

Footprint 17, issue: 'Bread & Butter' of Architecture

Deadline: Jan 26, 2015

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The 'Bread & Butter' of Architecture: Investigating Everyday Practices

In his 1942 essay 'Bread & Butter and Architecture', architectural historian John Summerson called on practicing architects to face 'the real-life adventures which are looming ahead' instead of trying 'to fly level with the poet-innovator Le Corbusier.' To render architecture 'effective in English life' once the war was over, he argued, would be the role of qualified teams of 'salaried architects' working for local and central authorities or commercial undertakings. Their 'departmental architecture' would be responsible for lifting the average quality of everyday building practice, for the benefit of all – while providing a profession chronically seeking to secure its place in society with 'those three essential things for any born architect – bread, butter, and the opportunity to build.' Coincidentally, the following year saw the publication of Ayn Rand's novel *The Fountainhead*, whose protagonist-architect epitomises the 'prime mover', the individualistic creative hero who singlehandedly conquered his place in history.

Seemingly following Rand's drive, the canon of western contemporary architecture has overlooked Summerson's everyday, 'salaried' architecture, however overwhelming it may have turned out to be in our built environment, praising instead the solo designer and his groundbreaking work. Since World War I, the social role of the architect (in terms both of his place in social hierarchies and of his contribution for social betterment) seems to have been primarily tested, and largely consolidated, in 'departmental architecture'. Yet the work of county, city and ministerial architects, heads of department in welfare commissions, guilds and cooperatives, is seldom discussed as such: its specificity as the product of institutional initiatives and agents, as the outcome of negotiation between individual and collective agendas, remains little explored, even when authors celebrate the many public-designed projects that are part of the canon. On the other hand, commercially driven architecture and the business side of the profession are still anathemas for many, despite being essential factors in the discipline's position in society. Henry-Russell Hitchcock's 'bureaucratic architecture' of large practices has often had a bitter reception in architectural culture, and occupies an awkward place in architects' collective conscience. Between artistry and subsistence, the former has consistently taken the upper hand.

We welcome full papers (6000-8000 words) that address the architectural production of those who played their part in inconspicuous offices and unexciting departments, and that contribute insights to discuss the place of the architecture of 'bread & butter' in architectural history studies and in the politics of architectural design and theory.

This issue of Footprint wants to reassess the significance of the architecture of 'bread & butter' in

the dissemination and hampering of architectural trends, and of the architectural culture within institutions and agencies. We welcome papers exploring theoretical frameworks, research methods and analytical instruments that project the disciplinary focus further than the work of the 'prime mover', discussing the relevance of 'salaried' architects and institutional agency in shaping the spatial and social practices of the everyday.

The full papers will be subjected to a double blind peer-review process. Shorter papers ('review articles' of 2000-4000 words) focusing on case studies can be submitted for a pre-review selection by the editors. In this case the authors of review articles should contact the editors with a short summary of their proposals in advance of the official deadline for complete papers.

The editors of Footprint #17 are Nelson Mota (Delft University of Technology) and Ricardo Agarez (Ghent University).

Please communicate with the editors of this issue via the emails n.j.a.mota@tudelft.nl and ricardo.agarez@gmail.com, and copy the message to editors@footprintjournal.org.

The deadline for complete papers is 26 January 2015.

Reference:

CFP: Footprint 17, issue: 'Bread & Butter' of Architecture. In: ArtHist.net, Dec 4, 2014 (accessed Aug 14, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/9057>>.