

The Advisory Board of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR CULTURAL STUDIES IN ARCHITECTURE welcomes Johanna Rolshoven as its member. In this issue she presents her vision of CSA. Hundred-ninety-four people and institutions receive our newsletter on a regular basis. We thank them all for their continuing interest. Interesting: The overall female-male ratio is 47:53, so the purely feminine advisory board and the three-quarter dominance of women among the Working Board members make sense. Has the fact, that the presence of gender-issues has so far been weak its origins in cultural studies or in architecture, or in the difficult relationship between the two?

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The CSA Quotation Guide, continued

« Marco Polo imagined answering (or Kublai Khan imagined his answer) that the more he was lost in unfamiliar quarters of distant cities, the more he understood the other cities he had crossed to arrive there, and he retraced the stages of his journey, and he came to know the port from which he set sail, and the familiar places of his youth, and the surroundings of home, and the little square in Venice where he had gambolled as a child. »

« The city in which I feel most at home is New York [...] Every time I go to New York I find it more beautiful than before and closer to the form of an ideal city. Perhaps it is because it is a geometric city, crystalline, without a past, without depth, apparently without secrets; that is why I am at ease there. It is the city which I can imagine dominating with my mind, to <think> in its entirety in an instant. »

From Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili*. Einaudi Editore, Milano 1972, quoted after *The invisible cities*. Transl. W. Weaver. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego 1974.

From an interview with Italo Calvino in 1985. Maria Corti, cited in Joseph Francese, *Narrating postmodern time and space*, 61f. State University of New York Press, Albany 1997.

Impressum

IACSA is an association according to Swiss law, founded in 2008. It consists of the *Advisory Board*, the *Working Board*, and the *Network Editor*. IACSA membership is free. It is open for everyone interested and willing to contribute to build the network. IACSA's registered office's address is at Hammerstrasse 14, 4058 Basel, Switzerland. The IACSA Newsletter is published every two months in electronic form.

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MEMBERSHIP: Membership is free. If you sense that the idea of IACSA covers the field of your interest you are welcome to participate as a member of the *Working Board*. Simply write an informal request to iacsa@mobileculturestudies.com.

by Johanna Rolshoven¹

Cultural studies are not only a theoretical approach, but an intellectual enterprise with political aspirations. They are transdisciplinary, often metadisciplinary and sometimes, though rarely, even antidisciplinary. They are fundamentally transnational, insofar as they transgress national fences of interests and normalising nation state power.

Cultural studies and in particular cultural analysis are committed to interpretive and critical methods. Their becoming shows how the choice of research practices is made from pragmatic, strategic and reflexive positions. In the centre are questions, conflicts and problems raised within specific social contexts. Cultural studies' interest is about the social contentions of peoples' everyday life, structures and dynamics of local lifeworlds against the backdrop of political and economic patterns.

Transposing the tasks of cultural studies into the field of architecture means that we have to operate with a wide concept of study topics: they embrace man, society and built environment, they draw on housing research, architecture critics, urban and landscape history, urbanism and all kind of strategies referring to built spaces, localisations, perceptual habits and their interconnections. Facts and cravings are equally subjects of this critical activity.

I propose to make use of the «space triad», based on the interaction of:

(i) lived space,
(ii) conceived space, and
(iii) built space. This triad is useful for the realisation of qualitative and quantitative research, the survey and analysis of facts knowledge. Its threefold perspective enables andus to place a topic in its complex social embedding with respect to distinguishing and to interpreting it. Experience from social sciences, humanities and sciences – among them history, philosophy, economics and architecture – allow to consider the subject in his

(i) lifeworldly,
(ii) social, and
(iii) built environment.² The particular ambition of «Cultural Studies» consists in interweaving the triadic *topoi*, their modalities and significances.

As for architecture, this is not just a discipline in the sense of its institutional history, epistemology and practices, but as well a discursive field within society as a whole. Therefore architecture as an associate of cultural studies cannot be tallied by saying catalog-like «architecture is: firstly this, secondly that, thirdly...».

From a bowl of existing theoretical concepts, methods and analytical procedures those tools are selected which are usable for the respective task. Theory is then used as a strategic resource. If new tools are needed they are designed and realised.

Cultural Studies are compulsorily open for unexpected occurrences. Its research process can be described and understood as bricolage. The cultural practices and live experiences of people guide theory building. As in Michel Foucault's analyses the coaction of science and power is reflected critically. Not only architects are involved in power games and difficult ethical issues, but also humanities and other disciplines dealing with culture and everyday life. Scientific investigation is never a goal in itself, but part of the effort

¹ Johanna Rolshoven is professor and head of department of European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Graz (Austria), co-founder and Advisory Board member of IACSA. This text is a revised version of her input to a collaborators' briefing at the ETH Wohnforum / Centre for Cultural Studies in Architecture in 2006. She relies on the Udo Göttlich et al. (Hg.) 2001. *Die Werkzeugkiste der Cultural Studies*. Bielefeld 2001.

² Johanna Rolshoven, Von der Kulturraum- zur Raumkulturforchung. Theoretische Herausforderungen an eine Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaft des Alltags. In: *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 2003, 189-213.

to create a democratic and equitable society. Cultural Studies want, as Lawrence Grossberg and others³ put it, to theorise politics and to politicise theory. They aim at producing knowledge relevant for the realm of politics. Thus they are about the politics of

³ See the interesting crossroad of cultural analysis and law: Austin Sarat and Jonathan Simon, Cultural analysis and legal scholarship, in: Sarat&Simon (eds), *Cultural analysis, cultural studies, and the law: moving beyond legal realism*, 17. Duke University Press, Durham NC 2003.

⁴ Art critic Robert Hughes has chosen this sentence by Iago from Shakespeare's «Othello» as title for the collection of his essays published in 1992.

acknowledgement and empowerment. Be it «nothing if not critical»⁴, but at least useful for the improvement of «real life». So far there are no such disciplines as «cultural studies»; but there are scholars and researchers who feel committed to this project, beyond all disciplinary claims. They operate at the interface not only of disciplines, but of cultures, sciences, and politics.

Relating theory to practise and inversely implies that there are many connections with traditional scientific and technical disciplines. The enterprise of Cultural Studies lives from constant shift through different contexts.

Architecture in Cultural Studies

by Justin Winkler

These lines offer not just a discussion of the relationship between the terms contained in the name of CSA, of architects' skills and genuine scholarship. They tackle the intricate relationship between art, science and practical fields.

In a footnote to a silently pacemaking article Italian composer and scholar Albert Mayr called for a different use of the concept of interdisciplinarity. He took the example of music: «This implies that interdisciplinary research dealing with music – which so far has been mainly uni-directional – become more bidirectional; we have the physics of music, the psychology, the sociology of music, etc. What about the music of physics, psychology, sociology?»⁵ He underlines his plea by 6th century Isidorus' remark about the fundamental role of music for all sciences: «Nothing would be without it». Even if the medieval concept of *artes* respectively science and their trivial and quadrivial order has been overthrown the relationship of the arts and modern science is still an issue of interest.

Why can we so easily replace «music» in Mayr's lines by «architecture»? Both have, in the nineteenth century at latest, become the playground of ideas of vocation, gift and

mastermindedness, outbalancing the concepts of craftsmanship. The sciences – as much humanities as natural sciences – are seen as being on the opposite bank, screening the arts' production with their tools and concepts. What for? will you ask, and justifiably so.

I have already stressed that cultural studies *in* architecture is not cultural studies *of* architecture⁶. The <of> is never subversive, whereas the <in> has this capacity. Innovation is about breaking rules. Rearranging words in supposedly wrong order has innovative potential if warming up one's imagination is not disallowed by corseted thought. If architecture as CSA understands it – you have noticed that we do not employ the term in the proper sense of the architects' profession itself – is combined the other way round with all disciplinary fields of cultural studies, what can be gained? Architecture in ethnography, architecture (with)in ethnography, architecture of ethnography. And so we go on: architecture in geography, architecture in art

⁵ Albert Mayr 1983. L'aménagement harmonique du temps vécu. *Diogenes* 122, 55. (Mayr Albert 1983. Creative time-organization versus subsonic noises. *Diogenes* 122)

⁶ See IACSA Newsletter Vol 2 No 2, January 2010.

history, architecture in history ... You will realise that «architecture» in these double terms is mostly the systematic part, whereas the active discipline is its empirical complement.

I have been from a simple playful permutation of two terms and I become aware that instead of risking blurred notions I obtain more insight and a broader understanding of CSA. We will have to continue to play on terms and notions, also by solving equations like {architecture \neq architecture} or {cultural studies \approx chimaera}. Perhaps this leads to the deconstruction of the name of the association; but it will not lead to its invalidation, it is a ticket for longer distance travel. Quite on the contrary, we will gain new understandings which open ways out from many dead ends of conventional housing and living research.

Thus the issue is not, as the opening remarks stated, one of the relationship between the terms contained in the name

7 For this and the following see Florian Dombois, Für eine Kunst als Forschung. In: Holger Schulze (ed), *Sound Studies. Traditionen – Methoden – Desiderate. Eine Einführung*, 291f. and 298f. transcript, Bielefeld 2008. See also the call for support for the Journal for Artistic Research in this newsletter.

8 The term is central to the aesthetics proposed by Berleant and Carlson. See Arnold Berleant, *Re-thinking aesthetics: rogue essays on aesthetics and the arts*. Ashgate Pub, Aldershot 2004; Allen Carlson, Aesthetics and engagement, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 1993 (33), 220-227. See also *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Online Journal <http://www.contempaesthetics.com>

of CSA, of architects' skills vs. genuine scholarship. The relationship between art, science and practical fields no longer corresponds to the ancient relationship between *artes* and *technai*. The formula «art as research» is reputed to be wishful thinking, respectively a way of softening the definitions of good work on both sides – the artistic and the scientific approaches – and ending with a *métis* result that disappoints both sides. It refers to the undesired exploitation of art by science – respectively science by *praxeis* and art.⁷ In this context «art as research» is not – and certainly not exclusively – a matter of scientific methodology and precision, but an issue of the aesthetic, visual or aural realisation of insights.

The discussion would not make sense if «architecture» in the narrower sense was not bound to a notion of aesthetics that opposes form and substance in a way to prevent it from realising what is really needed: engagement⁸. Not only in architecture, but also in many areas of cultural studies the approaches are still too contemplative, detached and distanced. This will consequently call for the revision of epistemologies, practices («paradigms») and, ultimately, attitudes. It also creates a demand for communication between disciplines which so far did not imagine of having to cope with built space, despite the overwhelming evidence that urban spaces are definitely the cultural realm of the 21st century.

While waiting for our next newsletter you are invited to solve an assignment: imagine what «architecture in humanities» is.

Calls and Announcements

Call for Support: Journal for Artistic Research

The Journal for Artistic Research (JAR, first issue planned for 2010) is an international, online, Open Access and double blind peer-reviewed journal for the identification, publication and dissemination of artistic research and its methodology. The journal's most innovative feature is the Research Catalogue (RC), which is a searchable, documentary

database of artistic research work and its exposition. The RC is an inclusive, open-ended, bottom-up research tool that supports the journal's academic contributions.

JAR is unique; it is the only journal worldwide that systematically features artistic research output in close proximity to academic articles and methodological discus-

sions. Introducing a high-quality journal in the field allows an ever-increasing number of artistic researchers to partake in what in the sciences and humanities are standard academic publication procedures.

In the context of JAR, artistic research is double defined: in so far as it is research, it enhances knowledge and understanding; because it is artistic, however, the mode of presentation is essential. This definition excludes works of art, for which the mode of presentation is essential, which do not enhance understanding. It also excludes research that is not dependant on its presentation. Given that artistic research is an emerging paradigm, contributing to the development of epistemological as well as artistic criteria for the exposure of artistic research is a key concern of the journal. JAR embraces research practices across disciplines thereby emphasising the transdisciplinary character of much artistic research. Part of

JAR 's mission is to re-negotiate art's relationship to academia and the role and function of research in artistic practice.

JAR offers a solution for the desire of artistic researchers to have their work displayed and documented in manner that cares about modes of presentation. By introducing with the RC a standard of documentation, the journal responds to the artistic and academic communities, which require high quality referencing and documentation. Moreover, the journal meets the demand of art institutions such as museums, galleries and collections to have artistic research made accessible.

More at <http://www.jar-online.net/>

Call for Submissions: Concrete Geometries Spatial Form in Social and Aesthetic Processes

Over the past decade architecture has witnessed a revolution in design and fabrication tools available to the discipline that has changed the way we imagine space forever. Digital design methods for form finding and implementing have produced an influential body of work, preoccupied with the development of novel, complex and heterogeneous spatial form. This form, simply referred to as «geometry», is often evaluated through performance driven issues emphasising the environmental and structural parameters that shape it. Yet, throughout history, the emergence of new spatial forms and with them new architectural styles, bear significance beyond advances in technology but in relation to what they offer to the human condition in terms of aesthetic and social processes – issues currently under-represented by the discourse. «Concrete Geometries» is a work-in-progress term derived from the notion of «concrete» as «*existing in reality or in actual experience*» or «*capable of being perceived by the senses*» and the abbreviation «geo-

metries» for the constructed environment. «Concrete Geometries» like Concrete Science, Concrete Music or Concrete Art is interested in the *particular and immediate*, concerned with *actual use or practice*. «Concrete Geometries» is an attempt to expand this current debate. Set up as a cross-disciplinary Research Cluster at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, «Concrete Geometries» investigates the intimate relationship between spatial form and human processes – be they social or aesthetic – and the variety of new material entities this relationship might provoke. By bringing together art, architecture, sciences and humanities, we hope to connect fields of knowledge that are currently fragmented through disciplinary boundaries. The call is structured into two thematic fields:

- A: Geometry and Perception
- B: Geometry and Social Processes

The cluster wishes to address such questions as:

- How is spatial form socially and experientially relevant? ▶

- How does it choreograph human processes?
- Can it stimulate emotional or behavioral responses or create particular aesthetic experiences?
- Can social cultures be patterned through formal configurations of space?
- How can the articulation of a space support acts of inhabitation, appropriation or other types of direct engagement?
- How do we perceive space visually and bodily?
- What social or aesthetic consequences does the formal articulation of space have for our everyday lives and for the production of reality?
- What kind of associations emerge between spatial form and social actors?

To advance this research, we are seeking submissions that provide practical or theoretical contribution. Submissions may include works of art or design, architectural projects or case studies, urban studies, research papers, scientific experiments and other forms of inquiry that address the objectives outlined.

10 Projects and 10 Texts will be selected by the curatorial board for inclusion in an exhibition, symposium and publication at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in 2010.

The call is open to students, practitioners and researchers from the fields of Architecture, Art, Design, Urban Design, Geography, Neuroscience, Behavioral Psychology, Spatial Cognition, Social Science, Ethnography, Anthropology and other disciplines concerned with such questions.

Deadline for submissions:
12th April 2010

Notification of participants: 3rd May 2010
Exhibition: 12th May - 29th May 2010
Public Symposium: October 2010

Curatorial board:

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For submission formats please consult
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