Political Agency and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects

Guillermo Fernandez-Abascal

Curatorial Statement

The editorial project will closely examine the work of 8 contemporary architects. Their work will be analysed under their political agency and their design strategies.[1]

We have chosen to analyze their "political agency" as during the last decade, there has been a growing interest within the architectural debate about the possibility of a political re-engagement of the discipline. A debate which seems particularly relevant in the work of some of these practices. We have also selected to explore their "design strategies". Here we refer to the mechanisms, procedures, formal devices and aesthetics choices that recur in the work architects, the tools with which they give shape and qualities to their spatial prepositions.

Once we have explained the title, let's try to make sense out of the grouping of such disparate architects. The intention is to make a book of those architects who have been most influential in our times, who after the 2008 financial crisis have aroused the interest of architectural sphere around the globe.

De Vylder Vinck Taillieu

OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen

DOGMA / Pier Vittorio Aureli

MOS Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample

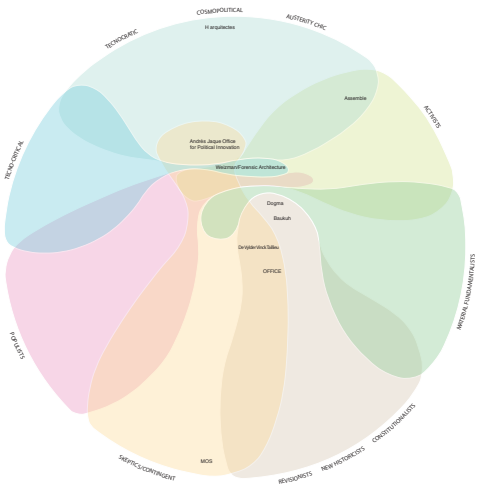
H arquitectes

Andres Jaque Office for Political Innovation

Eyal Weizman / Forensic Architecture

Assemble

[1]The proposal is deeply inspired by Rafael Moneo's "Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects"



GAP Compass V.1.1 based on Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Guillermo Fernández-Abascal previous version

We will start with De Vylder Vinck Taillieu, they represent what we all understand as an architect in the XX century, the practice directly connects with the linguistic legacy of the modern movement and updates it incredibly to contemporary aesthetics.

We will follow up with OFFICE and DOGMA. OFFICE influence in architectural media is ubiquitous, their built work and theoretical projects stand side by side. They explore the discipline through the most banal and intense propositions where everything is about the role of the norm and the singular. DOGMA's work on the relationships between architecture and the city seem to be the strongest theoretical framework of the generation. However it has not yet been materialised in built form (and probably it will never be) so we will explore their urban design and large-scale proposals where Aureli's thinking feels more comfortable.

MOS looks like the perfect product from the North American academia. They started operating in a scene defined by the parametric, software driven work leading to complex systems but in recent years they have been able to evolved into a more contemporary discourse constantly working with the generic forms and the banal vernacular.

H arquitectes represents and architecture that is only explainable through their actual building work. A contemporary vernacular production presented as both the architecture of the Cosmopolitics and the prefect example of the rise of Localism.

Andres Jaque, Eyal Weizman and Assemble are probably the paradigm of the new figures that have emerged in the architecture sphere in the last decade.The first two exemplified the research based practices emerged after the crisis and each of them has found a particular arena where their work functions naturally, museum galleries have become Jaque's territory while courts are Weizman's home. Andres's sharp work operates in the intersection of Art and Architecture through assemblages that render the diversity of ordinary life. Weizman's has invented a new category of architect, the forensic architect. He produces and presents architectural evidence in political and legal forums, truth commissions, courts and human rights reports.

We would like to finish with Assemble, as in our opinion they represent the more contemporary figure of the architect. The collective deals uniquely with clients relationships, financial models, collaborative production, social activation and ecological concerns. They exemplify how a society might rethink the way we approach buildings and how we build them.



Atlas, Tableau 18 (2018-) by Guillermo Fernández-Abascal for CIRCO

Strategic Plan

Because of the lack of clear paradigms today, young generations are freer than ever to choose their references, and that they do so very selectively and to the extent that those references help them advance very specific investigations. In the current state of cultural saturation and total and immediate availability of information, intellectual precision has become the main tool of the contemporary architect.

During the residency, contemporary production will be dissected through the lens of a relevant figure from a previous generation. These characters will allow us to discuss their projects in reference to the selected architects work.[2] For this purpose, we will pair them as follow:

James Stirling - De Vylder Vinck Taillieu

Robert Venturi - OFFICE

Peter Eisenmann - MOS

Aldo Rossi - DOGMA

Alvaro Siza - H arquitectes

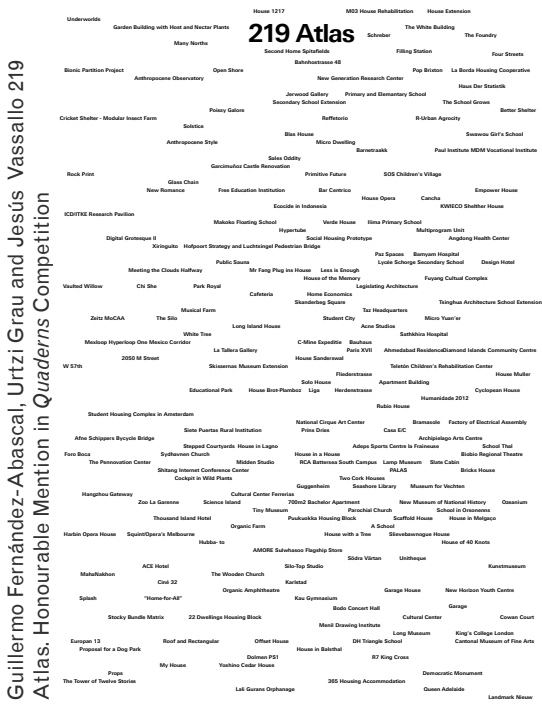
Cedric Price - Andres Jaque

Greater London Council - Eyal Weizman

Rem Koolhaas - Assemble

The established relationships are by no mean an answer but a personal interpretation of Today's landscape. The final goal is to help to navigate the field's impendent past as an attempt to read into its future.

[2] Research will be completed through stays in Montreal, Ghent ,Madrid and London.



Guillermo Fernández-Abascal, Urtzi Grau and Jesús Vassallo 219 Atlas. Honourable Mention in *Quaderns* Competition

Workplan

2018
1st Phase
NY Residency (Columbia University)
September 2018 / February 2019
- Research on the topic
- Set definitive list of architectural production to be analyzed
- First draft
- Engagement into funding processes

2019
2nd Phase
European Residency
March / April 2019
- Detailed research
- Second draft
- Engagement into editorial processes

2019
3rd Phase
May / November 2019
- Final draft
- Copyedition
- Publication

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