

Call for Papers

International Conference:

Reference and Contemporaneity in Architecture

Event organizer: Prof. Dr. Dietrich Erben, Technical University of Munich, Chair of Theory and History of Architecture, Art and Design

Prof. Dr. Carsten Ruhl, Goethe University Frankfurt, Department of Art History, Chair of Architectural History

Date and location:

Goethe University Frankfurt

May 11 to 13, 2023

Summary:

The conference is dedicated to the difficult relationship between reference and contemporaneity in architecture. It addresses the conflict between both ideas. This conference hypothesizes that the narratives of reference often disentangle the actual dialectic of reference and contemporaneity in favor of a radical opposition: While reference relates in large part to the past, contemporaneity is focused primarily on present and future references of originality, actuality, innovation, and problem-solving. Both concepts each have different narrative and legitimation contexts and justifications. Methodologically, the papers called for by this conference should introduce reference and contemporaneity as two normatively understood concepts that are different, but relate to each other at a critical distance – references only become problematic in their relation to actuality, while conversely contemporaneity comes into conflict with references that necessarily refer to conventions and to canonized knowledge. The question is whether one might recognize some ultimately unavoidable tension in this fundamental theoretical paradox, or even the desirable compromise in a conflict of norms. A central starting point for the theme of this conference is how the selection of references is driven by interests and if they are thus ideologically constructed more than anything in order to comply with current social demands on architecture.

The conflict between reference and contemporaneity can be concretely understood on the following levels for architecture: On the level of *theory*, it is about what “contemporary architecture” and “contemporary” mean in comparison to other cultural aspects such as art. On the level of *ethics*, it is about the social responsibility of architects to address current issues and to create future-oriented options. On the level of *aesthetics*, it is about decidedly non-historicizing and autonomy-aesthetic architectural concepts.

Planned Sections:

I. Reference and Contemporaneity: Beyond Architecture

As an interdisciplinary grounding of the topic, this section illuminates the two concepts of reference and contemporaneity in their respective historical geneses, in the critical and

theoretical reflection of the terms, as well as in their interdisciplinary perspectives. Contributions from media studies, (language) philosophy and historical transfer research are the main focus.

II. Reference and Contemporaneity: Histories and Theories

The section is dedicated to architectural referencing in cultural and architectural theoretical contexts of contemporaneity. Individual keywords of the questions are: the vernacular as universal reference and as regional topicality reference; reference and contemporaneity in the development from international to globalized architecture; building typologies as referencing; the selection of references in the context of archives, canon formation and discourse dominance.

III. Reference and Contemporaneity: Design Practice

This section looks toward the targeted production of references in architecture and describes the function of references in design production, which is relevant to both professional and market strategy. The material and questions to be addressed are present design theories and publications of architects; procedures of mimesis and imitation; and procedures of media transgressions in architectural design, especially through the reception of aesthetic techniques in film.

IV. Reference and Contemporaneity: Buildings

This section analyzes the dialectic of reference and contemporaneity on the level of concrete design projects and realized buildings. The use of architectural citations and iconologies, of ornamental references in media facades and surfaces will be the special focus.

The call for papers is addressed to scholars of cultural studies disciplines, in particular to architecture and art historians, media scholars and architects. The conference languages are German and English.

Please submit recommendations by January 31, 2023. These should include a title, a short description of no more than 300 words and a short cv of no more than 150 words. Please send these documents to both event organizers at: erben@tum.de and ruhl@kunst.uni-frankfurt.de.