

Session at SAH (Montréal, 12–16 Apr 23)

Society of Architectural Historians, Annual International Conference 2023, Montréal,
Apr 12–16, 2023

Deadline: Jun 7, 2022

Michael Faciejew

[1] Transactional Spaces: Currency in the Imperial Built Environment

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Recent scholarship on the relationship of architecture and capitalism has taken an affirmative turn to systems of extraction and circulation that account for empire's global legacy. Yet amidst this infrastructural turn, few histories have questioned how architecture shapes the act of transaction itself, that is, the carrying out of business. To study transactional spaces designed environments that played a pivotal role in the everyday functioning, maintenance, and perpetuation of empire is to explore the material systems that determine how currency is exchanged for other forms of value, goods, or labor. A focus on the transaction uncovers architecture's role in soft forms of coercion that legitimate the exploitation of land and bodies through a process of abstraction. We invite perspectives from the global context that consider how the built environment facilitated the flow of money before computational technologies radically transformed the architecture of international finance. Trading posts, docks, slave auction blocks, board rooms, wire transfer stations, colonial bank branches, what other spaces reveal the penetration of design into the core of imperial capitalism? This session solicits methodologically innovative papers that emphasize the mercantile aspect of architecture, from the relentless search for luxurious commodities in the 17th century through decolonization in the 1960s. How does the construction of transactional environments (their materiality, tectonics, and organization) reveal undisclosed aspects of the financial systems they support? How are these spaces of commercial activity connected to sites of extraction and production, and to transnational networks of trade? We especially seek studies that complicate the colonizer/colonized dichotomy by looking at, for example, the role of Asian, African, and Latin American traders. We are also interested in moments of (financial) failure and collapse, disruption, and protest, which could help undo the conception of the circulation of currency and commodities as a rational process.

Session Chairs: Michael Faciejew (Yale University), and Rixt Woudstra (University of Liverpool)

Please submit abstracts on the SAH portal: <https://www.sah.org/2023/call-for-papers>

Reference:

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/36812>>.