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Architecture and Authorship

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Architecture and Authorship:
Studies in disciplinary remediation

Call for contributions to an anthology of scholarly essays

Deadline August 26th

The 'Architecture and its Mythologies' research project, based at the School of Architecture, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, seeks contributions to an anthology of scholarly essays that will explore how architects operate historically and in contemporary contexts in relation to changing paradigms of authorship. Since the 15th century, architects have staked their claims, defended their territories and maintained their status through appeals to the logic of authorship. The professional identity of the architect, articulated through journals, publications and reviews, is still dominated by the pervasive idea of the architect as solitary author, creator of inspired and useful artefacts. At the same time, traditional ideas of architectural authorship are questioned in much contemporary debate around architecture. In addressing the issue of authorship, the book joins a growing and significant line of discourse that has developed recently in relation to contemporary practice concerning, for example, the significance of technology for architecture, the nature of the architectural drawing, and the impact of digital technology, all of which bring questions of architectural authorship into urgent focus, and which highlight conceptual uncertainties surrounding the role of the architect and of the designer as authors.

Such uncertainties, it might be argued, are articulated in architectural practice and in the texts of architectural theorists at critical points in the history of the discipline. For example, Leon Battista Alberti¹s construction of the modern architect in De re aedificatoria (c. 1452) and the emergence of the landscape architect as a distinctly other designer figure through particular theories and practices of the 18th century landscape garden each illustrate the theme of authorship in relation to the traditions of architectural design. Alberti identified the architect as a semi-divine figure, suggesting that a meaningful authorial relation can be established between architect and building; yet he denied the architect any final control over the act of building. Negotiating this

ambiguity in relation to authorship becomes critical in Alberti¹s definition of the architect. The emergence of the landscape architect in the 18th century challenged and transformed inherited architectural thinking about authorship in particular ways: for example, original authorship is now attributed to nature, and the designer is understood to interpret and enhance the existing on-site effects - a mode of operation that demands a new set of conceptual tools. Today, at a time of rapid technological change, another critical point may have arrived. Contemporary definitions (affirmations, dislocations, translations, dissolutions) that arise in architectural and design discourse frequently question established conventions of authorship through adopting collaborative, cybernetic, hybrid, open source, transgenic or emergence paradigms.

Contributions, which should be between 3500 and 5000 words in length, might include case studies, historiographical investigations or critical-theoretical analyses which examine how the concept of authorship has historically informed the architectural profession, or explore related concepts such as origin, intention, the ethics of signature, contract, authority, intellectual property or oeuvre. The anthology will be structured around four themed sections - affirmation, dislocation, translation, and dissolution:

1. Affirmation This section includes essays that bring forth and critically discuss different kinds of affirmative discourses and practices of authorship in architecture. What kinds of strategies have architects used to sustain the idea of authorial control? How has the idea of authorship been incorporated in architectural treatises and manifestoes? What role does art and architectural history play in the processes of reaffirming the image of the architect as author?

2. Dislocation This section includes essays that bring forth and critically discuss different kinds of dislocating discourses and practices of authorship in architecture. In what ways and for what purposes have notions of authorial control in architecture been challenged from within the profession? Could it be claimed that by steering away from, or by subtly dislocating, the idea of the architect as author, new possibilities create a space for outsiders as well as marginalized members of the professional community to operate as designers? How have such efforts been received and retrieved in architectural criticism and history?

3. Translation This section includes essays that bring forth and critically discuss moments of translation, or transference, between architecture and other forms of creative and critical discourse that affect ideas of architectural authorship. How has the discipline of

architecture (re)defined itself through the adaptation of terms from other disciplines? What specific kinds of authorial relations or operational modes give rise to different ideas of what it is that constitutes an architect? How have such definitions appropriated discourses, technologies, and perspectives from other forms of practice?

4. Dissolution This section includes essays that bring forth and critically discuss architectural and design discourses that actively promote a creative dissolution, or rejection, of authorship in architecture. Where do we find examples of radically different and new architectural ideas arising from a loosened attention to, or rejection of, authorial control? What is the significance for architects of the shift from linear, deterministic communications to interactive, non-linear, complex, networked and 'emergent' communications? If techno-scientific paradigms have changed from the hard mechanical sciences of the early twentieth century to the 'soft' biological sciences (and informatics technologies) of the early twenty-first century, how has this affected the status of human perception and individual creativity as the core evaluating criteria for authentic work?

Interdisciplinary contributions are welcomed. Potential contributors should send an abstract proposal of 300 words to Dr. Rolf Hughes at the address below by 26th August 2005. Abstracts will be reviewed and a shortlist of contributors approached by 22nd September 2005.

The anthology theme draws upon the Terms of Engagement session, held at the Society of Architectural Historians annual meeting 2005, and on the body of research under development by Tim Anstey, Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes in the research project "Architecture and its Mythologies: Authorship, Judgment and Representation"

Deadline for abstracts: 26th August 2005 Please send proposals to: rolf.hughes@arch.kth.se (as a Word or Adobe PDF attachment) Or hard-copy to: Dr. Rolf Hughes, School of Architecture, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, SE-100 44 Stockholm, Sweden. Phone: +46 8 790 8769.

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