



Research Cluster: Make – exploring innovative approaches to the ideation of artefacts and spaces | Timespan: start of the project 2018

Architecture in the age of display

Team

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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).



Johnston Marklee, Office KGDVS, Nuno Brandão Costa, 4th Lisbon Architecture Triennale (The Form of Form), Installation View (2016)

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. Furthermore, showing architecture requires a «series of mediation procedures and the translation of the exhibited object into artefacts that can be experienced within the space of the show» (Gigliotti, 2015). 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 – with an attention both on the theoretical background as well as on the museographic aspects related to the form taken by the setting of the show – the study could represent a valid contribution to the goals reached so far and a challenging change of perspective after a series of works characterised by a more historical approach.