



Annual Symposium 2020

A collaboration with AA Archives and RIBA Collections

ARCH/TECTURES

ARCH/VES

Session 1: CONCEALMENT/REPRESENTATION

17 July 2020 via Zoom

How do we recover the histories of otherwise invisible actors and agents in the built environment? Traditionally architectural archives and collections privilege the unique authorial genius, normally the design work of a named individual in a particular practice. What we want to explore in this session are marginalised figures - be they women and ethnic minorities, or different sorts of labour engaged in the making of the built environment, occupancy of buildings, and discourse. We also want to understand and interrogate the processes of exclusion - how are 'others' concealed or suppressed in contemporary archival practice? How have 'others' been excluded in historical archival practice? What are the epistemological assumptions of architectural history and archival practice that lead to this exclusion? How can we ensure that archives in the future are more diverse and representative of the various agents we now more commonly acknowledge in the built environment? We think that this is important because of the ways in which archives and archival practice bound the discipline of architectural history; if we want a more expansive discipline and to engage with innovative methodologies and historiographical questions, we need to open up space for conversations of this kind, scrutinising collections policy and archival practice, as well as the disciplines of architecture and architectural history. In turn this may allow for ever more engaging modes of teaching and practising architecture, architectural history, conservation and heritage.

Programme

- 14:00 *Welcome and Introduction*
Ewan Harrison and Neal Shasore
- 14:20 *Tracing Materials and Labour in Processes of Change*
Lennestina Andersson (KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm)
- 14:40 *Extra Work: Tracing Communicative Processes in the Byker Archive*
Heidi Svenningsen Kajita and Katie Lloyd Thomas (Newcastle University)
- 15:00 *The Ikea Archive*
Rebecca Carrai (Architectural Association)
- 15:20 *Discussion/Break*
- 15:40 *Architectures of Appropriation and Collecting Otherwise*
Marina Otero Verzier and Setareh Noorani (Het Nieuwe Instituut, Netherlands)
- 16:00 *Almost No Archive*
Yat Shun Julianna Kei (University of Liverpool)
- 16:20 *Byker for Byker People? The Search for Children in the Archives and in the Landscape*
(Newcastle University)
- 16:40 *Select Nothing, Collect Everything*
Volker Welter (University of California at Santa Barbara)
- 17:00 *Discussion*
- 17:30 *Close*

Abstracts – Presented Papers

14:20 *Tracing Materials and Labour in Processes of Change*
Lennestina Andersson (KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm)

The paper emanates from material transformations conducted at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm in-between 1845-2018. The building was erected as the first public museum building in Sweden and was closed for renovation between 2013 and 2018. The most recent renovation project was discussed in media as a revival of the original layout from 1866, and, disregarded a few new additions, a return to the former glory of the 19th century. The transformation adds to a narrative of permanence and authenticity rather than addressing a history of continuous change, and design choices communicated are underlining the authorship of a few architects and curators, leaving out the 2000 persons and 50 companies involved in on-site decision-making and final execution. Similarly, surface materials are easy to access, whereas construction materials hiding underneath the surface limestone have proven more complicated to trace. This paper will be discussing the archival presence of building materials and labour used to rebuild and transform this national monument, tracing these issues in national archives as well as institutional and municipal archives from the 19th century until today. My ambition is to address this national monument through networks of production and change, aiming to discuss questions of who and what is represented in these archives and what architectural histories they can support.

Anna Lena Stina Andersson is an architect and PhD Candidate in Architectural History and Theory at the Royal Institute of Technology, KTH in Stockholm. She holds an M.Arch from the Bartlett and has worked as a lecturer at KTH. She is a practicing architect and in this capacity has worked on the recently completed transformation of the Nationalmuseum building in Stockholm.

14:40 *Extra Work: Tracing Communicative Processes in the Byker Archive*
Heidi Svenningsen Kajita and Katie Lloyd Thomas (Newcastle University)

The UK branch office of Ralph Erskine's Swedish architecture practice was set up to manage just one project - the redevelopment of Byker in Newcastle Upon Tyne (1973-78) - with the ethos that the architects would 'have as much contact as possible with the tenants.' Famously setting up office, 'in the middle of the redevelopment area,' communicative processes with tenants were crucial to their method of practice. Thanks to the fact that the project archive has been kept in its entirety (at Erskine's request), this 'extra work' is reflected in the shelves of files that were produced by the office.

The Byker archive allows us to study how architecture is produced as, 'not just physical objects but also social relations' (Ockman, in Deamer, 2015, p.xxi). The job files reveal how the architects included social concerns in otherwise standard forms of building information such as specifications, notes on drawings and bills of quantities. The architects also initiated special kinds of document that facilitated information exchanges with residents, including questionnaires completed by residents, their letters of complaint and evaluative memos. We trace motifs that reappear across the project's rolling programming from vandalism of landscapes, to salvaged flagstones and relationships between private and public spaces. Thus, we notice how information is exchanged between different parties, across documents and over the extended temporality of the project. Our interpretation of these communicative processes challenges the normative understanding of the architect's written work and opens up possibilities for design practice.

Heidi Svenningsen Kajita is Assistant Professor at University of Copenhagen and recipient of DFF-international postdoctoral grant for the project '(Im)Possible Instructions: Inscribing use-value in the architectural design process' with Newcastle University. Her research interests include practice-based ethnographic-architectural methodology, feminism, architects' tools and the history of Welfare State architecture and planning.

Katie Lloyd Thomas is Professor of Theory and History of Architecture at Newcastle University and a member of the Architectural Research Quarterly (ARQ) editorial team. Her publications include *Material Matters* (Routledge, 2007); with Tilo Amhoff, Nick Beech, *Industries of Architecture* (Routledge, 2015); and a monograph *Building Materials: Material theory and the architectural specification* (Bloomsbury, in preparation). A founder member of the feminist collective taking place, Katie's research often examines intersections between gender, architecture and technology.

15:00 *The Ikea Archive*

Rebecca Carrai (Architectural Association)

In the attempt to investigate and understand the status and position of archives and practices of archiving in relation to the fields of architectural history, criticism and practice, I would like to pose a provocative question: why have IKEA and its collection been so far neglected by architectural historians? Why has the world's most important architectural actor of domestic life been entirely overlooked by canonical histories of architecture? With this paper, my goal is to share part of my PhD research, *The IKEA House*, to raise awareness among an academic audience of the agency of the Swedish-founded multinational company and its 'depository of knowledge'. By bringing forward this commercial subject to the symposium, I aim to disclose the IKEA 'archive', here understood not only as the physical space founded in Älmhult in

1950 but also as the ubiquitous and globally-broadcasted notions the company has been disseminating through different media. From mock-ups, manuals, webpages to its catalogue - today's most published book worldwide - IKEA has been shaping everyone's home since 1943. Despite the impact of the IKEAization, the company collection has barely been taken into account by architectural historians. In addressing this lacuna, I will consider what type of knowledge and sources is held in the IKEA 'archive' and who are its users and collectors. Through the case-study of IKEA, I will try to answer the questions of whether corporate design 'archives' are worth being represented as architectural ones or not; of what kind of practices can derive from them; and how contemporary students, scholars or practitioners might engage with their content. With this, I hope to open up further reflections about archiving, considering the increased presence of archives among commercial enterprises, and reveal their possible contribution to the architectural discourse.

Rebecca Carrai is a PhD researcher at KU Leuven University and visiting scholar at the Architectural Association of London. Before working on her PhD project [The IKEA House](#), she graduated with honours at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence. Through her academic and training experiences, she has gradually developed a keen interest in domesticity and its evolution. She conceives the phenomenon not only as an architectural issue but also as a social and cultural one, continually changing and adapting to contemporary circumstances and thus always expressed through different forms of media and representation.

15:40 *Architectures of Appropriation and Collecting Otherwise*

Marina Otero Verzier and Setareh Noorani (Het Nieuwe Instituut, Netherlands)

In the past years, Katia Truijen (senior researcher) and Marina Otero (head of department) have been working on the Architecture of Appropriation project. Acknowledging squatting as a cultural practice, the project analyzes six locations in the Netherlands through architectural drawings, interviews, and archival material to build up a record of past and current struggles, spaces, and oral histories. The project brought the expertise of the squatting movement together with architects, archivists, scholars, and lawyers, to discuss approaches to the research, archival practices and representation of precarious, non-author-based, and often criminalized spatial practices in the institutional framework of an archive and museum. Marina Otero Verzier and Setareh Noorani will present on this and 'Collecting Otherwise' a new long term project critically investigating the possibilities of the Other within a state collection. We intend to use this investigation to ask whose stories have space to be told while others are denied? Through

which spaces, objects, layers of objects, can we access and read these stories? Should the value of authorship and authenticity be re-assessed? And what is the environmental impact of the current collecting mode? These and similar questions, as well the self-reflection on the role of a museum and a collection, allow to resist the temptation of relying only on known paths and validating trajectories and, instead, open up the possibility of a more experimental yet solid approach.

Marina Otero Verzier is an architect based in Rotterdam. She is the Director of Research at Het Nieuwe Instituut and Head of Social Design at Design Academy Eindhoven.

Setareh Noorani is architect, and researcher at the Research department at Het Nieuwe Instituut. Among her current involvements at HNI are *Collecting Otherwise* and *The Critical Visitor*

16:00 *Almost No Archive*

Yat Shun Julianna Kei (University of Liverpool)

This paper asks, as an architectural historian, what kind of knowledge can we access and extract from the absence of archive and architecture? In particular, how can we use this absence to lend voices to those who have lost their agency, who have been considered as The Others in society?

These questions will be asked through an event at the margin of colonial history – the Vietnamese refugees who fled to Hong Kong from the 1970s to 1990s. Over the two decades, more than 230,000 refugees (often called “Boat People”) arrived in Hong Kong and were held in a dozen refugee camps. Amongst the most notorious “closed camps” was San Yik, a high-rise industrial building in Tuen Mun New Town in the New Territories. As an architectural historian, we assume a study of San Yik would be valuable to the studies of camps, as well as adding an alternative but crucial voice to the research into architecture in Hong Kong.

However, although the horrendous conditions within San Yik have been circulated in media and scholar studies, there is no visual documentation of the space. There is not even a building called San Yik in Tuen Mun. Basic descriptions of the building, including its height, also deviate. This paper describes the journey of locating the elusive San Yik camp, and the knowledge we excavate through the absence of architecture and archive. It argues that this absence can be a means to reflect on colonial architecture and planning.

Juliana Yat Shun Kei is a Lecturer in Architecture at the University of Liverpool. Her research interest architectural and urban culture of 20th century Britain and Hong Kong.

16:20 *Byker for Byker People? The Search for Children in the Archives and in the Landscape*

Sally Watson (Newcastle University)

When we think of missing voices in architectural history and architectural archives, we rarely (if ever?) think of children. Ralph Erskine's Byker office archive, held by the RIBA Collections, is the starting point for my research into the relationship between children and 1970s housing estate design. Research and writing about the Byker Estate has focussed primarily on the architects' novel engagement practices and its Swedish-influenced style.

Examining the office archive for the first time, this research explores another distinctive aspect of the design, which was the development of public space in response to conflicting ideas about children.

Research into architects' office archives can reveal stories about underrepresented groups, but this requires the active seeking out of alternative histories and the deployment of innovative methodologies. In this presentation, I outline the challenges of using archives both to elicit memories and to engage children in evaluating public space in Byker. I also examine how combining archival research with place-based methods could offer an alternative way for research to contribute to debates about current uses of historic environments. Finally, I suggest some ideas for discussion about the role of reflexivity when appraising architectural archives (in terms of what to keep and what to discard), given the impossibility of knowing what and whose future stories we might want to tell.

Sally Watson is an ESRC-funded (NINEDTP) PhD researcher at Newcastle University. She has an MA in Architecture from the University of Edinburgh and an MSc in Planning from Newcastle University, and has worked in architectural collections, museums and galleries in Edinburgh, London and Newcastle.

16:40 *Select Nothing, Collect Everything*

Volker Welter (University of California at Santa Barbara)

Focusing on the Architecture & Design Collection (ADC) at the University of California at Santa Barbara, which since its inception in 1963 has grown to ca. 2,000,000 drawings plus related papers and objects, this paper challenges the image of the architectural archive as a "conservative" institution. Looking closely at the

historical collection policy of the ADC at UCSB shows that indiscriminately collecting architectural archives since 1963 has made the ADC a highly diverse and idiosyncratic archive. This paper reflects on such a policy in light of calls for archives to diversify with regard to architects from marginalized sections of citizens in Southern California.

Volker M Welter is professor for history of architecture at the Department of the History of Art and Architecture, University of California at Santa Barbara. His most recent book is *Tremaine Houses: Private Patronage of Domestic Architecture in Mid-Century America, 1936-1977* (Getty, 2019). His current research projects focus on revival style in Southern California and on gay domesticity in Southern California.

Abstracts – Circulated Papers

Constructing the Barcelona Pavilion Archive as a Cumulative Tale 1
Constance Lau (University of Westminster)

In this paper, the formula used in the construction of cumulative tales is appropriated as a working methodology for the practice of archival research. This method of material curation results in another narrative, re-telling and presentation of Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion. Essentially, the technique of constructing a cumulative tale requires the users' imagination to connect fragments of material through repetition. The pattern of repetition takes precedence as the process of

material acquisition generates the core action and adds breadth and depth to a basic narrative. Adopting and adapting the approach and structure of the cumulative tale 'This is the House that Jack Built', the discussion highlights the method's inventiveness in interpreting archival material that subsequently adds to existing interpretations of the Pavilion.² The cumulative formula not only addresses debates of whether this is yet another Pavilion that Mies built and/or alluded to, but can

further be perceived as an interface between the archival material, Mies' design practice and history. The resulting body of work can be dually read as the contents and/or contents page of the material. This fluidity supports the variations as to what the original Pavilion was and represents. More important, this argument contradicts the 1986 reconstruction that presents the building as a predominantly visual archive, fixed in its usage and appearance. Hence constructing the Barcelona Pavilion archive as a cumulative tale manifests the fragmented qualities of existing

material and more importantly, endeavours to acknowledge traces of use and history through the presence of historical, human and/or climatic interventions.

Constance Lau is an architect and teaches architecture from undergraduate to doctorate level, in London and Singapore. Her design studio's research interests in multiple interpretations and narratives are explored through the techniques of montage as well as notions of allegory. Narrative as an ongoing dialogue in architectural design is further articulated through projects in the book *Dialogical Designs* (2016).

The Future is Folksonomies

Jasper Van Der Kort (Southbank Centre)

Archives are increasingly looking towards technical solutions such as machine learning, language processing, growing digital storage capacity and innovative crowd-sourcing methods, as means to enhance digital records and engagement. However little has been said of their potential benefit in tackling issues of diversity and representation within the content and interpretation of collections. Traditional archival procedures, such as the provenance of records and appraisal or destruction of records according to their context within the collection, as opposed to the wider community, often inadvertently erases the histories of marginalised groups that appear insignificant to the institution. As heritage institutions come under further scrutiny, the fallacy of the 'impartial archivist' becomes more apparent. Bringing into question the agency of both archivist, historian and their influence on historical narratives. This provocation piece seeks to explore how use of digital advancements may diminish the agency of the collector, allowing communities to co-create a more inclusive archive through user-generated systems of classification. Additionally, increased 'presentation' of the collection both digitally and physically within the spaces which they are accessed, breaks down pre-existing barriers between institutions and the public. Allowing the architectural archive, historian and buildings themselves, to act as bridges to the wider community. Furthermore, this broader engagement potentially draws out the histories currently hidden within collections and provides acquisition of materials to be discovered by future generations.

Jasper Van Der Kort is a member of New Architecture Writers and heritage professional based at Southbank Centre, working across the Southbank Centre Archive, Hayward Gallery Library and the National Poetry Library. A writer with a passion for exploring the historical relationship between people, community and the built environment. He is also a co-founder of Attica, an organisation focused on inter-disciplinary analysis of systemic cultural issues and potential technological solutions.