

parallax Special Issue: Concrete

Deadline: Apr 15, 2014

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Call for Papers

parallax, Special Issue: Concrete

This issue of parallax invites contributions that explore concrete as a divisive and contradictory material. In many respects, this status is the result of its physical properties: fixed yet fluid, solid yet brittle, composite yet uniform. However, it can also be attributed to the variety of reactions that concrete provokes; a spectrum which ranges from contempt to veneration. Furthermore, as soon as concrete acquires a definite article, 'the concrete', it becomes an abstraction. Therefore this issue of parallax seeks to be concrete. By mediating between these various modalities, we hope to examine the boundaries which separate the intellectual and the material, the valuable and the overlooked and the transitory and the permanent.

These issues are not only pertinent for architecture. They are equally relevant to works which traverse the boundary between art and design. Despite receiving critical acclaim, in recent years there has been an increased pressure to clad, conceal or even destroy the concrete architectural projects of the mid-twentieth century. Similarly, Rachel Whiteread's award-winning House was demolished at the request of Tower Hamlets Borough Council. In other cases, the concrete components of artworks and architectural projects have been deemed extraneous or unsound, sparking a series of debates on conservation. And whilst movements such as Minimalism and Arte Povera sought to champion the use of industrial materials, the responses which emerged were equally ambivalent.

Although there are a number of practical explanations for these reactions, this issue of parallax will attempt to explore their broader intellectual and historical implications. Possible lines of enquiry might include: the possibility for industrial detritus to function as a site of memory; discussions of the ways in which our understanding of physical substances is affected by broader ideological shifts; reflections on the apparent unthinkability of concrete and the challenges which it poses for the architecture of philosophy; accounts of how concrete has entered into (and subsequently problematized) the practice of thinking and writing about art and architecture; considerations of how concrete could operate within philosophy or challenge canonical notions of philosophical concreteness and explorations of the disjuncture between the abstract process of design and the act of producing work. By considering these questions, parallax aims to further current debates upon materiality and explore the cultural and intellectual resonances of industrial materials.

Potential contributors are encouraged to submit abstracts of 400 words to:

ArtHist.net

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/7018>>.