

## Architectural Theory Review, issue: Reception

Deadline: Jul 1, 2013

Naomi Stead, University of Technology Sydney

Call for Papers: Architectural Theory Review, volume 18 issue 3

To be published December 2013

Special Issue: Reception

Editor: Dr Naomi Stead

This special issue of Architectural Theory Review seeks to explore the architectural implications of reception theory, and the concept of reception. In keeping with the journal's editorial emphasis on 'review,' the issue will reappraise and reconsider what this concept might offer across the disciplines of media studies, cultural studies, literary studies, and into architecture.

Examining the way in which works of art and culture are received by audiences in different times and places, reception studies looks to how works are understood, how they have meaning, and what are the material and social conditions at the interface between works and their uptake. Reception theory is distinct from audience studies, partly in its focus on intellectual history, and partly in its emphasis on dissonance: on resistance or negotiation on the part of the reader/viewer. Emerging from historical and literary studies, reception theory moved into cultural and media studies in the 1960s, where it had a long heyday, and later into classics where it enjoyed a 'boom' in the 2000s.

Throughout the ages and stages of reception theory, it has rarely been considered as a concept in architecture. Partly this is a result of disciplinary convention: the history of architecture has tended to concentrate more on the production of buildings than their reception, and (with important exceptions) scholarship has frequently focussed on the author and work, rather than the reader and text. Buildings have been approached in terms of their patrons, clients, architectural authors, and design concepts before and during construction, rather than their expanded social life (or afterlife) beyond practical completion.

Reception theory has occasionally entered into architectural

historiography, with its meta-analyses of how historic buildings and events mean different things to different groups at different times, but this has most often been an implicit rather than explicit presence. Furthermore, the popular reception of buildings – of architecture beyond the field of architecture - has not often been addressed, nor has the idea that architecture may be actually constituted in the negotiations, productions and mis-readings of amateur, as well as expert, recipients.

It is now accepted that architecture has had a close, even dependent relationship on media – of both generation and representation - throughout the modern period. Indeed, architecture has legitimately been described as a 'media construction.' In media studies, the early intellectual framing of reception was influenced by communication theory and semiotics, including Stuart Hall's influential theory of how media messages are encoded and decoded. Later iterations concentrated on ethnographic studies of how individual media productions such as specific television or radio programmes were taken up in particular subcultures, and on the quantification of reception in television and radio 'ratings.' Reception theory implied a move away from earlier implications of an inert consumer who passively 'receives' culture, which stands at odds with a newer conception of the active and engaged 'reader' of cultural texts, after the death of the author.

Reception theory was also, in part, a critique of the idea that meaning is immanent in a text. Arguing that approaches such as the 'New Criticism' tended to fetishise texts as formal and autonomous objects, and failed to take account of the effects and creative potential of contexts and contingencies, reception theory instead focuses on practices: embodied, performed, and informed by a specific and unique set of circumstances. It demonstrates that the meaning of a text is always a dynamic negotiation, that texts and contexts can never really be distinguished as one can never know a text outside of its specific reception processes. Today, in a contemporary media environment of 'producers' and interactive participatory culture, media audiences are likely to be considered to be active agents making, appropriating, and remixing media and culture, and thus in remaking it anew.

This special issue proposes that, despite the complexities and limitations of reception theory, such a concept may still have valuable resonance for the field of architecture, perhaps now more than ever. Scholars from diverse disciplines including architecture, media studies, cultural studies, literature, the arts and other fields, are invited to consider alignments between reception theory

and architecture. Contributions might address, but need not be limited to, the following topics:

- Reception, 'appreciation', ratings, and architectural criticism
- Post-occupancy evaluation and/as reception in architecture
- Architecture and its audiences, communities, readers, and publics
- Architecture in popular cultures, and the popularity of architecture
- What might fan culture mean in architecture?
- Reception and the everyday
- ethnographic approaches to the occupation and use of buildings
- The reception of architecture into and through other media and art practices
- The possibilities of new media for facilitating and documenting the reception of buildings

Architectural Theory Review, founded at the University of Sydney in 1996, and now in its eighteenth year, is the pre-eminent journal of architectural theory in the Australasian region. Now published by Taylor and Francis in print and online, the journal is an international forum for generating, exchanging and reflecting on theory in and of architecture. All texts are subject to a rigorous process of blind peer review.

Enquiries about this special issue theme, and possible papers, are welcome – please email the editor Dr Naomi Stead [n.stead@uq.edu.au](mailto:n.stead@uq.edu.au).

The deadline for the submission of completed manuscripts is Monday 1st July 2013. Please submit manuscripts via the journal's website:

<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ratr>

When uploading your manuscript please indicate that you are applying for this special issue (vol. 18.3 - Reception) since the journal has two Calls for Papers currently in circulation.

Manuscript submission guidelines can be found at:

[www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?journalCode=ratr20&page=instructions](http://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?journalCode=ratr20&page=instructions)

Reference:

CFP: Architectural Theory Review, issue: Reception. In: ArtHist.net, Apr 23, 2013 (accessed May 17, 2026),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/5161>>.