**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 26 - 27 - 28 NOVEMBER 2009**

# METAPHORS IN/ON ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

In light of recent critiques of metaphors in architecture – Diller and Scofidio reject any "metaphoric associations" for their blur building (2002) – and in urbanism – Atelier Bow-Wow wants to get away from "the attitude that the city can be summarized by metaphorical expression" (2001) – the question arises about the origins, the nature and the consequences of metaphors in these contexts. However, there is little theoretical work on the subject. Among the few exceptions are "City Metaphors" by Oswald Mathias Ungers (1976) and the work of Denis Hollier on Bataille in "Against Architecture" (1989).
The absence of theoretical responses is surprising, considering that Leon-Battista Alberti, in addition to his famous "large house/small town" metaphor, already utilized organic metaphors. Additionally there has been an explosion of metaphors in urban descriptions – networks, organisms, archipelagos – symptoms of the complexity of urban environments. The absence of such theories is on the one hand not surprising if we consider how the metaphor has been associated with rhetoric, which has long since been reduced to an ornamental dimension, forgetting its original richness and complexity. On the other hand, it is surprising, considering how metaphors have been reevaluated since 1940 in scientific discourse, through the research of I. A. Richards or M. Black (without forgetting the work

of K. Bühler and W. Stählin, or, further back, Friedrich Nietzsche). It is in this context that Zradko Radman speaks of a "metaphorical turn".
Hence, we hope that this conference will address the discussion brought forward by science on the cognitive and model-making nature of metaphors.

The conference will provide an opportunity to discuss the implications of metaphor for architecture and urbanism, both from a theoretical and a historical point of view. The goal will be to explore the term, to open future perspectives, to understand the difference between metaphor and analogy as well as to consider the differences between metaphors about and metaphors in architecture/urbanism.
Architecture, like urbanism, is never neutral. Both disciplines are always in search of legitimacy outside their disciplinary borders: they push and question their limits "from inside" or are affected "from the outside" and try to understand this challenge to their limits. Metaphor, as an instrument of translation, appears to be fundamental to understanding the "transitional" nature of architecture and urbanism. In this regard, Peter Collins' "Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture" (1965), is interesting in that it identifies four major analogies that influence architecture: biology, mechanics, gastronomy and linguistics. It is revealing, that

Collins speaks of analogies and not metaphors.
At the same time, advances in programming and the application of algorithms in design in architecture and urbanism, question the nature and role of architecture. One of the most powerful and reoccurring metaphors being the biological metaphor.

The conference will last three days and will focus on three main topics: Metaphors as instruments of knowledge, metaphors in projects and metaphors in discourse. Each presentation will last 30 minutes and at the end of each day, a round-table discussion will connect the different presentations.
Unless specified, papers will be presented in English. Synopses of the papers will be available in both French and English during the conference.

The conference is organized by Andri Gerber, Ecole Spéciale d'architecture de Paris.

In collaboration with :

**DEUTSCHES FORUM FÜR KUNSTGESCHICHTE**
CENTRE ALLEMAND D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART

The conference is generously supported by :

**GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG**

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