

Actors and Vehicles of Architectural Criticism (Bologna, 4-5 Oct 16)

Bologna, Oct 4-05, 2016

Deadline: Jun 19, 2016

Hélène Jannière

Actors and Vehicles of Architectural Criticism
Mapping.Crit.Arch Second International Workshop

Mapping.Crit.Arch: Architectural criticism 20th and 21st centuries, a cartography/ La Critique architecturale, XXe et XXIe siècles: une cartographie
(ANR Project ANR-14-CE31-0019-01)

Université Rennes 2 / Università di Bologna
Agence Nationale de la Recherche / The French National Research Agency (ANR)

The research project Mapping.Crit.Arch: Architectural criticism 20th and 21st centuries, a cartography, funded by the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche, aims to develop a field of research on the history of architectural criticism, from the last decades of the 19th century to the present day. It is based on an international network of scholars, whose interests cover the history of architectural criticism at various levels and through different approaches (including architectural theory, history of preservation, historiography of architecture, history of architectural periodicals and of criticism, history of photography). Nathalie Boulouch (Université Rennes 2 and Archives de la critique d'art), Anne Hultzsch (Bartlett School London and OCCAS, Oslo University), Giovanni Leoni (Università di Bologna), Paolo Scrivano (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University), Laurent Stalder (ETH Zurich), Suzanne Stephens (Barnard College, Columbia University), Alice Thomine-Berrada (Musée d'Orsay, Paris) are the members of this network, which is administrated by the Université Rennes 2 and coordinated by Hélène Jannière (Université Rennes 2).

This call for papers is for the second of three international workshops planned by the Mapping.Crit.Arch Project to foster scholarship on the history of architectural criticism and facilitate exchanges between scholars active in this field of research. Conceived as milestones of the research project, these workshops intend to go beyond somewhat widespread interpretations that invoke either the specificity of architectural criticism or its partial overlapping with other forms of writing. The workshops also want to challenge simplistic views that suggest the crisis of architectural criticism if not its entire demise.

After the first workshop at the Université Rennes 2 (January 2016), centered on the relationship of criticism to "public opinion" and on criticism as an autonomous discipline, the second workshop

will take place at the Università di Bologna on October 4-5, 2016, focusing on the actors and "vehicles" of architectural criticism. A third Workshop (Spring 2017) will be dedicated to the notions of architectural criticism and its disciplinary boundaries.

2nd Workshop - Call for Papers

The second international workshop takes into consideration the actors and the vehicles of criticism: with these terms we refer to both the agents of criticism (critics, architects, historians, publishers, photographers, institutions, etc.) and the media through which criticism is disseminated (press, photography, exhibitions, etc.). The workshop aims to expand the knowledge about the specific functions of these actors and their networks and to outline their mutual relationships. We are particularly interested in papers that investigate the links between the actors, the media of criticism, and the historical contexts within which they materialize, as well as the cultural, intellectual, and institutional milieus from which they originate.

1.- Actors of criticism

The first of the two sessions into which the workshop is organized intends to broaden the notion of "actor" of architectural criticism not only to encompass critics or authors (the same notion of "authorship" in criticism might be subject to question) but also to include professional and academic institutions, publishers, and the various specialists who are involved in the actual production of professional publications.

One of the primary goals of the event is to scrutinize the profile and the "professional" specificity of the critic, who is neither necessarily a historian nor a theorist, since defining such a profile on the basis of a corpus restricted to architectural historians and theorists is, in our view, a too narrow approach. Instead, the session intends to promote the investigation on a broader range of critics, whose writings are sometimes limited to newspapers or architectural magazines and who have been until now largely overlooked by architectural historiography. The goal is twofold: on the one hand, to cast light on more "ordinary" criticism; on the other, to question the role of the critic, delineating the often-overlapping boundaries between his or her activity and status and those of other "architectural writers". The questions we would like to address are: what kind of competencies does the critic share with other "writers" (the historians, the theorists, the social scientists, etc.)? Which are the specificities of the critic's practice? To what extent can this practice be called a "profession"? Proposals should not be limited to the analysis of works by critics as "authors", but can include papers dealing with the activity of publishers, owners of journals and, to a lesser extent, photographers and graphic designers; they may also examine the actors and the practices of "other" forms of criticism, such as radio broadcast or TV programs in their interactions with architectural criticism.

Papers interrogating the role played by architectural publications' editorial boards and scientific committees, and their influence on the forms and contents of criticism and on the editorial choices, would be equally considered.

Finally, the session would like to give proper attention to the role played by institutions. Several professional associations (such as the AIA or the RIBA) and academic institutions have played over time a significant role in supporting, controlling or publishing architectural journals. The questions we would like to pose are: to what extent have these institutions fostered criticism or, on the contrary, hindered it? Proposals may interrogate the influence exerted on the evolutions of criti-

cism by these publications and, more broadly, by professional associations and departments of architecture. Apart from papers on specific case studies, the session invites contributions that explore the interrelations between different types of actors and agents, such as critics, publishers, and institutions. Papers devoted to networks of criticism, and to international exchanges and transfers, are welcomed as well.

2.- Vehicles of criticism

Architectural publications

This session is open to proposals dealing with the influence on the forms, discourse, and contents of criticism on the part of specific types of journals, from daily newspapers, to cultural magazines and building construction periodicals. The session wants to put into question the categories that recurrently describe the so-called "typologies of criticism": "savant" vs. popular, professional vs. layman, formalist vs. technical, etc. We would like to ask: is it possible to identify a relation between types of publication (daily newspapers, cultural magazines, politic magazines or professional periodicals, etc.) and the statuses of the critical discourse? And to what extent do these publications and their target readerships influence or create specific forms of criticism?

New media

The session would equally like to stress the role of the "new media" (on-line magazines, blogs and social media). The questions we would like to raise include: by modifying the status of the critical discourse and influencing the circulation or reproduction of texts and images, are "new media" simple vehicles of criticism or do they also contribute to produce and foster specific forms of criticism? Numerous aspects characterizing the working operations of these emerging media remain largely ignored, such as the extent and size of their audiences: do these media reach broader or different audiences than those to which traditional newspapers and magazines are geared? Do they offer to the "public" a better access to professional or specialized debates? Which kind of interrelation they produce with the sphere of public debate? These emerging media tend to raise -- once again -- the recurrent opposition of "savante" criticism vs. popular criticism, whatever the conceptual limits of these two notions are. In this session, these two notions will therefore be subject to question.

The image as a medium for criticism?

As a different vehicle of architectural criticism, the session would like to pay attention to the photographic image and, more generally, to the visual components of architectural criticism.

Since the 1980s, the history of architectural photography has been largely developed by historians of photography as well as by architectural historians, with a peculiar emphasis on the aesthetisation of architecture through these media; drawing on the notions of publication and "publicity", conceptualized respectively by H el ene Lipstadt and by Beatriz Colomina, some scholars have then focused on the role played by photography in the mediatisation of architecture; more recently, the material and visual characters of architectural books and periodicals have begun to be analyzed using approaches borrowed from visual studies. It is from this corpus of studies that the session wants to draw a possible definition of "vehicle" of architectural criticism.

The questions we would like to address are: beyond the pure "indexical" value exploited by the operative criticism of the avant-garde movements, can photography be considered a specific form of architectural criticism? And is it possible to give a definition of what architectural "visual

criticism" is? Proposals are expected to not limit their investigations to architectural periodicals, but to focus also on the role of photography and other visual aspects of the production of specialized publications (graphic design, typographic setting, etc.) in the construction of a critical reading of architecture.

The workshop welcomes papers authored by architectural and urban historians as well as by scholars in different fields of research (sociology, philosophy, information and communication science, etc.).

Abstracts in English of maximum 300 words, accompanied by a short CV including name, affiliation and a list of publications (both files in word or rtf format), must be sent by June 19th, 2016 to:

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and
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Authors will be notified of acceptance by June 30th.

Scientific Committee

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Suzanne Stephens (Barnard College, Columbia University),
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For questions regarding the organization of the workshop, please contact
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Reference:

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