## CfP: The Architecture Exhibition Operating as a Cross-Cultural Contact Zone

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This thematic issue engages with the methodological challenge of writing a global history of architecture through the lens of architecture exhibitions operating as cross-cultural ‘contact zones’. Languages and literature scholar Mary Louise Pratt defined contact zones in the context of colonial studies as ‘social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power’ (Pratt, 1991: 34). Scholars from different fields have creatively appropriated Pratt’s concept, suggesting, for example, that looking upon literary developments as ‘sites of struggle’ can facilitate radical reorganisation of the canonical histories of English literature (Bizzell, 1994). Similarly, viewing a ‘museum as contact zone’ can be used as a way of expanding the museum’s role so that it becomes a place where cultural biases are confronted and dialogue can occur (Clifford, 1997). Political science scholar Elizabeth Kath, commenting on the differences between Latin American dance and music in its original form and the forms seen overseas, argues in favour of a multidirectional and multi-layered way of thinking about cultural contact (Kath, 2016). Kath proposes distinguishing between the layers of transculturation, to account for people and cultural forms moving around the world and across national boundaries and for their coming into contact with one another.

Applied to the field of architecture, we would like to think of contact zones as intensive sites of encounter between different architecture cultures that result in a productive exchange of ideas; these encounters include architectural competitions, exhibits, conferences, biennales, summer workshops, international classrooms, and development aid projects. Contact zones help us understand the intricate circulation of ideas within architecture culture on a meta-theoretical level as a productive concept to expose power dynamics and include previously repressed perspectives. Simultaneously, an architectural history structured around contact zones allows a bottom-up perspective of cultural encounters in which ‘the history of diverse places becomes connected and interdependent’ (Hunt, 2014: 57). Architecture and Culture Vol. 12, Issue 1 (2024) explores the ability of the architecture exhibition to act as a cross-cultural contact zone and reveals how exhibitions  function as important platforms for the confrontation, exchange and development of architectural ideas. Looking at architecture exhibitions through the lens of contact zones suggests that ideas are not simply exported, imported or translated but that they move across different cultural contexts through complex processes of transculturation. Examining the mechanics behind architectural contact zones, we argue, can result in a cross-cultural, multi-authored and poly-conceptual reframing of architecture history.

With a boom in cultural institutions placing architecture ‘on display’ in the late 1970s, research on architectural exhibitions gained currency. In recent decades, scholars have paid attention to thematic foci, curatorial strategies, and the performative characteristics of exhibitions. Publications such as Exhibit A. Exhibitions That Transformed Architecture, 1948-2000 (Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, 2018) and Place and Displacement. Exhibiting Architecture (Arrhenius, et al., 2014) addressed how the field of architecture has propelled curatorial approaches and how, in turn, exhibitions have shaped the discipline of architecture. Others, including The Model as Performance (Brejzek and Wallen, 2017) and Log #20: Curating Architecture (New York: Anyone Corporation, 2010), have scrutinised the performative capacities of the architecture exhibition. However, these studies have largely ignored the role that exhibitions play as sites of cross-cultural exchange propelling the discipline of architecture. This omission is startling, since exhibitions have long functioned as important platforms for the confrontation, exchange and development of architectural ideas from different cultures and geographies. The United Nations International Exhibition of Low-Cost Housing (New Delhi, 1954) and the German Mobile Exhibition travelling 24,000 km throughout Africa between 1961 and 1963 are but two examples in which the confrontation between designers, curators, audiences and exhibits from different geographical locations resulted in a lively, transnational discussion.

In this thematic issue, we ask authors to conceptualise the architecture exhibition not as a mere cultural event but as a productive encounter between different architecture cultures that produces friction and resistance as well as ‘exhilarating moments of wonder, revelation, mutual understanding and new wisdom’ (Pratt, 1991: 39). We particularly seek scholarly contributions from non-Western contexts that stimulate new insights in architectural knowledge production in ‘South-South’ relations. In their analysis of a specific exhibition case study, authors should trace how designers, curators, audiences and exhibits from different cultures encountered one another ‘on display’, and reveal how architectural concepts are constituted in and by their relationships with one another. Instead of relying on individual geniuses and their individual ideas, this issue argues for just the opposite. Looking at the discipline of architecture through the lens of exhibitions operating as contact zones,  the issue focuses on the way in which architectural knowledge is predominantly produced by way of the co-presence, interaction and interlocking of people, theories and practices.

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## Submission Instructions

This call is open to scholarly articles of varying lengths (maximum 7000 words or equivalent visual content, inclusive of tables, references and endnotes) and visual essays that offer new insights into the architectural exhibition operating as a contact zone. Full articles will be reviewed by the guest editors on thematic relevance, innovation and evidence of an explorative academic level. After the initial review, full papers will go through a rigorous double-blind peer-review process.

Please select 'Special Issue: The Architecture Exhibition Operating as a Cross-Cultural Contact Zone' when submitting your paper to the online platform.

<https://think.taylorandfrancis.com/special_issues/architecture-exhibition-operating-cross-cultural-contact-zone/>

Submission deadline for full papers is **1 October 2022**

Image caption:German Mobile Exhibition, Central and East Africa, 1963

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