

# **METAPHORS IN MITCHELL'S LANGUAGES OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM**

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DESIGN IS EXPLORATION

DESIGN IS A GAME

DESIGN IS A SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

DESIGN IS LANGUAGE

DESIGN IS COMPUTATION

## DESIGN IS EXPLORATION

### DESIGNS ARE ENTITIES IN A WORLD (SPACE, UNIVERSE)

(Related metaphor: Shapes are animate beings in a world – world is “populated with shapes”)

### DESIGNER IS AN EXPLORER

### DESIGN PROCESS IS SPATIAL

Exploration Routes are Branches of a Tree

In particular, a “state-action tree”

(recall Lakoff’s metaphor States and Actions are Locations in Space)

#### Verbs (what the designer does)

explore

search

backtrack

dive deeply into

follow (a branch)

(branch) will not lead to (a solution)

push into it

abandon (a branch)

#### Adjectives (for process)

Depth-first, breadth first

Top-down, bottom-up

Higher level, lower level

#### Implications

Designs (like ideas) are pre-existing, entities in a design world. The designer’s job is to find or discover them (as opposed to making them). Design is an adventure. We could get lost if we don’t know what we’re doing!

## **DESIGN IS A GAME**

### **SHAPES ARE TOKENS (GAME PIECES)**

Tokens are manipulated, assembled as in a “jigsaw puzzle”

Game has rules

#### Implications

Design is fun! We don't know the ending, it requires intelligence and cunning, strategizing, you could lose or win

## **DESIGN IS A SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE**

### **DESIGN PROCESS IS FOLLOWING RULES**

### **DESIGNER IS A RULE-FOLLOWER OR RULE-MAKER**

#### Verbs

violate, comply, tighten up, warned, restrict, governing

#### Adjectives

promiscuous, strict, concise, uniform, explicit

#### Implications

Design is not casual! Design is serious, authoritative, you can land in jail if you do something wrong

## **DESIGN IS LANGUAGE**

(Similar to above, but rules are part of a grammar)

### **DESIGNS ARE SENTENCES IN A LANGUAGE**

### **DESIGNERS ARE SPEAKERS**

DESIGN PROCESS IS TALKING (in accordance with a grammar)

#### Implications

Designs are incorrect or correct (depending on the language being spoken). Depending on one's notion of “grammar”, design process could be construed as a natural, unselfconscious process, in distinction to the rule-following in the metaphor above.

## **DESIGN IS COMPUTATION**

Combines different aspects of all above metaphors

#### Implications

Design is structured, formal, mathematical, abstract. The designer is a computer (in the original sense of the word)