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Media as a Modality of Architectural Discourse:
Methods/Modes/Medium/Activity

by

Melissa Megan Sullivan

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Master of Architecture

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Houston, Texas

May, 2005
abstract

Media as a Modality of Architectural Discourse:
Methods/Modes/Medium/Activity

by

Melissa Megan Sullivan

This thesis claims that the modalities of the discourse of architecture are much broader than scholarship and journalism. The modalities extend to include magazines, journals, books, but also newspapers (print news media), radio, television, websites, blogs and even conferences, lectures, reviews, openings, and cocktail parties. Via the case study of the Walt Disney Concert Hall project, this thesis maps the ways in which differing media circulate stories and information, and the back and forth influence among these media. The events of the project itself combined with the influence of external events like the Northridge earthquake and the L.A. Riots, demonstrate the effects of these differing modalities on the discourse of architecture. These effects, in turn, imply potentials for the role of the architect and broader discipline in this media driven culture.
acknowledgments

To John Bihn for his commitment and dedication not only to this thesis but to being an educator and mentor.

To Helene Furjan and Sean Lally for their insight, enthusiasm, and dedication.

To my fellow students Kari Smith, Zeynep Atas, Dan Burkett, and Christian Sheridan without whom I would never have made it through the thesis semester.

To my parents, Patrick and Colleen McGuire, and family, who have provided limitless support both emotionally and financially throughout my architectural pursuit. Without them none of my accomplishments would have been possible.

Finally, to Shane, the only person who would sit in the library for me behind stacks of books searching for that one little piece of information that would only potentially help.
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1.0 introduction
In the study and practice of architecture, many topics and concepts are discussed and deemed as relevant to what contributes to the potential progression of the discipline. For instance, discussions of architectural form, site, material, construction, technology, history, and/or theory, are considered undisputedly relevant to the discipline in some way. Some would even argue biology, music, art, etc. influence architecture. Not only are these items considered worthy of discussion, but they can be catalysts of architectural design and thought. These concepts may affect the following processes specific to the discipline of architecture:

**solicitation process**: the process by which an architect acquires new jobs and clients.

**design process**: the process by which a project moves from idea to working drawings

**building process**: the process by which a project moves from working drawings to actual built form

**reception process**: the process by which a built or actualized work is received and evaluated

There is also a concept that can affect all of these processes. This concept is the combination of media and informal communication. Media in the discipline includes:

**print or written media (word-of-print)**: books, magazines, and newspapers

**broadcast media (word-of-broadcast)**: television, radio, and film

**computer media (word-of-mouse)**: websites, blogs, email, chatrooms, and forums

Informal communication in the discipline is recognized as:

**ephemeral media (word-of-mouth)**: conferences, lectures, reviews, openings, and cocktail parties

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In the discipline of architecture these elements combine to virtually render an image of architecture. This is also how the discipline communicates and maintains a current understanding of the progress of architecture.

Within the discipline, people are recognizing media and informal communication as fundamental to architectural process. Through a personal email conversation with Tom Wiscombe of Emergent, information was received on how his project became published in the October 2003 issue of Architectural Digest. This magazine is not considered completely within the architectural profession because it lacks professional advice and information specifically for the architect. It is designed for the general public audience. In his email, he stated that “the journalist Joseph Giovannini, whom [he has known] for years, picked up on it and approached [him] about the story. [He] had nothing to do with the contact to Arch. Digest, [Giovannini] pitched the story and dealt with [the magazine].” Wiscombe went on to say that articles in magazines like these, ones considered less significant to the education of the discipline, “tend to create almost nothing in new contracts, at least in [his] experience. The only people who actually responded to that article were other architects (congratulations, etc.), who are like hawks in terms of the press.” This reveals something about popular media being recognized as something intrinsic to the discipline. It seems at the least, that media can elevate an architect’s reputation within the discipline.

In his article Pass It On..., R.E. Somol argues that the informal communication aspect of the discipline is what makes the discipline “larger than life.” He also elevates “small talk” to the level of something that makes “architecture architecture.” This article represents the discipline recognizing not only that informal communication exists within the discipline, but that its “performative” nature can actually generate architecture and propel the

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2 conversation conducted with Tom Wiscombe via email.
discipline forward.

Another example that recognizes informal communication as intrinsic to the discipline are the architectural publications, specifically *Architecture* and *Architectural Record*. These two magazines are the most widely circulated publications in the profession. Both contain sections that encourage a level of informal communication within the profession. *Architecture* magazine contained a section formerly entitled “Details” which began in May 1990. This section was renamed to “The Buzz” in September 1997 and then shortened to “Buzz” in 2000. The term “buzz” is a gossip-like word, meaning confusion of activity and gossip, or the promotion or encouragement of talk or gossip. *Architectural Record* has a similar section entitled “Off the Record.” Both of these sections in the two magazines include information like winners of competitions, shortlists, and prizes, who was selected for a project, new architecture school hires, and deaths. These sections encourage “buzz” by providing the information that is then gossiped or talked about. The briefs under these sections do not tell the whole story. They leave out information, such as how an architect went about winning a competition and what kind of politics were involved. The titles and information of these sections imply the magazine is providing the reader with insider knowledge that is not necessarily supposed to be public knowledge, giving it a seductive and erotic quality. These magazines have evolved to include these sections, and this implies that informal communication is now being recognized on some level as important to the discipline.

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These examples, while also implying other things about the nature of the profession, provide evidence that media and informal communication are recognized within the discipline as relevant and fundamental to architectural processes. This thesis researches the media and informal communication surrounding the discipline in order to reveal a) how, as a combinatorial element, it functions within the discipline and b) how it affects individual architectural processes. The implications and conclusions drawn from this research will shed light on potentials for the role of the architect and broader discipline in this media driven culture. This media research takes the principle form of a case study analysis of Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall.
2.0 case study

Walt Disney Concert Hall
Frank O. Gehry
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Though there are discrepancies in the reporting of dates of this project, I am using the dates of the book *Symphony: Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall* for the purpose of this case study because Gehry's office uses it as their official timeline. I have made a diagram that represents the discrepancies in the reporting of the timeline of the Walt Disney Concert Hall project. Each media that reported dates is featured in this diagram. When dates are reported different from the official timeline, it is denoted using the color red. Discrepancies mainly occur within the controversy boundary and can even be off by just a day or two. One interesting note is that the article by Dana Hurt for A+U has a discrepancy regarding the date construction resumed and she wrote *Symphony: Frank Gehry's Walt Disney Concert Hall* with the "official" timeline. This timeline shows that the author's objective a goal for an article often takes precedent over the relaying of accurate information.
The timeline diagram represents the key events and dates of the Disney Concert Hall project. Due to the complexity of dates and events, the diagram provides a visual representation of the project's timeline. The diagram includes various milestones such as the opening of the Gehry Center and the architectural design and construction phases. The text at the bottom of the page discusses the author's objective and the relaying of accurate information.
2.1 case study summary

Case study: Walt Disney Concert Hall
Architect: Frank O. Gehry
Acoustics Consultant: Nagata Acoustics
Location: Los Angeles, California
Client: Los Angeles Philharmonic Association
Project start: May 1987
Project completion: October 2003
Project final cost: $274 million
Auditorium: 2,265 seats

Summary:

The project began with an initial $50 million donation to the Los Angeles Philharmonic from Walt Disney's widow, Lillian, in May of 1987.¹ She donated the money because Walt was an avid supporter of the Philharmonic. The building would replace the existing home of the Philharmonic, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. In 1988, Ernest Fleishman, executive director of the Philharmonic, began a search for an architect by conducting a competition. Fleishman and "...an architectural subcommittee winnowed a list of 80 architects down to four who would compete for the commission: Gottfried Boehm, of Cologne, Germany; Hans Hollein, Vienna; James Stirling Michael Wilford, London; and Frank O. Gehry, FAIA."² In December 1988, the committee chose Frank Gehry, the local architect and the only one of the four without a Pritzker Prize. In 1989, a local architectural firm, Dworsky Associates, agreed to take Gehry's schematic designs through working drawings as project architect. When Gehry was hired, it was agreed that an acoustics consultant would also be

¹ In summarizing the case, I have used the dates regarding the events, from the "official timeline" in the book Symphony: Frank Gehry’s Walt Disney Concert Hall. See timeline discrepancies on page 7.
² Russell, James. "Project Diary: The story of how Frank Gehry's design and Lillian Disney's dream were ultimately rescued to create the masterful Walt Disney Concert Hall." Architectural Record. November 2003. pp. 135-160.
hired. The Los Angeles Philharmonic hired the Tokyo firm Nagata Acoustics. The project seemed to be off to a good start and things seemed to be going well for Gehry. In 1989, Frank Gehry completed the Vitra Museum in Weil am Rhein, Switzerland, the first project that represented his curvaceous architecture. He also claimed the Pritzker Prize this year.

In 1991, Gehry’s partner Jim Glyph pioneered the use of CATIA, a three-dimensional modeling software used in the French aerospace industry. This “three-dimensional modeling software would help assure the Gehry’s enriched vocabulary could be built to budget.” 3 Things seemed to be going along smoothly for the project until the LA Riots erupted in 1992, after the televised Rodney King beating. After this, “a new home for the Philharmonic no longer felt like a top priority.” 4 Even so, the project continued. However, the client now wanted an underground parking garage under the Concert Hall. Construction of the parking garage began December 12, 1992. The project at this time had a working budget of $115 million. “One overlooked danger signal was that the garage alone would come in at $81.5 million.” 5 Also, at the end of 1992, the Philharmonic hired a new music director, Finnish composer and conductor, Esa-Pekka Salonen. Salonen would prove to be instrumental to the design of the Concert Hall. While the parking garage was under construction, another controversy hit the project. In 1994, the Northridge earthquake hit Los Angeles causing billions of dollars worth of damage to the city. At this time, the drawings for the Walt Disney Concert Hall were put out for pricing bids by contractors. The $160 million outcome shocked everyone involved. “The 1994 Northridge earthquake caused the structure of the Concert hall to be changed to a steel-brace frame, which further increased costs since eighty percent of the steel was already purchased.” 6

3 ibid
4 ibid
5 ibid
Because of the escalating costs, the project stopped construction in November 1994. This event is noted as “controversy,” and represented as a dashed red line, in the case study diagrams because this is when the architecture was in serious crisis and needed saving. Construction would be stopped until enough funds from individual and private donors could be raised to finish the project. Though the Concert Hall construction was stopped, it was decided that the parking garage would be finished. The garage opened in 1996. The actual Concert hall would continue only when enough funds were raised. Also in 1996, a fundraising effort was initiated by Eli Broad, a local philanthropist and owner of residential development company Kaufman Broad; Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan; and others. The fundraising group came up with a plan that would move the project forward as a design-build project, removing Gehry as lead architect. This outraged Gehry and resulted in him writing “The Letter” in which he offered to withdraw from the project. “The letter also referred to Gehry’s difficult personal relationship with Broad, for whom he had designed a house.” The controversy surrounding Gehry caused Diane Disney Miller, Lillian’s daughter, to step in and tell Mayor Riordan that she wanted Gehry to remain on project. If he remained, she would donate $25 million more to the project.

The Concert hall also gained more support after the opening of Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain in 1997. “Bilbao, relatively free of cost surprises and construction snafus, reinforced Gehry’s claims that his firm could do the job for a predictable sum.” In November 1999, the project resumed construction with Gehry still as project architect. In June 2003, the construction was completed and the orchestra moved into the hall for a six-month tuning period. The building then opened to the public in October 2003.

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7 Russell, James. “Project Diary: The story of how Frank Gehry’s design and Lillian Disney’s dream were ultimately rescued to create the masterful Walt Disney Concert Hall.” Architectural Record. November 2003. pp. 135-160.
8 ibid
The original competition design by Frank Gehry changed dramatically over the course of the project. The shapes changed and the materials did also. The exterior skin was originally intended to be limestone, but the final exterior skin chosen was steel cladding, similar to the Guggenheim in Bilbao. The Concert hall is composed of an entry plaza, lobby, auditorium, 2 outdoor amphitheaters, a public garden, rehearsal space, REDCAT (a 266 seat black-box theater), and offices.
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"Frank Gehry got the job because they wanted a California architect."
Events → Media → Media

The Walt Disney Concert Hall
Frank Gehry

The following diagram represents the events and media surrounding the Walt Disney Concert Hall project. Along the x-axis are the events of the project presented in chronological order. The dates correlating to these events are not included because the differing media portray discrepancies in regard to a timeline. The media propagating the project are on the y-axis. The categories of media are: internal to discipline, which includes media geared specifically toward architects; musical discipline, which includes media geared specifically toward the musical field; external to discipline, which includes media that are geared toward a general public audience; cross-over, which includes media which features architecture but is not specifically for architects; and last, personal or informal communication, which is information collected through word-of-mouth. The arrows in the diagram indicate something generating something else. When events generate media, the arrow color is gray-green. When media generates events, the arrow color is brown-beige. When media generates media, the arrow color is purple.
Ernest Reischmann, executive director of the Philharmonic, narrows search to 4 firms

Frank O. Gehry is chosen to be the architect for the new concert hall

Dworzynski Associates agree to take Gehry's schematic design through working drawings as executive architect

The Philharmonic hires Nagata Acoustics as a consultant

Frank O. Gehry wins Pritzker Prize

controversy -
criticism
gossip
reportage
speculation
 hype
promotion +

Disney

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Construction of underground parking garage begins
Philharmonic hires new music director, Finnish composer and conductor, Esa-Pekka Salonen
Northridge earthquake

October 1995: Correspondent's File

Architects have say on final plans, respond to critics who say the $650-million Walt Disney Concert Hall, designed by Frank Gehry, has too many problems. Gehry says the $650-million Disney Hall project is the most complex project he has ever undertaken.

Concert Hall construction stops
2003: Projects

November 2003: Projects

"Bilbao, relatively free of cost surprises and construction delays, reaffirmed Gehry's claims that his firm could do the job for a predictable sum."

Qtr. 1995: Correspondent's File

"Steel prices for Bilbao Guggenheim Bilbao came in 10 percent under budget."

Diane Disney Miller, daughter of Lilian, calls Mayor Richard Riordan, she wants Gehry to remain on project

Bilbao Guggenheim opens to public

Construction resumes on hall.

Construction orchestra moves to hall.
2.2 case study analysis introduction

There are many ways to focus a case study in architecture. One might look for
programmatic similarities in projects, or simply study the design process of an architect.
This case study suggests a different focus. The way people are able to look back and
understand an architectural project is through what is reported in various media. Media
encompasses written, televised, and broadcast modes; it includes ephemeral media like
websites, blogs, and chatrooms; and it involves people’s personal experiences with the
informal communication, such as gossip and email, that surrounds an architectural project
at any time. A combination of these media and informal communication helps construct
an individual’s understanding of a project, or paints the picture of what the project can
mean to them. Beyond the physicality of the building, the varying media create a virtual
identity of the building, one composed of quotes, hearsay, rumor, and gossip. For example,
Mary-Anne Ray mentioned to me that “the only thing she thinks of everytime she drives by
the Walt Disney Concert Hall is the rumor that Frank Gehry begged Lillian Disney at her
deathbed to get the project built.”

Though media and informal communication are essentially two different things, conducted
in different ways, in this case they combine to produce a virtual representation of the
building. For the sake of clarity, I will use the word “media” to represent the combination
of the two terms. What the media proved to represent was essentially the building process,
rather than the design process. This was true even in the architectural media itself. And,
as will be discussed in detail later, the architect and his position within the discipline
and community was also propagated. This propagation further influenced the building
process.

I designed this specific case study on the Walt Disney Concert Hall on the basis of what I
collected across all types of media. The information collected relates solely to the Concert
Hall project. The compilation does not include articles about Frank Gehry’s other projects. These projects are only mentioned if they are represented in the media around the Concert Hall. The information regarding the external events like the L.A.Riots and other such factors is also only analyzed when it is reported in a story about the Concert Hall.

Many issues led the construction to stop in 1994. It was a controversial architectural project, 16 years in the making. However, budget was the primary source of controversy surrounding the project. Factors that contributed to the budget crisis were the LA riots, the Northridge earthquake, program changes, and internal personal problems. Though some factors contributing to the budget problem were beyond the control of anyone involved in the project, like the change in the construction laws caused by the Northridge Earthquake which required the Concert Hall project to invest in more steel reinforcement, Frank Gehry still managed to attract the controversial media attention regarding the budget. Upon closer examination of this specific case, it appears that the media portrayed only one interpretation of the way events unfolded in the building process. The factors previously mentioned (budget, riots, etc.) complicated the building process, making it difficult to trace the history of this project completely and accurately. The events of the project are represented in the media through the varying modes of discourse, and this introduces discrepancies as to what is fact and what is not. In my analysis, the modes in which the discourse of architecture is represented in the media are categorized on the basis of type of journalism and language used:

- **Controversy:** a dispute or conflict made public
- **Critique:** evaluation/analysis/negative press
- **Gossip:** unsubstantiated claims
- **Reportage:** substantiated claims

---

1 See discrepancy diagram on page 15.
This diagram represents other discrepancies in the reporting of the Walt Disney Concert Hall besides the timeline. It reveals how in a complicated design project facts become distorted and it becomes difficult to determine the right answer. The arrows in the diagram indicate media covering the same concept. As in the timeline diagram, the author's motives and goals for an article often takes precedent over the reporting of accurate information.
Speculation: form of projection, expressing an opinion based on incomplete evidence
Hype: blatant or sensational promotion, public relations
Promotion: evaluation/analysis/positive press

For instance, I have identified as critique, language such as “critics say...” or “he has been criticized...” Language identified as speculation would be, “it could be...” or “it may be...” And for promotion, it could be, “he has been praised...” or any positive adjective describing the architecture. These modes of discourse are represented throughout the case study on a color coded gradient. Red represents more negative press, while blue represents more positive press on or about the building, building process, or Frank Gehry.

controversy
criticism
gossip
reportage
speculation
hype
promotion +

Key: Modes of discourse through media.

The Walt Disney Concert Hall project was chosen as a case study because it was and still is heavily propagated in a broad range of media, from magazines to blogs, and because it is discussed in many different circles, both specifically architectural and in more general circles. Other projects by other architects are also propagated along the same lines and would likely work similarly to this one. However the Disney Concert Hall may be unique in being represented across the full range of available media. Also, the Concert Hall is an accessible project in terms of collecting the media information. The project was propagated not only because of Frank Gehry’s international fame, but also because a new high-profile
cultural building is important to the public. It can mean new jobs and new problems (glare from building upset the neighbors) for the public, and it requires public support in the form of funding. All this allows free reign for anyone and everyone to have an opinion. The success of the project was and is important to architects because when his design was being criticized as “needlessly complicated”, Gehry stood by his work, and at the same time simultaneously “defend[ed] the profession whose authority has been steadily eroded by such apparently ‘practical’ scenarios.”

The Walt Disney Concert Hall media contains information regarding each event of the project. The events as discussed earlier in section 2.1 “case study summary” are, briefly:

(in chronological order)
1. Lillian Disney donates $50 million to build a new home for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.
2. Ernest Fleischmann, executive director of the Philharmonic, narrows search to 4 firms.
3. Frank Gehry is chosen to be the architect for the new concert hall.
4. Dworsky Associates agree to take Gehry’s schematic design through working drawings as executive architect.
5. The Philharmonic hires Nagata Acoustics as a consultant.
6. Frank O. Gehry wins Pritzker Prize.
7. Frank O. Gehry completes Vitra Museum in Weil am Rhein, Switzerland.
8. Jim Glyph, Gehry’s partner pioneers use of CAITA, a three-dimensional modeling software.

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10. Construction of under-ground parking garage begins.
12. Northridge earthquake
13. Concert Hall construction stops.
15. A fundraising effort begins by philanthropist Eli Broad, Mayor Richard Riordan, and others.
16. Broad and Riordan urge to move the project forward as a design-build project, removing Gehry as lead architect.
17. Gehry writes a letter in which he offers to withdraw from the project.
18. Diane Disney Miller, daughter of Lillian, tells Mayor Richard Riordan, she wants Gehry to remain on project.
20. Construction resumes on Hall.
21. Construction finished and orchestra moves into the Hall.
22. Concert Hall opens to public.
23. Post-occupancy evaluation

Once the information was collected and the modes for each article, book, website, blog, email, and so on were established, this material was compiled into a generative diagram to reveal how each article, author, and media was related to each mode of discourse. (see media diagram on page 19) The diagram allows conclusions to be drawn as to the journalistic tendencies of the differing media and authors. It also reveals how different modes tended to be utilized before and after the construction stopped. Of all the articles written before construction stopped, none could be understood as controversy. It was only after construction
Media Sources Propagating Walt Disney Concert Hall
articles on Walt Disney Concert Hall


"20 Million in Gifts Meet Key Goal for Disney Hall before deadline to allow groundbreaking in April."

"Frank Gehry: The Person & the Professional." KCET.


"Battle of the Metaphors." 21words blog. April 17.

"Does anyone know gossip on Frank Gehry's Disney"
This diagram, along with all of the others, is based on a datum axis, which is the date when the project controversy occurred and construction completely halted on the project in November of 1994. This diagram is split into two halves based on the datum line. The first half of this drawing includes media published/aired/posted before the controversy occurred; the second half includes media published/aired/posted after controversy occurred.
Pie charts representing the differing media covering the Walt Disney Concert Hall and the percentage each attributes to the modes of controversy, criticism, gossip, reportage, speculation, hype, and promotion.
stopped that *controversy* articles appeared. Another conclusion is that the more ephemeral media (like websites) tend to be associated more with *controversy*, while the media we consider to be more "academic" (like books) are more *promotive*.

The varying media represented each event individually using the modes of the discourse. *(see figure 1)* Thus quotes, opinions, and misinformation combine to paint the picture of each event. Note that the excerpts pertaining to each event are not necessarily always related to the actual dates of the events. For instance, the November 2003 article in *Architectural Record* "Project Diary: The story of how Frank Gehry’s design and Lillian Disney’s dream were ultimately rescued to create the masterful Walt Disney Concert Hall" by James Russell, records the events of the Concert Hall after it was completed.4 These excerpts still combine with the other chronological excerpts to give an overall impression of the project through the media, and this is why they are included in the diagrams of the case study. Media chronology is only a significant factor when media begins to generate the events of the project, something I will discuss later in more detail.

Generally speaking, the Walt Disney Concert Hall media coverage concerning events during the early stages of the project spans a wide range of media. The amount of coverage is high with the hype of Lillian Disney’s $50 million donation and Frank Gehry being chosen architect. The media coverage then drops, existing mainly within the boundaries of media internal to the discipline when covering events like the hiring of Nagata Acoustics and Gehry winning the Pritzker Prize. The amount of coverage then begins to heighten again when controversy hits, occurring in media internal (media geared toward architects) and external (media geared toward general public) to the discipline. It then expands to all ranges of the media, including musical discipline media and cross-over media, when

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4 Russell, James. "Project Diary: The story of how Frank Gehry’s design and Lillian Disney’s dream were ultimately rescued to create the masterful Walt Disney Concert Hall." *Architectural Record*. November 2003. pp. 135-160.
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Figure 1: amount of each mode used in overall media coverage regarding the events of the Walt Disney Concert Hall project (Figure 1 continued on next page)
observations:
-the mode of reportage was used the most overall and gossip was used the least.
-the extreme modes of promotion and controversy were used a significant amount during the building process.
Figure 2: The quantity of overall media coverage per category concerning each event of the Walt Disney Concert Hall project.

observations:
-the architectural media and media external to the the discipline have more of an impact on the overall representation of the project.
covering events like the opening of Bilbao and construction resuming on the Concert Hall. (see figure 2) An article in the April 1997 issue of Architecture stated that “until this year [1997], the average Angeleno knew no more about the concert hall proposal than was evident from grainy pictures in the newspapers, which foreshortened the brio of Gehry’s design. The public, however, knew the project’s troubles.”5 In other words, controversy and conflict were reported more than the design itself in the media geared toward the general public.

At the beginning of the project, before controversy occurs, events in the project’s life tended to generate media across a range of modes. (see figure 3) For example, when Lillian Disney donated $50 million to the Philharmonic, (“an event”), this generated stories (“media”) covering it. (see figure 4) However, and most importantly, after controversy hit, the process reverses: media begins to generate the events themselves. (see figure 3)

---

Figure 4: An example of an event-generating media attention network.

- Event: Construction of a new football stadium in Los Angeles
- Media: Football game coverage
- Archi: Architectural design
- Media: Post-event analysis

Legend:
- Dashed lines represent the flow of attention.
- Solid lines represent the flow of media.

Note: The diagram illustrates the interconnectedness of events, media, and architectural attention.
Once the media coverage began on the project, media begins to generate media as well as events. One symptom of this is how speculation turns to fact. For example, it was first speculated in the Los Angeles Times that the $50 million cash donation from Lillian Disney “raised the question as to whether it is, outside of donations of works of art, the largest ever given to a cultural institution.” The musical magazine Ovation also speculated that it was “possibly the largest cash donation ever made...” This bit of information was then quoted again in the book Symphony as fact that it was “the largest single gift in the history of the United States for a cultural building,” saying that this was what the original Los Angeles Times article had stated. (see figure 5) The process by which an event generates media generates media generates an event is described in more detail in the “example” diagram. (see figure 6)
Event \rightarrow Media \rightarrow Media \rightarrow Event

"Glare" Example
activity

medium-of-mouth

social encounters

mode

word-of-mouth

activity

"word-of-mouth"

book Archi

mode

"word-of-mouth"
Figure 6
This diagram shows in more detail how an event generates media, generates media, generates an event through the modes of discourse. The example used is on the reports that the Walt Disney Concert Hall was causing glare problems as reported in the media. Headlines, especially controversial ones, can lead to misinterpretation and mutation. People read a headline and make assumptions based on a bit of information. The controversial headlines create buzz, or ignites people talking. This is how it transforms to gossip, which further intensifies the level of mutation. As in the glare example, one person thought the whole building was going to be sandblasted when in fact it was just a portion. This gossip was relayed by someone in a blog and another blogger corrected that it was in fact a portion of the building, not all of it. This process of communication ultimately leads to a sense or vibe (activity generated) about Gehry’s reputation as an architect. People and the media whether seriously or in jest, now associate Gehry with problematic projects.

observations:
-what people consider “gossip” can be just a misconstrued or misinterpreted headline or piece of information in the media

-this process reveals something about how people receive information in the media by understanding how the information gets relayed and passed on from person to person.

implications:
-the mode of controversy used in the media gets people to talk about a subject. The blog is evidence people are reading and then discussing the news.
2.3 case study analysis
The initial research resulted in generative diagrams, which provoked observations, implications, and conclusions to be drawn. The following section represents this analysis. The following diagrams indicate: the relationship of the modes in the media to the construction stoppage and other events, how the subject of the media relates to the events generated in the project, and the implications and result of Gehry's participation in the media.

Figure 7: Pie chart representing the modes of discourse used regarding the events of the project before and after construction stops. Before construction stops, the mode primarily used in the media is reportage. After construction stops, the mode primarily used is controversy.

**implications:**
- the wider range of modes used to cover the events after construction stopped helped get the project funded, whereas before construction stopped, the primary mode used to cover the events was reportage, the mode most substantiated of all.

- the more extreme modes, controversy, promotion, and criticism, are more inclined to generate events because after construction stops is when the media began to generate events.
Figure 8: The number of times the architect, Frank Gehry, was the subject of discussion in the media surrounding the Walt Disney Concert Hall events compared to the number of times the building, scheme, or design was the subject of discussion during the process of the project before and after construction stops.

implications:

-at times, Gehry’s image and reputation is just as important as the building itself in the representation of the project and in generating the events leading up to construction resuming. (see the detailed examples on the following pages)
event
Concert Hall construction stops

medium
word-of-print

modes
newspapers
Guardian

media about building (concert hall)

Los Angeles Times

book

magazines
Metropolis

architectural record

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

July 21, 1998
because that opening continues the dialogue with the downtown core, the institute decided on a dual approach, including a new building and the reuse of that hanging facade.
This diagram shows the influence of the media in burning Geary's reputation as an architect. The events, as depicted in the diagram, are: (1) the building process, (2) the opening of the parking garage, and (3) the decision to build the project by Geary as lead architect. The media's role is to propagate the events and influence the public's perception of Geary's reputation. The diagram illustrates how the media's influence can shape public opinion and reputation, even in the context of a construction project.
Event:
- Bilbao Guggenheim opens to public

Medium:
- Word-of-print
  - Newspapers
    - Guardian
  - Books
    - Los Angeles Times
  - Magazines
    - Metropolis
    - Architectural Record
    - Architectural Digest
- Word-of-mouth
- Word-of-broadcast
  - Radio
    - KCRW
  - Blog
### Media Coverage During Building Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media About Building (Concert Hall)</th>
<th>Media About Gehry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 21, 1998: City</td>
<td>October 27, 2003:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| "[Gehry] said he had never seen the building a part of his..." | "The Guggenheim is very much the son or daughter of the..."
| August 1997: Correspondent’s File   | Symphony: 2003:   |
| "Steel prices for the Guggenheim Bilbao..." | "The strongest backing for the building..."
| October 1995: Correspondent’s File  | November 2003:    |
| "Steel prices for the Guggenheim Bilbao..." | "Projects..."
|                               | KCRW: February 18, 2003: |
|                               | "the client wanted a steel building after seeing Bilbao." |

### Media Coverage After Building Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media About Building (Concert Hall)</th>
<th>Media About Gehry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 14, 2003: Home Edition</td>
<td>October 2003:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| "Gehry’s reputation was solid by his..." | "The strongest backing for the building..."
|                                      | Symphony: 2003:   |
|                                      | "The strongest backing for the building..."
|                                      | November 2003:    |
|                                      | "Projects..."
|                                      | KCRW: February 18, 2003: |
|                                      | "the client wanted a steel building after seeing Bilbao." |
This diagram shows the media helping Gehry’s reputation or image as an architect. Walt Disney Concert Hall media coverage of the Guggenheim in Bilbao is supportive and promotional of Gehry and the building. Because his reputation and building are praised through the media, this ultimately helps the Walt Disney Concert Hall project. “If they can build his work overseas, why not in his backyard?” Bilbao was covered in many other articles, blogs, websites, and so on; but the excerpts in the Walt Disney Concert Hall media touch upon the impact of the media surrounding Bilbao on the Concert Hall project.

**Observations:**
- In this instance, the mode of hype is most prevalent.
- In this instance, during the building process, Gehry’s reputation as an architect is the subject of the media more than the building itself.

**Implications:**
- Media helps Gehry’s reputation, when the Guggenheim Bilbao proved that a project like Walt Disney Concert Hall could be built without problems and the media reported that this was a result of Gehry’s project management abilities.
- Because Bilbao was built overseas, the media is the way for most people to understand it and to know what others think of it. A building cannot be praised or criticized unless it is talked about (informal communication) or covered in the media.
- The media surrounding the Guggenheim Bilbao elevated Gehry’s status to super-stardom. Gehry became a household name.”


Gehry's reputation seems to have

1993 Disney Hall (LACMA)

1999–2003 Gehry

Gehry

Gehry's
design

technique

crises

1983 Bilbao

Construction
resumes on hall.
This diagram shows the media helping the reputation of the building because the media coverage was mainly about the architecture. It shows that despite the controversy surrounding the project, the building still managed to earn acclaim from the media. The buzz around the opening along with the controversy surrounding the project, establishes both the building and the architect as subjects the media wants to discuss even after the building process, initiating a post-occupancy evaluation.

**Observations:**
- In this instance, the mode of promotion is most prevalent.
- Though media attention is mainly about the Concert hall, it becomes more difficult to distinguish media covering the building and media covering the architect. The building and Frank Gehry become one subject: "A Frank Gehry magnum opus..." or "Frank Gehry's LA concert hall..." or "Frank Gehry's $274 million Walt Disney Concert Hall..."

**Implications:**
- Until the project is actually built, media coverage is mainly about the architect, after it is built then the media tends to discuss the actual architecture.
- The mode of promotion used to discuss the building around the opening of the Concert hall, along with the controversy surrounding the project, establishes the relevancy and importance of the architecture to the public. This deems it as a news-worthy subject even after it is built.
- In this instance, the media coverage of a building helps or hurts the architect's reputation because the architect's name is so closely attached to the building.
implications:
- because Gehry was not quoted as much in the media before construction stopped, he was portrayed as responsible for most or all of the problems leading up to the construction stopping.

- after construction stopped he had to defend himself by responding to the criticism. He used the media to do so, in an attempt to repair his reputation.

- before construction stopped, Gehry’s reputation was formed by what other people were quoted as saying in the media. i.e. Gehry is a “wild man” who would give the orchestra plywood instead of stone and chain link instead of polished brass.”
This diagram represents how after the event of construction stopping, the media reported criticism surrounding Gehry. This resulted in a "vibe" about Gehry, which hurt his reputation as an architect. He then responds to the criticism regarding the event by utilizing the media to defend himself.
When Gehry inserts himself into the media to defend himself, this results in a better outcome for him. In the end, this event is still represented as controversial in the different media, but it has shifted from Gehry being solely responsible for the construction stopping to a number of other factors causing it also.

**observation:**
- though reporting of other events like Bilbao opening can affect the resulting understanding, Gehry's responses have an impact on how the event was ultimately portrayed.

**implications:**
- when Gehry is quoted in the media, he is able to manipulate the reputation that the media creates for him.

- the mode of controversy draws more attention to its subject than lesser degree modes, enabling a change in representation to occur.
3.0 models of discourse
The models derived from this case study analysis are represented in two diagrams. They are based on the idea that media (both written and ephemeral), and informal communication, which are seemingly two separate entities, combine in the discipline of architecture to "virtually render" an architectural project. The first model is a representation of \textit{what} media and informal communication affect in the discourse of architecture; this, in turn, results in the image of the architect and the building. The second model describes \textit{how} media and informal communication function in the discipline in relation to history and theory, and how this creates the image of the architect and the building, and then generates an event.
architectural processes represented

solicitation
(from query to idea)

design
(from idea to blueprint)

within discipline

outside of discipline

building
(from blueprint to reality)

reception
(from reality to virtuality)

media
informal communication
All of the stated factors can hurt or help an architect’s reputation or the building's reputation during the architectural processes because of how they are represented in the media. In the case of the Walt Disney Concert Hall, all architectural processes were represented, but the building and reception processes were mainly represented. The media was what generated the image of the architect and building, through its representation of the events of the building process. For instance, the Northridge earthquake hurt the Concert hall project because it contributed to the budget increase of the project. The media represented this event, but portrayed it as people blaming Frank Gehry for the unexpected budget increase.
*definition of terms:

modality
n: a classification of architectural propositions on the basis of whether they claim necessity or possibility

method
n: a way of doing or expressing something, especially a systematic way

medium
n: a means or instrumentality for storing or communicating information

mode/stimulator
n: how something is done or how it happens

activity
n: resultant state stimulated by modes of discourse
This diagram represents the process by which, or how the media in addition to history and theory, activates events to occur in the discipline of architecture as concluded from the Walt Disney Concert Hall media.

The diagram reads as such: the modalities of architectural discourse (history, theory, and media) are expressed using a method (word-of-print, word-of-mouth, etc) and a medium (book, journal, conference, lecture, etc.) Because the methods are "word-of," meaning they are evidence of people's views, opinions, and journalistic tendencies, they are represented using varying modes of the discourse (controversy, criticism, gossip, reportage, speculation, hype, promotion). The equation of the modality, method, medium, and mode, in turn, results in an activity (vibe, buzz, gossip) which results in how the piece of information is received by an audience. This process ultimately renders the image of an architect and a project's reputation and then generates an event.
4.0 concluding remarks
In summary, this case study of the Walt Disney Concert Hall analyzes one example of how media and informal communication work to affect the discipline of architecture. This case demonstrates how architecture as discourse and event, is in no way an autonomous discipline because it is thoroughly infiltrated and influenced by the media. Media and informal communication are intrinsic to the architectural processes of solicitation, design, building, and reception. As we have seen, the Concert Hall media primarily portrayed the building process (rather than the “design process”) in which, Frank Gehry and the building itself are subjects. Where the media portrayed the reception process, Frank Gehry and the building were again central as subjects, but this time the building process was also represented as a subject.

The Walt Disney Concert Hall media hurt Gehry’s reputation at times, and elevated it at other times, causing “a star architect’s reputation [to be] tarnished, then restored...” On the one hand, it hurt him when the media covered the event of construction stoppage. This coverage led to the event of the fundraising committee urging that Gehry be removed from the project. Because Gehry was not quoted as much in the media before construction stopped, he was portrayed as the one responsible for most or all of the problems leading up to the construction stoppage. Thus he was labeled a poor project manager. On the other hand, the media helped Gehry’s reputation when they covered the opening of Bilbao. The coverage on this event helped initiate the resumption of construction on the Concert Hall because Gehry was then promoted in the media as a successful project manager. Media was the primary way people in Los Angeles could understand the process behind the Guggenheim because the project was built overseas and remained otherwise largely inaccessible to the Los Angeles population.

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Though the media both hurt and helped Gehry’s reputation, when Gehry interjected himself into the Walt Disney Concert Hall media, he had an influence over how events would ultimately be portrayed. In the early stages of the project, Gehry was rarely quoted in the media, and this ultimately caused him to be blamed for the construction stoppage. Initially, the media reported that people thought Gehry was solely to blame for this controversy. Later, it represented Gehry as interjecting and blaming others. Finally, because of his interjections, other factors in the construction stoppage were also portrayed. Because his reputation was at stake, Gehry’s role as architect extended beyond the discipline, beyond being active solely in each of the architectural processes of solicitation, design, building, and reception; Gehry found it crucial to be active in the media, inserting himself, forcefully when it became necessary to defend and restore his reputation.

At times throughout the Walt Disney Concert Hall project, Gehry’s image and reputation were as important as the building itself in the media influenced representation and activation of the project. Before construction stopped, Gehry and the building were subjects of the media an equal number of times. After construction stopped, it became more difficult to distinguish between Gehry as subject and the building as subject. They began to be represented as one subject, ie. “Gehry’s Walt Disney Concert Hall.” Because his name was so closely linked to the building, this fusion had the power to either help or hurt Gehry’s reputation. By the time the Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Guggenheim opened, the attachment of Gehry’s name to each building worked to help his reputation.

The means by which the media was able to influence and generate events in the case of the Walt Disney Concert Hall was through specific activity of the modes of the discourse: controversy, criticism, gossip, reportage, speculation, hype, and promotion. Before construction stopped, the primary mode used in the media was reportage, or the neutral mode. (The modes are represented on a positive/negative scale. See page 16.) After construction
stopped, a wider range of modes were used, but the primary mode was *controversy,* or the most extreme negative mode. The use of these negative modes after the construction stoppage helped to draw attention to the project. The more the media was able to draw attention to the project, the more donations were likely to come in. Ultimately, this led to construction resuming on the Hall. It is with the more extreme modes that the media began to generate events in the Concert Hall project.

The extreme modes are also what influenced Gehry's reputation as well as the Concert hall's reputation. This is due to the fact that *controversy* and *promotion* draw more attention to its subject than does *reportage.* This is apparent in the example where Gehry's reputation was threatened after construction stopped; he responded to the *controversy* and *criticism* by using the same modes of *controversy* and *criticism.* *Controversy* and *criticism* hurt his reputation as a project manager, but it helped his reputation when he interjected himself in the media to blame others. The mode of *controversy* also created Concert Hall *buzz* and *gossip* within the profession. These activities then generated events. In the "glare" problem example, only the mode of *controversy* was used. When I posted a blog on an architecture website asking if anyone knew any "gossip" on the Walt Disney Concert Hall, someone posted the "glare" problem as "gossip" and a topic worthy of discussion. Others responded similarly. The blog on the "glare" problem is strong evidence that people are more willing to talk about the controversy surrounding a project. The media activity created around the "glare" problem initiated a trend whereby other media reported problems on other Gehry projects, ultimately leading to the formation of a general evaluation of him as an architect.

The activity created (ie. gossip, buzz, and vibe), along with method, medium, and modes all combine and work together to generate events in the building process of this particular project. Ultimately, this process generated the events that led to the resumption of construction on the Walt Disney Concert Hall. Looking at the case study in this particular
manner has provided an empirical understanding of something as seemingly intangible as the media surrounding architecture. At the very least, this exercise provides the architect with a tool to be able to understand the process by which the media dictates public opinion and the events of a project or process of architecture.
5.0 proposed future work
The broad topics covered in this thesis could be researched and analyzed further, possibly without end, since in our technologically driven culture, the way we communicate continues to evolve. But here are a few specific ways this work might be extended:

1. research media coverage surrounding Gehry and his other projects.
2. complete several more contemporary case studies representing them through generative diagrams.
3. cross-analyze and compare the results from several case studies.
4. continue a theoretical study of communication within the discipline of architecture.
5. complete a historical architectural case study to see how media affected architecture before computers and television.
6.0 bibliography
general references


works consulted


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case study bibliography

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Musical Discipline:

Cross-over:
architect.com
**External to Discipline:**


2blowhards.com