Display Architecture: Department Stores and Modern Retail (Edited volume)

Deadline: Jul 15, 2014

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Display Architecture: Department Stores and Modern Retail – Call for contributions

The opening in the mid-nineteenth century of the first "cathedrals of consumption" that were the department stores gave birth to an array of strategies meant to enhance the presentation of merchandise. From innovative use of materials (glass and iron) and new lighting techniques (electricity) to new technologies of mobility (the elevator) and new spaces for socializing (art galleries, writing rooms, or dressing chambers), nothing was spared that could turn the heads of even the most adamant opponents of consumerism. The store was for display and display made the store. Strategies and techniques of display became more widely implemented and could be found in a variety of retail environments, from local mercantile shops to other modern spaces of commercial persuasion, including arcades, boutiques and malls, showrooms, and "big box" or wholesale retailers like Costco and Walmart in North America. As the twentieth century unfolded, it seemed that the "cathedrals of consumption" had opened their doors and spread their gospel across the built environment.

We seek scholarly approaches that explore the interior and exterior architecture of department stores and other modern retail spaces in new ways. Commissioned by Ashgate Press, our volume - tentatively titled Display Architecture: Department Stores and Modern Retail - comes out of a conference panel organized at the recent Society of Architectural Historians' annual meeting in Austin, TX (Chair: Anca I. Lasc, Pratt Institute, NY). The book departs from the premise that the presentation of merchandise cannot be separated from modern materials and building techniques that have been the preferred topics of art and architectural historians so far. Consequently, it proposes to challenge the traditional hierarchy of materials and to replace brick and mortar, paint and stone with artificial flowers, theatrical props, tantalizing fabrics, lighting and wax mannequins (as well as a host of other visual effects focused on capturing and sustaining the viewers' attention), which, together, form a real architecture of display. By asking scholars to engage with new materials and new media, we propose to redefine commercial display design as an essential component of modern art, design, and architecture.

We invite innovative, previously unpublished articles that focus on display strategies in retail architecture, interiors, spaces and environments, including staged sets, window displays, model rooms/homes and retail furniture, but also the more recent store installations and digital interactive screen displays that have transformed the 'retail theatre' experience. The essay should have a final word count of 6,500 words (inclusive of footnotes and bibliography) and should include a maximum of 4 images, for which the author will have to clear copyright and cover permission

fees, if needed. We ask that you submit to the editors, at this initial stage, a one-page abstract detailing the topic to be explored and your methodological approach as well as a short CV. Please submit these materials no later than July 15, 2014. Final essays will be expected by December 15, 2014.

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Reference:

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