

of the characteristics of the real object, but not all. The third way we might represent the cat is by using symbolic means. We might for example use the symbol from common language, which in English is the word 'cat'. This word conveys the meaning quite precisely, but has itself got no qualities of the cat at all – it is a pure symbol, a kind of conspiracy amongst the English-speaking people of the world to attach this meaning to this collection of letters.

So buildings may carry meaning in similar ways. Goodman suggests that they can 'denote', 'exemplify', 'express', and offer 'mediated reference' (Goodman and Elgin 1988). They may actually look like something in some iconic way. Utzon's magnificent opera house in Sydney carries visual echoes of the sails of boats in the harbour, thus speaking to us of its context, and in this way it can be said to 'denote' sailing boats. In fact, in terms of our earlier discussion we can see it as being an iconic reference to sailing boats. Buildings may 'exemplify' certain architectural ideas. Such a concept is embedded in the British system of 'listing' buildings of architectural interest. Through this process buildings come to stand for a set of ideas, whether they be structural, constructional or aesthetic. The famous office building in Appledorn for Centraal Beheer, by Herman Hertzberger, exemplifies a particular approach to architecture in which the intention is to allow the users to take possession and occupy it in a very personal kind of way. This kind of meaning is one to which architects often refer in conversations and debates about architectural ideas, but which may nevertheless be 'meaningless' to ordinary people who have not studied those ideas.

Buildings may also 'express' ideas or feelings through properties that it possesses either literally or more often metaphorically. Goodman puts this with his characteristic lucidity:

A Gothic cathedral that soars and sings does not equally droop and grumble. Although both descriptions are literally false, the former but not the latter is metaphorically true.

Goodman therefore argues that the distinction here between the literal and metaphorical properties is a useful one, and prefers to see the former as 'exemplification' and the latter as 'expression'. This distinction seems particularly useful when we run across buildings that can both exemplify and express, but not necessarily the same things.

Goodman's final way of meaning is that of 'mediated reference'. In essence, this is where buildings refer through a chain of connections to something beyond their actual existence. We see particular attention to this kind of meaning in the post-modern movement. Here a building or feature of a building may be sufficiently similar to some features from an earlier style to indirectly refer to those buildings themselves. In a now famous and fascinating argument, Robert Venturi has