Transcribing The Journal of Architecture: research, production and publication 2004–2013
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Journal Supplements: Selecting Six Themes

Having been invited by the editorial board to guest edit a second anthology of research papers from *The Journal of Architecture* following in the footsteps of *Narrating Architecture* published in 2006\(^1\), an alternative proposition emerged to cover the following ten year period of the journal’s publication from 2004 – 2013. This took the form of a series of supplements that together constitute a new anthology. The supplements are to be published as two special editions (in June and August) during the next three years from 2016 – 2018.

Responsive to the ‘internal’ dynamic of the journal, this is a retrospective assessment identified with wider ‘external’ perspectives. In our task of re-reading and selecting papers for reproduction in the six supplements, we were mindful not to take our own personal editorial predilections for granted, any more than the vicissitudes of research funding available to scholars and institutions, or intellectual and architectural fashions.

Given our general brief to consider how the content of the journal had developed over this period, it was immediately evident that the influence of globalisation was unavoidable, both in examination of precursors to the global architecture which we now associate with neoliberalism, and in the evolving consequences of digital publication and dissemination. As further explored in this introduction, authorship, research mores, and modes of readership, are now registered within a shared global culture.
After surveying the territory of the journal from 2004 to 2013, we identified six areas of interest that translated into emergent themes to structure our paper selections. They engaged a variety of subjects relevant to research in architecture:

The Consolations of Practice and the Production of Architecture

Social Architecture: the anthropology of occupation, urban theory and politics

The Architecture of Globalization and its Discontents

The Medium of Architecture and the Dilemmas of Representation

Building as Artefact: an analytical disposition

Reconstruction in Retrospect: the exigencies of heritage culture

Inevitably this deterministic approach, rather than an open selection based on individual paper quality alone, has meant that some excellent pieces have tended to evade our thematic net. For example those with a more exclusive interest in ‘theory’ were difficult to confine to particular thematic readings. However a number with divergent or broader appeal were generally included in one, or another, thematic areas. There remain obvious overlaps and categorisation has not been an exact science. By bringing together practice and production; social anthropology and urbanism; media and representation; reconstruction and heritage, we allude to the discontents and dilemmas of the architectural subject in an age of globalization and digital media.

In order to complement our editorial selection of papers, and given the journal’s expanding international status, we approached four architectural scholars with a global reach: Paolo Tombesi, Mary Louise Lobsinger, Yat Ming Loo and Pari Riahi. Each has been invited to provide a critical focus and contextual commentary for the supplements in their fields of expertise. Their thematic reappraisals will introduce each supplement in emphasising the value of retrospective reading and review. The passage of time since individual papers has
been published – up to ten years – also allows reviewers the space to bring fresh perspectives and insights to bear on the afterlife of the original research.

In an age of ready digital access to the journal’s complete digital archive, the editorial enterprise of selection and re-republication mirrors how the majority of individual reader’s undertake online searching and targeted compilation of papers of relevance for their own purposeful research. Although *The Journal of Architecture* has always been widely indexed in scholarly catalogues, this level of almost instant accessibility was not available in the era of hard copy, nor was it comprehensive before the completion of the full digital archive. So if most readers can now create their own anthologies, what role does this current thematic retrospective play? Our aim is to bring new connections and adjacencies to light, deviating from previous chronological patterns of publication and recreating the sparks of serendipity to be found on library bookshelves. Similarly selected papers that were associated with special issues from conferences or research seminars could now be re-aligned with other themes that provide new directions for research. Rather surprisingly only seven of our forty-three papers were taken from special issues, which suggests that their own tight thematic proximity tends to preclude individual attention.

We are fully cognisant that listing our themes was to enter the grey area between data retrieval, information and critique, identified with the concept of a ‘inventoried consciousness’. Anthologies characteristically represent ‘a mode of subject formation’ as ‘a structured field’ shaped by distinct sensibilities in creating collections that constitute ‘systems with meaning’. The thematic essays proposed by the journal’s editors as an alternative to the research paper model, in contrast seek to unpick that field in setting out new markers for retrospective critical debate.
Embarking on this lengthy exercise, as invited guest editors we set about reading the articles chronologically in London and Melbourne. We found we tended to concur markedly in our reactions to papers, and to favour more articles from 2011 to 2013; which either says something about their currency or about our short memories. Our attention was limited to discrete papers and consequently did not include special theme introductions, or book, exhibition and film reviews, which nevertheless have formed an important part of the journal’s academic scholarship in the last decade.

**Ten Years of Writing Research: 2004 – 2013**

There remains a tension, productive or otherwise; between the objective practice of academic history and theory and a more personal or experiential discourse in architecture; that surfaces from time to time (even in an academic journal). Thankfully not all research papers follow the academic canon. Professional propriety and the imperatives of the building industry are one side of the coin, discursive modes of social, aesthetic or historical understanding another. It was reassuring then to find that the most provocative and intelligent discourse published in *The Journal of Architecture* dispensed with these polarities which were redirected to advantage, or were assimilated into a new sensibility all its own.⁴

It is evident that the introduction of new editors during this period: Murray Fraser (2007 – 2011) and more recently Charles Rice (2012 –); set in motion an expansion in the scale and the breadth of content of the Journal. This has stretched the limits of the current format by increasing the number of issues each year (including special issues), and exploiting the virtues of digital publication.

Through skilful guidance from the journal’s editors and peer reviewers, overall the increased professionalism and quality of the research papers published has been notable,
and this is no longer restricted to elite universities. Nor have the confines of academic expectations and conventions lead to a proliferation of pretentious writing. For, as noted above, we found a diverse range of voices, authorial presence, writing style and scholarly structure evident in the tone of the papers contained within the volumes between 2004 and 2013.

Authors have tended to be associated with architecture and planning schools in universities or, in a few notable exceptions, have come from other cultural institutions or practices. Although numerous journals in the UK and elsewhere more definitively focus on design practice-based inquiry, the last ten years of the Journal have seen a particular interest in interrogating media and representation techniques, and modes of professional practice and building production. How one speculates might this productive exchange develop in future?

A desire to participate in a more ‘global’ critical discussion has also become a particular strength of *The Journal of Architecture* in the last decade. Authors from the United Kingdom and Australia still predominate, followed by Europe and America, but now include Korea, Turkey and Israel, which is refreshing. These global perspectives have not only extended to the phenomenon that is contemporary China or Singapore, but have also expanded perception of western Europe to reflect on similarities and differences with the Eastern Bloc post-war. Viewing Europe in its wider context has also informed a particular interest in Turkey’s ambivalent past, in terms of development pre and post-WWII, underlining the influence of insidious nationalist ideologies. Research in this subject area gained momentum during the last ten year period and consequently influenced our selection of more recent papers.

**Content and Criticism**
It is clear that two subjects have been central to research published in the journal over the past ten years: globalisation and heritage. Apparently antithetical concerns, they were joined by the influence of media on architectural formation and representation, and all three predominate in respective download statistics.

The previous anthology concluded in a ‘rereading of *lilong* housing in ‘modern’ Shanghai’; poised to engage the architecture of the expanding C21st Asian economies. China, and Singapore for example, are now central to discourse on globalised architecture: represented here in Duanfang Lu’s useful chronology of Chinese experience and Mark Crinson’s focus on Singapore’s colonial ‘turning point’. In an extended study of the London Stock Exchange, Amy Thomas explored the homologous spaces accommodating the bankers behind this progressive economic transformation. If that study filled a gap in relatively recent architectural history, then Jing Xie’s paper on the Cang Lang Pavilion took a long view of the philosophical implications of traditional Chinese architecture’s two essential formal types. Deferring a local focus on the courtyard gardens of Suzhou, the wider question addressed how literary allusion substituted for the multifarious identities of building types in the West (in China buildings could be read, if not speak). Research into the Chinese context explored difference and the meta-linguistic assimilation of western models.

In contrast it has been salutary to experience a shift towards a more nuanced view of the European architecture of the Eastern Bloc than that promoted in an earlier pre-occupation with the domestic culture of the Cold War (and polarisation between US and Soviet models). This was neatly unpicked in Christel Frapier’s examination of professional discourse between European engineers on both sides. A series of special issues were set in motion by ‘Behind the Iron Curtain’ (2009), closely followed by Miles Glendinning’s perceptive study of the international architectural congresses of the early post-war period.
‘Warsaw’ (2010): ‘Transpositions on the edge of Europe’ (2011) and ‘Cold War Transfer’ (2012); were all evidence of evolving research. Individual papers by Lukasz Stanek, Akos Moravansky and Tom Amermaete stood out in the latter issue of the journal, in examining a diverse socialist architecture’s competition with the West in newly independent Africa and the Middle East. As colonial power waned, this offered an antidote to the ‘western’ strand of a tropical architecture explored by Iain Jackson in the context of the West Indies.

The potential of a ‘series’ of themed issues in a particular subject area was evident in re-examination of the concept of ‘built heritage’, set out initially in ‘Keeping the Past Public’ (2010) and followed by ‘an outline of architectural heritage conservation in Argentina’ and ‘Townscape Revisited’ (both 2012). The subject of post-war reconstruction set in the context of built heritage also proved particularly provocative, fuelled by ‘nostalgia’ for the welfare state and occupying intersections between heritage and history. While the former retrospectively informed Gosseye and Heynen’s Belgian studies and Tom Avermaete’s research into French youth clubs (collected in ‘Architecture for Leisure in Post-War Europe, 1945–1989’) (2013); the latter was embedded in operative uses and revisions of history as heritage evidence, constructing a platform for more incisive critiques of conservation outcomes. New approaches in this area may also be seen to reflect a broader historiographical turn towards visual and sensory evidence. Mathew Aitchison’s particular interest in the concept of townscape and the picturesque, during that period, was revealingly stretched in ‘Townscape Revisited’ beyond a sometime parochial English perspective, while John Macarthur brought his reading of aesthetics to bear on this topic.

Individual studies elsewhere visited reconstruction in different contexts. Martin Delbeke’s examination of Robbrecht and Daem’s experience with their concert hall in Bruges (remaking the centre on the periphery) contrasted with Florian Urban’s tenacious study of
the prolonged gestation of the same building type in Glasgow. The ambiguities of indigenous character were emphasised in the former, while serial projects and debate produced an inevitable engagement with urban morphology in the latter. Parallel research ranged from reviewing the pursuit of the ‘generic’ or ‘local’ anti-monument (focussed on German experience) to a preoccupation with ruins exemplified by Jerzy Elzanowski’s paper on ‘post-catastrophic Warsaw, and Adam Sharr’s concern with the demolition and reconstruction of a chapel on the cusp of the Berlin wall. This theme aligns with the concurrent aesthetic cult of ruination encapsulated in the phrase ‘the ruins of modernity’. A sensibility aroused, perhaps, by an interest in the urban studies and phenomenological research concerned with the veracity of reconstruction; investigating the temporality of the urban artefact and also of the archival record.

The concept of representation in architecture was not itself the subject of a ‘special issue’, but ‘Constructing the Interior’ (2004) and ‘Visualising the City’ (2006) largely followed this theme. Three studies of modern architecture cast a new perspective on modernist paradigms: whether Mendelsohn’s ‘artefactual landscape’ examined by Jeremy Kargon; Richard Difford’s investigation of the expansive space of Le Corbusier’s Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau, or Claire Zimmerman’s sophisticated purchase on the concept of a ‘Photographic Modern Architecture’, exploring the ambivalent relationship between the two disciplines. Now subsumed in a book, this raises the question of our view of republishing ‘superseded’ papers. Initial choice was tempered by knowledge of forthcoming books: Mark Swenarton’s prospective study of housing designed by Camden borough council’s architects department (1965–73), informed two papers, as a case in point. Where the work appeared accumulative and obviously part of a larger project (of which we were aware) then we tended to defer inclusion, but took a generous view of a more independent status as precursor to, or origin of, later work.
The question of ‘theory’; that in more ‘exclusive’ papers may have slipped through our thematic categories; bears on the special issue ‘Critical Architecture’ (2005). If determinedly not ‘post-critical’ it was precisely that in the form of its variety of approaches to the subject. This currently diffuse state of theory has taken a millennial turn, leaving threadbare concepts (Postmodernism, Deconstruction and ‘the end of theory’, for example) behind, in favour of an incipient romanticism ameliorating ongoing environmental catastrophe (green, landscape orientated, natural, sustainable and carbon neutral). A cross-disciplinary New Materialism, characterised as a form of ‘speculative realism’, locates this crisis in the more tangible manifestations of the biopolitical. Otherwise evidently there remains a tendency to fall back on a clutch of not unfamiliar ‘notions’: temporality, phenomenology, bigness, the neo avant-garde, a new realism, or an aspiration for a mediating ‘praxis’ in a throwback to the critical sociology of the Frankfurt School.

Significantly then, three of the more substantial ‘critical’ papers published in the last decade are not featured in the supplements. Those, by Andrew Leach re-examining the contemporary relevance of Tafuri’s thinking and Tim Anstey on Alberti’s disegno, project a clearly present ‘past’. Similarly Andrew Benjamin’s complex paper ‘Surface Effects’ draws together the work and thinking of Borromini, Semper and Loos. Henri Lefebvre and Walter Benjamin have retained their longstanding influence on architectural theory accumulating a fog of meta-critique traces of which were to be found in many papers, not simply those associated with ‘Walter Benjamin and Architecture’ (2007). At a certain level of over-interpretation, critical reflexes become habitual and a form of preconceived ideological thinking tends to be prematurely asserted. Nonetheless an ideological approach has been particularly effective in probing the contradictions of post-
war reconstruction, and the export of architecture and national identities in a global economy.

This critical diversity (or is it incoherence?) is something to be celebrated in the content of the journal during the last ten years; refreshing in largely tending not to perpetuate dominant orthodoxies or schools of thought from particular regions or university research centres.

Production, Consumption and Reception

To complete our introduction to the second decade of The Journal of Architecture and its publication, it seemed pertinent to consider aspects of the its production, readership, consumption and reception, as the last decade has seen the consistent building of scholarly impact alongside significant shifts in focus (also evident in studies of the genre of the architectural journal itself)\(^{37}\).

If a long historical view is taken the journal is a relative newcomer to the field, in comparison to other established architectural magazines and journals in the UK like The Builder (from 1842); or in the US like The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians (JSAH, from 1941), and the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture’s Journal of Architectural Education (JAE, from 1947).\(^ {38}\) In recent years the journal has seen strong competition from new types of publication in the form of responsive and speculative online media, and from a surprising renaissance of small architectural magazines with limited print-runs that have deliberately returned to the seductive and often hand-made qualities of the hard copy. However there is no doubt that growth has been dominated by online production modes with a rise in wide-ranging practice and theory-orientated volumes and, alternatively, in more specialised focus areas with for example a particular growth in urban and heritage studies.
The journal has remained constant in its production format from the outset. The relationship between images and text as laid out within each paper has also remained fairly consistent; single images of a constrained size set within or juxtaposed against text blocks. Typically they read as background and context or, more rarely, as visual documentary evidence that supports textual description. The occasional more diminutive monochromatic image has a particular resonance in contemporary literary culture; low quality and bookish (pages within pages) in the characteristic and much-imitated mode of the publication of W G Sebald’s novels. But in general the journal’s imposition of a median scale precludes either the large scale full-bleed detailed drawing or spectacular photograph, or for example small thumbnails read in series. A number of papers collected under the heading of Media and Representation, could for example have benefited from reader’s really being able to closely scrutinise archival drawings and photographs, as in Diana Periton’s acute analysis of the ‘Coupe Anatomique’ sections through nineteenth century Parisian apartment buildings. There are also moments when images are more actively used as part of visual and documentary methodology, often taken and produced by the author, as in Iain Borden’s ‘The Limehouse Link’. But one could imagine future formats of the journal really harnessing the power of digital reproduction in terms of images.

Individual and library-borrowing subscribers to the printed volumes may well still browse an issue from cover to cover in which papers are associated more typically by editorial selection, unless grouped in special thematic issues. However digital access (discussed initially) has certainly irrevocably altered patterns of research consumption and reading habits. While the journal’s digital archive is now complete, one suspects that the targeted search and selection of specific papers to read in isolation predominates in terms of online consumption. And titles and abstracts have become arguably more all the more important as accessible signposts of content. Themed issues themselves also reflect interesting trends
in production, towards international and co-institutional collaborative research evident in
the rise of joint authorship and investigations identified with larger scale funded projects.

Reading itself has therefore obviously also been affected by download consumption,
whether HTML texts that remain disassociated from illustrations, or PDFs that retain the
journal format but require secondary collection. As is now so often the case, a format
previously designed for page turning is now scrolled. The journal’s ‘paired’ square format
(within double spread pages) no longer registers when read digitally. Nor do the ever-
consistently elegant silver and black covers perform their indexing function for online
readers. However, in retaining consistent print design, the journal’s production reassures
with a semblance of objectivity.42

The diversity in authorship is amplified in readership trends and reflects the wide reach and
range of subscribers and readers who are now profoundly global. The number of individual
paper downloaded has grown exponentially, tripling from 2005 to 2013 (for example as a
snapshot approximately 32,000 papers were downloaded in 2010). With digital
dissemination through Routledge Taylor & Francis, has come powerful ways of monitoring
and accounting for outputs – both in terms of the journal itself, and for individual authors
and readers who can view individual paper downloads. Selected papers made available on
‘open access’ have seen a dramatic increase in their circulation statistics. These metrics
point to a future academic landscape of open access publishing where journals and authors
continue to seek readership and relevance in an ever more crowded field.

The availability of these statistics is obviously a mixed blessing in a context of academic
accountability that never tires of finding new ways of attempting to measure quantity and
quality. While many flaws are well known, recent research assessment and review
exercises like the REF in the UK, and the equivalent ERA in Australia, have placed more
emphasis on demonstrable international rankings, citations and impact factors of refereed journals. These have undoubtedly had some effect on bolstering the demand for scholarly outputs in rigorously peer reviewed and edited, broadly based journals of a global reach like The Journal of Architecture. This demand is reflected in the growth in the number of issues produced each year (from four to six), and the number of special issues running at two or three annually between 2004 – 2011, and rising to four in 2012.

We set out to explain the series of supplements, of which this is the first, celebrating the second decade of the journal’s publication, and it seems fitting to conclude with the back cover. Following the format of the contents on the front of each issue, this lists papers in forthcoming issues, idiosyncratically for occasionally they are never published. The journal looks its objective part but between the covers there is something less predictable; a content supporting varied perspectives on architectural research without an editorial axe to grind or the need for a startling graphic fluency to prove a point. Resolute: unfashionable; increasingly substantial; well informed about the current global context, open to unpredictable changes in architectural culture, yet not averse to the continuity of established lines of research.

Note: JoA for The Journal of Architecture.


3 J. Braddock, Collecting as Modernist Practice (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 2012), pp. 1–6. This tendency is lampooned by Mari Lending with reference to Sylvia Lavin’s ‘Theory into History or, the Will to Anthology’, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, v58,


18 See among other papers: A. Thomine, ‘About Les Halles in Paris: The Leading Role of


This role of the journal in supporting development, through serial publication of an ongoing research agenda, later consolidated in the form of a book, is perhaps underestimated.


40 D. Periton, op. cit., n. 24.

41 I. Borden, op. cit., n. 4.

42 Deferring the graphic fluencies of a journal like OASE (Rotterdam, NAi) whose content is otherwise similar.

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