Thresholds, no. 44: Workspace

Cambridge, MA
Deadline: May 1, 2015

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thresholds 44: workspace
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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

When an employee at Google's Mexico City office takes a post-lunch plunge into the on-site ball pit, is she working or playing? And when an employee in one of Foxconn's factory sites in China leaps from his eighth-floor dormitory, only to be cradled in recently installed "suicide" netting, is he fulfilling or transgressing the design of the workspace? Long hidden in museum basements, conservation labs and storage rooms now feature prominently in museum designs. Facing complicated visa programs and unsavory jobs, employers skirt bureaucracy to sustain the agricultural industry in the US and illegal workers stay undocumented in order to be easily employable. When and why are certain workspaces - and workers - hidden or revealed? What is the "work" that is supposed to happen in the workspace and how have transformations of the tools, economies, demographics, and technologies within the workspace shaped the notion of work? thresholds 44: workspace seeks to mine how the meanings of and locations for work have been historically and culturally defined, how work transposes earlier notions of labor and craft production, and how the work of artists, writers, architects, designers, and urban planners – alongside managers, psychologists, political leaders, and employees themselves – have been integral in construing the physical and mental conditions of work, rest, and play.

Therefore, a central theme of this edition of thresholds will be the nexus between sociality and productivity in relation to changing technologies and instruments of work. Impresarios such as Henry T. Ford and Andy Warhol and corporations ranging from Yahoo to SOM have redefined workspaces, production techniques, and social relationships as they pursue "the bottom line." Even farmers that have welcomed technologies developed for agribusiness onto their family-owned farms have reported both an increase in crop yield and a much-needed boost in leisure time. Resonating with the ideas of sociologist Emile Durkheim, who defined "the social worker" over a century ago as the person who feels solidarity within a team, thresholds asks why and for whom does the dream of a social workspace remain important? In an age of robust telecommuting technology, for example, must workspace persist as physical space?

The journal also seeks submissions that parse issues of class and gender within workspaces. For Marx, a realm of freedom existed outside the sphere of material production. But, when and where is the workspace not? From America to Iran, home economics courses for women in the 1950s

sought to transform the home into a workspace and the female into an efficient worker. The corridors of a large university exist as transit space for students between classes during the day, but become workspace for custodians at night. Is sweat equity too often masked by financial equity?

We welcome contributions that engage the idea of workspace at a variety of scales and across historical moments and political geographies. We appreciate proposals that incorporate diverse theoretical approaches and unorthodox subject matter.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MAY 1, 2015

Essay submissions should be in English, approx. 3,000 words, and formatted in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style. Submissions should include a brief cover letter, contact information and bio of under 50 words for each author. Text should be submitted in MS Word. All material should be submitted to thresholds@mit.edu. More info can be found at thresholdsjournal.com.

thresholds is the annual peer-reviewed journal produced by the MIT Department of Architecture.

Reference:
CFP: Thresholds, no. 44: Workspace. In: ArtHist.net, Feb 28, 2015 (accessed Nov 12, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/9592>.