

The ATCH (Architecture Theory Criticism History) research group in the School of Architecture at the University of Queensland presents:

WRITING ARCHITECTURE: A SYMPOSIUM ON ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM AND THE WRITTEN REPRESENTATION OF ARCHITECTURE

Saturday August 15

The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

This is the first of two planned events on the subject of writing architecture and architectural criticism. This first event will be a relatively informal workshop, intended to discuss broad issues and map out the parameters, key questions, case studies and scope of the second, more formal event in February 2010, which will result in a book publication. The events are convened by Dr Naomi Stead, a UQ Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the ATCH group.

Papers and presentations are invited on the subject of written architectural criticism and the written representation of architecture. Possible topics could include, but are not limited to:

WRITING: When and how is writing an architectural practice? What is gained in translation, and what is lost, when architecture is represented in writing? What is the critical influence of writing, as itself a medium, technique, and mode of representation, in architectural criticism? What happens when architectural criticism becomes explicitly or implicitly literary, a mode of art practice in itself?

CONVENTION: What are the genre conventions of writing in architecture, and written architectural criticism? What do these conventions arise from, and what would it mean to bend or break them? What might an experimental writing in architectural criticism look like?

MEDIATION: How does the vehicle and platform of publication affect what can be written, by whom, and for whom? What can be said, differently and variously, in newspaper criticism, professional journals, popular journals, academic journals, books, and blogs? What are the potentials and limitations of architectural writing in the new media?

HISTORICITY: How does historical specificity bear on architectural criticism – why would we read old critiques, and for what? How does contemporary criticism write buildings into history? How is the historian a critic and the critic a historian? How does criticism use, abuse, or depend on an architectural canon?

JUDGMENT: What is the significance of judgement in architectural critique? Has judgement been de-emphasised in current criticism in favour of description, interpretation, or evocation? What is the significance of architectural awards, prizes, and competitions, when seen as a mode of architectural criticism? What are the different kinds of criteria used to evaluate architecture in criticism, and which are correct? Is architectural criticism 'critical enough'? How could or should it be more or less so?

DISCIPLINARITY: What is the relationship between disciplinary architectural criticism, and broader cultural critiques that take architecture as an example? How do critical practices in architecture compare with and differ from critical practices in the visual and performing arts, design, film, television, and literature? How does architectural criticism implicitly or explicitly frame architecture as an art, a profession, a discipline, a service industry, a body of technique, an artifice?

OBJECT: What is the object of written architectural criticism? How important is architectural criticism, to whom, when, and why?

Proposals of 300 words should be sent to Naomi Stead (n.stead@uq.edu.au) by 19 June. Acceptance will be notified by 26 June. Full papers will not be required before the event. Presentations will be 20 minutes, followed by discussion.