

Wolkenkuckucksheim  
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Воздушный замок

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# Identifications of the Postmodern

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Curated by Sonja Hnilica and Riklef Rambow



**Call for  
Abstracts**

International Journal of Architectural Theory

# Identifications of the Postmodern

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Denise Scott-Brown stated in 1990: “We are modernists, not postmodernists. No one is a postmodernist. Maybe postmodernism is dead.” Only ten years ago, the architecture of the so-called postmodern era suffered from a rather dubious reputation. Since then, the perspective seems to have shifted radically. The 1980s are enjoying a revival not only in the fashion world, and an increased interest in postmodernism can be observed in the architectural debate. The number of publications, exhibitions and conferences on the subject has increased dramatically in recent years.

It surely is no coincidence that this comes at a time when postmodernism is about to become historical. The exhibition “La presenza del passato”, organized by Paolo Portoghesi as the first Architecture Biennale in Venice, will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2020. Some of the protagonists, like Hans Hollein, Robert Venturi and Charles Jencks, whose book *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (1977) declared the death of modernism and wanted to be a kind of founding document of a new movement, have passed away recently. After post-war modernism and “Brutalism”, the listing of buildings now focuses on the architecture of the 1980s and its value is reexamined. As part of an inventory campaign completed in 2018, 28 postmodern buildings have been placed under protection in England. In Berlin, the buildings of the 1987 *International Building Exhibition* are the latest monuments on the list.

It is probably no coincidence that an emerging generation of architects is currently rediscovering postmodernism. This interest is not only due to a fascination for the ornamental surface aesthetics, which from today’s point of view seem almost disturbing—sometimes heightened to the point of ironically staged excess. Rather, a sincere interest in the fundamental concepts, techniques and design strategies of postmodernism can be observed: an interest for quotation, collage, typology, context or intentional ambiguity. The contradictory nature of the “first” postmodernism also becomes an issue: besides ironic and playful references to typology and history and an anarchic desire to break taboos (as in Wilfried van Winden’s Hotel in Zaandam in 2010, apparently consisting of stacked houses), very serious designs aiming for timeless qualities are being realized (such as the Bremer Landes-

**By March 30, 2020**

Submission of abstracts, 500 words, in German or English to Sebastian Feldhusen: s.feldhusen@cloud-cuckoo.net

**By April 20, 2019**

Notification of authors regarding the acceptance of topics

**By October 3, 2019**

Submission of full paper draft to curators

**December 2020**

Publication of the journal issue

**Information for authors**

Abstracts and papers will be reviewed using a double-blind process. For more information, see: <http://cloud-cuckoo.net/en/in-den-wolken/informationen/>

bank by Caruso St. John Architekten, 2016). It is also interesting to note that postmodern urban development is itself becoming a reference point for contemporary inscriptions, as in Frankfurt/Main on Römerberg and Museumsufer or in Berlin-Kreuzberg's southern Friedrichstadt and around Checkpoint Charlie.

Postmodernism was highly controversial in all aspects during its heyday. Hardly a question was left undiscussed: Does it exist at all? How can its relationship to modernity be described? Which understanding of modernity does it refer to? Does it mark an epochal break or maybe even the end of history? The concept of postmodernism did not originate in architecture in the first place, but for a significant while architecture seemed to be the perfect demonstration case for postmodern thinking. So how has its relationship to philosophy, literature and cultural history to be assessed in retrospect? Are we dealing with a particularly fruitful or, on the contrary, with a rather restrictive, retarding phase of architectural development?

We invite contributions that question postmodernism in architecture in all its many facets and take it as a starting point for reflections on the current situation of architecture and urban planning, if not projections of its future. We welcome critical examination and re-reading of key works of postmodernism, be they books, exhibitions, buildings, or urbanistic projects. Among the possible topics are:

- Postmodern theory of architecture: post-histoire, “end of the grand narratives”, the plurality of “anything goes”, theses on the symbolic nature of thinking and being, rejection of functionalism, resurrection of the architect as author, architecture as “intellectual art”
- Postmodern design theory: contradiction, collage, irony, complexity, repetition, deconstruction, fragment, transparency, quotation, staging and scenery, sign and symbol, immateriality (“Les Immatériaux” 1985)
- General comprehensibility and the fascination of the trivial. The classical, the vernacular and pop culture
- Postmodern discourses on urbanity: reconstruction, renewal, new urbanism
- Discourses on the preservation of monuments, on Heritage (European Architectural Heritage Year 1975, new legislation and definitions of monuments, World Heritage) and on the history of architecture.
- Critical regionalism, analogue architecture and neo-traditionalism. Varieties, counter-concepts or side stages?