Form Finding (Mendrisio, 10-11 Oct 13)

Mendrisio, Switzerland, Oct 10–11, 2013

Dr. Elisabeth Bergmann

International Exploratory Workshop
Form Finding, Form Shaping, Designing Architecture
Experimental, aesthetical and ethical approaches to form in recent and postwar architecture

Istituto di storia e teoria dell'arte e dell'architettura
Accademia di architettura Mendrisio, Università della Svizzera italiana

In the early 1950s the German architect FREI OTTO (born 1925) developed the concept of «FORM FINDING». He defined this concept in opposition to the shaping of forms, which in his eyes could only result in a deformation. Otto wanted to find, to explore and to optimize form instead. In the meantime, contemporary architecture has seen an emergence and increasing prevalence of seemingly or factually arbitrary forms.

The workshop takes Frei Otto's influential concept as the starting point for a critical assessment and investigation into POSTWAR AND RECENT CONCEPTIONS of the GENESIS OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM. Researchers and practitioners from different fields will discuss the following questions: How unrestricted, how random should or can architectural form be? Which processes lead to form? Which considerations influence the process of design? Which part does the «design tool» play? Are there aesthetical and ethical criteria which can be influential to form?

In order to enhance the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and methods the workshop is set up in collaboration with the chair of structural design of the ETH Zurich (Prof. Dr. Joseph Schwartz, Dr. Toni Kotnik). The topics of the four sections reflect the multiple perspectives of the workshop ranging from engineering practice and its theorization to theoretical reflection covering historical, art historical, architectural, natural scientific and philosophical approaches. FREI OTTO himself will explain his actual reflections on finding form and the ethics of light construction at the PUBLIC CONFERENCE in an interview with Elisabeth Bergmann, filmed by students of the Accademia di architettura, Mendrisio.

PROGRAM

October, 10th

Accademia di architettura, Largo Bernasconi 2, CH-6850 Mendrisio
Palazzo Canavée, third floor, auditorium C 3.89

9:00–13:00

Marco Della Torre (Coordinatore di direzione AAM/USI): Welcome
Prof. Dr. Sonja Hildebrand (AAM/USI): General Introduction into the Topic
Dr. Elisabeth Bergmann (AAM/USI): Introduction into the Workshop

I. Process-Related Aspects of Form Finding (chair: Dr. Elisabeth Bergmann)

Dr. Gabriele Neri (AAM/USI): Teoria, prassi e cultura del modello in scala ridotta nella ricerca della forma strutturale del XX secolo
Dipl.-Ing. Martin Kunz (Karlsruhe Institute for Technology): Form Finding with Models and their Variations in Time, in the Atelier Frei Otto: On the examples of maximum and minimal turning point and surface structure studies
Daniela Fabricius MA (Princeton University): Material Calculation: Frei Otto‘s soap film models
Dr. Toni Kotnik (ETH Zurich): Livio Vacchini: Forms of dialogue

14:30–18:00
II. Cultural Parameters of Form (chair: Prof. Dr. Sonja Hildebrand)

Prof. Dr. Kurt Möser (Karlsruhe Institute for Technology): „A man a-riding upon nawthin‘“ – Light structures and new mobility cultures around 1900
Dr. Elisabeth Bergmann (AAM/USI): Frei Otto. Tesi su forma, estetica e etica nella sua „filosofia architettonica“ e la loro ricezione
Ass.-Prof. Dr. Sean Keller (Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago): Anti-Monumental Anti-Nationalist National Monumentality: The postwar politics of form finding
Ass.-Prof. Dr. Lara Schrijver (TU Delft): Rem Koolhaas and Oswald Mathias Ungers: A plausible relationship between the formal and the social?

20:00–21:30
Palazzo Canavée, ground floor, auditorium C 0.63/64

Public Conference: Form Finding – Frei Otto and beyond
Foyer Palazzo Canavée: „Architetture elastiche“, Prof. Riccardo Blumer (AAM/USI) and students (Bachelor, 1st year 2012/13)
Prof. Dr. Christoph Frank (AAM/USI): Welcome
Prof. Dr. Sonja Hildebrand: Introduction
Dipl.-Ing. Martin Kunz (Karlsruhe Institute for Technology): The Frei Otto archives at the saai, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
“Finding Form Today. The Ethics of Light Construction”, film interview Frei Otto, May 2013, by Dr. Elisabeth Bergmann. Produced by Max Collomb, Pimipat Hongdulaya and Leonardo Vinti (students AAM/USI)
Round table: Prof. Dr. Fulvio Irace (Polytechnic Milan and AAM/USI), Ass.-Prof. Dr. Sean Keller, Prof. Dr. Robert Off, Dr. Toni Kotnik, Dr. Alexandra Stara; facilitation: Dr. Elisabeth Bergmann

October, 11th

Palazzo Canavée, third floor, auditorium C 3.89

9:30-13:00

III. Constructing Form Today (chair: Dr. Toni Kotnik)

Prof. Dr. Joseph Schwartz (ETH Zurich): Architecture and Structure
Prof. Dr. Mario Monotti (AAM/USI): L'arte del costruire: La natura e l'uomo
Dipl.-Ing. Henning Dürr (Hochschule Anhalt): Development of a Method to Harden Mechanically Prestressed Membrane Structures by Spraying with Concrete
Stefan Neuhäuser M. Eng. (University of Stuttgart): Stuttgart SmartShell – A Full Adaptive Shell Structure

14:30-18:00
VI. Architectural Parameters of Form (chair: Dr. Gabriele Neri)

Ass.-Prof. Dr. Dirk van den Heuvel (TU Delft): Topology, Finding Processes and Image Systems: Revisiting the British discourse of the 1950s
Ass.-Prof. Dr. Roberta Grignolo (AAM/USI): „Cladding Tectonics" in Contemporary German-Swiss Architecture as Return to a Construction-Based Architecture
Dr. Alexandra Stara (Kingston University London): Beyond Form: The Relevance of the Tectonic
Final discussion

Participation is free of charge and does not require any registration.

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Co-operation partner: Chair of Structural Design, ETH Zurich, Prof. Dr. Joseph Schwartz and Dr. Toni Kotnik
www.arc.usi.ch, www.arc.usi.ch/index/isa.htm

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Reference:
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