

Architectural Theory Review (23, no. 1), Architecture Exhibition as Environment

Deadline: Jun 1, 2018

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The Architecture Exhibition as Environment

A special issue of Architectural Theory Review, edited by Alexandra Brown & Léa-Catherine Szacka

The rise and professionalization, around the 1960s, of the figure of the “curator” marked an important point in the configuration of an exhibition’s authorship and process, including artist-curator overlaps, restaging or reframing of exhibitions, and questioning processes of instruction versus creation. The exhibitions of Harald Szeemann, Lucy Lippard, Seth Siegelaub, Pontus Hultén and others gave form to these new problems, as did the disciplinary provocations of conceptual art. Together, these changes contributed to the transformation of the very idea of the exhibition, from a display of discrete and primarily representational objects to more immersive and experiential environments.

In architecture, however, shifts in curatorial processes and exhibition environments trailed behind experiments in the visual arts (painting, sculpture, conceptual art). And while the practice of discussing exhibitions in terms of curators and the architectural objects they curate may appear to carve out clearly defined roles for those involved, it can often conceal more complex negotiations and overlaps in the practice of exhibition-making and the display of architecturally informed work. In the case of architecture, exhibitions that seek to display process alongside products or outcomes through forms of commissioned content invariably ask the curator to assume multiple roles in the development of the exhibition: those of the curator, the client, the critic, the advisor, and the designer. Likewise, the more totalised experience of the exhibition as environment can recast visitors or audiences as users, clients and participants, as well as embedded spectators.

Such broader shifts in exhibition practices coincided with the emergence of a wide range of architecture exhibitions conceived as, or concerned with, environments. For example, at the 1976 Venice Art Biennale, architecture entered the renowned multidisciplinary institution through an exhibition entitled Ambiente Arte (Environment Art). And by directly addressing or challenging the architectural dimension of the notion of environment, the exhibition suggested new terms on which architecture and design could be practiced, prepared and presented in both institutional and extra-institutional settings. Reflecting growing uncertainty over architecture’s capacity to meaningfully engage with the expanding networks and systems responsible for re-ordering the urban environment in unprecedented (and often intangible) ways, architecture is no longer just the object of the exhibition. Instead, the exhibition itself has emerged as an important site for refram-

ing and representing the discipline of architecture in response to these new challenges.

This issue of Architectural Theory Review seeks to discuss the often overlooked and yet productive negotiations and tensions embedded in the postmodern and contemporary architecture exhibition as form of production. Specifically reflecting on the conflation of the architecture exhibition with environments, to what extent can the productive and problematic aspects of display be considered either as distinct from, or as extensions of, those encountered within the art exhibition? In which ways does the architecture exhibition, considered thus, challenge more traditional and unidirectional curator-artist relationships and outcomes? How might the notion of environment (as media, physical settings or systems) in relation to architecture be used a lens through which to understand new forms of exhibition making?

We are particularly interested in papers reflecting on the conceptualisation and curation of architecture exhibitions, as well as other kinds of exhibitions in which architecture or architectural (or environmental) thinking may be at stake, from the middle of the twentieth century onwards. We also welcome papers addressing biennial and/or triennial exhibitions as forms of display that particularly challenge the temporality of the exhibition as a singular event.

Full papers may be submitted to the ATR Manuscript Central site by June 1, 2018.

This issue of ATR (23, no. 1) will be published in April 2019.

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Reference:

CFP: Architectural Theory Review (23, no. 1), Architecture Exhibition as Environment. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 27, 2018 (accessed Aug 1, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/17218>>.