Exhibitions and the Canon of Modern Architecture (Stockholm, Oct 2012)

Stockholm, Oct 24–27, 2012
Deadline: Jan 15, 2012

Wallis Miller

Art History Conference NORDIK 2012, Stockholm, Sweden, October 24 - 27, 2012
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Call for Papers: Exhibitions and the Canon of Modern Architecture

Art History Conference NORDIK 2012

There has been much recent interest in the canon of the History of Modern Art, focusing on the role of exhibitions in its formation and subsequent development. One thinks of the research on Impressionism or the wide-ranging work on Secession movements, demonstrating the central role played by exhibitions in confirming the importance of the works of art. But, what do we know about the role of exhibitions in the formation, confirmation, and rejection of the canon in the narrower field of the History of Modern Architecture? In the context of the emerging research focus on architecture exhibitions, we would like to discuss the influence that exhibitions have exerted on dominant conceptions of modern architecture and processes of canonization through the proliferation of public exhibitions of architecture since the late 19th century.

Indeed many canonical works of modern architecture owe their existence to exhibitions, with an emblematic example in Mies van der Rohe's German Pavilion at the 1929 World Exposition in Barcelona, a temporary building that journalism and scholarship transformed into a permanent monument. However, exhibitions have produced permanent buildings that have become fixtures in the history of Modern Architecture as well: the 1927 Weissenhof Siedlung, and the Case Study Houses in Los Angeles, produced as an exhibition spanning several years. These and other exhibitions have also conferred significance on the work of lesser-known architects by consolidating their projects under an important rubric or announcing them as the harbingers of generational change (the Exhibition of Unknown Architects, Berlin 1919)

Along with supplying content, exhibitions have shaped definitions of architecture by introducing and revising a definition of modernism. Most notably, the 1930 Stockholm exhibition consolidated a definition of Modern Architecture and linked the practice to national interests. The 1932 Modern Architecture – International Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art did the same but, significantly, with a much-extended purview. In both cases, powerful institutions acted as sponsors; the choice of representational medium was important (full-scale buildings for one; photographs and

models for the other), and their accompanying publications were crucial to their impact, lending permanence to the fragile medium of the exhibition.

Papers should consider exhibitions that tell a story about modern architecture. Have exhibitions merely served to illustrate existing texts or have they preceded them, collecting and selecting as well as creating content that would define subsequent theories of architecture? Have they operated independently from texts, producing theories that are at odds with the written word? Have the most influential exhibitions been retrospectives or have they presented the work of a new generation? The papers can focus on work by professionals or students; unbuilt or constructed projects; institutions or curators; or the mechanics of exhibitions, such as representational media, logistics, or peripheral material and events such as catalogues, merchandising, competitions, symposia or tours. Exhibitions that challenge the canon are as important to our discussion as those that confirm or propagate it.

Chais: Professors Mari Lending, Oslo School of Architecture and Design (Mari.Lending@aho.no) and Wallis Miller, College of Design, University of Kentucky (wmiller@uky.edu)

NB: Direct your communication both to the chairs of relevant sessions
and to the conference organisers at: papers.nordik2012@arthistory.su.se

This is one panel at the NORDIK conference. We invite paper proposals
for the 21 sessions spanning a wide range of topics.

Submit a 1-2 page abstract, brief c.v. (two pages max.), and full
contact information by January 15th, 2012.

More information: http://nordicarthistory.org/conference
Call for papers by January 15th, 2012

Reference:

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