Architects and critics use different tools to manifest the imagination of the otherwise distant and invisible; to design, describe and appraise future and past constructions in absentia. Beginning already in the ancient world, architecture was often practiced as an itinerant art – architects moving to the location of a building opportunity and consulting on projects away from home. In the fifteenth century, as architects like Leon Battista Alberti began working on drawings and models at a scholar’s table rather than the construction site, they expanded the possible distance between design and building. The printed word and image accompanied these developments in the form of a treatise to promote one’s designs and ideas about architecture to an international audience. Later, the utility of scale reproductions in two- and three-dimensions afforded the study of distant classical antique structures for students of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris at the beginning of the 19th century. In 1851, the Great Exhibition held in Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace brought together full-size models of distant structures, actual machines, textiles, furniture, art and examples of international production to present “a living picture of the point of development at which the whole of mankind has arrived.” At the turn of the century, the development of photographic reproduction and film made these objects and ideas portable to an international public.

In the past century, this transmission increased across space and time at a dizzying rate: films of the challenged the promise of industrial manufacture with dystopian images of modern life; by 1932, architectural journals and exhibitions made European modernism into and International Style; design teams could work fluidly across continents by updating shared digital models as the sun moves across the globe. Advancements in new media and fabrication technologies continue to expand tools which architects employ in the study, practice and critique of architecture at a scale and with a freedom they have never experienced before. However, beneath the excitement and glamour of this international
exchange, are architects developing an ability to use their tools to create environmentally
and culturally relevant new architectures or are they homogenizing cities and landscapes
and obliterating regional differences with increasingly standardized approaches? How do
architects put their tools – both traditional and new – to use when confronting foreign
materials and methods of construction?

Four topics/questions, therefore, are to be considered in this symposium:

1. How can embodied tools aid the architect’s ethical imagination when designing
globally?
2. Is there retention or loss of local/regional craft/construction knowledge in constructing
architecture from a distance?
3. What are the implications of the contemporary transformation of an architect’s tools
from what Heidegger referred to as present-at-hand (Vorhandenheit) to the ready-to-
hand (Zuhandenheit)?
4. How has media transformed the way different cultures view their own built
environments?

Abstracts of no more than 350 words, accompanied by an 80-word biographical profile,
are to be submitted to Matthew Mindrup at matthew.mindrup@sydney.edu.au by 31
March 2020. A publication of selected papers is planned.

Key dates:
31 March 2020: Submission of abstracts
15 April 2020: Notification of acceptance
20 May 2020: Submission of draft papers
3-4 June 2020: Symposium

The full call for papers can be downloaded here.

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