

Women, Feminist Practices and Alternative Practitioners in Architecture

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The Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Architecture and Urbanismo ZARCH (SJR Q2-Architecture) is currently accepting the submission of articles for its Issue 18: "Women, Feminist Practices and Alternative Practitioners in Architecture".

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"The absence of women from the profession of architecture remains, despite various theories, very difficult to explain and very slow to change. It demarcates a failure the profession has become adept at turning a blind eye to, despite the fact that it places architecture far behind the other professions with which architects frequently seek to align themselves. If we consider architecture as a cultural construct, both vessel and residue, we can but wonder what this symptomatic absence suggests about our culture and the orders that govern the production of its architecture. One thing is clear however: just as the absence of either sex from a large constituency must indicate some internal crisis in which gender plays a crucial role, the absence of women from the profession of architecture points to a profound gender-related crisis at the base of architecture".

Francesca Hughes, *The Architect: Reconstructing Her Practice* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996): 1-2

Architecture is a traditionally masculine profession currently feminised. Since the 1970s, the number of women in architectural schools has progressively increased, reaching parity in the classrooms in much of Europe, America and Oceania by the end of the 20th century. However, the situation of social and cultural inequality that has historically existed between women and men has led many women architects and urban planners to work critically with regard to the traditional way of understanding the architectural profession promoting alternative practices from critical thinking often linked to feminist positions.

Since the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), women architects, town planners, landscape architects, historians and theoreticians of architecture have been echoing feminist thinking and, since the second wave of the 1970s, dozens of texts on women's history in architecture and feminist criticisms of the man-made built environment have been written. As many of them point out, the canonical historiography of modern architecture privileged the analy-

sis of great works of architecture by favoured privileged Caucasian male architects, with a romanticised approach that regarded the figure of the architect as a creative genius. This romantic idea of the 'genius' encloses historical gender biases and, consequently, the contribution that women architects and urban planners have been making to the built environment for decades has been obscured and neglected in those dominant narratives.

In general, these works highlight the lack of neutrality of the canonical discourses on architecture and the city with modern roots, and draw attention to how gender differences have generated historical asymmetries that must be studied and analysed in reviews that recover women's previous work as well as in the ways women deal with their professional practice today. Furthermore, the positions taken often consider it necessary to de-construct the canonical view (Western, Eurocentric, patriarchal, idealistic, dualist) of understanding architecture in order to open up new debates and they also point out that analysing the contribution that women have historically made to the built environment involves building a more diverse and inclusive discipline for future generations of professionals.

This monographic issue of ZARCH adds to the present fourth feminist wave, where the role of the Internet and social networks has meant a globalisation of this line of thinking. On the one hand, we are living an on-going renewed interest in recovering the work done by significant women architects in the past, and, on the other hand, an interest in making visible the ways of working initiated or engaged in by women whose professional practices offer an alternative to traditional, dominant patriarchal practices of architecture.

In contrast to other types of studies on women and architecture in which biography predominates, this special issue seeks to delve into how the different situations in which women have carried out their work can be a device for opening up new fields of activity, encouraging creativity and offering a critical view of the profession. Thus, we want to publish articles that recover significant works of women architects, and, discourse on the particularities that their female gazes to impulse an alternative and critical professional practice. Therefore, we seek texts that reflect on:

- Analysis of works of architecture, urban planning, urban design and/or landscape designed and carried out by women as sole practitioners, reflecting on the distinctive contribution that her female gaze has brought to the work in question.
- Analysis of works of architecture, urban planning, urban design and/or landscape designed and carried out by diverse teams of female and male professionals that offer a critical perspective on the canonical discourse and reflections derived from feminist thinking.
- Analysis of historical and/or theoretical reflections of women - whether or not trained as architects - about the built environment that offers critical discussions from an intersectional perspective, i.e. that bring together gender issues with others including identity, race, age, social class or disability.
- Analysis of teaching methods, editorial, curatorial or artistic practices of any kind carried out by women trained as architects, landscape architects and/or town planners who have been critical with a canonical understanding of intervention in the built environment.

These questions invite reflection across various chronological and geographic areas. We seek contributions considering topics, practitioners and works from past fifty years, however analyses of previous critical practices will also be welcome. In addition, while proposals are expected to focus on cases, practices and critiques lead by women in the Europe and North America, proposals showing cases of female leadership from less analysed geographical areas will be welcome, that is, from regions far from the dominant focus of discussion in Western, Central European and Anglo-Saxon architecture. Finally, for this monographic issue, submission of research papers presented at the First Congress 'Women and Architecture: Towards an Equal Profession' are encouraged.

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Website: <http://muwo.unizar.es/en/home/>

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