

NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL MATERIALS IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN - AESTHETIC AND MEANING -

MATERIALE NATURALE ȘI ARTIFICIALE ÎN ARHITECTURA PEISAGERĂ - EXPRESIE ȘI SEMNIFICAȚIE

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Abstract. *The landscape art explores quite diverse the aesthetical qualities of the finishing materials, so that they gain multiple meanings and poetic qualities. The natural and artificial materials, creatively used and adapted to context, bring aesthetical and semantic variety in architecture of parks and gardens. Natural materials, such as wood, stone or brick, - symbolize tradition and rootedness; they have preciousity and nobleness, warmth and vitality. The stone signifies power, perennially and prestige. The wood is the symbol of universal substance; it gives the feeling of intimacy and protection. The water and vegetation create vitality and beauty, harmonizing the relationship between the nature and manmade environment; they are a symbol of regeneration. Artificial materials such as metal, glass, concrete, plastic, symbolize the human control, the control of reason on the environment. The metal – signifies flexibility and concentration. The concrete, a malleable artificial stone, means lastingness and hardness; it can generate a large variety of spaces and forms.*

Key words: natural and artificial materials, plastic and semantic effects, symbol, meaning, identity, diversity, landscape design

Rezumat. *Calitățile estetice ale materialelor de finisaj sunt explorate foarte divers în design-ul peisager, astfel încât dobândesc multiple sensuri și calități poetice. Materialele noi sau tradiționale, utilizate creativ și adaptat la context, aduc diversitate semantică și estetică în arhitectura parcurilor și grădinilor. Materialele naturale – lemnul, piatra, cărămida – simbolizează tradiție și înrădăcinare, au prețiozitate și noblețe, vitalitate și căldură. Piatra exprimă putere, perenitate și prestigiu; lemnul semnifică substanța universală, conferă sentimentul de intimitate și protecție. Apa și vegetația aduc vitalitate și frumusețe, armonizează relația dintre mediul natural și mediul creat de om, sunt un simbol al regenerării. Materialele artificiale - metalul, sticla, betonul, plasticul simbolizează controlul uman, al rațiunii, asupra mediului. Metalul semnifică flexibilitatea și concentrarea. Sticla transparentă sau translucidă are capacitatea de a absorbi, de a reflecta sau de a lăsa lumina să pătrundă, astfel încât oferă senzații variate și schimbătoare. Betonul transmite ideea de trăinicie și duritate; este o piatră artificială „maleabilă” ce poate genera o mare varietate de forme spațiale.*

Cuvinte cheie: materiale naturale și artificiale, efecte plastice și semantice, simbol, semnificație, identitate, arhitectură peisageră

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INTRODUCTION

The finishing materials have the role to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the landscaping; they transmit ideas, feelings, and create certain ambiances. They communicate a large variety of sensations such as tactile sensations – of warmth or coldness, thinness or hardness, olfactory sensations and visual sensations – depending on texture, color and the way of absorbing or reflecting light.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The landscape art explores quite diverse the aesthetical attributes of natural and artificial materials, so that they gain multiple meanings and poetic qualities. “Materials can be made to glitter and vibrate”, states Peter Zumthor, in his concern to reach the complete expressivity of finishing materials, to discover their aesthetical valences by adapting them to the context of creation (Zumthor, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Natural materials, such as wood, stone or brick, signify tradition and rootedness. They have vitality and warmth, nobleness and preciousness. They get the simple beauty of the things created by nature.

The raw and unpolished materials generate organic landscaping that seems to be pure creation of nature. The treated and processed materials are a symbol of a harmonious relation between man, technology and nature.

Wood – contains a superhuman wisdom and science, it is the symbol of universal substance (Eseev, 2001). In Catholic religion, wood is the symbol of the cross.



Fig. 1 - Norwegian Wild Reindeer Centre Pavilion, Hjerkind, landscape architects Snøhetta Oslo AS the inner wooden shell shaped by means of computer aided design and advanced processing technologies

The wood generates the feeling of warmth and protection; it emphasizes the role of shelter that some landscaping elements have (fig. 1). It is

gentle to touch and it has material plasticity, being easily to process in various ways. The wood is a modern and traditional material; it can be adapted to the new technologies and to the contemporary requirements and styles in landscape art.

The stone symbolizes power, perennially and prestige, beautifully aging as the ruins (Vlad Gaivoronschi, 2003). The stone creates order and stability, is characterized by mass, weight and power, by “ease, naturalness and elegance, beauty and simplicity” (Werner Blaser, 2003). The stone beautifies and ennobles the landscape environment of urban parks and gardens and is a powerful element of local identity (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 - Stone River, New York, landscape artist Jon Piasecki

- made of row and polished stone extracted from the site, this landscape work creates an organic image and provides the feeling of merging with nature

Besides wood and stone, **water** and **vegetation** also represent natural “materials” of landscape art compositions (fig. 3). They create vitality and beauty, harmonizing the relation between the natural environment and the manmade environment. The water and the vegetation have aesthetic, symbolic and ecologic roles.



Fig. 3 - Sunnylands Center and Gardens / The Office of James Burnett , Frederick Fisher + Partners, California – in the arid area of Sonoran desert, water and vegetation used as landscape design compositional elements generate a powerful semantic impact

Water is a symbol of purity, wisdom, grace and virtue; it is a source of bodily and spiritual regeneration (Chevalier, 2009). Water is one of the four essential elements of which the universe is created. It is the origin of life, the primordial substance, from which all forms arise and where they come back by regression.

Both in static and dynamic states, water as compositional element in landscape art has the property of reflection and audio-visual effects, which confers energy, space and vitality. The artesian wells and basins bring psychological benefits, are point of attraction, places of communion, sources of strength and regeneration.

Artificial materials - concrete, metal, glass, plastics – „put into work, they oppose the natural, the aleatory, and symbolize the human control, the control of reason on the environment ... these materials do not know – are not allowed to age in the way the stone, wood, crude or fired earth do” (Ioan Augustin, 2007).

The concrete is an artificial stone inspiring lastingness and hardness. “Easy to mould in amorphous and fluid forms” (Zaha Hadid, 2004), the concrete has generated, during the modern and contemporary times, new forms and novel spatial and constructive solutions (fig. 4).



Fig. 4 - Negev Monument, Beersheva, Israel, 1968, landscape architect Dani Karavan
The concrete – an artificial stone that can generate fluid, organic shapes

Although apparently an impersonal material without aesthetical qualities, the concrete can communicate a wide variety of visual impressions, depending on the way of processing. Creatively and ingeniously treated, it can prove plastic valences and a specific expressiveness. Tadao Ando exploited in its works “the power”, but also “the sensitivity” of the concrete (fig. 5). Realizing that its aspect and qualities depend on the formwork, the way of consolidation and casting in forms, he transformed it into a mild and sensitive material, approaching in texture and beauty to wood and paper.

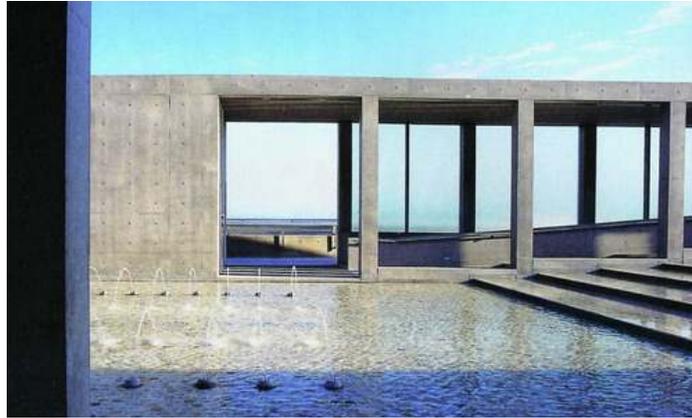


Fig. 5 - Awaji Yumebutai, 1995, architect Tadao Ando - the concrete turned into a mild and sensitive material, approaching in texture and beauty to wood and paper

The metal – signifies flexibility and concentration. The steel buildings of modern period represented a symbol of technological progress, the metallic structure allowing the evolution of buildings at a higher scale. The metal has brightness, coldness and hardness; in combination with warm natural materials, it can create particular semantic and plastic contrasts. Certain metal types – such as titanium, copper – used as finishing materials, have remarkable plastic qualities, confer an air of preciousity. The artist Anish Kapoor use the reflection and mirroring effects of the metal in order to enhance the artistic expression of the landscaping (fig. 6, 7).



Fig. 6,7 - Metallic sculptures - Non-object and C-Curve, Londra, 2007, artist Anish Kapoor

The glass - by transparency, translucence and capacity of absorbing or reflecting light, it offers various and changing sensations. The glass facilitates the communication between indoor and outdoor space – garden, court -, and the relation with the nature or with the light.

By applying serigraphy with motifs inspired by nature, the glass gain new and interesting effects in the works of the architects Herzog & de Meuron (fig. 8).

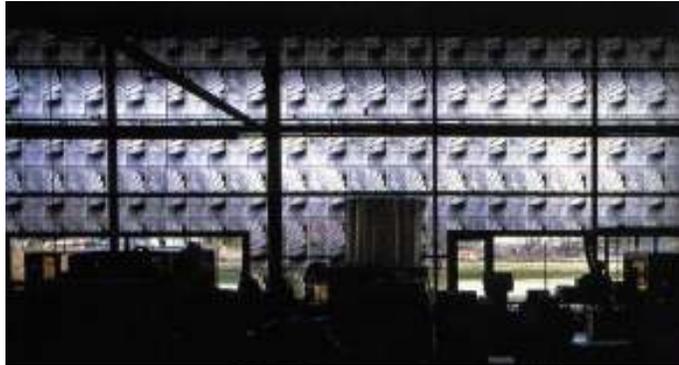


Fig. 8 - Ricola Warehouse, Mullhouse-Brunstatt, 1995, architects Herzog & de Meuron - new aesthetic and semantic effect for the glass serigraphed with nature inspired motifs

CONCLUSIONS

The contemporary technology opens up new opportunities in the materials processing and the aesthetics of the landscaping. Both the natural and artificial materials, used creatively, not only as aesthetic meaning, but also in the scope of transmitting ideas and concepts, used coherently and adapted to the context of the landscape creation, bring a large aesthetic and semantic diversity in the designed environment, becoming an important resource of identity.

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