

## Semiotics of making: beginnings of a theoretical frame

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The contemporary problem of semiotics in architecture is an inherited struggle, not a chosen one. We consider the question of architectural communication because we inevitably recognize its centrality to the problem of architecture itself.

While the twentieth-century impact of Saussure and his birthing of structuralism gave architecture a new ground from which to reconceive its own semiotic functions, it was probably never possible that such a synchronic and undialogic theory would suit such a disparate and intersubjective activity. This is not to say that semiotics offers no guidance for the problem of architecture. It may say, however, that to use semiotics productively is not to start from its constructs but instead from architecture's own.

To that end, this study intends to establish a conceptual basis for communication and meaning in architectural form by an inquiry into *making*. The initial judgment about why making might prove to be more useful than other architectural characteristics is due to its essential dialogic nature; it already *is* a semiotic. In that sense what follows is an *opportunistic examination*. It arises from what should be considered a powerful—if somewhat neglected—text on making: Elaine Scarry's 1985 *The Body in Pain*. A deeper consideration of this work is long overdue. While Scarry's book seems to enjoy a rather wide readership, its potential impact has been largely unrealized since few scholars have developed its implications. Given the extraordinary originality of its argument, the artful construction of its prose, and the complex sophistication of its logic, it offers a rich—albeit demanding—place from which to begin.

The objective of this study is to schematize Scarry's theory of making such that connections to a semiotic understanding of its potentials may be realized. Following this effort, a short examination of one particular semiotic aspect of making will be argued as a tentative ground from which to guide further investigation.

### Elaine Scarry's theory of making

Elaine Scarry closes her seminal work *The Body in Pain* by moving away from an account of the structures of torture and war—what she terms “unmaking”—and toward an anticipatory proposition on how the “making” of the object world could be understood. Her last chapter, “The Interior Structure of the Artifact,” is notable not only for its compelling thesis of object making in a theoretical realm that “is at present in a state of conceptual infancy” (Scarry 280), but for the potentials of how such a thesis on making might illuminate a richer semiotics of architecture.

She proposes the connection between objects and the nature of their communicative capacities through her “radical formulation” that “artifacts are (in spite of their inertness) perhaps most accurately perceived as a ‘making sentient of the external world.’” (Scarry 281). Scarry uses the term *sentient* here in its definition as a state or quality of perception and consciousness. Scarry says object sentience is not a literal consciousness or animism, but is instead the active recognition of the struggles of human sentience; that it is the task of made objects to act with subjects in a discursively empathetic manner by recognizing and ameliorating the problems of sentient human perception. Scarry calls this function of objects “the *materialized structure of a perception*; [the object] is sentient awareness materialized into a freestanding design” (290, italics added). Through the consequence of objects realized as a concretized human perceptions, it is here in Scarry's argument that the very basis of semiotics within subject-object interaction is established.

Scarry then develops the communicative character of the made object by distinguishing it as a site of both “projection” and “reciprocation.” These actions are the cyclic discourse between human subjects and their *projection* of internal needs onto made objects and the subsequent *reciprocal return* of care afforded by that constructed world. The actions of projection and reciprocation in Scarry's theory are conceptually distinct—an assertion that we will find has semiotic consequences—though their actions are indivisible. She states that “the human act of projection assumes the artifact's consequent act of reciprocation” and that “[t]he first has no meaning without the second” (Scarry 307). The made object sits between the arcs of projection and reciprocation, and further, it has the extraordinary capacity of magnifying its own effects; “the action of reciprocation is ordinarily vastly in excess of the action of projection”

(Scarry 315). As an example the entire logic of projection and reciprocation, Scarry repeatedly returns to the image of a woman making a coat to keep herself warm:

[I]t is clear that [the woman's] translation of a counterfactual wish ("perceiving her own susceptibility to cold and wishing it gone") into the projective act of labor requires the embodied aversiveness of controlled discomfort. Arms, mind, back, eyes, fingers, will all be concentrated on bringing about a certain outcome: the sustained mental and physical attention seams, shapes, materials, is itself an interiorized objectification of the original counterfactual wish. . . . But while her making of the coat (the first half of the total arc of action [projection]) requires a deepened embodiment, the coat's remaking of her (the second half of the total arc of action [reciprocation]) will bring about her disembodiment, divesting her body of its vulnerability to external temperatures and therefore also freeing her mind of its absorption with this problem. In the total arc of action, then, she is first more intensively *embodied* (projection) and then *disembodied* (reciprocation); but clearly the level of the second is much greater than that of the first. If the second were the exact equivalent of the first—if the second relieved her of discomfort precisely to the same degree to which she had earlier willfully subjected herself to discomfort—it would have been senseless to make the coat: she might as well have remained wholly passive before her environment. Instead, the work of the second is vastly in excess of the first. (315-316)

The amplifying nature of object reciprocation can be described more succinctly; "the degree to which the object disembodies or recreates the human makers will ordinarily greatly exceed the degree of heightened aversive embodiment required to by the projective act of creating the object" (Scarry 315).

Collectively, Scarry characterizes the reciprocating effects of made objects as a *remaking of the subject*. Though never precisely defined, she uses many synonymous terms to give a boundary to the idea of remaking: "self-revision," "self-amplification," and "re-creation" among others.

Remaking is, at its heart, a consequence of diminishing the aversiveness of human sentience so that this sentience might ultimately be enlarged. As Scarry says:

The mental, verbal, and material objects of civilization collectively work to vastly extend the powers of sentience, not only by magnifying the range and acuity of the senses but by endowing consciousness with a complexity and large-mindedness that would be impossible if persons were forever engulfed in problematic contingencies of the body. (305)

So, the essential value of made objects is the remaking of the subject such that sentience is "vastly extended," senses are "magnified in their range and acuity," and consciousness becomes "complex and large-minded." It should be pointed out that these all are *semantic* conditions, and all possible through making. It is Scarry's thesis that the logic of making is itself the logic of human imagination: "the made object is simply the made-locus across which the power of creation is magnified and redirected back onto its human agents who are now caught up in the cascade of self-revision they have themselves authored" (323). So, not only is the remaking of the subject a functioning of the reciprocating capacities of the object world, the discursive projection-reciprocation cycle between subject and object becomes an ever-enlarging field of human betterment.

While Scarry argues that "the interior structure of the artifact" is premised on the communicative sentience of made objects, she does not frame the process in any terms of semiotic theory. It is something to her credit, perhaps, to have left this interpretation to others, since it defers the potential banality of an empirical structure from a task she poetically describes as being "lost in . . . a few square inches of something far more magnificent in scale" (Scarry 281). At the same time, she does invent for us a provocative and original argument that—in its close reading of the meaningful nature of human making—provides open connections toward some particularly under-developed realms in architectural semiotics, especially semantics. It is from these points that this study here intends to build Scarry's invention into a potential ground from which a discursive semantic intentionality for architecture could be made.

### **Making as semiosis**

Within Elaine Scarry's theory of making, there are numerous points through which semiotics offers a structure of analysis and application. The usefulness of such a study is not to recast Scarry's work in alternate terms as much as to unfold its impact on the making of objects, its inspiration for the practice of design, and—specifically for the purpose here—its affect on the creation of meaning in the built environment. The study here will focus on Scarry's development of projection and reciprocation and offer a potential translation of its effects through semiotics.

As previously discussed, *projection* is how the human subject projects internal needs out onto the world through the making of objects. *Reciprocation* is the subsequent act of return engendered by the made object as it affords care back to the human subject. The object is a "lever across which the force of creation moves back onto the human site" and remakes the human subject (Scarry 307). "Remaking" the subject is the essential logic of object making, and the enlargement of human sentience its ultimate goal.

It is through the acts of projection and reciprocation that the object world becomes—in Scarry's argument—"sentient." This is only possible if these two arcs of making are also semiotic; that is to say, that they operate as forms of communication. In that Scarry connects the processes of human making directly to the processes of human meaning—the "remaking" of the subject—it is appropriate to further define making as *semiosis*: the "processes and effects of the production, reproduction, reception and circulation of meaning in all forms, used by all kinds of agent[s] of communication" (Hodge and Kress 261)

Since making as semiosis involves the interaction of non-living and living beings, there is a demonstrable difference in the nature of the communication between them. In the arc of projection, the subject communicates content to the object world; in the arc of reciprocation, the object acts on and is read by the subject. The particular semiotic codes used in and by each arc are a function of both the capacities of each realm—subject and object—to communicate to and with each other. But it should be seen that projection is the arc most operationally "signifying"; because it is communication emanating from the human subject, it is the construct of making that is bound directly to signification.

While the full exploration of the semiotics of projection and reciprocation awaits a subsequent study, Scarry's argument does guide us toward a point from which to begin: a closer inquiry into the specific nature of projection. Ultimately, projection will suggest potential processes of judgment in designing semantic meaning in architecture, and the signification inherent to the subsequent object reciprocation will suggest potential claims to the socially constructed semantic meanings of ideology.

### **"Visibility of projection" and "accessibility through signification"**

Scarry explicitly recognizes the consequences of what she calls the "fictionality or madeness" of projection (312). She raises this issue in the consideration of how the common, pragmatic, every-day objects of a civilization—the "real" objects—operate with human subjects. These objects are "the realm of tablecloths, dishes, potted plants, ideological structures, automobiles, newspapers, ideas about families, streetlights, language, [and] city parks" (Scarry 312). We would also understand the general category of "architecture" to be included with these "real" objects. The value in her question about the madeness of this set of objects is that they are "by far the largest category" and so among the most important to fully consider (Scarry 312). In doing so, she recognizes the particular semiotic condition of their projection:

[A]t the stage . . . where these objects must function as "real" or self-substantiating, they perform this work much more successfully if they are not at every moment confessing their origins as human projections, and thus will have either no signature or an only recoverable, generalized human signature. (Scarry 314)

Initially, this statement suggests that common, every-day, "real" objects will do their work of reciprocation better if their madeness through projection is either weakly signified or not at all. Translated into terms of semantics, Scarry is saying that *the place of meaning in the category of "real" objects is most likely located in their capacities of reciprocation*. [It is beneficial to immediately note the potential importance of this idea for engaging the problem of semantics in architecture; it suggest that, to the extent architecture should be experienced as a "real" object, the authorship of its design and the fictiveness of its making

should be designed as a weaker semiotic than that of its reciprocating effects.]

Scarry continues her questions about madeness by further delineating realms of objects around the set of “real” objects by the nature of their projections. She says that the very large set of “real” objects are framed by two very small sets of objects: the “super-real” and the “unreal.” The category of the “super-real” is those objects whose projection is both “unrecognized and unrecoverable”; an example of such an object is God. The category of the “unreal” is those objects whose projection is not only “recoverable and recognized but self-announcing”; examples of such objects are those “framed by their fictionality,” like art, poetry, symphonic music, or film (Scarry 314). Again, it should be noted that we would also understand specific instances—but not all—of “architecture” to be included with these “unreal” objects.

These categories and their effects of projection offer us a place from which to characterize the semantic potentials of objects in general. Scarry tells us the consequences of projection within these categories of objects:

These three categories are introduced only to underscore the fact that at the moment when an artifact is recreating us, or reciprocating us, or being useful—that is, at the moment when an artifact is performing the second half of the arcing action—whether or not the first half of that action [projection] is visible will depend on whether that visibility will interfere with its reciprocating task. That visibility will jeopardize the work of the [super-real] objects . . . will not jeopardize but will interfere with the work of the [real] objects . . . and will neither jeopardize nor interfere but will instead assist the work of the [unreal] objects . . . (since those objects exist both to celebrate and help us to understand the nature of creating). (314)

So, as Scarry describes them, the visibility of projection increases across the object categories from “super-real,” “real,” to “unreal.”

From Scarry’s conceptual framework of objects, we can map the function of projective visibility (Figure 1). As every object has multiple ways of being both projected and reciprocated, we should note that this mapping only represents the *general and collective* nature of the

projection of objects across the categories, and will not describe any one object in particular.

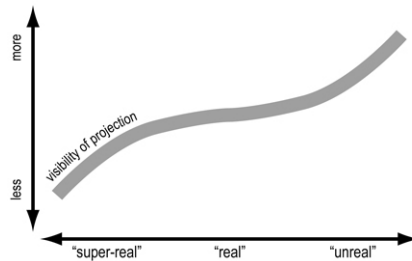


Figure 1: Level of visibility of projection through the categories of objects.

Next, we can focus on a comparison of one of the semiotic components of reciprocation: *signification*. Though Scarry never limits her idea of the projection/reciprocation arc only to acts of signification, we should realize this to be the essential semiotic activity—perhaps overwhelmingly so—in the process of both. Signification allows both the *expression of content* as well as the *method for accessing other content*, other semiotic forms of communication. Here we might describe the general effect of signification in reciprocating acts as the manner of *accessing* reciprocation. In this it is primarily linguistic; the vast effects of signification within human experience are routinely and necessarily based in language.

It is useful, then, to conceive of the level of accessibility of reciprocation through signification. Some very substantial assumptions must be made to begin this proposition, but these will be seen to become more reasonable through subsequent consideration. From an assumption that the lowest levels of visibility of projection—for example, God—tends to encourage, if not require, reciprocating signification—“and the Word was God” (John 1:1)—the trajectory of the accessibility through signification begins at “more.” From a comparative assumption that the highest levels of visibility of projection—for example, art—tends to defeat attempts at reciprocating signification—“that which is most likely art is that which remains *unknown the longest*” (Risher)—the trajectory of the accessibility through signification goes to “less.” As with the level of visibility in projection, it is necessary to generalize the level of accessibility of reciprocation through signification across the categories of objects. Even more so than in the visibility of projection, this arc of accessibility through signification

represents a general and collective nature, and will not describe any one object in particular (Figure 2).

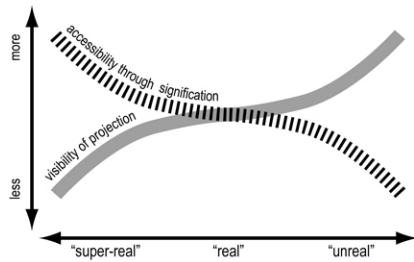


Figure 2: Level of accessibility through signification mapped against visibility of projection through the categories of objects.

In fact, not only will this mapping of accessibility through signification not describe any one object in particular, it is clear that *any* object's level of accessibility through signification can be *made to be seen* to lie outside this mapping. A rock picked up on a beach, for instance, would normally fall very close to "super-real," as would most products of nature. These objects are not generally "projected" into being made as physical things, so their level of visibility of projection is low, if not non-existent. Conversely, the objects of nature are often reciprocate through the elaborate structures of mathematics and the sciences, of novels, poetry, and philosophy, and so their accessibility through signification is high. However, it is just as easy to see this rock reciprocating as a hammer, an earring, or a piece of art, which requires a clearly decreasing investment in reciprocating signification. In fact, to conjure the rock's reciprocation as art is—almost by definition—to defeat its explanation through language.

So, again, the concepts exhibited by the mapping only represent a broad generalization of both effects. Within this generalization, however, are a number of potential insights. For instance, the effects of signification seen at the two extremes—where visibility of projection and accessibility through signification are most divergent—seem to invoke the most abstract form of language; these two extremes could be said to be the locations of the discourses "theology" and "philosophy." We might suspect that this kind of high-level discourse *is required as a function of the distance between* the object and its level of projection and the object's reciprocating accessibility through language. In other words, this says that the greater the distance from

projection to reciprocating signification, the more sophisticated the discourse; conversely, the less the distance from projection to signification, the more common the discourse. So, as we move in from the two extremes of theology/philosophy and this distance becomes reduced, we might first sense a linguistic shift more toward the character of "theory," and moving in together even further to one of "critique." In fact, the center region of the mapping—where the visibility of projection and the accessibility through signification have little distance from each other—holds interesting implications for not only the character of language it may suggest, but also for the semantic problem of making meaning from objects.

### The signifying-projective intersection

To initiate these possibilities, the region where the visibility of projection and the accessibility through signification converge will be identified as the "signifying-projective intersection" (Figure 3).

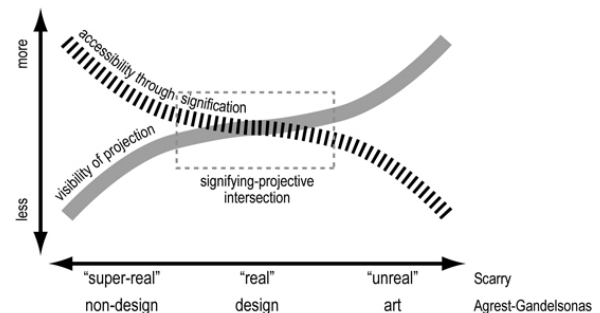
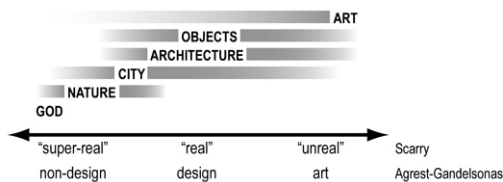


Figure 3: Figure 3. The signifying-projective intersection.

In the work to apply these semiotic questions toward the problems of architecture, we will advance Scarry's object categories by teaming them with a characterization of architectural objects inspired by a semiotic schema of Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas (103). These are the categories of "non-design," "design" and "art."<sup>1</sup> Though not commensurate in their respective theoretical intentions, the categories established by Scarry, Agrest, and Gandelsonas become better linked when qualified with some specific realms of objects—some of them actually shared between the two arguments (Figure 4).

From the previous discussion, we recognize the positions of "God" and that of "art" at the two extremes. "Nature" sits in



the "super-real/non-design" category because of its non-

*Figure 4: Classes of objects between category schemas of Scarry, Agrest, and Gandelsonas.*

made character, though it slides toward the "real/design" realm as its manifestations are given boundaries and named—a national park, cattle, or Ursa Major, for instance. The other realms—"city," "architecture," and "objects" (meaning the broad world of designed things)—are all centered around the category of "real/design." "City" is the object realm that potentially slides toward "super-real/non-design" in the sense that, in its more chaotic and extreme examples, it has an appearance of defeating recoverable human projection and appearing almost as a kind of nature. On the other hand, all the realms of "city," "architecture," and "objects" can also be manifest closely to "art." As Scarry describes, at some point, their projection can become so fictive and self-announcing that they more properly belong in the "unreal," in the realm of art. The location of this boundary between architecture and art, we should note, is often a substantive issue when engaged in attempts to understand significant architecture.

It is useful to consider the *nature of the discourse* within the realm of the signifying-projective intersection. First, we must recognize again that these characteristics of discourse represent a general and collective nature along the mapping, and will not describe the exact discourse for any one particular object. In fact, it is possible to consciously engage any form of discourse within the reciprocating action of any object. But it is the *generalizable* conditions of discourse at points along the mapping that offers us potential conceptual importance.

At the mapping's extremes—"God" and "art," in the categories of "super-real/non-design" and "unreal/art"—we previously anticipated that the reciprocating discourse induced is at the sophisticated level of "theology" and "philosophy." From the schema of object realms in Figure 4, we can begin to see the logic in proposing that, as we move in from the two extremes, the discourse shifts first toward

"theory" and then toward "critique." In fact, the point along the mapping when we begin to realize "critique" is at the same point that the object realm coalesces around the category of "real/design." This is the place in the mapping where the nature of objects and their reciprocating signifying discourse *are very close to each other*, where the manner in which the object is projected and reciprocated is dynamically and intimately connected to linguistic signification, to language. This point is the signifying-projective intersection.

The qualities of the objects at the signifying-projective intersection are very significant. These are the objects of everyday life: the common things around us *engaged repeatedly* through the needs and desires of our immediate human existence. They are experienced *consciously* as well as *habitually*. Objects in this realm envelop our experiences; they can neither be denied nor ignored. Further, these are the objects with which we share such an intimacy that—if they do not satisfy the requirements of making, of projection and reciprocation—they are invariably *critiqued and modified*. At times this critique and modification happens within the same moments of our engagement with the object; at other times, critique and modification is part of a much larger and longer social discourse. In terms of sheer volume of experience, the subject-object interrelationships at the point of the signifying-projective intersection are of such a scale that they comprise the majority of the human engagement with the object world. So, we would recognize that, by definition and character, *the category of "real/design" must be the place where the most subject remaking occurs*. This is not to say the most meaningful, substantive, or dramatic subject remaking occurs in the category of "real/design"—certainly that can happen in the realms of God and art. But it does say that the most common experience of remaking occurs here, and so it follows that it is the most familiar site of subject remaking as well. Architecture can be located as essential within this familiarity.

In his reading of Charles Sanders Peirce and his theory of semiotics, Umberto Eco imagines a process by which these actions of the signifying-projective intersection might be better understood. In "Peirce's Notion of the Interpretant," Eco considers one of Peirce's triadic constructs in his model of semiosis: *representamen*, *object*, and *interpretant*. The *interpretant* in Peirce's model is similar in its the operation of *signified* in Saussure's model; however, unlike

Saussure, Peirce conceived the interpretant as "itself a sign in the mind of the interpreter" (Chandler 33). As a sign, the interpretant can thus give rise to a new interpretant, which can give rise to another, and can continue on in an endless chain of signification. Eco terms this particular aspect of Peirce's theory *unlimited semiosis*—an "infinite network of signs referring to signs, as in a finite by unlimited universe of semiological ghostly appearances" (Eco 1464). But while the concept of unlimited semiosis seems to suggest an abstract structuralist loop, Eco is convinced that Peirce's pragmatic nature requires that this problem be reconsidered. He believes that "Pierce was interested in objects not so much as ontological sets of properties but as occasions and results of active experience" (Eco 1465). Gallie reiterates this thought in a different way, saying that while interpretants "can theoretically be interpreted in some further sign . . . [t]he exigencies of practical life inevitably cut short such potentially endless development" (Gallie 126).

Eco finds an end to the chain of signification in unlimited semiosis through Peirce's idea of the *final interpretant*. He sees that Peirce's discussion of the various qualities within interpretants—that a sign can produce an "emotional" and an "energetic" interpretant—allows the problem of unlimited semiosis to be resolved in a way that is the very definition of the signifying-projective intersection. Eco says that:

A sign can produce an emotional and an energetic interpretant. Considering a musical piece, the emotional interpretant is our normal reaction to the charming power of music, but this emotional reaction may elicit a sort of muscular or mental effort. This kind of response is the energetical interpretant. . . . But . . . an energetic response does not need to be interpreted; it rather produces (I guess, by further repetitions) *a change of habit*. This means that after having received a series of signs and having variously interpreted them, *our way of acting within the world is either transitorily or permanently changed*. This new attitude, this pragmatic issue, is the final interpretant. (Eco 1465, italics added)

What Eco says here is profound. In the engagement of objects in repetitious, habitual situations, there is a point at which the chain of signification stops by human action induced by the energetic interpretant. From the action that follows, "our way of acting within the world is transitorily or

permanently changed." It should be clear to us that Eco's proposition connects a specific semiotic process first to the signifying-projective intersection—the engagement of objects in repetitious, habitual situations—and then secondly to a simple rewriting of Scarry's thesis of remaking—the subject's recreation "within the world." Here in Eco, we have not only an illumination of the processes of semiotics for objects in the signifying-projective intersection, but also an explanation of why its signifying discourse produces subject remaking.

### **Semantics at the signifying-projective intersection**

Eco's critique of Peirce's semiotic system takes us to point where the action of the final interpretant becomes a path to meaning. This work finds semantic potential in how the final interpretant is both a construct of the world itself and the habits of humans in the world. While this argument will only apply itself to the signifying-projective intersection, it offers us a theoretical ground from which to consider the location of semantic intentions beyond the category "real/design," and toward both "super-real/non-design" and "unreal/art."

Before returning to Eco, it is useful to introduce *ideology* as a particular realm of potential subject-object semantics. Ideology here is not considered in its pejorative sense, but through the manner in which "it identifies a unitary object that incorporates complex sets of meanings with the social agents and processes that produced them" (Semiotics). In social semiotics, ideology represents how society expresses its social relationships and negotiates interests "through motivated versions of social reality" (Hodge and Kress 266). This expression and negotiation is accomplished by intersubjective semiotic processes. Given the substantial economic and political determinations in the production of architecture, ideology in this social sense is also a beneficial critique toward designing semantics through constructs of architectural intention.

So how is the final interpretant connected to the signifying-projective intersection and how it might manifest meaning?

From his consideration of the *final interpretant*, Eco goes on to illuminate how it acts as within the social sphere as *habit*. The term *habit* is of keen importance, since it connects directly to the conditions of subject-object interrelationship as we understand them at the signifying-projective intersection, where objects are often engaged repeatedly

and habitually. Eco reiterates his belief in Peirce's pragmatism by saying that the "final interpretant as habit" has "rules of interaction with the continuum of reality that produce individual events and concrete objects of perception" (Eco 1466). Translated to the current argument, that is to say that the operation of the final interpretant occurs in the signifying-projective intersection and is a function of semiotic processes. Eco pushes the construct of these social rules of interaction further, to a point at which we can recognize that what he is actually describing is *ideology*: the normative discursive semiotics of socially-constructed rules, behaviors, and modification through "testing." Eco says:

Since there are general principles, the ultimate meaning or final interpretant of a sign can be conceived as the general rule permitting us to test or to produce a given habit. The habit produced as a sign is both a behavioral attitude acting in some regular way and the rule or prescription of that action. . . . The objectivity of such a pragmatic law is given by the fact that it is intersubjectively testable—[ . . . ] there are natural tendencies and operational rules allowing all of us to test them. (Eco 1466)

So, to the extent that Eco's functions of the final interpretant can be redefined in terms of ideology, it follows that *the signifying-projective intersection is actually an ideologic realm*. That is to say, we can consider meaning processes through ideology as a basic semantic condition of the signifying-projective intersection. Thus, the objects around the category of "real/design"—the place of architecture—can be measured through the socially constructed semantic processes of ideology.

To say this is not to have proven something necessarily unknown. Ideology and its potential connections to architecture has been a conceptual staple among contemporary theorists since the rise of structuralist semiotics in the 1970s. Perhaps among the most cogent arguments about the usefulness of ideological structures giving foundation to architectural semiotics is Agrest and Gandelsonas' "Semiotics and the Limits of Architecture." In fact, their work to construct operational strategies of metaphor and metonymy, opening and closure, will be of great importance to subsequent developments of the propositions embedded in this current study. But what may

be a newly recognized use of ideology here is that the possibilities of a semantics in architecture could come from an understanding of its *foundations through making*, rather than an external concept of semiotic structuralism. In this sense, what has been introduced here is the possibilities of an authentic semiotic of architecture rising from its manifestation as a made object in the world.

### Conclusions in the form of propositions

There are great distances yet to be covered in the task of creating a semiotics of making. The effort here has been only to introduce connections between Elaine Scarry's theory as it might be redefined through the realm of semiotics. The promise in this work is that it offers substantially new ground from which to conceive of architectural meaning and to guide the production of such built form through processes of design practice.

The results already suggest certain propositions for subsequent study. As we've seen from the illumination of only one place on the mapping of projection and signification—the signifying-projective intersection—the consequences of its semantics of ideology can offer a particular measure for how meaning can be expressed in architecture. *Architecture is located within this intersection*, and so the question of how ideologic systems work semantically—a well established realm of scholarship—should prove to be enormously beneficial. It should also be said that this does not imply that architecture is best manifest as a slavish adherent to the semantics of existing ideologies; to do so would be—by the consequences of our study here—to only communicate what is already defined as commonly understood. In fact, it might be learned that recognizing the signifying-projective intersection is beneficial because architecture should be designed with *semantic aspects outside the intersection*, so that its capacities for signifying reciprocation and subject remaking are promoted rather than diminished.<sup>2</sup>

Among other propositions, it will prove important in future research to test these semantic measures on seminal architectures. This should provide for new perspectives—perhaps in some cases radically so—from which to judge their design achievement. It also promises to open up older theories that have included issues of making within their logic to new interpretations. Gottfried Semper's materialist theories of ornament and his anthropological view of



architectural form developed in *The Four Elements of Architecture*, for example, would be among such positions to be revisited.

In all, the continued investigation of the semiotics of making hold great potential. This is perhaps even more true when we consider that the real solutions of the twenty-first century may be found in realms of discourse rather than empiricism. In such a world, the benefit of a rich and useful theory of architectural semiotics is not just desirable, it is fundamental.

*Semiotics Encyclopedia Online*. Ed. Paul Bouissac. Victoria University. 15 May 2008 <<http://www.semioticon.com/seo/1/ideology.html>>  
Semper, Gottfried. *The Four Elements of Architecture*. Trans. Mallgrave, Harry Francis and Wolfgang Herrmann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1851/1989

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The schema proposed by Agrest and Gandelsonas does not include the term "art," but their argument can be seen to be sympathetic to the idea, especially regarding art's relationship to "design": "[D]esign constitutes a set of practices . . . unified with respect to certain normative theories. That is, it possesses specific characteristics that distinguish it from all other cultural practices and that establish a boundary between what design is and what it is not" (Agrest and Gandelsonas 104).

<sup>2</sup> In "Semiotics and the Limits of Architecture," Agrest and Gandelsonas promote exactly this strategy, using a resistance to prevailing ideology as a productive critique. "The aim of semiotics is neither the acceptance of the ideological definition of architecture nor the proposition of new definitions, but rather the displacement of the boundaries established by the ideological definitions" (Agrest and Gandelsonas 101).

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