CALL FOR PAPERS

Hybrid Symposium
Remote Practices: Architecture in Proximity
8-9 October 2020

Earlier this year we proposed a CFP entitled ‘remote practices’ to explore how architecture’s complex and distant interfaces are being intensified through a mass globalization of the discipline. In it we sought to explore how the remote practice of architecture has become inherent in the way phases of early ideation to late production could take on surprising transformations as architects and critics use different tools to manifest ideas and imaginations to the otherwise distant and invisible; to design, describe and critique future and past constructions in absentia. In late January 2020, a Covid-19 pandemic emerged and the proposed conference was put on hold.

As Covid-19 rapidly infected persons across the world, it made many of the issues we wished to discuss in the original CFP more timely as lockdowns were enforced globally to reduce the rate and risk of contagion and death. As people retreated to their homes, the business of doing architecture in schools and offices also shifted into this temporary holding space. Face-to-face encounters were curtailed in favour of virtual meetings. Architecture, a discipline which thrives on expression and imagination, and which had already been remotely practised by way of translation across different media and sites, now takes on a further dimension of distancing; this time in the absence of a physical community of architects, designers, teachers and students.
We are interested in the future, and legacy, of architecture after the pandemic. Already production of drawings and models take place on the table at the office, and later, these ideas are transferred onto the construction site. The distances between these different modes of doing architecture – drawings, diagrams and models, manifestos and critiques in the printed form; augmented reality walkthroughs and digital films; digital prefabrication technologies, and the built form – create several thresholds by which architecture may already be understood as a remote practice. Yet, confronted with a failing global economy, the temporary stoppage of travel, the still undefined length of closure of many construction sites, schools of architecture, and the absence of office environments where ideas can be openly discussed and materialized through conversation, what are the local and global implications which this pandemic presents for the future pedagogy, practice and critique of architecture?

We invite papers and creative work to participate in a hybrid symposium of virtual presentations to local participants focusing on the following areas:

1. **Pedagogy:** Rather than a share session of innovative online teaching modalities we seek papers that explore what it means to teach architecture at a distance. Despite the increased utilization of digitalized remote practices to the globalized production of architecture, its education has proven to be slow in uptake, and at odds with recognizing fully the ‘online’ as ‘an education environment with its own organizational space, modes of communication, [and] pedagogical principles.’ What then, does it mean to teach design face-to-face, and what is lost in translation? What values might there still be for the haptic and analog modes of learning-through-making, as the space and curriculum of the studio shifts from physical to virtual? What opportunities does remote practice offer for testing and running experimental ways of learning? What new knowledges and research methods might the virtual studios produce for the discipline?

2. **Practice:** If anything, a pandemic has made the remote practice of architecture a global reality. Experts in the discipline predict a ‘faster technological revolution’ that will continue into the future, with the heightened adoption of remote practices reorganizing how design work is produced and communicated across distances to stakeholders. Already some main challenges are observed: virtual teams experience gaps in communication with each other; virtual architects are disconnected from the material environment not possibly replicable in virtual site visits. Predictions estimate the breakdown of traditional mono-disciplinary design offices to be overtaken by ‘a new generation of younger, digitally-facile practices’ – a flexible and multiply-adaptable ‘design version of the “gig” economy’ that may be ‘focused less on full projects, and more on discrete tasks.’ How would the authorship of a piece of design be collectively shared and re-defined? What new architectures and concepts could be produced through novel collaborative methods? Extending from the classroom to the design practice is the question of the virtual site visit and fieldwork – the approach to design for many built structures – for which any ‘serendipitous discovery through immediate, grounded encounters and the corporeal reading of space and place’ seem irreplaceable. Can the real/physical be replaced by the virtual site? Could there be serendipitous discoveries that remote practices might offer?

3. **Critique:** Before the pandemic, questions about place were disrupted by social media but shelter-in-place forced us to rethink home as a physical place. How have zoom parties, home schooling or balcony concerts altered the way we think about concepts of office, home or community? Already in the short span of two months, the architecture community have begun to critically reflect on the shifting spatial paradigms of inside-outside, private-public, and home-workplace that remote practices have brought to users. Private home interiors are exposed to public view in the backdrops of Zoom windows. Interior spaces become visual clues to locate anxiety, distress, family situations, economic standing, ethnic and cultural differences. Some relate remote distancing and the fragmentation of both education and practice to disciplinary regimes; they fear that ‘creativity, criticality, and academic freedom,’ are curtailed in the process. Yet others call for increased open-access to collective knowledge, and digital archives and resources – shared between academia and practice, in order for remote research/education/working to reach its productive potential. In short, there has been an unprecedented sharing of experience dealing with remote practices to the discipline, and reflections on the future of architecture, across institutions, and around the globe. What modes of creative energy and critical discourse might be borne from architecture’s contingent and emergent remote practices?
Abstracts of no more than 350 words, accompanied by an 80-word biographical profile, and 1 image (JPG, 300dpi) are to be submitted to remotepractices@gmail.com by 1 July 2020. A publication of selected papers is planned.

KEY DATES

1 July 2020: Submission of abstracts
24 July 2020: Notification of acceptance
22 September 2020: Submission of draft papers
8-9 October 2020: Symposium

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8 Barbara Penner, untitled notes, in Martin, et. al.