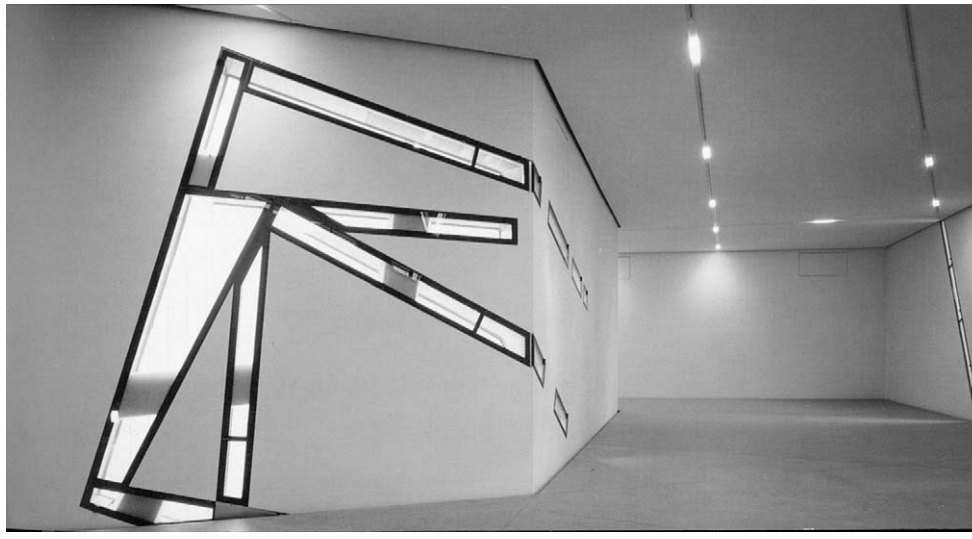
They are also made very often as a result of a reaction against some existing trend; the new becomes a criticism of the old or, to put it another way, the old no longer represents an acceptable explanation. As Libeskind remarked in an interview:

> 'Architecture is at a renaissance, a rebirth of ideas. People are getting tired of high-tech façades and simply functional issues. People want architecture to be part of their life as they've always wanted it to be . . . One has to enjoy what one is doing. One has to have fun with clients, with the public. One has to celebrate life which is always very vulnerable. The fatal ideologies of the last century destroyed some of the humanity and possibility of being. It's a good time to reassess and think about what is possible – to think that things are not over but might be beginning in a different direction.'
> (Isaacs, 2000, p.51)

Libeskind's description given in his Hanover talk also highlights the difficulty of using verbal or musical ideas since there is no real correspondence between those ideas and a three-dimensional form. However strong and explicit the narrative, there is still an inevitable need to choose and determine a form, and that form is, as a rule, part of the initial problem recognition. Verbal thinking is not a substitute for non-verbal design.

At the beginning of the 21st century the Jewish Museum in Berlin stood empty of exhibits but was much visited; the spaces were the exhibits. The only labels were some descriptive sentences by Libeskind which provided the kind of background he described in his talk. Without such verbal explanation no uninitiated visitor could grasp the symbolic intentions inherent in the design. It is inconceivable, for instance, that anyone would understand that the slanting windows are derived from lines on the city map which link the homes of prominent Jewish families to the museum; detailed explanation is essential.



Above
Daniel Libeskind, Jewish Museum, Berlin 1988–99; windows in gallery

When I look at Epstein's sculpture of the Madonna and Child on a wall in Cavendish Square in London, for example, and see the Christ Child with outstretched arms, I understand that this symbolises his embrace of humanity as well as foretelling the crucifixion. I 'read' these meanings because the sculptor and I share a common iconography. I can of course admire the sculpture and the Jewish Museum without being aware of any symbolism but will miss meanings. This is only to point out the danger of loading architecture with symbolism it cannot support and then questionably ascribing to it design initiatives.

Daniel Libeskind and Frank Gehry are both building in Berlin and are part of the incredible crane-proliferating activity that has taken place in the centre since the re-unification of Germany. In a very different way but making an equally powerful impact on the city are the buildings by Renzo Piano. These are derived somewhat more from the nature of materials and the technologies of building than the Jewish Museum or Gehry's bank. All three architects must be aware of each other's