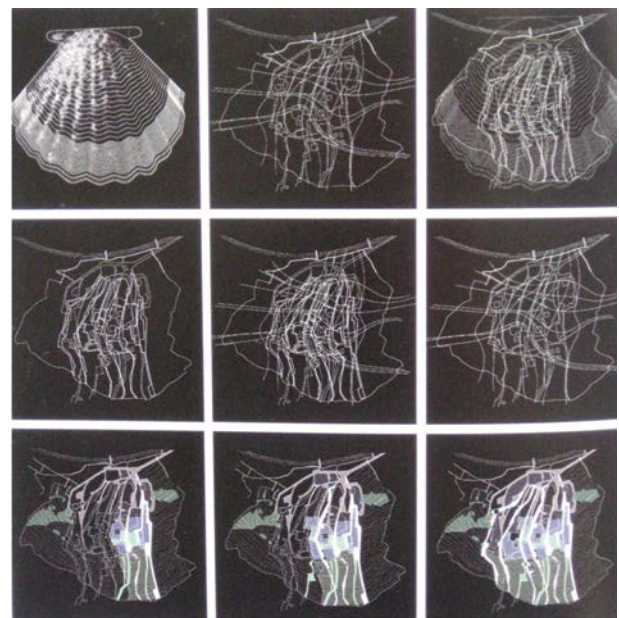


Figure 7
Peter Eisenman, diagram of City of Culture of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela

Note. Retrieved 22/5/2015 from <https://gigarch.wordpress.com/>

Eisenman used superimposition again in designing his Cannaregio project in 1978. He superimposed several "sites", namely, the site where the town's square was to be built, the Venice project that was supposed to be built on the same site by Le Corbusier in 1965-1964, and one of his own projects, House II. The result was a fragmented, transforming, and topologically complex design that was executed by using "tracing" as a drawing method (Figure 8). As for the Long Beach project 1986, Eisenman superimposed 6 maps of different scales that emphasized the significant site conditions in the history

of the site in the past and in the future (Figure 9) (Balfour, 1994).

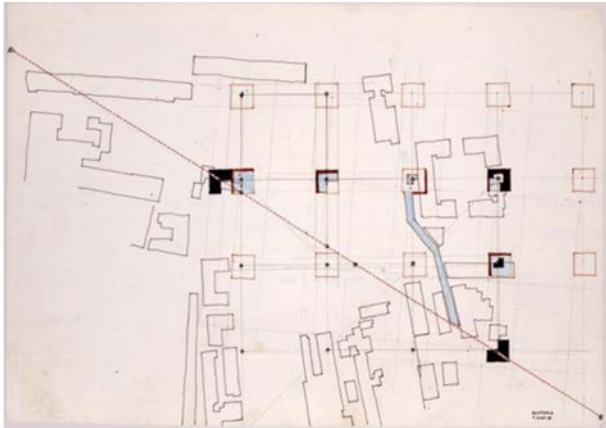


Figure 8
The Cannaregio Project (1978)
Note. Retrieved 22/5/2015 from <http://www.archdaily.com>



Figure 9
Long Beach, California 1986
Note. Retrieved 25/5/2015 from <http://www.arcl.uniroma1.it>

Not all the superimposition processes result from following traces. Superimposition sometimes results from many fundamental elements that should be considered. An example of such design is Parc de la Villette by Bernard Tschumi. This project is based on the superimposition of three layers with each layer representing a different system of arrangement. The first layer is a system of points where at each point, a folly is built. Follies are red cubic buildings that are equidistant from one another (they intersect horizontally and vertically every 120 m in a point). The second layer is a system of lines that determine the sidewalks that lead to different activities. The third system is the surface layer that includes activities, such as sports, games, etc. (Figure 10) (Van Der Straeten, 2003). The superimposition of these layers somehow created an interaction among these independent systems.

Finally, superimposition is one of the prominent approaches to deconstructivist architecture. According

to Mark Wigley, superimposition results in a “Series of ambiguous intersections between systems [...] in which the status of ideal forms and traditional composition is challenged. Ideas of purity, perfection, and order, become sources of impurity, imperfection, and disorder” (Broadbent, 1991).

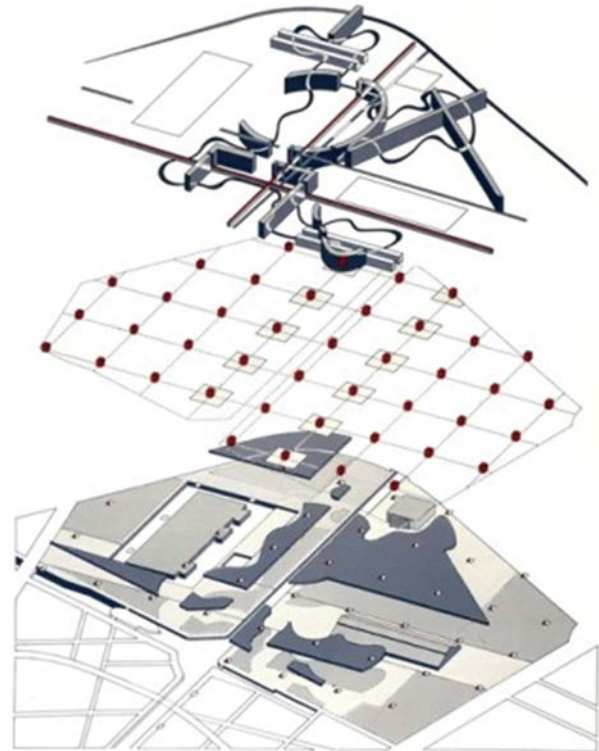


Figure 10
Parc de la Villette
Note. Retrieved 25/5/2015 from <http://www.archdaily.com/>

5.8 Différance

Différance is another concept of deconstructivist philosophy that was translated to architecture. Bernard Tschumi approached most of his projects with the strategy of différance. This concept is evident in the idea behind the “Parc de la Villette” design where he attempted to find “an organizing structure that could exist independent of use, a structure without center or hierarchy (hence the grid), a structure that would negate the simplistic assumption of casual relationship between a program and the resulting architecture” (Ibid.).

5.9 Iterability

Derrida’s iterability was translated to architecture, and many deconstructivism projects have repeated a sign and an architectural element more than once. This sign (element) has different meanings or functions according to its context. This concept was manifested in the repetition of the follies in the “Parc de la Villette” project; the follies comprise three stories and include various designs. One design is cylindrical, whereas another is triangular, and some designs are without walls. The follies do not have a

specific function. It can serve as a gallery, a cafeteria, or any other public building (Kroll, 2011). The iteration here intends to create distinction and difference.

5.10 Deconstructing Binary Oppositions

This is a central principle of deconstructive philosophy that was translated to architecture through several deconstructivist architects. This idea involves deconstructing the principle of causality, cause/effect, which was manifested in architecture by deconstructing the relationship between form and function, form and program, and structure and economy, among others.

Tschumi has attempted in Parc de la Villette and through the follies to deconstruct the connection between the form and the program considering that the program is constantly changing. The form was also separated from the function because any folly can substitute its function with another. For example, one folly, which was formerly a restaurant, became a gardening center and then, an art studio. These changes can simply occur without affecting the general identity of the park (Kroll, 2011).

This principle is also powerfully present in Frank Gehry's projects, which are characterized by paradoxes, discontinuity, and distortion. Gehry deconstructed these binary oppositions: function/structure, beauty/ugliness, and interior/exterior.

DISCUSSION

Based on what was mentioned before and after comparing the principles of deconstructivism and deconstruction, we find that some principles were literally translated to architecture, whereas other principles have been modified and renamed to suit architecture. Moreover, the figures of deconstructivism were not committed to all the concepts of deconstruction philosophy. Some figures focused on one or two concepts and made them fundamental principles of their personal styles in architecture. For example, Peter Eisenman has primly focused on the concept of presentness and trace, whereas Daniel Libeskind has concentrated on the concept of absence. Frank Gehry focused on binary oppositions and free play.

Deconstructivist architecture has sprung from the ideas of deconstruction. Notwithstanding, when executing their projects, deconstructivist architects (or proponents of this theory) found themselves, consciously or unconsciously, bringing influences from previous architectural movements to their works. The chosen movements' principles, however, were compatible with the principles of deconstructivism. Therefore, many deconstructivist architects' works imitate some features of other movements. The most prominent among the mimicked trends is the constructivism that had appeared in the Soviet Union in the 1930's. Many critics and proponents have denied this imitation and attributed it to mere coincidence. Nevertheless, the similarities are many. They are clear and

they have been documented in many published studies (Cooke, 1989). Some of these similarities include the diagonal overlappings in rectangles and trapezoids and the use of curved segments, especially in the works of Lisinski, Chernikhov, and Malevitch.

Moreover, deconstructivism was influenced on the level of forms and content by the architectural currents of thought in the twentieth century, namely, modernism, post-modernism, cubism, minimalism, and expressionism. Deconstructivism in architecture starkly contrasts with modernism's ordered rationality. In fact, deconstructivist architecture was influenced by post-modernism just as deconstruction was influenced by post-structuralism. Although deconstructivism agrees with postmodernism on refuting ordered rationality, it differs from postmodernism on many issues. Deconstructivism opposed architectural tradition because of its objective to deconstruct architecture. In contrast, postmodernism embraced and adopted historical references, namely, the historical marks and adornments that were neglected and omitted by modernism.

The second difference centers on the essence of a building. Deconstructivism agreed with postmodernism on the rejection of ordered rationality, the purity of form, clarity, the truth of materials, and simplicity, which are the main features of modern architecture. However, deconstructivism disagreed with postmodernism on the function of a building. Contrary to deconstructivism, postmodernism did not alter the function of a building. Moreover, the deconstructivist approach to complexity and contradiction is completely different from the postmodernism approach because deconstructivism's influence reached the essence of a building and its geometry. Postmodernism, to the contrary, was only concerned with adornment.

Analytic cubism has influenced deconstructivism (more than synthetic cubism) through Frank Gehry's early organic vernacular works. In contrast, minimalism's influence on the deconstructivism was separating deconstructivism from cultural references. The deconstructivism's tendencies of deformation and dislocation have granted it a type of architectural expressionism.

CONCLUSION

We cannot translate every single idea of deconstruction philosophy to architecture. As Eisenman said, "One cannot do in architecture what one can do in language" (Eisenman, 2007). Thus, applying some principles will necessarily conflict with the fundamentals of architecture because architecture is not just art for the sake of art. It is not futile; architecture is a sociological act that always responds to a certain human need. Architecture is not an end by itself. It is a means that serves a specific purpose. Moreover, architecture must follow certain scientific

principles to ensure the safety and stability of a building. It must also observe certain challenges including a project's budget, a project's program, the dimension of the land, and the construction regulations in a given country. Architecture, then, does not enjoy the freedom that characterizes philosophy and writing. There is a limit to how far it can apply ideas. For these reasons, deconstruction's ideas were not completely implemented in architecture.

It is inaccurate to say that deconstructivism is the product of deconstruction philosophy alone. It is true that deconstructivist architecture was founded on the ideas of deconstruction that have influenced some architects, particularly theorists. Deconstructivist architecture spurred them to forsake old forms and challenge the common classical taste by building distinctive and unconventional architecture. However, recent developments such as advanced technologies and architectural software programs, have promoted deconstructivism and allowed many architects to unleash their creativity. As a result, many architects have constructed some sophisticated and unconventional buildings that were attributed to deconstructivism although their creators did not actually believe in deconstruction.

The revolution of communication and the internet has promoted deconstructivism in different places around the world. As a result, many architects have adopted deconstructivism and sometimes copied parts of other deconstructivist architects' works even if they have not always been aware of the theoretical and philosophical background of this direction.

Architecture is a paid service that is delivered by an architect to satisfy the needs of a client, who can be an individual, group, or government. Therefore, the architect must offer his services objectively to avoid unconsciously projecting his own repressed feelings and complexes on the project and to consider his client's wishes, beliefs, culture, and tendencies. One cannot deny that an architect's personality and creativity is the cornerstone of his/her work. However, these qualities should be governed by the particularities of the place, time, and culture of the society where a building is to be erected.

In a way, architecture, particularly contemporary architecture, is indebted to deconstructivism because it helped to break the monotony of modern architecture. Deconstructivism has moved architects to create and invent new styles that enriched some places and succeeded in communicating the architect's message, whereas in other places, these styles appeared similar to alien buildings that confused their audiences.

Finally, a deconstructivist architect is not as free as a reader. He/she is committed to a certain program, a real estate, a budget and construction regulations. Therefore, an architect cannot simply do what he/she wants. Furthermore, neither an architect nor an architectural design can always be compared with a reader or a literary

text. We conclude with Eisenman's words: "It is one thing to talk theoretically and another to act on these theories" (Eisenman, 2007).

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