

xakt

- *critical theory in architecture – xakt 2004*

Time: Feb 19th to 20th 2004
Place: KTH School of Architecture,
Östermalmsg 26, Stockholm,
Lecturehall A2

A two-day conference outlining the research practices of xakt, a research group at the KTH School of Architecture pursuing critical and creative research into the fields of architecture and critical theory. The papers address via different areas of investigation issues of ideology and politics in architecture, planning and landscape design.

Language: English

Program: The conference is structured into five sessions. Session 1-3 and 5 are chaired by Rolf Hughes. Session 4 is chaired by Helena Mattsson:

Feb 19 th	9-9.30	Intro
	9.30-11.30	This must be the place
	12.30-14.30	Seen and not seen
	15.00-17.30	Burning down the house
	17.30	Bar
Feb 20 th	9.30-11.30	Slippery people
	12.30-14.30	Houses in motion
	14.30-15	Final discussion

Each speaker will give a 30 minute presentation, after the presentations, 30 minutes of discussion will follow in each session.

Coordinators: Rolf Hughes, Katja Grillner, Thordis Arrhenius, Katarina Bonnevier, Katrin Fagerström

Presentations by: Tim Anstey, Thordis Arrhenius, Ana Betancour, Katarina Bonnevier, Katrin Fagerström, Catharina Gabrielsson, Katja Grillner, Rolf Hughes, Ulrika Karlsson, Anna Odlinge, Christina Pech, Lars Raattamaa, Meike Schalk, Sven-Olov Wallenstein, Jenny Wiklund, Malin Zimm

Moderators: Rolf Hughes and Helena Mattsson

Program

Feb 19th

9-9.30 Introduction

Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes

9.30-11.30 This must be the place

Catharina Gabrielsson *The Meaning of Place as Chance Occurrence*

The concept of place, wherever it occurs, is closely linked to "meaning". Although rarely defined in terms of substance, "meaning" is here understood as being of a universal or collective order. In theory, the meaning of place on an individual basis does not exist: in fact, the "negation" of place, the idea of non-places, can in itself be taken as an evil of the process of individualization. Yet we all have the experience of place as a purely personal phenomena. Its inherent meaning is the result of chance, the juxtaposition of fragments and their inexplicable correspondances. What "place" is this, what is its "meaning", and what are its implications for architecture?

Malin Zimm *Writer in Residence – At home without a plot*

A portrait of the writer-in-residence, the author who writes himself into his domestic interior, confining fiction to the occupation and arrangement of space in a "novel without a plot", by late-19th century authors such as Edmond de Goncourt and Joris-Karl Huysmans, where writing departs from within a domestic environment, strictly ordered in the fashion of the central subject, realising himself through his physical environment and material belongings. The isolating shell is punctuated by the freedom of imagination, by expanding the senses to evoke a universe in mind from what is interiorised in matter.

Meike Schalk *Imagining the 'Organic' City*

The paper investigates the question of the "organicity" of the city. The imagination of the organic city refers thereby to the nature of work (organic or alienated), which determines not only the relationship to the ground, but also poses an imperative to common political and social action in Marx/ Engels (revolution), Henri Lefebvre (the right to the city), and Patrick Geddes (urbanism as a broad social movement), all of which aim towards the (re)installation of "organic" relationships. The topic will be discussed in respect to two architectural movements that were strongly influenced by the sources mentioned above, Japanese Metabolism and the work of Team X during the 1960s.

Lunch

12.30-14.30 Seen and not seen

Katrin Fagerström *Green was out*

"Architecture is colorless", Gio Ponti stated about 1960. "A building made of bricks is a building of bricks, not red architecture ...". "I made the house green in 1967", Robert Venturi said about his mother's house, meaning to be provocative. Why? What conflicts are inherent in color?

Katarina Bonnevier *Making things perfectly queer
-an interpretation of Eileen Gray's E.1027.*

There are stories about power and gender concealed within the surface of architecture. By looking at the overlooked my research is an attempt to unveil scenes and patterns hidden in the constraint of bipolar opposition. And, even more important, simultaneously I want to raise the question of architectural strategies that push towards a collapse of such norms. The stage for the investigation is architect Eileen Gray's building E.1027 (1926-29) designed into detail "to create an interior atmosphere in harmony with the refinements of the intimate modern life." Working title of thesis: *L'Architecture vivante Ornaments, Coulisses and Other Figures.*

Ana Betancour

On the edge

This text focuses on issues of representation particular to the city of Buenos Aires in the 1930s, through the modernist photographs of Horacio Coppola. During this time, the edges of the city, its peripheries and everyday life became a strong feature of a rapidly changing city and laid the foundations for a mythology of the origins and the present status of a national identity. The exploration of the relationship between the political and aesthetic discourse of these images is linked to the representations of the city itself. It sets the conditions for an interpretation of the work within the context of the cultural debate in Argentina and as part of the Modern project. Discussing questions of nationality, constitution of culture in a peripheral country, and representation as an ideological construct.

15.00-17.30 Burning down the house

Lars Mikael Raattamaa

Posthumanism and Architecture

If we recognise architecture as construction and not as nature we are faced with certain consequences: We must look at the house/city as a machine, yes certainly, but when the artefact is a tomb or a monument, that is an artefact of memory, we have a memory-machine. But if we think of memory as a part of the human being this human being becomes a part of the machine. The human being is no more than a proteases to the house/city, or, if you want a more pleasant way to put it, the house/city is a proteases of the human being.

Christina Pech

How does a golden age end?

How does a golden age end? is referring to a possible end of an era and the beginning of new orientations in Swedish architecture in the early 1970s. Intertwined with unparalleled economic, social and cultural progress, Swedish post-war architecture calls the attention to the need for critically studying the periodization and historiography of recent architectural developments. The presentation will include a brief description of my planned thesis [working-title: "The second crisis of functionalism"].

Ulrika Karlsson

"Stop making sense" – Architecture and (Radio and TV) Communication in Post-War Sweden 1955-1970

The development and refinement of radio and its technologies for the reproduction, multiplication and mass-dissemination of the voice, coincides with a period of modernisation in architecture and society. Broadcasting, a form for the dissemination and decentralisation of information was introduced when technologies for the control and institutionalisation of the dispersion of the message had been developed. The Radio House in Stockholm (1961), a large building complex, entwined with recreational areas, dispersed across several blocks, which breaks with the urban fabric at the periphery of the gridded city, became the institutional office block of the Swedish Radio. Loci of my investigation are these two simultaneous movements towards an institutionalisation and a decentralisation of architecture and (radio and tv) communication in post-war Sweden 1955-1970.

Thordis Arrhenius

Restoration in the Machine Age

The paper "Restoration in the Machine Age" considers Le Corbusier's plan to modernise Paris, the Plan Voisin noting how it has been described in the history of architecture as a rational erasure of the historical past, a tabula rasa that installed nature as the new foundation for the modern city. The paper argues that one aspect of the Plan Voisin radically alters that assertion: Le Corbusier's intention of preserving a group of historical monuments within his scheme. These monuments, which for Le Corbusier signified the essence of Paris, were to be conserved in a park created through the erasure of the urban fabric. However radical, Plan Voisin shows that within the modernist agenda, a perceptiveness to the historical monument can be read which relates to the discourse of conservation.

17.30-

Bar

Feb 20th

9.30-11.30 Slippery people

Rolf Hughes	<i>The Invention of the Author</i>
Tim Anstey	<i>Framing authorship</i>
Katja Grillner	<i>"Nature only is the proper school for it" - Designing the Landscape Garden</i>

This session by Rolf Hughes, Tim Anstey, and Katja Grillner, collaborators in the research project *Architecture and its Mythologies: Authorship, Judgement and Representation* (funded by the National Research Council in Sweden from 2003-2005) draws upon the body of research under development within this project (www.auctor.se). Our two historical case-studies or historiographical analyses (Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* and the emergence of the landscape architect as a new type of designer in the 18th Century) explore the (trans)formation of the modern architectural discipline through concepts adapted from other forms of creative and critical discourse. Such concepts may derive from literary discourse (e.g. authorship), law (judgment), or philosophy (competing concepts of representation). The three presentations each investigate the transfer of terms between disciplines in the formation of the figure of the modern architect and of contemporary architectural discourse.

Lunch

12.30-13.50 Houses in motion

Jenny Wiklund	<i>Complex structures and continuous geometries</i>
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Studying specially complex structures, continuous geometries and the organization of form, space and movement in large structures, I search for differently organized reference systems, other kinds of orders and other ways of organizing space. My main concern is the inner logic of architecture, architecture as a three-dimensional, spatial structure and an informal order, where the limitation of the room becomes a continuously changing interface. In this presentation I will in particular address this topic in relation to the structures and geometries present in the TWA-terminal by Eero Saarinen and the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo by Kenzo Tange.

Anna Odlinge	<i>Form in the margins</i>
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In my licentiate thesis "Form in the margins" (KTH 2003), I use the concepts of marginality, autonomy, context, integrity and integration. It is a three-dimensional weave made of studies, thoughts and text. The studies concern America during a few decades of the first half of the last century; they are performed through texts of Frank Lloyd Wright and of Ayn Rand. The thoughts concern my position as a researcher; they are guided by the texts of Jean François Lyotard. They also concern architectural objects; they are defined with the help of the above concepts and their extensions. The text verbalizes the first two parts and is defined by its margin, which in its turn is accentuated by me.

14.00-14.30

Sven-Olov Wallenstein	<i>The Philosophies of Modern Architecture</i>
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In his forthcoming book, Sven-Olov Wallenstein investigates the interplay between philosophical concepts of space, language, history and ideology and architectural theory in post-Hegelian philosophy. His talk gives a brief outline of the book, and highlights the reception of Heidegger in theories of "genius loci", Critical Regionalism, and in the concept of "negative thought" as developed by Massimo Cacciari.

14.30-15 Concluding discussion

Participants

Tim Anstey is a qualified architect in practice and senior lecturer at the School of Architecture, KTH, Stockholm with responsibility for undergraduate and graduate teaching. His research is concerned with origin narratives for the discipline of architecture and the relation of architectural discourse to that within oratory, theology, music, and law. Member of the xakt research group.

Thordis Arrhenius is an architect and researcher. She recently concluded her Ph.D. thesis "The Fragile Monument; on Modernity and Conservation" at the School of Architecture, KTH, in Stockholm where she also coordinates and teaches theory and design in the diploma year. She holds a MArch in History and Theory from the Architectural Association Graduate School of Architecture, London and she has published widely on architecture (AA-files, MAMA, Bang, Index Art Magazine and the Nordic Journal of Architectural Research). Since 1997 she has had a small practice mainly dealing with private housing and conversions. She is a member of the xakt research group.

Ana Betancour is an architect, running the Dip/MA programme Architecture + Urban Research Laboratory at the KTH School of Architecture in Stockholm. She holds a MArch in The Theory and History of Architecture, from the Bartlett, London. She is the founding member of ma/am, a London and Tokyo based design practice and Search4, research design group, based in Barcelona. She is pursuing PhD-studies on questions of representation and identity in Latin-American modernity. Member of the xakt research group.

Katarina Bonnevier is an architect and PhD student in Critical Theory in Architecture at KTH, School of Architecture, where she also has taught and lectured. She holds an MArch degree from Iowa State University, USA as well as KTH and was trained in physical theater at Ecole Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, Paris. Since 1998 Bonnevier runs her own office. She is a member of the xakt research group and pursues research in gendered and theatrical aspects of architecture.

Katrin Fagerström is a practicing architect in Stockholm and PhD student at the KTH School of Architecture, Theoretical and applied aesthetics / Colour. Member of the xakt research group.

Catharina Gabrielsson is an architect and PhD student at the School of Architecture, KTH in Stockholm. She is a member of the editorial board of MAMA (currently presented by "Revision - mama skriver om historien" at Arkitekturmuseet Feb.- May 2004) and is a member of the xakt research group.

Katja Grillner is an architect, researcher and critic, practising in Stockholm, Sweden. She is a senior lecturer at The KTH School of Architecture in Stockholm. She holds a PhD from KTH, and a MArch from the Theory and History of Architecture program at McGill University, Montreal. In her role as architectural critic and educator Grillner has been engaged since two years at White architects. Her latest publications are *Just White - Handbok för Framtidens Arkitektur* (White Arkitekter, 2001) and *Ramble, Linger, and Gaze: Dialogues from the Landscape Garden* (KTH, 2000). She is the director of AKAD (The Academy for Practice-based Research in Architecture and Design). Member and coordinator of the xakt research group.

Rolf Hughes is a British writer, critic and researcher based at the School of Architecture within the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. He has published fiction and criticism, and recently co-edited and contributed to two collections of interdisciplinary essays: *The Book of Models: Essays on Ceremonies, Metaphor and Performance* (Open University, UK: 1998, reprinted 2003) and *Hybrid Thought* (Open University, UK: 2003). He holds a PhD in Creative and Critical Writing from the University of East Anglia, UK, and is currently researching the role and history of the concepts authorship, judgement and representation in the collaborative research project *Architecture and its Mythologies* with Timothy Anstey and Katja Grillner. Member of the xakt research group.

Ulrika Karlsson is an architect and landscape architect and is a PhD student at the School of Architecture. She holds an MArch degree from Columbia University, New York. She is a founding member of the international design collaborative servo, which has exhibited their works widely, most recently in *Architecture Non Standard*, at Centre Pompidou in Paris, *Latent Utopias* in Graz, Austria, and at the Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York. Member of the xakt research group.

Helena Mattsson is an architect, researcher and critic. She holds a PhD from KTH. She is also an editor of the magazine SITE. Her PhD-thesis *Arkitektur och konsumtion - Reyner Banham och utbyttbarhetens estetik* will be published in february/march 2004. Member of the xakt research group.

Anna Odlinge is an architect and PhD student at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, Sweden. She holds a MofArch from SCI-arc, in Los Angeles, California, as well as a MofArch from the KTH, after studies in Stockholm and Switzerland. She also studied Astrophysics at the University of Umeå, as well as at the Observatory of Stockholm in Saltsjöbaden, Sweden. For the past two years she has been teaching architecture at the KTH and game development at the University of Gotland (Hgo), as well as she has been involved with Mama. Member of the xakt research group.

Christina Pech PhD student in architectural history at the KTH School of Architecture in Stockholm since 2002. Educated in Art History at the University of Stockholm combined with studies in the history and theory of architecture at the technical university in Budapest. Currently teaching at KTH-A. Participating in the research project "Historicism in Modernity" (run by professor Johan Mårtelius), which focuses on modernism's manifold relation to history in a Swedish 20th century context.

Lars Mikael Raattamaa Architect and Poet. As architect: 1:st price in the competition on the Pro Forma Theatre and Culture centre in Oerestad, with the late Great Eastern Hotel (Katarina Bonnevier, Klas Ruin, Elin Strand, and Lars Raattamaa), Copenhagen; Centre of physics and astrology, Stockholm, with Henning Larsen; As poet: Latest book, *Politiskt våld*, some poems are translated to English, Spanish, Lithuanian, Polish. Member of the xakt research group.

Meike Schalk is an architect and a PhD student in the field of Theoretical and Applied Aesthetics at the Dept. of Landscape Planning Alnarp, The Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences (SLU). She holds an MSc from SLU. She worked in architectural practices in Stuttgart, Berlin, London, and Stockholm, and taught a studio in architecture and urban design at The School of Architecture, Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm between 1997-2003. Since 2000, she runs the platform urban curating. She was responsible guest editor for "feminine practices," MAMA (magasin för modern arkitektur) 26, 2000, and is an editor for the magazine SITE.

Sven-Olov Wallenstein is a lecturer in art theory at Konstfack, in Philosophy at Södertörns Högskola, he is also teaching architectural theory at the KTH School of Architecture, Stockholm. Chief editor of the journal SITE and has translated books by Frege, Husserl, Heidegger, Levinas and Deleuze. He has published widely on contemporary art and philosophy. Among his most recent publications are *Heideggers väg* (1999, with Daniel Birnbaum), the anthology *Arkitekturteorier* (1999), *Bildstrider: Föreläsningar om estetisk teori* (2001), and *Den sista bilden: Det moderna måleriets kriser och förvandlingar* (2002). Forthcoming publications include *Den moderna arkitekturens filosofier*, and translations of Immanuel Kant, Critique of the Power of Judgement, och Gilles Deleuze, *Folding*.

Jenny Wiklund is an architect and a PhD student in Architecture by Design at the School of Architecture in Stockholm. Member of xakt research group and CRSD (Centre for Research in Structural Design).

xakt is a research group pursuing studies in the field of critical theory in architecture at the KTH School of Architecture. It was founded in January 2002. Coordinator Katja Grillner.

Malin Zimm has published the licentiate thesis "The Dying Dreamer – Architecture of Parallel Realities" during 2003. She graduated as an architect in 1999 at the School of Architecture KTH, after having completed two year Diploma course (BA Hons) at the Bartlett, University College London. Zimm started her PhD architecture studies in 2000 at KTH with Dr. Katja Grillner as supervisor. Member of the xakt research group.

Articles

- Timothy Anstey: *Authorship and Authority in L. B. Alberti's De re aedificatoria* (Nordisk Arkitekturforskning 4:2003)
- Thordis Arrhenius: *Restoration in the Machine Age* (from: *The Fragile Monument: On Conservation and Modernity*, Stockholm 2003, also published in AA-files 38:1999, p. 10-22)
- Ana Betancour: *The Imaginary City: Horacio Coppola's Photographs of Buenos Aires from the 1920s and 30s* (from: Nordisk Arkitekturforskning 1-2:1998)
- Katarina Bonnevier: *Ett rum för queerutopin. Eileen Gray skapade ett hus för det normöverskridande livet.* (Bang 3-4:2003)
- Katrin Fagerström: *Gröna hus är nästan okej* (draft)
- Catharina Gabrielsson: *ground zero from afar* (area 1-2:2003)
- Katja Grillner: *Re-Writing Landscape. Description as theory in the eighteenth century landscape garden* (Nordisk Arkitekturforskning 4:2003)
- Rolf Hughes: *Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain: The Invention of the Author* (draft paper)
- Ulrika Karlsson: *Curtain Walls* (from: *What If: Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design*, Moderna Museet's exhibition catalogue no 298, trans. by J. Teeland, Stockholm 2000)
- Helena Mattson: *House of the Future: Inredningens sociologi i en tid av konsumtion* (SITE 5:2003)
- Anna Odlinge: *Fler och bättre dimensioner. Något om strängteori och ny geometri* (MAMA 13, 1996)
- Christina Pech: *Hur tar en guldålder slut?* (from: *(theorising) History in Architecture*, eds. E. Tostrup and C. Hermansen, Oslo 2003)
- Lars Mikael Raattamaa: *Sprawl 1 Tänkandets prosa - Den offentliga klassen* (from: *POLITISKT VÅLD*, Göteborg 2003)
- Meike Schalk: *Det urbana mentalsjukhuset och forskningens status* (SITE 2:2002)
- Sven-Olov Wallenstein: *Three Ways of Retrieving Heidegger: The Case of Architecture.* (from: *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation*, eds. Dan Zahavi, Sara Heinemää, Hans Ruin, Kluwer 2003)
- Malin Zimm: *The Dying Dreamer – Architecture of Parallel Realities* (extract from introduction chapter, licentiate thesis 2003)