

The City Scenery: Another Tools in Urban Space

Naira Chilingarian

Master Thesis in Urban Studies
Chair for Urban Studies
Faculty of Architecture
Estonian Academy of Arts
2008

<http://urbanistika.ee>

Abstract:

City is a socially constructed space and there are various factors, such as graphic signage, i.e. outdoor advertisement, signboards and storefronts, making account for its appearance apart from the built objects. The purpose of my research is to analyze how graphic signage within urban scenery effects our perceptions of the characteristics of an area, thus leading to its unconscious interpretation according to the appearance and placement of its signage. Using a mixture of library and Internet research, as well as referring to some key sources, I have traced the features and nuances according to which signage may have its impact on human perceptions and urban space, as well as the importance of its spatial location and composition in mental structuring of an area and way-finding within it. Considering some place specific examples, i.e. Times Square in New York and Piccadilly Circus in London, I would indicate that due to its aesthetic features, graphic signage may constitute an identity of a place. Referring to its distinctive appearance, I would argue that apart from its perceptual influences, commercial sorts of decoration, i.e. outdoor advertisement, signboards and storefronts, may be used as hints to 'read' an urban space and compose tools in navigating within it. In contrast to my positive approach and for equal judgment of the pluses and minuses commercial sorts of decoration have, I will also observe São Paulo's negative approach towards its graphic signage. Conclusively, I hypothesize that graphic signage constitutes an important part of an urban infrastructure and may be regarded as a useful tool in perceptual experience of an area as well as in orientation within it.