



Research Area: MAKE: Exploring Innovative Approaches to the Ideation of Artefacts and Spaces | Project Timespan: 2018-2022

Architecture in the age of display

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In his seminal essay, "The Work of Art In The Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Walter Benjamin observes a tension between new modes of perception and the aura that arises from the work of art due to its reproducibility. Following Benjamin's diagnosis, and given the recent explosion of architecture exhibitions, could we look at the work of architecture under new conditions of production and public presentation? As stated by Léa-Catherine Szacka, «If exhibitions were once only a reference to something else, the exhibition is now the referent, whose traces become more important than the event itself» (2016). Taking these elements as a starting point, this research aims to investigate the work of architecture in the age of display. Due to its nature and dimensions, buildings cannot be contained in the show and the act of exhibiting is often connected with the absence of the very object of the addressed matter. But this is true only if we aim to reduce the exhibition of architecture to the presentation (or representation) of built realm. What is exhibited in an architecture show is definitely worth of examination since the contents range from architecture (buildings) per se to issues which are relevant for it. The production of space in the context of the exhibition has always been connected to experimentation

and it is acknowledged that the context of temporary exhibitions is punctuated by «the most extreme and influential proposals» in the history of architecture (Colomina, 2008). All this to say that the research interest on architecture exhibitions, although established and consolidated, is still lively and continues offering issues worth being deeply examined. Beyond mere display, the architecture exhibition is a thing in itself: it is presentation and knowledge production as much as it is representation of something that lies outside of the exhibition space. This opens up the way for a development of the research interests in the direction of the production of architectural knowledge through architecture exhibitions, and orientate the focus towards its outcomes in regards not only to cultural but also material production. The research project ARCH-DIS aims to develop a theoretical and operational framework for implementing the knowledge about architecture exhibitions with a focus on the proliferation of these shows, and the increasing attention of the public and of the academia towards them. Tracing a genealogy of the most recent exhibition, the study represents a contribution to the goals reached so far and a challenging change of perspective after a series of works characterised by a more historical approach.

In the summer 2020 Roberto Gigliotti, Léa-Catherine Szacka and Nina Bassoli with the collaboration of Davide Tommaso Ferrando developed the format “5X2 Summer Conversations”. Originally conceived as a summer school, the idea to enable scholars to meet experts while working around the question “What does an architecture exhibition produce today?” has been transformed into a series of public online conversations due to prevailing circumstances.

Each appointment brought together 2 different architecture exhibition producers or critics and invited them to engage in a moderated dialogue about 5 proposed topics as in the following programme:

01 PROMISES

(ab)Normal and Saskia van Stein, moderated by Nina Bassoli

02 SURROGATES

Veronique Patteeuw and Francesco Garutti, moderated by Léa-Catherine Szacka

03 TRANSGRESSIONS

Andres Jaque and Carlos Minguez Carrasco, moderated by Roberto Gigliotti

04 IMAGES

Shumi Bose and Jimenez Lai, moderated by Davide Tommaso Ferrando

05 TRANSFORMATIONS

Giovanna Borasi and Sumayya Vally (counterspace), moderated by Roberto Gigliotti

An extensive book on the results of the research project edited by Nina Bassoli, authored by Roberto Gigliotti and with a contribution by Léa-Catherine Szacka will be published in 2022 by Spector Books, Leipzig.