

RA 27.2025: Laughter, Humor, Satire, Architecture, and Everything in Between

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CALL FOR ARTICLES:

RA – Revista de Arquitectura 27.2025: "Juste pour Rire. Laughter, Humor, Satire, Architecture, and Everything in Between"

Guest Editors: Luis Miguel Lus Arana / Gabriele Neri.

«In the first book we dealt with tragedy. (...) We will now deal with comedy (...) and see how, in inspiring the pleasure of the ridiculous, it arrives at the purification of that passion... inasmuch as –alone among the animals– man is capable of laughter»

(Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, New York: Harcourt, 1983: 468).

Thus began Aristotle's fictitious second volume of his *Poetics*, a passage from *The Name of the Rose* (1980) with which Umberto Eco blew up an entire Platonic-Aristotelian tradition in which humor was reviled, relegated to a lower status than the rational. Why -asked William of Baskerville- a book devoted to such an apparently minor subject had spawned so much destruction? The volume's custodian replied that "[l]aughter is a diabolic invention, (...) capable of annihilating fear" and, consequently, make established power tremble. Humour, irony, satire... laughter, in short, have historically provided, from the medieval jester to the cartoons and editorial caricatures of the written press, a last resort for criticism that the legal figure of *animus iocandi* has protected from retaliation -thus providing humor with a lucidity sometimes forbidden to dispassionate, rational thinking.

As an item pertaining to the *res publica*, architecture is not impervious to humor either. Buildings and architects have been a recurring subject of the *res publicata*, tackled by cartoonists who, on occasion, have also been architects: from Piero Portaluppi to Saul Steinberg, and from Gustav Peichl to Leon Krier, while, conversely, a cartoonist like Osbert Lancaster came to be one of the editors of *The Architectural Review*. Even heroic figures, from Le Corbusier to Moshe Safdie or Josep Sert, have peppered their publications with cartoons clipped from the printed media. In 1940, Ernst Gombrich and Hans Josef Kris wrote, quoting Annibale Carracci, that the caricature is capable of seeing "the lasting truth beneath the surface of mere outward appearance" (Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich; Ernst Kris, *Caricature*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1940: 11).

However, caricature, understood just as playful distortion, and humor, in its search for alternative, hidden, laughable readings, work not only as an analytical tool, but also as generators of new ideas. The History of Architecture has given a good account of nods and jokes, both private and obvious: from Claude-Nicolas Ledoux and his pre-modern risqué follies to Robert Venturi and

Denise Scott Brown, Kazumasa Yamashita, James Wines/SITE... the list of architects who have turned humor not only into a vehicle for critical commentary, but also into a design tool seems endless. Last, but not least, laughter also has a cathartic and healing function. Hippocrates, writing before Aristotle, and Galen or Joubert after him, would underline its therapeutic abilities. Humor can, together with caustic criticism, provoke amused laughter, a complicit smile, or reconcile the citizen with an architecture which, once its comic vision has been revealed, they cannot help but feel closer to.

This call for papers looks for articles that explore the intersections between architecture and humor in their many facets: from biting satire, or caustic commentary, to ironic nods or friendly caricatures. From the humorous vignette to the illustrated discourse, the paper architecture folly or the built joke, we seek texts that explore in depth the multiple exchanges between humor and architecture, at a time when the vindication of this particular way of looking, both at the discipline, and at reality at large, reveals particularly necessary.

For information concerning this issue, please contact Gabriele Neri (gabriele.neri@polito.it).

For further information, questions about submissions or article selection processes, please contact to the editorial coordination:

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