narrative definitions

Sebastian Messer & Jennifer Jin
narrative in architectural design

'trilectic' diagram showing the relationship between people, space and time
'exemplify' vs 'expressive'

Hugo Haring (1923-6) Gut Gakau farm

literal representation = it looks like what it does
metaphorical representation = it looks like something else
narrative definitions

can be described as:

modes of narrative representation in art
1. monoscenic narrative: single scene depicts a crucial moment

Theodore Gericault (1818-9) *The Raft of the Medusa*

see also: Victorian “problem pictures” and “anecdotic” paintings
2. continuous: multiple events depicted in a single frame (enframement)

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1559) *The fight between Carnival and Lent*
an example of a continuous narrative in 3D

Calle follows ‘Henri B’ to Venice where she photographed and recorded his day-to-day actions secretly for two weeks. Calle follows him down side streets, letting him disappear so that she can seek him out again. She watches him linger on bridges, imitating his footsteps after he leaves and wonders what he could have been thinking. Calle concludes that she feels as if she were falling in love.

Through the repeated images of Henri B.’s passing presence is to immortalise this moment; ‘to stake a claim on ephemeral things’. Venice’s hauntingly empty streets becoming ‘a repository of her desires’.

The axiomatic sequential narrative form is the comic strip

Chris Ware (2013) *Building Stories*
sequential narrative (Hockney portrays himself as Hogarth’s ‘rake’)


inspired by William Hogarth (1732-4) *The Rake’s Progress*
narrative definitions

three levels of narrative architecture

Definitions in Nigel Coates (2012) Narrative Architecture
1. binary narrative: investing the building/ object with a parallel identity

SITE architects (1970 – 1984) BEST Products Stores

other examples include the ‘duck building’ shown previously
2. sequential narrative: several events along a predetermined route

Other examples include visitor attractions and airports.

Laurie Chetwood (2002) Butterfly House, Godalming, Surrey
3. Biotopic* narrative: independent ‘storylines’ or functions

* Could also be called a "cross-programme" brief

Atelier Bow Wow (2001) Made in Tokyo (detail)
narrative definitions

narratives techniques
in architectural production
and representations
a ‘sketch’ = both processual, development drawings + final visualisations

Mies Van Der Rohe (1924) *Landhaus in brick*

a notation ‘system’ (music) or ‘scheme’ (script) = instructions

definitions from Nelson Goodman (1969) *The Languages of Art*

notation and narrative

space and use | set and script | object and events
movements of ‘protagonists’ in(to) the architectural ‘stage set’
“witness” or “direct” events
Tschumi deeply inspired by staging of Robert Wilson and Philip Glass (1976) *Einstein on the Beach* (link: http://www.robertwilson.com/einstein-on-the-beach/)
sketch: continuous narrative (at multiple scales simultaneously)

An industrial ruinenlust: architecture is to the city as clothes are to the body
‘Maximalism’ – the aesthetic, but not the socio-politics, of Gamma City…
narrative used to develop a brief model shows activities not spaces…

The “narrative model” for St Luke’s Creative Agency in London was produced at the very start of the project to provoke a conversation with the client about what they required.

- the existing buildings (in grey),
- the intervention (in yellow), and
- conceptual “narrative” activities (in white)

The client’s concept was to create a “village” environment, so the conceptual activities (in white) do not represent literally what will take place in the spaces, but are metaphorical. For instance, the idea of “the chapel” embodies emotional and atmospheric qualities such as “quiet” or “calm” and may suggest physical attributes, like the quality of light or the materials used, in the way that the word “boardroom” does not!
The architecture is formed between two ideas:

A gentle hollow in the ground as a meeting place for the community – meeting in the stillness.

A delicate, ship-like timber structure that rises into tree tops to gather the light from the tree – buoyancy, rising toward the light.

The central space of a church is called a ‘nave’, which shares a Latin etymological route with ‘navis’, a 17th Century ship, and can also mean the still centre of a turning wheel.
narrative informed programme + material language

the 'gansie' loom room: a look-out to sea for lost sailors
the casting room: replacing sea-battered cladding
sea water slowly corrodes the steel room
narrative informed programme + material language
narrative used to present design development

The Centre is a series of interconnected pavilions and protected spaces built within an existing walled garden of the adjacent convent. A number of the pathways naturally loop back on themselves, always returning a person home again.

Drawing of the wandering routes

narrative used in post-occupancy evaluation for research & development

A large time-based drawing which attempts to communicate and interpret some of the changes to spatial perception caused by dementia.

The investigation of spatial cognition reveals an understanding of how minds interpret space, memory and situation.
narrative definitions

architectural representations of literary narratives
representations of “spatial stories” inspired by fairy tales
representations of “spatial stories”
reinterpretation (from an image to an experience)

William Hogarth (1732-4) *Bedlam, The Rake’s Progress*

Bartlett School of Architecture (2010) *The Madhouse* (1st yr project)
abstraction and reinterpretation
abstraction and reinterpretation

Sir John Soane (1807-1833) *The Picture Gallery (overlooking the Monk’s Parlour)*

abstraction of found objects (memorialise first public radio broadcasts)

found objects represent/re-present landscape proposals at multiple scales