

Haecceity Papers

Volume 1 / issue 2 – “What Now Architecture?”

Introduction

Broadly speaking, critical architectural thought as it exists in the profession and academy today can be identified to belong to three broad categories of approach, each identified by a certain concentration of practitioners and thinkers. On the one hand there exists a well-published and disseminated technological paradigm championed by the likes of Kas Oosterhuis, Mark Goulthorpe and Bernard Cache to name but a few of the more distinguished names; on another front there exists an articulation and demand for a strong and critical ideological-theoretical need and strain in creative architectural thought represented at its respective élan by Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi; on the third front there exists a call for architectural thought and creativity to co-opt and immerse itself in the logic and practice of neo-liberal global capitalism and commercial networking, represented most pronouncedly by the practice of AMO and the writings of theorist Michael Speaks. To these three broad directions of thought we may add a fourth, although not theoretically articulated, but nevertheless forming an ever-increasing importance in the curricula of architecture schools the world over, that of the pressing ecological paradigm in architecture.

With the recent deaths of first Jacques Derrida, and then Philip Johnson – two figures who in different ways and with differing legacies influenced the course of architectural speculation during their respective careers in our time – we wish to ferment a speculation on the present and future direction of architectural consciousness and subjectivity as it bears on critical and creative practice today,

in light of their deaths, and in light of the varying stances of criticality in architecture today.

With all death, comes a reflective evaluation on the legacy of a body of work and thought on the part of the living. A death may also be construed by some as the passing or termination of an era, if not literally, as times may have moved on while they were still alive, then figuratively. The death of Phillip Johnson has been surmised as the death of the modern era, an era that was cemented through his co-writing and publication of the *International Style*, which was later re-evaluated and superseded by his embrace of postmodernism, but nonetheless always remaining true to the tenets of modernism. The death of Jacques Derrida on the other hand might be construed by some as the symbolic termination of theoretical speculation in architecture, something that marked the vibrant deconstructivist period of architectural thought and practice in the '80s – and still echoing through to the present –, but which has arguably been on the wane since the mid-nineties.

In light of the deaths and contrasting legacy of these two highly influential figures on the architectural scene, and in light of the diverse and contrasting nature of contemporary architectural thought and creative practice in our present, are we at a threshold of a paradigm shift in critical architectural thinking, or in our approach to it? We may rightly ask, is the respective deaths of Derrida and Johnson – albeit with starkly differing, but nonetheless individually influential contributions to architectural subjectivity – the end of a certain type of speculation in architecture? Is the tide turning, or did their respective body of work merely lay the groundwork for something that still warrants relevant further and closer scrutiny and debate? Is architectural thought at a crossroads, in need of, or in search of new direction, and if so, what is that direction? What might the metaphoric 'analyst's couch' yield to architectural thought today? Put simply, what is the present flavour and direction of winds in critical architectural thinking, and in light of an ever-present burden of the present that surrounds us and the

responses mustered to it? What does thought and life summon to architecture today, without forgetting our recent past, indeed in light of it? Above all, what is the substance of micro-segmentarity that might echo through the subjectivity of architecture in the present and in its morrow?

In the context of this legacy, and in the counter-context of the present situation as outlined simplistically at the beginning of this introduction, we wish to posit a call and question for speculation on what is paramount in critical architecture thought today, to return architectural speculation one more time to the analysts couch and probe deeply into its ontology of presence. The second issue of *Haecceity Papers* asks the question: "What Now Architecture?" in the context of the burden of the present and hope of the future, and in light of legacies and changing times.

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