

advocated the development of such mediated references in such a way as to produce complex and even contradictory ideas (Venturi 1977). The argument here seems to be that such variety of meaning creates ambiguity and interest in buildings, which in turn provides a rich experience for the user who also becomes more engaged in the perceptual process. Whether this is really true does not seem to have been tested empirically, but has certainly become a tenet of some architectural theories. These sometimes complex chains of reference may be quite inscrutable to those who have not studied architectural theory in detail. Others, such as the English architect John Outram, well known for using such forms of symbolism as generators of architectural ideas, have argued that it does not matter whether people understand the chains of allusion (Lawson 1994). Outram claims that the use of these ideas in his work gives designs a form of internal consistency and coherence which is perceived whether understood or not (Plate 7).

However, Goodman's taxonomy of meaning does not include all the ways in which buildings can and do mean things. They may also represent organizations, people, events, ideas or values purely by association. In such a case the meaning has nothing to do with the architectural form and characteristics of the building, but rather comes from circumstance. By now in fact the Sydney Opera House has joined the harbour bridge as a symbol of Sydney and even of Australia as a whole. Note here that the initial iconic link between the sailing boat and the opera house has been connected to another, this time symbolic, link between the opera house and Sydney, thus forming a rather complex chain of connections. They can all be used to stand for or signify the place, the country and the nation in place of words. Of course such symbolic association can take place on a wide scale, as in this example, or more privately. For me certain buildings have meanings associated with significant events that have taken place in my life in or around these buildings. Sometimes those events may be shared by many other people too.

In reality, buildings can have meaning in none, one or many of these ways, and in sympathetic or contradictory ways. I found that my first visit to Berlin since the removal of the Wall gave rise to a particularly confusing set of meanings. The great Altes Museum built in the last century by Shinkel has always fascinated me. It represents an attempt to reinterpret Greek architecture, but is in some ways an extraordinarily modern building (Fig. 4.9), and yet it stands at one end of the open space that is the Lustgarten, famous for being the site of political rallies held by Hitler. The memories of this and a view of Shinkel's façade as the backdrop for these appalling events came powerfully and yet unbeckoned into my mind. Curiously, but perhaps understandably, at this point in German history there is no reference there to these events, and I found it distinctly odd to see tourists flocking around in the sun