

BARCELONA INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE

BIArch
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BIArch DIALOGUES REVIEWING ARCHITECTURAL KNOWLEDGE FORMATS

DIRECTED BY

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2009 . 10 AM - 7 PM

LA PEDRERA DE CAIXA DE CATALUNYA. MEZZANINE.

THE DIALOGUES WILL BE HELD IN ENGLISH. ATTENDANCE BY INVITATION ONLY.

BARCELONA INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE

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Barcelona

REVIEWING ARCHITECTURAL KNOWLEDGE FORMATS

Introduction

With the BIArch Dialogues "Reviewing Architectural Knowledge Formats", the Barcelona Institute of Architecture will concentrate on the generation and dissemination of architectural knowledge through multiple channels, opening a field of inquiry that complements the Institute's fundamental theoretical, technical and academic concerns. These dialogues, along with the many other activities offered by the Institute during the course of 2009, are set up according to the will of bringing forth the interests and contents of a new postprofessional institution at the close of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The general objective of the dialogues is to extend the notion of architectural knowledge beyond curriculum. Expanding architecture culture is a particularly timely and challenging endeavor given the current state of the profession. Understanding the possibilities for architectural learning in alternative practices and fostering exchanges between modes of production and instruments of dissemination should offer a richer and potentially more stable professional outlook. Thus, alternative knowledge formats become key complements to the core academic activities of a postprofessional degree program.

By bringing together a series of young practitioners from a breadth of fields related to architectural knowledge, the dialogues will draw an outline for reflection and action in various areas of experience. What are the limits and possibilities of generating criticism or promoting reflection on architecture through print and digital media? What are the most appropriate formats for different types of information or audiences? How can academic and cultural institutions support each other and expand their respective scopes? What are the roles and responsibilities of architecture editors, critics or curators within the frame of knowledge and learning? How might the proper balance between different topics informing the discipline be achieved through the structuring of curricula? Through the shared reflection of scholars, critics, independent publishers, digital media entrepreneurs, curators, and cultural activists, the dialogues hope to establish a framework that might provide some of the answers to a context in which knowledge is permanently evolving.

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10.00 a.m.

PRESENTATION

**JORGE GARCÍA
DE LA CÁMARA**

10.15 - 11.45 a.m.

**DIALOGUE 1:
PRINT MEDIA**

**JOANA SÁ LIMA
PEDRO GADANHO**

MODERATED BY

MARIO BALLESTEROS

Print and architecture are fundamentally slow disciplines. In our days, slowness is often considered a serious disadvantage. The economic and professional turmoil of the past year has been particularly rough on both architects and publishers; for architectural publishers, the crisis has been twofold. Slowness is deemed partly responsible for the slump in the building and printing industries, which are suffering profound changes in their respective business models and being subjected to questions regarding their fundamental purpose. As if this wasn't enough, there is a whole new set of challenges being posed by the widespread adoption of new technologies and changing attitudes as to what an architect or an editor should be.

For hundreds of years, printed matter was the vital tool for institutions to extend knowledge; in the age of mass media it became the dominant force for disseminating information. If print media's position has waned in both of these spheres, what is the point of architectural publications today? What are the challenges and possibilities for printing presses tied to architectural institutions? What are the enduring virtues of print? Might the answer be in its very slowness, in its demands for care and reflection and reconsideration, its basic filtering qualities? How can print media stay relevant in our present-day academic and architectural circles?

11.45 - 12.00 a.m.

COFFEE BREAK

12.00 - 13.30 p.m.

**DIALOGUE 2:
DIGITAL MEDIA**

**PAUL PETRUNIA
FELIPE DE FERRARI**

MODERATED BY

ALICIA GUERRERO YESTE

The relationship between architecture and electronic media is not new. Throughout the twentieth century, film, television and computers became

more than means of architectonic representation: they helped established a sphere of practice in itself, an immaterial architecture. Still, in the past few years the onslaught of digital media technologies, the rise of network culture, and the transition from mass media to mediated communities have all radically altered this relationship. Within the sphere of architectural dissemination, the Web is now a flurry of images, projects, and exchanges; it isn't far-fetched to assume that it will soon become the preferred outlet for creating and distributing specialized or trade content, be it commercial or independent.

The disruptive nature of this shift –with its unique sets of rules and its own particular logic in terms of reading, representation, and distribution– is only beginning to reveal itself. Furthermore, these dynamics will probably affect the definition and drive behind contemporary architectural debates. Will the modes and manners of the Web in terms of participation and interaction extend to the practice? Aside from the obvious benefits of the speed, proliferation and accumulation of information that digital media offer, is there truly an opportunity to create knowledge? What are the limits and pitfalls of new media instruments? The challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead for institutions in relation to digital media are numerous, as they alternate between struggling with and profiting from this breach in the traditional balance of knowledge structures.

13.45 - 15.45 p.m.

LUNCH

16.00 - 17.30 p.m.

**DIALOGUE 3:
INSTITUTIONS**

**JOSEPH GRIMA
FRANCISCO GONZÁLEZ DE
CANALES**

MODERATED BY

INÊS MOREIRA

Architectural knowledge is not the exclusive realm of academics. It is built around and fed by a variety of organizations and institutions that range from gallery spaces to independent research bodies and sporadic events. Architectural learning increasingly goes beyond formal training, extending into the more ample spheres of criticism and culture. In this sense, independent architectural institutions become an alternative instrument for producing and divulging architecture and knowledge. Exhibitions act as pedagogical or research tools. The architectural curator becomes a generator of content and a key protagonist in architectural debates.

Academic institutions themselves are integrating these practices into their own structures or seeking to establish some sort of link with independent organisms, in order to enrich learning experiences and expand the mindset of the new generations of architectural professionals. Alternative architectural practices and organizations also create a bridge between the profession and other fields of practice and interest, and even manage to shorten the gap between architects and the public at large. The recession is actually strengthening this tendency, creating wider and more diverse networks of support for the proliferation of architectural knowledge.

17.30 - 19.00 p.m.

**DIALOGUE 4:
KNOWLEDGE AND
TEACHING**

**PIER VITTORIO AURELI
ENRIQUE WALKER**

MODERATED BY

PEP AVILÉS

The curriculum of an architectural institution is the equivalent of its academic backbone, an outline of its pedagogical agenda. Yet even this basic, clear precept has been shaken by the current economic and professional crisis that is also taking its toll on academic institutions. As a result, there seems to be a fierce competition between schools and programs hoping to differentiate themselves from the rest on the grounds of uniqueness, sometimes recurring to imprecise notions such as "multidisciplinary" or a straightforward but reductive focus on technical expertise.

What should be the aim of a twenty-first-century postgraduate architectural institute in terms of creating and sharing knowledge? What should it resemble? An experimental hub? A productive engine tied to local economies? A loose, dynamic network of organizations, teachers, professionals and students? How can a postgraduate institute position itself through instruments other than its syllabus? What are the academic possibilities contained in public agendas or professional exchanges? How are the profiles and demands of prospective and active students changing as well? Architectural institutions must ponder these matters in order to push the discipline forward and allow students to thrive in a professional reality informed by technological, environmental, theoretical, social and economic factors.

19.00 - 19.15 p.m.

FINAL REMARKS