

## The intelligence of the diagram

The potentials of architectural diagrams have been addressed before in **arq**, notably in issue 16.1 (2012). The ‘Leader’ to that issue recalled traditions of the diagram in architectural culture. Diagramming was famously employed as an analytical tool by J. N. L. Durand in the nineteenth century and by the likes of Colin Rowe in the twentieth. Early modernists understood diagrams as a way to move discussions of architecture into the realm of formal organisation away from the decoration of surfaces. A later generation associated diagrams with objectivity in the 1950s and 1960s, with the refinement of building types as archetypes. More recently, firms like SANAA, MVRDV, and Herzog & deMeuron have stressed the importance of diagrams in their design processes, understanding a clear diagram for a project as a tool for clarifying an architectural idea and for sticking to it through the demanding processes of procurement and construction. Papers in this **arq** return to the theme of the diagram.

Sandra Costa Santos reflects on the design ideas informing Alejandro de la Sota’s Domínguez House in Galicia, finished in 1975 (pp. 200–8). She illustrates how the architect’s thinking – on activity and repose; on the fundamental separation of earth and sky, cellar, and attic – were crystallised first into a diagram representing human existence and then into another diagram for the section of the house. Andreas Luescher recounts a different design process, by Catalan architects RCR for Musée Soulages in France finished in 2014 (pp. 209–18). A diagram illustrating the relation of the building to the site was important to the architects’ competition win. The plan diagram, Luescher emphasises, like other aspects of the building, responds to an understanding of Pierre Soulages’s artwork. Rosa Urbano Gutiérrez, meanwhile, examines debates on the aesthetics of sustainability. She includes a triangular diagram ordering the priorities of architectural form, passive systems, and active systems in environmental design (pp. 257–70) but she also reflects on ‘aesthetic metrics [...] related to the integral principles of nature’, many of which operate at the level of diagrammatic organisation.

These articles highlight the intelligence of the diagram in its various modes: its analytical mode – in relation to site, context, form, and even abstract ideas – and its generative mode – producing plan and section form, building form, urban form, and wider intellectual structures. Diagrams are criticised for being overly reductive, for limiting rather than expanding architectural possibilities. But, as these articles show, different kinds of diagram operate and intersect in multiple ways.

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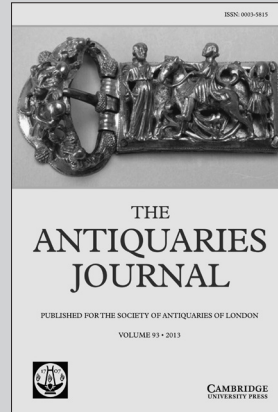
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