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Igea Troiani is an academic, architect and independent filmmaker teaching in the School of Architecture at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford. She is founding director of the independent film company, Caryatid Films and of the Oxford based architectural practice, Original Field of Architecture Ltd. She contributes regularly to international journals, edited collections and exhibitions. She is co-editor of The Politics of Making and is editor-in-chief of Architecture and Culture. She is currently writing a book titled Architecture Filmmaking: Travelogue of an Illegal Architect (to be published by I.B.Tauris). It is based on her short film, Illegal Architect (2013).

Suzanne Ewing is an academic and architect teaching at the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture where she leads design-research studios. She is a director of the architectural practice, zone architects, and actively contributes to discourses on the relationship between architecture, education and research. Her research interests lie in tactics and techniques of architectural design practice and criticism, and in architecture and the city. She is lead editor of Architecture and Field/work (2011), and recent publications include ‘Architecture in context: Habits of seeing, knowing and working’, in Nordic Journal of Architecture (2012).

Diana Periton is an architectural historian. She has taught at various UK schools of architecture, including the Architectural Association, London, and the Mackintosh School of Architecture, Glasgow. She is currently based at De Montfort University, Leicester. Her recent research is on the development of the discipline of urbanism in France in the early twentieth century; the research asks what urbanism’s various practitioners understood a city to be. Publications include Intimate Metropolis: Urban Subjects in the Modern City, eds. Di Palma, Periton and Lathouri, Routledge 2009.
Images

Figure 1 Glimpsed interior, Skeppsholmen, Stockholm, 2011.

Acknowledgements

The inaugural issue of *Architecture and Culture*, ‘Discipline’ is named ‘Hannah and Aaron’ in memory of Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) and Aaron Swartz (1986-2013).
Title: Architecture and Culture: Architecture’s Disciplinarity

When the Architectural Humanities Research Association, or AHRA, was set up in 2003, one of its main aims was to speak up for architecture’s particular and varied modes of research. Like all university departments in the UK, architecture schools were and are expected to produce research that could be validated in some way. But if scientific research aims to solve identifiable problems, much research in the discipline of architecture, as in other areas of the arts and humanities, is intended instead to deepen cultural understanding, a more open-ended proposition. And if scientific research is usually carried out by teams of researchers together following a pre-planned (and pre-funded) approach, research in the arts and the humanities is often carried out by lone individuals, each acting independently, often raising questions rather than answering them, and, in architecture’s case, often testing architecture’s boundaries to ask what architecture might be. AHRA sought to provide an interdisciplinary forum where such individuals could come together in mutual support, and to establish ways in which their research could be acknowledged even beyond the categories of ‘building science, social science, humanities, and art and design research’. AHRA is not a learned society, nor a funded body, but simply a multiplicity of voices, now with significant numbers of members from architecture and related disciplines worldwide. The collaborative, critical and cross-institutional nature of the association continues to enable and support many activities. Through it, two annual conferences are organised, one for students, the other open to all, both of them international in scope. Initiated by AHRA, select material from these has been published by Routledge in a series named *Critiques* (eight titles, 2007-2012), and in other peer-reviewed journals such as *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*. Igea Troiani and Diana Periton have taken forward the idea of a new journal specifically associated with AHRA, developing a journal that might deepen the speculative dimensions of architectural inquiry, to open a new kind of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary space where work beyond the established lineages of the arts and humanities might find a place. *Architecture and Culture* is the result. The editors of this first issue of *Architecture and Culture*, Igea Troiani, Suzanne Ewing and Diana Periton, intend this article to offer the initial setting out of the new international public space of the journal, which we hope will become the site of rich dialogues, debates and deep insights as well as expand the visual and material culture of architectural research. The collective aim is to create a forum for creative Arts and Humanities research and to nurture a culture of multidisciplinary architectural research.

Like AHRA, *Architecture and Culture* is intended as a forum for many voices. The journal aims to promote a conversation between all those who are curious about what the discipline of architecture might be, and what it can do. Many voices means many ways of speaking, and the journal is intended to accommodate different kinds of writing, design and criticism related to architecture, from essays, critical reviews and interviews to fictional narratives in both words and images, from art and building projects to design hypotheses. In this issue, explorations range from the extended essay format of an argued academic paper, to a visual essay, to fictional speculation, with links to video and aural work. Each brings its own conversation, its own set of references, with it.

If AHRA was initially established to focus on and validate architecture’s research as part of the arts and humanities, *Architecture and Culture* hopes to further this aim, in part by investigating how its scope might be expanded or transformed. The journal’s title asks about the relationship between architecture and the broader culture that shapes and is shaped by it. This involves drawing on the material culture of objects studied by archaeology and anthropology, and on the spatial cultures studied by cultural geographers; it involves exploring the transformative processes of culture understood as ‘cultivation’, thus eroding any stark differentiation between culture and nature, and potentially beginning to render opposition between the sciences and the humanities obsolete.

*Architecture and Culture* is clearly happy to borrow from other disciplines, to infiltrate them and be infiltrated by them in its attempt to ask what architecture is, and what it can do. It is with this in mind that the first double issue is entitled ‘Discipline’. Pursuing the ‘disciplinarity’ of architecture, it’s ‘disciplinarity’, is a way of probing contemporary understandings of the organisation and creation of knowledge, and what or who it may be for. The inherent paradox of architecture’s disciplinarity is both its specificity, a recognisable anchor for particular practised knowledge, and its simultaneous potential to activate and synthesise general ideas, truths and materialisations which resonate with and across other disciplines. Architecture understood through the lens of, or with, disciplinarity raises questions of the
knowledge, practice, modes of representation and purpose of architecture, with the potential to imagine or inscribe disciplinary transformation: new disciplinarities.

Architecture’s Disciplinarity

Architecture as a field of knowledge and as a practice is broad in its scope and range of methods, both practical and theoretical. Because of this, it has been called a ‘weak’ discipline; it depends on, and integrates, many different kinds of knowing. This was made explicit as early as the first century CE, when Vitruvius wrote in The Ten Books on Architecture that “the architect should be equipped with knowledge of many branches of study and varied kinds of learning […] knowledge [which] is the child of practice and of theory”. He lists drawing, geometry, history, philosophy, music, medicine, law, astronomy and astrology as branches of study with which the architect should be familiar. Architects and students of architecture still engage with some of these, as well as more recently formed areas of study such as the social sciences, geography, biology, linguistic theory and digital media.

“If we define a discipline as a system of rules of conduct, or as a method of practice, then architecture is not a discipline, since it combines a number of methods of practice,” suggested Jane Rendell, writing in 2004. Yet architecture has been disciplined. It has been codified and bounded in various ways, social, economic and, political, through the institutions that regulate it. Despite its multi-faceted nature, it is defined in separation from other areas of professional expertise – each has its own specialised educational training – and from other academic subjects, each of which has its own theories, its own culture. Through both education and practice, architecture itself disciplines, as Stefania Kenley suggests in her article in this issue, where she posits the architect as a disciple who is inculcated into the discipline.

It would seem that it is the very attempt at disciplinary separation that makes architecture seem weak. It reaches out to other fields to find its methods, whether to engineering or to art history, to sociology or to philosophy, raising questions of disciplinary integrity. But is it not in fact in this unashamed borrowing, in its bridging of humanities, arts and sciences, and of academic pursuits and practical learning, that architecture’s strength lies? Architecture’s particular condition of disciplinarity involves a conscious crossing or merging of limits, a willed effort of connection and understanding between disciplines, necessitating negotiations between definitions, scope, methods, practices and responsibilities. Architecture’s disciplinarity, its version of what it is to be a discipline, is then of itself an inter-, trans-, super-, even an un-disciplinarity or a-disciplinarity.

Architecture’s Knowledge

David Leatherbarrow opens ‘Architecture is its own Discipline’ with a quotation from André Gide’s Pretexts: “If I had to teach a child geography, I should start with the plan of his garden, it seems to me – as Rousseau did – with the spaces that his pupil Emile can embrace, with the horizon that his own eyes can see, then I should project his curiosity beyond the limit of his vision.” Leatherbarrow contends that architecture is a discipline that possesses “its own subjects and skills,” its own particular knowledge (taught through methods of projected curiosity) and that to neglect architecture’s differences from the knowledges special to other disciplines and related fields “should be resisted.”

To its initiates, knowing architecture is like knowing a particular language, written, spoken and drawn. It means being privy to historically and institutionally established standards for the appropriate ways to write about, draw or otherwise represent architectural ideas and potentially buildable forms. We gain this institutional knowledge from teachers in schools of architecture, from earlier writings, from studying the designs, real and fictional, of others – in short, from our architect-foremothers and forefathers, peers and colleagues. To become an architect means being inculcated, intellectually, practically, and socially, into ‘architecture culture’. This architecture culture establishes the lineages that we can extend or attempt to break with our own discourse, our own practice and production of design. In “A Black Box: The Secret Profession of Architecture”, Reyner Banham describes the architectural studio as the site in which “architects are socialised into their profession” and notes that “anthropologists have been known to compare the teaching studio to a tribal long-house.”
Architectural acculturation involves familiarity with rules and canons that can restrict our actions. Universities and architects’ offices that remain purely devoted to pursuing formal reinventions of architecture can become the optimal sites for the transfer of this kind of architectural knowledge. At the same time, the world wide web offers a free and un-policed site in which some forms of architectural knowledge roam, reflecting, mimicking and distorting the discipline of architecture as a fragmentary and porous body of knowledge. Within that digital realm of open source information, newcomers to architecture are at risk of being misled, but they may also be led to fresh ways and new insights.

Banham’s ‘black box’ is referred to by both Stefania Kenley and Amy Kulper in their articles in this issue\(^{18}\). But where Kenley emphasizes the mystery of its contents, available only to the initiate, the architect-disciple, Kulper focuses on Banham’s interest in how architects do what they do, on their technique. Elsewhere, Mark Linder has argued that the ‘black box’ might be seen as an attempt to intervene in the trend towards disciplining architecture\(^{19}\). The same critical provocation is called upon to pull in very different directions – to focus on the explicitly knowable, the visible, or to point towards the only tacitly knowable, the secret.

Architecture’s knowledge, then, consists both of knowable facts, and of knowing or understanding how to act. This knowing or understanding is the experience of practice. It takes place in a context, whether in the physical ground or in a political, institutional, cultural situation. This kind of knowing is collective, public, positioned. Leatherbarrow talks about this as a ‘knowing before hand’, which also carries an ethical understanding\(^{20}\). Being moved, affected or inspired by an extraordinary (or very ordinary) designed space, imaginary world or emergent future can become a knowing of architecture – architecture is not just known by those who participate in its production. The relationship between external glimpse, interior suggestive of a small past or future gathering, mediated by the window frame and varied glass panels in the ‘Skeppsholmen’ image in this journal’s call for papers [Figure 1], visually explores architecture’s knowing and echoes the structuring of this issue of Architecture and Culture. One collection of material focuses on the discipline of architecture, and its own discursive formations\(^{21}\). Against Leatherbarrow’s warning that we should resist embracing the knowledge of other fields, the other grouping of material works from architecture’s edges and beyond, crossing and engaging with other disciplines. Inside and outside are always interdependent. Contributions to this issue are made from within and from without a disciplinary architectural position.

**Architecture's Practice**

If architectural practice is a particular version of knowing how to act, then Aristotle’s list of different practices of knowing, different praxes, may elucidate what is involved. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes between *techne*, *episteme*, *phronesis* and *sophia*. *Techne* (in Latin, *ars*) is the practice of the craftsman. *Episteme* is to do with logical, repeatable facts, such as scientific or mathematical truths. *Phronesis* is ‘practical wisdom’, and is the domain of citizenship, politics, or simply the way we work through the situations of daily life. *Sophia*, wisdom proper, is the domain of philosophy, of what it is to know fully and correctly; it, too, is a practice\(^{22}\).

Architecture potentially partakes of all of these. It is by no means pure *techne*, craftsmanship, nor pure epistemological, scientific truth. Perhaps its most dominant form of knowing is practical wisdom. The goal of practical wisdom is not an object, as is that of the craftsman, but an ability to make judgements. Such wisdom involves experience, or being experienced (having been a disciple), and the intuition that such experience allows for. It is a wisdom that cannot be directly taught. Aristotle starts by distinguishing it from *sophia* because of its involvement in human affairs, only to conclude that if the judgements of practical wisdom are to be good judgements, they must also partake of the higher truths of wisdom itself – just as the philosopher must concern himself with daily life in order to be fully wise\(^{23}\). In the light of Aristotle’s different kinds of knowing, Vitruvius’ list of what the architect should know suggests that the architect needs to be able to range across these different kinds of practice. S/he needs to be able to range between their concreteness, their very practical, everyday manifestations, and their more universal significance.

The concerns of architecture in the world that speaks of the world – where, when, what, how, to build, construct or project, and to what end – present a hugely broad landscape of potential practice. As a knowledge ‘here’, situated and integrative, these a priori concerns
always have to be negotiated, navigated and constructed in relation to contemporary context, economic, (geo)political, social, cultural. The project of architectural practice is to develop an expertise in how to synthesise, consolidate and how to bring forward new architecture, through the negotiation, navigation and construction of the contemporary situation. This makes architecture a continual project of reformulation, of reinterpretation, but not necessarily one of novelty. It is a project where a range of techniques and processes of practice may be honed, disassembled, reassembled, towards acting with skill and precision and wit. In this issue, Ronny Hardliz’s ‘Undisciplined Boundary Explorations’ reminds us that this reformulation can be realised as reorientation of thought or intention, as the pre-formulation of a project, as much as through physical manifestation. The practice of architecture that speaks can also be imaginary, as in the writings of Jorge Luis Borges or the drawings of John Hejduk; it can be questioning, optimistic, pessimistic or simply dreamily fantastic. It is architecture’s very situatedness that makes it such a porous discipline, one with blurred edges, open to all that surrounds it. The ideal of an autonomous architecture, operating according to its own logic and separate from ‘society’, that preoccupied many architects and architectural thinkers from the 1960s to the 1990s has, writes Anthony Vidler, given way to ‘Architecture’s Expanded Field,’ with “a serious attempt to reconstrue the foundations of the discipline.” In this issue, Tim Gough’s ‘Architecture as a Strong Discipline’ examines current theoretical formulations of architecture, caught between hermetic autonomy and a multiple variable state. Gough concludes that there is a productive position of resilience for architecture that acknowledges its open and endlessly problematic sets of relationships.

For those who elect to operate at the peripheries of practice, architecture can manifest as installation art, poetry, a novel, and so on, such that the recognized realm of architecture – known even within the dictionary definition as ‘building’ – becomes subsumed by another discipline. Here, Michael Fowler stretches the potential practice of architecture to become sound design; for Alessandro Zambelli, it is a question of archaeology. Jane Rendell’s ‘Working Between and Across: Some Psychic Dimensions of Architecture’s Inter and Transdisciplinarity’ offers a critical traversing of the interdisciplinary condition, increasingly demanded by many academic institutions and research practices, to suggest that attention should be paid to the emotional register and dynamism of these relations. Rendell’s ‘interdisciplinarity’ asks us to work at the margins of our discipline; thus she implies that there is still a middle, a centre of gravity that we can pull away from.

The practice of architecture from the Renaissance on has been recorded mostly as the activity of single heroic figures, almost always male. But in fact it has always been collaborative in nature, belying its competitive stance. Usually subservient to so-called ‘market forces’, both within architectural practices and academic institutions, it can also be politically subversive. Quoting Jeffrey Kipnis, Ari Seligmann describes architecture in his article below as a perpetual chess game, a game in capitalism we cannot help but play, sometimes winning, sometimes losing.

Architectural Modes of Representation

A number of the articles published here identify representation, particularly drawing, as one of the key aspects of the discipline of architecture. If architecture’s role is to reinterpret the situations of daily life, drawing is, quite literally, a way of re-presenting those situations, transforming them as it does so. Technical drawing tries to empty the language of drawing of ambiguity, to treat it as a code that presents precise information. But even this kind of drawing is inevitably gestural in its conscious reductiveness. Used more like a language through which we speak, never quite knowing in advance what we will say, we use drawing to project possible futures, to reveal them to ourselves and to others. Drawing here is a way of communicating a plot, of revealing a situation. We become skilled at using its suppleness, just as we might through learning how to communicate through a film, or a graphic novel. Once we experience architecture as building, the drawings and other representations that allowed it to be built are a distant memory, no longer important. But before a piece of architecture is built, those representations – usually models, drawings, written reports, handmade or digital – are an essential right of passage to convincing or seducing a client, teacher, planner etc. of the proposal. The creative and critical work carried out in the most questioning of both academic and commercial practices sometimes uses experimental modes of representation that are deemed unreadable by the public, even by parts of the architectural
profession, demanding close attention, even translation if they are to communicate, to be understood and evaluated. Such new techniques and technologies offer new ways of seeing and making; they add new vocabularies and tools to existing architectural languages, allowing us to reveal unexpected, perhaps uncomfortable things. In an image heavy culture, where everyone is potentially a ‘visual practitioner’, architectural drawing as the site of investigation, invention and proposition can seem esoteric and obscure, but is essential for drawing out and negotiating an emergent future based on the critical realities of the present.

Just as the ways in which architectural drawings might learn from other visual media seem endless in their possibility, so too do the ways in which architectural writing might learn from other written genres. Here, José Vela Castillo’s experimental writing, ‘Live Adventures – and Misadventures – of Style: The Discipline of Architecture’ is inspired by slippages between architecture and philosophy. His free association with visual imagery asks us to range freely between different modes of representation. We come to question why it is that architects are usually so limited in the modes or media in which we work. And to ask why it is that the personal voice is treated so cautiously in architecture culture.

Architecture’s Purpose

For many, architecture as produced by architects remains the domain of an elite, whether financial or intellectual. Its aspirations remain obscure except to architect-initiates. It is often unnoticed (in ‘Kissing Architecture’, Sylvia Lavin points out that most visitors to the dentist are unlikely to register whether the surgery has been architect-designed) and this is as it should be, since mostly what it provides is merely the background to our lives. It is the creative interpretation or re-presentation of daily life, of life that we hold in common.

However, Stephen Walker’s review in this issue of Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale warns forcefully against any easy assumption that architecture is quasi-natural. If ‘natural authority’ or ‘natural order’ are in fact human constructions, architecture’s are doubly so, as the culturally-driven interpretations of human situations. Walker shows how Atwood draws on our nostalgia for an apparently innocent, ‘natural’ past to project a menacing future in which architectural space and social ritual are used to enforce a rigidly hierarchical structure. Atwood’s depiction of social segregation is shown to be a version of colonialism, in which strongholds for particular, arcane functions, mostly derived from the domestic, are protected. The dystopia of The Handmaid’s Tale serves as a warning against architecture as disciplinarian, or as aid to exploitation. In our situation of rapidly changing demographics, of extreme inequality in the distribution of resources, of a repositioning of the ‘old’ world in relation to the ‘new’, architecture’s response – and responsibility – is in its imaginative projection of the possible as it distils and disseminates priorities. It is not so much a problem-solver as a raiser of questions in its reformulation of our modes of living together.

Architecture’s New disciplinarities?

If architecture, and architectural research, therefore has the potential to raise questions which may reformulate our modes of living together, of broader culture, and ‘cultivation’ of possible collective worlds, the specificities of architecture’s knowledge, practice and modes of representation need to be continually renewed and refreshed in relation to the contemporary situation. Conventional and unconventional modes of both established and more speculative inquiry need to find ground to interconnect and to antagonise, beyond the often disciplined bounds of institutional, professional, economic and geographic spheres. Architecture and Culture offers a space for these potential transformative exchanges.

In the future, architecture might transform to become more inclusive, less male dominated and less Western. It might benefit from being undisciplined and irresponsible as Paul Rodgers and Craig Bremner contend, ‘because what is needed to address the world’s serious global challenges is more playful and livable future visions that many of the old forms of knowledge and production are ill equipped to produce’. Architecture might be more generous in its relations within architecture culture and beyond it (Rodgers and Bremner, and Rendell), less insecure about the possibilities of change to architectural writing, drawing and building thereby allowing inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or undisciplinary experiments to be published, drawn or built. It might need to modify its systems of judging what is valid practice.
in architecture by freeing itself from the security of rules that fail to allow the profession to evolve. It might need to understand the thing that draws someone to study architecture should not be stripped out of them as part of their training and like any art, its practitioners need space to operate in ways outside established disciplinary conventions. It might take the pressure off itself to just let designers make without feeling that at every turn they need to justify it with evidence. It might need to embrace other disciplines that might, heavily or lightly, contribute to the evolution of the practice of architecture. It might need to move outside its safe modes of disciplinary production and thought, now exhausted, in order to return refreshed to alternative images of architecture that embrace critical social, environmental and global cultural issues.

Crucially, architecture has to redefine its responsibility: what is the task of drawing out emergent architectures and cultures in the reality of transnational economics and globally drifting populations, societies, cultures? Not as a return to universalism or romantically traditional ideals, but as a ‘critical realist’ practice, where the potential of its core concerns are revisited; acute and prescient skills are honed to negotiate, alter, modify and adjust both the immediate present and the future ‘imperfect’. This may not come about through the currently formulated architectural profession, as the scope of action seems already too circumscribed and limited in relation to the interdependent complexities of our contemporary world. Knowing reformulations and collaborations between all those who participate in the production of architecture and (its) culture might offer a valuable trajectory for architecture’s disciplinary transformation, ‘projecting curiosity beyond current limits of vision’.

(4032 words)

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1 http://www.ahra-architecture.org/
3 In the UK, funding bodies are aiming to change the culture of Arts and Humanities research in such a way that most research is carried out by groups rather than by individuals.
4 Rendell, 2004
6 http://www.routledge.com/books/series/AHRA/
7 Troiani has been a member of the AHRA Steering Group since 2006 and was AHRA Chair from 2009- 2013. Periton has been a member of the AHRA Steering group since 2007. Troiani and Periton have collaborated with members from AHRA Steering group, Ewing, Walker and Fontana-Giusti and the extended international network of the AHRA and editorial board as peer reviewers.
8 One issue in each annual volume of Architecture and Culture will be thematic, another open. The third issue each year will include original work chosen from our international AHRA conference.
12 On the question of what architecture as a discipline might be, and its particular configuration of theory-practice relations, see Cross, 1982; Leatherbarrow, 2001; Blau, 2003; Jarzombek, 2009.


Leatherbarrow, 2001, p. 84.


Linder, 2005

Leatherbarrow, "Architecture is its Own Discipline," p.100


Aristotle, p. 367ff, p.345.

Ronny Hardliz, "Undisciplined Boundary Explorations", pp. ???.


Ari Seligmann, '(m)ANY Disciplinary Approaches', in this issue of A&C, pp. x-y

On drawing as a way of conveying predictable, repeatable information, see Kulper's paper, op. cit., pp. x-y.

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