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## CONCEPT OF METAPHOR IN THE MEMORIAL ARCHITECTURE. CASE STUDY MEMORIAL CENTER “DONJA GRADINA”

### *Abstract:*

This paper discusses the phenomenon of metaphor as an instrument of significance and expression in the memorial architecture. The metaphor enables an indirect transfer of meaning via analogy. In the wider sense it represents expression of meaning via something else. The original linguistic form, the metaphor in architecture deeply permeates creative thought process, understanding and structure of perception alongside the end reception of the work. The metaphor as the type of architectural communication initially appears as the conceptual system in the creation process and then in the reception phase i.e. conceptual interpretation of the sense and meaning through its expressive attributes. This research shall be divided in two basic parts. The first part of the paper shall present the theoretical framework of metaphor considerations as an architecture concept. The second part shall be designed as qualitative research through case study

*Keywords: metaphor, material architecture, concept, knowledge*

## КОНЦЕПТ МЕТАФОРЕ У МЕМОРИЈАЛНОЈ АРХИТЕКТУРИ. СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА МЕМОРИЈАЛНИ ЦЕНТАР „ДОЊА ГРАДИНА“

### *Резиме:*

Овај рад разматра феномен метафоре као инструмента значења и изражајности у меморијалној архитектури. Метафора омогућава посредно преношења значења путем аналогije. У ширем смислу она представља исказивање значења путем нечег другог. Изворно лингвистички фигура, метафора у области архитектуре дубоко задире у креативни мисаони процес, разумјевање, структуру перцепције, те крајње рецепције дјела. Метафора као облик архитектонске комуникације првобитно се јавља као концептуални систем у процесу стварања, а затим у фази рецепције тј. појмовног тумачења смисла и значења кроз своје изражајне карактеристике. Ово истраживање ће бити подијељено на двије основне цјелине. У првом дијелу рада ће бити постављен теоријски оквир разматрања метафоре као архитектонског концепта, док ће други дио рада бити конципран као квалитативно истраживање кроз студију случаја.

*Кључне ријечи: метафора, меморијална архитектура, концепт, значење*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to discuss the theory and thereafter, with the qualitative research method through case study, bring points of view closer together and better understand the concept of metaphor as a model of architectural thought and creation. Further to this, the paper aims to explain the significance of the concept of metaphor in the design process of creating memorial architecture; the primary goal of such an architecture being to achieve interaction and establish a communication process with the observer/participator. Discussing the communication process in architecture means talking about architecture through semantic information through which the idea, the state of the spirit, the thought of emotions are transferred. [1] In this communication model it is necessary to consider two moments, the first one - in the creative process of forming, i.e. input of the sense and meaning, and the second - in the reception phase, when architecture is a sensual framework for the one observing, experiencing and interpreting the meaning. This communication process is especially emphasised in the area of memorial architecture, when it is necessary to develop the experience of the mnemonic with the metaphoricality of space structures of the visitor.

The idea of mnemonic refers to the skill of memorising, i.e. the skill of having the possibility of remembrance supported by certain aids and it primarily consists of that what needs to be remembered through association brought by something else. [2]

In wider terms, the memorial architecture (and monuments) has the role of keeping alive the memory, carrying the message, commemoration of the memory on historical events. They are part of the collective and personal memory. In the traditional sense, the monument implies an architectural or sculptural composition, or a combination of these two, which are dedicated to a personality, an event, and is primarily meant as a visual marker. The memorial, on the other hand, is seen as an architectural construct, determined by the use of space, rather than representation. Memorials form the space which implies the engagement of the visitors at several levels starting from the visual perception, i.e. the visitor is exposed to the mnemonic nature of the space, being both an audience and a performer at the same time. [3] The memorial as defined in the area of transitional justice "designed to provoke a reaction, or a set of reactions, including the public awareness of the event or the people it represents; start a personal reflection of regret, pride, anger or sorrow about something that has happened; or knowledge and curiosity about a period in the past". Aspiration of contemporary memorials is to include a contemporary moment, i.e. the existence of the past in the present. [4]

## 2. BASIC TERMS AND THEORY

### 2.1. Metaphor as a model of architectural thought

In the wider terms the concept of metaphor may be discussed as the model of architectural communication. Specifically, the role of metaphor is emphasised as an instrument in the construction of significance and expression of the architectural work, which is of great importance when talking about memorial architecture.

Metaphor (deriving from the Greek word, 'transfer') is a figure of speech for change, transfer of name or word from one to another term based on an obvious or hidden analogy, shortened comparison. [5]

Originally the metaphor was a comparison, but in an implicit way, implying cognitive processes of analogy in the emergence of metaphor. "Metaphor implies an expressive means of conveying meaning, and it literally also includes either additional sense or a surplus of meaning." [6]

The Italian semiotician Umberto Eco is of the opinion that the logic of metaphor belongs to the semantic mechanism, appearing in every system of signs, thus metaphor is not characteristic only for the language. In other words, the mechanism of metaphor is present in different discourses, and it allows the meaning to be conveyed in a creative manner through analogy: "What is illustrated is that the relation of analogy, which is primarily based on the visual similarity of the presentation and the original, may be formulated as a compositional rule that no longer has a direct and literal relation with the starting object, but with the concept of presenting the object, i.e. the knowledge of presenting and perceiving the object." [7]

It is precisely owing to the semantic and creative potential that the metaphor constitutes a creative instrument by which we form the meaning and expression in the area of architecture: "Our architectural gnosis deprives us of the need to operate with literal terms and categories in our

profession. We will always better explain ourselves with our actions, if we remain with the metaphors and allegories, and it teaches us to be careful about the literal, about the monosemic." [8]

Pointing to the meaning and sense of a work, the metaphor refers to the category of symbols. It is analysed as a form of communication at the symbolic/semantic level. Within the domain of communication characteristics of architecture, the concept of metaphor enables interaction at the symbolic level, it carries the content, message, emotion. This is the key aspect in the use of metaphor with the memorial architecture. The structure of symbols is formed by two elements: the formal phenomenon and experience of space, on the one hand, and the sense and meaning, on the other hand, both of which arise from the experience of space phenomenon. Symbolically, as well as metaphorically, in architecture it enables that certain space experiences, observations, events and experiences are constituted and named in a symbolic way. [9]

In the area of architectural communication, the phenomenon of metaphor is naturally present in the creative and contemplated process of the creator, as well as in the structure of perception, and finally in the reception and understanding of the work with the observer/participant. Apart from the dominant function of the metaphor - as the instrument for carrying the message, it is also a significant figure in building the recognisability and uniqueness of memorial architecture. In this sense, the concept of metaphor can be a key design strategy in the entire design process - from the setting of spatial disposition, formal and functional characteristics of architecture, to the use of materials.

We can observe the metaphor in the wider system of the mimetic process. [10] Here we will emphasise the contemporary interpretation of the term mimesis in the field of art, without going into detail about the origin and definition of this term. The impulse of mimesis, as the German philosopher Theodor Adorno explains [11], refers to the natural desire of the creator to by multilevel observation absorb the environment, to through the creative process then process its content, and finally articulate and incorporate it in a symbolic way in its own (artistic) work. He is of the opinion that mimetic processes are present in the creative process in the early intuitive phase even before the creator engages in conscious stimulation and rational actions. This thesis supports the understanding of the design process which does not exclusively rely on rational thinking but is imbued with intuition and imagination in the understanding and creating of things (the world) surrounding us. On the other hand, the mimetic process is also present in the reading of the work, where the recipient in the semiotic apparatus decodes the meanings by identifying similarities, rearticulated in the creative expression. [12]

According to this view, in the designing of the mimetic mechanism the architect absorbs the material and immaterial characteristics/values of the context, and then incorporates them through the symbolic articulation and expresses them metaphorically in a new value. As for the observer/participant, in this mechanism it is exactly through the metaphorical expression that they recognise and adopt the recognised values with which they identify themselves. In this sense, the metaphor is, *inter alia*, based on the interpretation of the contextuality and is in tandem with the conceptual, esthetical and creative intention of the author. Hence, metaphorical expression in the mimetic system may be observed as a way of expressing - emotionally, ideationally, conceptually and symbolically - characteristics of the contexts formed in the creative expression.

### 3. CASE STUDY- COMPETITION PROPOSAL

#### 3.1. Spatial-time context

The awarded competition<sup>6</sup> work shall be taken as a case study -the idea of urban and architectural presentation of the memorial center in the site of conscience "Donja Gradina".

Until nineties of the 20th century, memorial center (site of conscience) Donja Gradina was the part of the unique memorial complex "Jasenovac- Donja Gradina". Disintegration of the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia caused splitting of the memorial complex between the two states: Jasenovac site which was the concentration camp site under the Independent Croatian State during the WWII and today situated in the Croatia and Donja Gradina site, the biggest burial site within the concentration camp Jasenovac, and today situated in the Republika Srpska,. The main memorial buildings were built in the 1960s with the central monument "Flower" of the architect Bogdan Bogdanović and the museum Jasenovac on the territory of the former camp. Donja Gradina, established on the conceptual proposal from 1977, acquires the character of the Open-Air Museum,

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<sup>6</sup> The authors of the first awarded work are Marina Radulj, Maja Milic Aleksic, Milana Nedmovic and Slobodan Peulic

which is conceptually called Silence, as based on the Una River rudder. The open-air museum follows natural Posavina landscape with emblematic tombs in the landscape and slip articulated pedestrian paths.

In the new geopolitical circumstances, the Republika Srpska Government in 1996 proclaimed the area of Donja Gradina as a prominent place and immovable cultural property of exceptional significance. In this context, on the basis of the 2009 public competition solution, the preparation of the Regulatory Plan for the wider area was approved, and it was adopted in 2011 along with the Program for the Site of Conscience organization at the Donja Gradina area. The public competition was published in 2015, and repeated competition in 2017/2018 for the best urban and architectural solution of the Memorial Center of Donja Gradina. In fact, all these activities in the broader sense represent the basic program idea of the interruption of Silence. In the text to follow we shall explain the method of building of basic spatial elements of the Memorial center in the work that was rewarded in the latest competition. They will be viewed in the context of realization of the communicational aspect of architecture which is important for memorials.

### 3.2. Design approach

How to build in a sensitive area? How to build and at the same time express our contemporary attitude towards the area of suffering from 70 years ago? It is important to note that the design process was rather intuitive, guided by the long-term experience of the author (the list all the participants in the footage) and the impression and knowledge of the area - Donje Gradine and the event - the Holocaust.

In the creative thinking, the two key goals were crystallized: the first, to achieve a relationship with the infinite Posavina landscape and the established memorial and the second, to build new spatial and metaphorical values of the memorial character.

In this way, this paper attempts to illuminate in a certain way and, once again, re-examine the competitive solution by bringing it into connection with definitions and philosophy in the interpretation of the set of metaphors and symbols. The reasoning behind was to design, build and establish better quality interaction with the future generations that will come to pay their respect.

The author clearly expresses the attitude in the introduction of the paper as well as in the interpretation of the term "memorial" that Donja Gradina memorial as well as events that happened there and the echo of those events in the contemporary moment should not remain only as the representation of the visual and monumental. Quite the opposite, they should be determined by the use of the space hence each visitor will build and carry authentic memories as a part of the wider collective memory. For precisely: "Forgetting extermination is part of extermination, because it is also the extermination of memory, of history, of the social..." [13]

Under this paper, a program segment will be considered that includes a monumental unit within the Field of Sighs without the accompanying contents of the complex located on the edge of this Field. Within the open-air museum, two places of intervention are identified: in the physical and mental center of the Silence Filed and along the Sava River, towards Jasenovac, at the historical site which represents the chronology of the events - bringing prisoners to Gradina, and their path to death.

Exposed to the specific context of the space, the authors unconsciously initiate mimetic system of layered observation and absorption of the surroundings and „ (...) transfer and report to others the same truthful messages. How? *Through metaphors*. The topic of the suffering, according to the philosopher Živanović, is at the same time the topic of overcoming life. "From the overshoot horizon and we speak (...) in the only possible way - precisely metaphors." [14] With the help of friend - philosopher, two basic metaphors are being defined i.e. a **whirlwind of silence** and **scaffolds of fear**, stretching through the space as two-folds monumental and memorial space interventions.

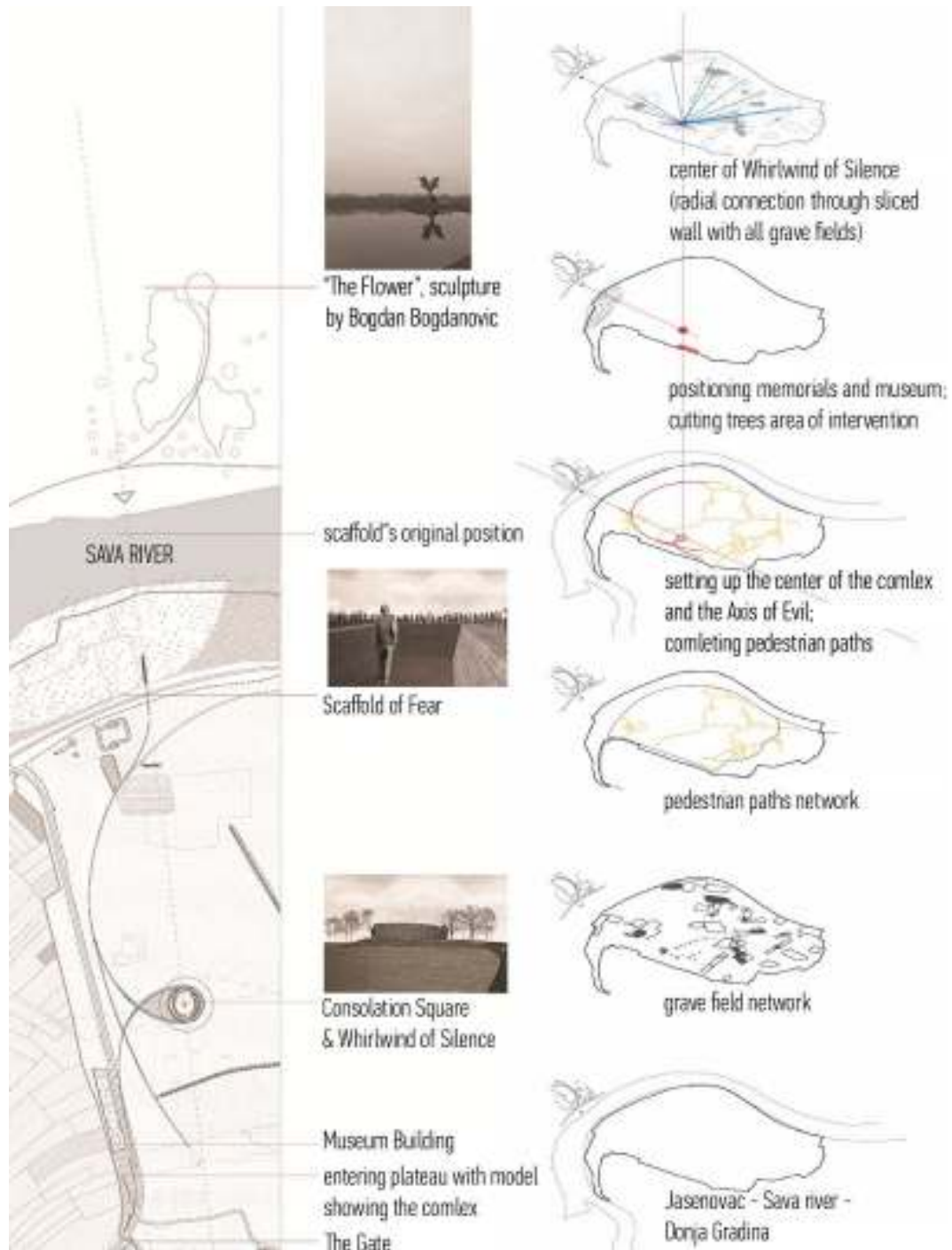


Figure 1 Design plan of the complex Donja Gradina with Jasenovac on the other side of river Sava (competition proposal) with Jasenovac central memorial by Bogdan Bogdanovic

### 3.3. Memorial center: whirlwind of silence and scaffold of fear

Memorial Whirlwind of Silence represents the central element of the Memorial park and it is in the center of the complex. Its appearance is marked by its detachment in the field and in the grass layered mound from which it appears as a fort - representing the metaphor of the city. "Gradina" is augmentative of the town, and represents city inhabited by many people. And we can in a way say, that one whole city of people disappeared in Donja Gradina.



Figure 2 *Memorial Whirlwind of Silence (competition proposal), 3D visualization*

"Gradina", site, is the term in architecture describing difficult to access fortified site of bigger or smaller dimensions; it may be applied to almost all high settlements and often to fortifications on the swamp land and in the plains. At the same time, the mound is being built and in order to drain the ubiquitous water in the field during the high water level of the groundwater.

The area of Gradina is marked by tragic historical events - the Holocaust; time is infinite, separated from every day, whole and unique. Guided by this thinking, the WHIRLWIND OF SILENCE, in the geometry of the base, is built from the circle. The circle and geometry that builds from it are symbolically layered and multifaceted, and in this sense, metaphorically open to complex interpretations.

Whereby, the circle "(...)" symbolizes the individual self, manifestly, infinitely. (...) The circle removes time and space and indicates repetition. It is the symbol of heavenly unity. "[15]

The three circles in the geometric setting of the Whirlwind walls were formed as a formal analogy to the three peoples who were singled out as "others" and whose members were in the largest numbers killed here. With that: "The three concentric circles are a symbol of the past, the present and the future." [15]

In the formal sense, the Whirlwind is built of walls from the geometry of concentric circles whose center is slightly shifted along a line. It is positioned so that its center is located on the north-south line called the Axis of Evil, which connects the direction of providing another monumental element of SCAFFOLD OF FEAR and monuments in Jasenovac.

The vortex theme through spatial design characteristics is experienced through movement and time from the very entrance into the field. "A rotten man is spinning." [14] The movement in the vortex presupposes the effect of space over time. It is a dramaturgy of movement that should cause a variety of different feelings to the visitor: a certain discomfort, fear, anxiety, tension in movement, curiosity. What is behind the high walls of the gates?! Concentric walls with a pronounced height and at a slight distance create a sense of movement in the maze to the visitor. The entrances are not emphasized, they are searched along the concentric path, along which vertical flanks occur towards the center of the Whirlwind, and, on the contrary, when going out, towards the field, which, with fragmentary opening, is curious, but also builds uncertainty. There are also "blind" spaces. One single path leads right into the center and out again According to some hypotheses, the labyrinth is a symbol of the world, of all things, of incompetence, of movement. "Its uninterrupted line is eternity, infinite duration, and immortality. (...) At the same time, the permission and the prohibition, he excludes, because it makes the road more difficult and fails, makes the exit more difficult. "[14]



Figure 3 Memorial Whirlwind of Silence (competition proposal), plan

Whirlwind connotes the "Survival of life and death, signifies a state in which one neither can live nor die ... It can only be turned into a circle or vortex." The etymology of the word vortex indicates the verb spin, which connects with the spindle word. This etymological series suggests that the whirlwind, in addition to bringing fear and leading to death, simultaneously points to the source of life, on weaving and creation; therefore, the theme of the vellum is also the cyclical movement of life, where life ends and it reappears. [14]

The second axis is perpendicular to the axis of evil and lies towards the east - west where memorial religious objects are positioned as a place of purification, comfort and faith in life. The square within the vortex is intended for gatherings, manifestations and worship. The interior of the vortex is a protected place, a limited and defined space, forms a place, a spacious whole open to the infinite sky.

The vortex center is a place that calls, arouses memory, recognition and identity. This is also the place where a visual vertical connection with the crypt is realized. From the square we are moving towards the depths, the vortex narrowing, anxiety, uncertainty, pressure intensify, so that one single point that does not rotate on the bottom itself, stands as a fact, as an eternal truth. It is a place of sculpture for all victims. "Rake, funeral caves and maze-shaped maze were protecting the dead, but also preventing their return." [15] Mating into the labyrinth is a symbol of death, and a birth-giving birth. The Vortex is turning. His power is unequal, somewhere stronger, somewhat weaker, but continuous. Whirlwind leads us to our center, in order to ultimately drag us to the bottom, in the essence of the truth about this place. The Whirlwind is emphasized by geometric separation - a circle in the field. They symbolize an independent self, manifestly, infinitely.

The second part of the memory comes from the need to factually reconstruct the historical facts related to the former Jasenovac death camp. During the WWII, there was a river scaffolding at the place where the Sava River was narrowest. It was used for the transport of inmates, path without return. On the other hand, as a mimetic stimulus, we have a lush wildflower forest towards the Sava River all the way to the dam that protects the Gradina from the flood.

As it is impossible to expose the chronology of events linearly, due to state borders, it is possible to create an end-of-life experience. The scaffold of fear is projected as a narrow bridge that has no end, it does not merge to the other shore, which goes to some point towards the Sava and the stables. The seized forest is shed so that only the trunks below the Scaffold, many of them, in the numbers of Jasenovac victims, remain. The bridge is creaky. It is possible to establish a visual connection with Jasenovac on the Scaffold.

At the end of the Scaffold there are just a few verses:

"Darkness is not the worst place,  
The end is not the worst place,  
The Fear is the worst place." [16]



Figure 4 *Memorial Scaffold of Fear (competition proposal), 3D visualization*

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to show the phenomenon of metaphors as an instrument of meaning and expression in memorial architecture. In the conceptual setting, the metaphorically expressed urban and architectural elements create the overall message and the meaning to be transmitted to the observer / visitor. All together: the internal structure of the elements, their forms, materialization and spatial dispositions, create the morphology of the overall memorial through multi-layered symbolic meanings.

The construction of symbolic speech through the instrument of metaphors was directly conditioned by spatial and physical characteristics and historical facts as a kind of framework for interpretation and experience. Through the characteristics of the form and function, the site of conscience builds and expresses the meaning, in a unique spatial framework with the idea of conveying a message of memorial architecture.

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