

LETTER GRAPHICS IN THE FACADE OF THE BUILDING - COMPOSITION AND MESSAGE

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Introduction

The research concerns the issues of art and communication in architecture. Façade graphics, alongside their compositional and aesthetical qualities, may also contain visual elements that are part of a message. One of the ways of sending such a message is by incorporation of letters. The article looks at preliminary research on the form and content of messages contained within façade graphics. The author analyses the objective of placing letter graphics on a façade, and how they relate to the information and message that are given. The analysis focuses on the form in which the message is given, as well as the applied artistic means tied to the content and their relation to the building's structure.

An important part of the analysis is the examination of the applied artistic means tied to the meaning, and how they relate to the building's structure.

The research material was divided based on the articulation in the façade. The following groups were distinguished: creating a figurative image, integration of lettering graphics with the building's compositional arrangement, graphic arrangements made up of text, text arrangement made up of letters, uniform texture made up of a text, abstract letter shapes, creating notation based on a code, lettering symbols.

Material and Methods

The research was conducted based on eight buildings constructed over the past two decades. In each of them, graphical techniques of digital and screen printing were used. The majority of them are located in Europe, and due to the global nature of artistic phenomena, there is no limited smaller area of research.

Results

In buildings fully covered with façade graphics, lettering arrangements are part of the aesthetic and compositional strategy of forming the façade. Image on glass adds variety, and highlights the building's form by visually correcting the façade's composition. Lettering graphics may be used in the form of texture that fills graphical arrangements present in the façade. In building's partly covered with façade graphics, lettering arrangements act as decoration that emphasises key surfaces in the façade or separates important areas such as the entrance area. The layer responsible for meaning completes the compositional role of the lettering ornament used in the facade. Lettering graphics are used to create information related to the purpose of the building. The text used in the facade may have a symbolic meaning, often referring to lettering patterns, signs or quotations. An interesting phenomenon that has been observed are formal procedures related to the image, which have a compositional and artistic significance, but also make the text less readable.

The text on the façade contributes to the making of the company's image and branding – improving its brand awareness. Lettering motifs are important in the creation of an identity for an architectural space as well as its identification.

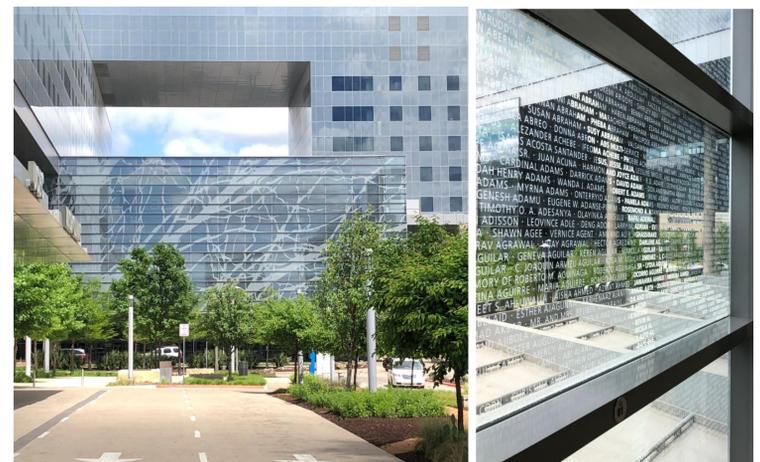


Figure 1. New Parkland Hospital, Dallas, USA (HDR & Corgan, 2010), a) view of the facade from outside, b) details of the glass coating from inside, source: Dip-Tech, Ferro Company.



Figure 2. Veenman Printer, Ede, the Netherlands (Karel Martens [5], Neutelings Riedijk Architecten, 2002), a) view from a distance, b) compositional arrangement of the facade, photos by Maarten Helle.



Figure 3. SUVA Office, Basel, Switzerland, (Herzog & de Meuron, 1993), a) close-up view of the facade, b) printout, photos by Maarten Helle.

Discussions & Conclusions

In the examples used in the analysis, a direct link was observed between lettering graphics and the building's compositional arrangement and shape. In buildings fully covered with façade graphics, lettering arrangements: add variety to the simple shape of a building; highlight the building's form with the letter shapes; create visual reduction in the composition of a building, e.g. by visually shortening the façade; provide texture used to fill graphic arrangements that play out in the building's façade. In buildings partially covered with façade graphics, lettering arrangements act as an element that highlight key surfaces of the façade, or separate important areas such as the entrance area.

In the analysed examples, the following strategies of forming lettering graphics were observed: decrease of letter size, visible only in direct contact with the façade; linear multiplication; surface multiplication – texture creation; breaking down of text into letters; using foreign languages.

The above operations, related to both form and meaning, are the same ones that result in making the meaning of a text unclear.

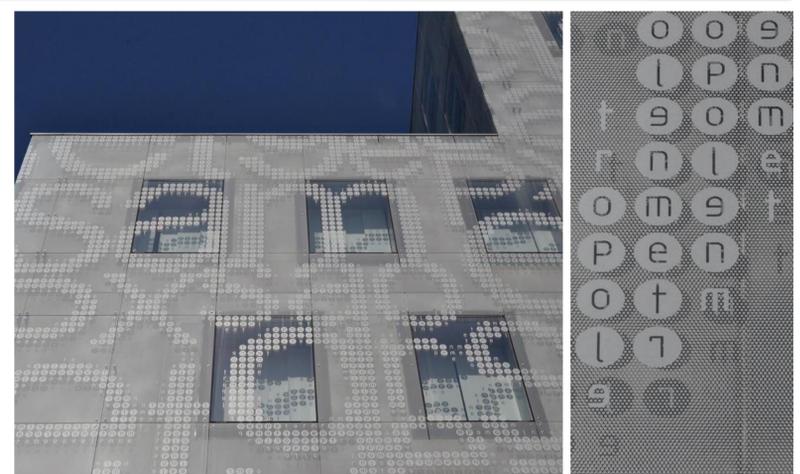


Figure 4. Metropole Office Building, Copenhagen, the Netherlands (C. F. Møller Architects, 2010), a) printout from various distances, b) close-up view of the facade, photos by Maarten Helle.

Acknowledgements

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