

Generational reappraisal

In his review of the ‘Superstudio Migrazione’ exhibition in Brussels (pp. 193–197), Aleks Catina remarks on the passing of architects who have become the subject of critical or historical study. Their loss marks a moment, he suggests, when architectural design ‘ceases to be verbalised from a position of direct experience’. At such a stage, he argues, ‘we are entering a new realm, one where other voices take over in contributing to a work’s narration’. Catina’s point has long been understood, albeit often tacitly: that there comes a point when historians’ or critics’ voices prevail in the interpretation of works beyond the voice(s) of those works’ architectural author(s). This is not necessarily injurious – critics or historians see differently to designers, less bound up in the knotty contexts out of which work was produced – though nor is it unfailingly advantageous – recognising too an equally knotty web of contemporary preoccupations that subsequent commentators bring to bear. Rather, it is a moment when different opportunities, circumstances, and readings become available, contributing to a work’s ongoing interpretation. This kind of generational reappraisal is the concern of this issue of **arq**.

Marcela Aragüez examines Cedric Price’s ideas of ‘calculated uncertainty’ with reference to the Interaction Centre project built in London’s Kentish Town. She shows how it ‘evolved from a building initially conceived to be modified over time into a fixed construction accommodating a great range of planned and unplanned activities’ (pp. 108–124). Rather than concentrate on the work of a particular individual, Emre Altürk interprets the building type of the wedding hall in Turkey ‘which almost resembles a production line’, noting how it has been turned into ‘a matter of optimisation, administration, even discipline’ (pp. 133–144). With reference to a philosopher instead of an architect, Simon Weir and Glen Hill re-read the idea of degeneracy in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, examining its contemporary relevance to our field. Meanwhile David Walker investigates ‘the exquisite moments when enclosed space’ at Hagia Sophia in Istanbul ‘attains an illusory plastic state’ – preferring to examine the qualities of illuminated interiors over traditional studies of historical and archaeological conditions (pp. 145–176). Álvaro Clua Uceda, meanwhile, revisits the urban form of the cloverleaf interchange – emerging from modern ideas about speed, optimisation, efficiency, and functional segregation – with particular focus on the Slussen interchange in Copenhagen, reflecting on renewed preferences for human-scaled urban form (pp. 186–192).

The generational reappraisal of architecture is a matter of academic interest, in relation both to specific cases and to broader research methods. However, it remains a matter of interest for practitioners too. Appreciating how the interpretation of architecture changes – through the generational reappraisal of familiar projects and designers, and in the emergence of new objects of study – helps us to think through how we design in today’s circumstances, and also how our work might be reappraised in future.

THE EDITORS