



Annual Symposium 2020

A collaboration with AA Archives and RIBA Collections

ARCH/TECTURES ARCH/VES

Session 4: PLENARY

23 October 2020 via Zoom

In the final session in our ARCH/TECTURES ARCH/VES symposium series we sum up our exploration of the multivalent relationships between architecture and archives, with a series of papers that delve deeply into, and cut across, the themes previously explored in the three sessions held through the summer.

Archives and the process of archiving form a primary interface between architectural history and practice. This interface, however, has been little explored by either discipline, despite growing interest in and theorization of the archive in contemporary art and the wider discipline of history, let alone in archival studies itself. The record response to our call for participation and the attendance at our summer sessions, illustrates a broad desire amongst architectural historians, heritage practitioners, architects, archivists and curators to look critically at the role archives place in bounding the practices of architectural history, architectural pedagogy and architectural practice itself. There is clearly a need to bring together the practical with the theoretical and epistemological.

Programme

9:30 Opening Remarks

9:50 The University Architectural Archive and User-Led Activism, Harriet Edquist (RMIT University, Melbourne)

10:10 Keeping Meaning: The Cosmic House Museum Archive In the Making, Lily Jencks (Lily Jencks Studio)

10:30 Sir John Soane's Museum Library as an Instrument of Legacy? Fran Sands (Sir John Soane Museum)

10:50 Questions / Break

11:30 A Journey Through the Archives of Zaha Hadid Architects (Manon Janssens, ZHA)

11:50 The Provocative Role of the Everyday Archive in an Age of Digital Retrieval, Tom Coward (AOC)

12:10 The archive in contemporary architectural design practice- buildings as repositories? Charlott Greub (University of North Dakota)

12:30 Mine the Gap: Archiving is Not Enough, Emilie Banville (Eindhoven University of Technology & University of Quebec in Montreal)

12:50 Questions / Break

13:30 Pride of Place: Towards an Archive of Queer Buildings? Alison Oram (Institute of Historical Research)

13:50 "We Are What We Keep:" Archives, Women and Architectural Histories, Elizabeth Darling (Oxford Brookes)

14:10 Archive as Project: Recovering Colonial Histories of the Built Environment, Yasmina El Chami (University of Cambridge)

14:30 Peripheral Archives: Instances from Colonial India, Tania Sengupta (Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London)

14:50 Questions / Break

15:20 Questo è a Mantova di mano di meser giovann battista alberti." "This is in Mantua, of the hand of Sir Giovanni Battista Alberti!" Elizabeth Merrill (The Warburg Institute)

15:40 Mind the Gap: Exploring the gaps at Avery Drawings & Archives, Pamely Casey (Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York)

16:00 Questions / Break

16:20 The Legacy of Sub-Basement 8: The itinerant and diminishing archives of the LCC Architect's Department, Ruth Lang (Central St Martins)

16:40 The formation of the Computer Research Group and the state-academic-industrial complex in Britain in the late 1960, Eleni Axioti (The Architectural Association)

17:00 Classified: Architecture Archives in the Age of Secrecy, Aaron Cayer (University of New Mexico)

17:20 Questions / Break

18:00 Plenary Discussion

18:30 Finish

Abstracts

- 9:50 *The University Architectural Archive and User-Led Activism*, Harriet Edquist (RMIT University, Melbourne)

The questions posed in the call for papers for Architectures/Archives indicate the impasse facing architectural archives. As architectural practice becomes more fluid and porous, more trans-disciplinary and collaborative, digital and ephemeral it may seem that the historical archive fixed in its objectness and materiality is, well, a bit archaic. Hence, we may ask about its relevance to practice, its lacunae and its foundational premises for these are all up for negotiation. In this paper I want to approach these questions from another angle; from the standpoint of the user. My case study is RMIT Design Archives at RMIT University, Melbourne where I am director. The Design Archives (which collects architectural archives as well as graphic, product, fashion and automotive design) is housed in a wing of Sean Godsell's award-winning Design Hub building that opened in 2012. Under the rubric of the 'Active Archive'; the Design Archives is developing a range of platforms for user engagement situated within the parameters of the university's strategic goals of learning and teaching, research and industry engagement. Working closely with staff in academic schools, it co-develops curriculum for Masters' courses, is building a research profile that includes PhDs, competitive grant applications, collaborative research platforms, exhibitions and peer-reviewed publications and has a range of programmes to bring industry (and our donors) back into the Archives. This paper will argue that by focussing on use (particularly practice-based engagement) rather than ontology, architectural archives can have a vital function for architectural practice and the community today.

- 10:10 *Keeping Meaning: the Cosmic House Museum Archive in the Making*, Lily Jencks (Lily Jencks Studio and the Cosmic House)

Listed at Grade I, the highest category of protection, 19 Lansdowne Walk is a key monument of twentieth century London architecture and was at the centre of the global discussions and conversations around Post Modernism. Designed in 1978 by the architectural historian, designer and writer Charles Jencks for himself and his family, it is itself a Post Modern landmark, a densely-layered palimpsest of meaning, myth, symbolism, cosmology and culture. Jencks was responsible for defining and developing the ideas around Post Modernism and this remarkable building is the movement's spiritual home. It houses perhaps the world's finest private archive on Post Modernist architecture, design and thinking in a series of purpose built furniture, fittings and spaces which were themselves at the heart of the debate. It is the place where the idea for the Maggie's Cancer Care Centres was conceived (by Charles Jencks and his wife Maggie) and it features

elements by some of the best-known names of late twentieth century architecture including Michael Graves, Piers Gough and Sir Terry Farrell. The intention of the Cosmic House Project is to make this pivotal space public and to create a stimulating and unique visitor experience. It will also open up the archive, library and house itself and to allow this site to continue its role as a space for discussion, provocation, exhibition and ideas around contemporary culture. Lily Jencks, the owner of The Cosmic House archive, will be in conversation with Edwin Heathcote whom Charles Jencks described as 'The Keeper of Meaning', to discuss how this hybrid house/museum/ archive will preserve and make accessible the many meanings intended by its creator.

10:30 *Sir John Soane's Museum library as an instrument of legacy?* Fran Sands (The Sir John Soane Museum)

The SAHGB 2020 Call for Participation cites the Soane Museum as an example of 'the fashioning of the image of the architect', but is this correct? This paper will consider to what extent Soane's library collections – particularly his architectural drawings – function as a self-portrait. Why did Soane collect and why did he leave his collection to the nation? How do the drawings and papers from his own office sit within the wider drawings collection? And as he amassed his drawings collection, was Soane conspicuously massaging his own legacy, or was he simply an architectural and pedagogical enthusiast with no heir? Here we will explore the history of Soane's drawings collecting as a means of understanding his intentions. If he was curating his own legacy, to what extent is Soane still in control today, and what effects do twenty-first-century curators have on the ways in which we perceive Soane and his collections? Through the processes of mounting exhibitions, and more so through scholarly cataloguing, are we tampering with Soane's carefully considered bequest? While the Soane Museum is advanced in presenting its collections in a digital format, and thereby providing free access to all, we must remember that there are no formal international standards for cataloguing architectural drawings, and the Soane Museum is not necessarily following the same protocols as other comparable institutions. Here we will explore the ways in which Soane Museum curators are presenting the drawings collections to the world, and ask the fundamental question – would Soane have approved?

11:30 *A Journey Through the Archives of Zaha Hadid Architects*, Mannon Janssens (Zaha Hadid Architects)

A brief introduction to over 40 years of archives. How to document, catalogue and preserve the body of work of this dynamic, ever-growing practice; well over 900 projects, competitions, interior design, furniture pieces, product design, installations and exhibitions. How did the archive

evolve and what is it composed of? What are the challenges and why is it not straight forward to deal with the collection? What is it used for, why is it needed in this digital age and will it become redundant? What is the role of the archivist in an architectural practice and how does it differ from a museum context? These are just a few of the many questions that will be raised during this presentation.

11:50 *The Provocative Role of the Everyday Archive in an Age of Digital Retrieval*, Tom Coward (AOC)

AOC Architecture is increasingly involved in creating spaces for libraries and archives. We have been exploring archives, and what may be called 'everyday archives'. Specifically considering architectural archives we have become interested in the domestic scale spatial archives of designers and architects. These spaces, often intimate in scale, hold cherished objects in a familiar space that designers arranged to suit their taste. They remain as unique experiences with collections both contemporary to the life of their creation, and the subsequent period of 'curation' as cherished objects and narratives. Much has been written about celebrated spaces in London; the Soane Museum and Goldfinger's Willow Road (NT); both also used to host contemporary responses (AOC presented 'return of the past' at the Soane in 2018). Less commonly experienced is the unique decor available at 575 Wandsworth Road, another National Trust property. We were surprised to find Giancarlo de Carlo's remarkable Ca Romanino available for residential stays through *fondazione ca romanino*. And - available for holiday let - Charles Moore's own unit 9 at Condominium One, Sea Ranch, California. Modern architecture set in a remarkable landscape, however living there for just a day or two - his 40 year residence - adapted to his shifting needs and architectural persuasions; surrounded by objects gleaned through his life and travels; and augmented by a diverse academic narrative; was transformative. The technological performance of new archive space prioritises the physical protection of the collection. With reference to recent AOC work we will consider the potential of situated experience within the architecture of archives as a critical act; synthesizing collection, its container and a relation to a broader context. With everyday archives seen as a provocation to the functional archive, such an approach is vital for prioritising the experiential quality of archive artefacts within this current period of digital retrieval.

12:10 *The archive in contemporary architectural design practice- buildings as repositories?* Charlott Greub, University of North Dakota

This presentation reviews innovations in creative practices in architecture and design as reflected through both the medium of the architectural archive and the deliberate strategy of off-site reuse of building materials. Two illustrate these innovative techniques, two projects by Rotor will be examined as case studies. Rotor is an architect's collective based in Brussels that represents a new kind of emerging multidisciplinary practice in architecture: from research and exhibition-making to material studies and reuse strategies. Rotor is interested in material flows in industry and construction, particularly in relation to resources (waste, use, and reuse) that challenge historical conceptualization of building culture, heritage and social value. They deconstruct buildings into elements (construction, materials) and reassemble them in new ways. The question of re-using existing buildings, their history and the archive has also a literal dimension: how the historical buildings can be taken apart into elements (construction, materials) and re-assembled in new ways?

Material re-use encourages one to consider buildings as repositories, not just of the materials, but also of knowledge and past practices of crafting buildings. The past practices are also given as raw material- in this case, of knowledge and skill – that might find new applications and contribute to new value systems. Not only do Rotor's distinct yet comparable approaches entail urgent questions of sustainability, re-use, and appropriation, they also imply a need for a different view on history and the historical production: they recharge the aspect of archiving and exhibiting architecture and expand it to the problem of re-use: the re-use of materials and of building elements, but also the re-use of ideas, of composition and building techniques, the re-use of knowledge, of archives and memory.

For Rotor the archive is not to be considered an art historical reservoir that houses the canon of architectural history, but the archive is a resource providing building material as well as an active element for the (re)design of projects. Rotor's approach is also intended as a provocation to trigger a debate on the value and role of history and the archive in contemporary architectural design.

12:30 *Mine the Gap: Archiving is Not Enough*, Emilie Banville (Eindhoven University of Technology & University of Quebec in Montreal)

“An unused archive is not an archive. An archive is only an archive when it is entered, or, more precisely, when things come out”. In this quote, Mark Wigley (2005) concisely evokes what has recently been referred to as ‘productive’ archives: the idea that archives become meaningful only when activated into dynamic entities, enabling new networks and relationships (Miessen & Chateigné 2016). Departing from Wigley's remark, this paper develops the notion of the ‘productive archive’ as a potential site where history and theory intersect with practice, remediating the ‘precautionary gap’ identified by Manfredo Tafuri in the 1970's (Figueiredo 2017; Wigley

2000; Tafuri 1968). The paper will discuss how contemporary curatorial practices engage with archival holdings and challenge historical and theoretical knowledge production, using the case of the Canadian Centre for Architecture. It will focus on the 'Out of the Box' research and exhibition series as a demonstration of what the notion of the 'productive archive' might mean – beyond mere reproduction, a locus of critical production in its own process of becoming. As such, this paper contributes to the on-going discussion on the role of archives in contemporary architectural culture and concludes with a plea for an 'archiveology' (Russell 2018; Ketelaar 2017; Eveling, Günzel & Assmann 2009; Derrida 1995): a renewed epistemological framework for research and archival practices, which not only *minds* the gap between theory and practice, but understands the archive as a site to *mine* the gap instead.

13:30 *Pride of Place: Towards an Archive of Queer Buildings?* Alison Oram (Institute of Historical Research)

How can we ensure that the queerness of buildings is retrieved from obscurity and made more visible in the archives and in other modes of preservation and representation? Buildings might be 'queer' if they are part of a tradition of queer architectural style, or on account of their association with LGBTQ inhabitants or activities. This paper will discuss the interventions made by "Pride of Place: England's LGBTQ Heritage", a project commissioned by Historic England (the government agency for the historic environment) in 2015-16. A wide-ranging project with a number of aims, achievements and effects, Pride of Place made a crucial contribution to the identification and official recognition of queer heritage. Two particular outcomes of the project demonstrate interesting strengths and weaknesses in building a more accessible archive of queer/ LGBTQ sites and buildings. Pride of Place led to 22 historic sites being newly listed or having their list descriptions amended on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) as places of LGBTQ heritage significance. Official listing has a number of limitations, not least the ranking of architectural or aesthetic merit above social history significance. Nevertheless, the permanent inclusion of explicitly queer places in the NHLE has begun a process of redressing the absence of queer history in the official record of national heritage. Conversely, the crowd-sourced online map of LGBTQ places in England was (and still is) open to any member of the public to pin a place of personal or public queer relevance. These range from lesbian and gay bookshops to queer bars, clubs and cruising grounds from the early modern period to the 21st century, as well as more conventional historic buildings. The paper will argue that both these approaches (and more) are essential to the development of queer archives of the built environment; the shifting of establishment perspectives and the generation of more democratic methods of archive construction.

13:50 *“We Are What We Keep:” Archives, Women and Architectural Histories*, Elizabeth Darling (Oxford Brookes)

The current Royal Academy exhibition ‘Picasso and Paper’ includes a panel entitled “We are what we keep”. It notes how ‘Picasso kept every letter, envelope and seemingly insignificant scrap of paper, leaving thousands of individual pieces of ephemera after his death.’ We might consider that the fetishistic hoarding of material that signals this painter’s sense of his own importance and that acted as a prerequisite to the preservation of his legacy is paralleled in the architectural archive. Its overwhelming maleness implies that only certain types of people and their effects are important enough to be kept. This paper considers, then, where gender sits in the architectural archive. It asks how what has been kept affects our ability to remember, to know, and to see women’s presence in architectural culture. It considers how the absence of keeping in one place, leads us to different forms of keeping in different forms of archive elsewhere. The paper concludes with some reflections on what forms a more inclusive archive might take.

14:10 *Archive as Project: Recovering Colonial Histories of the Built Environment*, Yasmina El Chami (University of Cambridge)

This paper premises that the entangled histories of imperialism and the built environment can neither be understood through nor are confined within singular collections and project-centered architectural archives. Drawing on research into the construction of the two oldest universities in Beirut in the nineteenth century—by competing French Jesuit and American Protestant missionaries—I explore two challenges of using archives to study post-colonial cities. First, research on these pre-national institutions highlights the various private and foreign actors involved in their construction, and the impossibility of reconstructing such a history from a single source. The scattering of archives in multiple locations (US, Rome, Paris, Beirut), their private and often inaccessible nature, and their multilingual aspect renders these projects’ ability to survive in the contemporary city problematic, while they remain overlooked and unquestioned in Beirut’s urban historiography. Second, these collections’ own histories of production reveal more problematic aspects of their nature as tools of colonial knowledge extraction as much as of representation (as highlighted by Edward Said). The documentation practices of nineteenth-century missionaries and their contributions to surviving bodies of visual knowledge that form the basis of our modern conceptions of the territory and the city raise questions about their nature and their validity for recovering de-colonised and future narratives. The archive, in colonial contexts, was itself a project; this suggests the need for a reconsidered conception of the archive as a product and output of research as much as a

source, an active project of re-writing critical and new visual and textual knowledge.

14:30 *Peripheral Archives: Instances from Colonial India*, Tania Sengupta (Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London)

Architecture's relationship with the archive has been complex. Most students of architecture (except those located within history/ art history) in professional schools are unfamiliar with the world of archives, often viewed as an impenetrable 'scholarly' domain. The practice of architecture (as profession/ vocation) is largely seen as autonomous from its historical scholarship, and archives often as emblematic of this distinction. Archival practice – gathering, collecting, organising, delving, digging, reading, interpreting – has rarely figured as a form of architectural practice. The issue becomes particularly complicated when working on non-western contexts. For postcolonial discourse, the (institutional) 'archive' is particularly problematic, being most often produced by colonial/ dominant powers. On top, formal institutional archives are not always readily available, being 'badly kept' and mired in (residual colonial) bureaucracy. Swathes of protagonists – buildings, places and protagonists – simply do not figure. The historian is constantly faced with archival silences.

This is where the material/ immaterial 'field' – the actual places, buildings, people, stories, memories – emerge as an active 'ground' or archive in itself. Colonial landscapes were uneven. I look in this paper at 'colonial peripheries': provincial architecture in interior, 19th century towns of India. I use the urban field as an active archive and interweave the readings of a few buildings/ spaces from institutional and other archives on the one hand, and their close on-ground study on the other. Recognising their complementary roles as well as the gaps they help us crack open, the paper argues a case for post-colonial frames in problematising the archive-architecture relationship. I suggest that the very archival silences, difficult bureaucracies, or the apathy of present-day custodians of colonial archives open up new ways of working and new imaginations of the archive. Not only do they help build fuller and more textured architectural histories of 'non-western' worlds, they also help expand the very definition, range and sites of what we call archive. Through these, architectural production also emerges as a far wider domain of material and immaterial accumulations. Most crucially, in a broader disciplinary sense, postcolonial readings of these colonial peripheries help re-figure architectural historical knowledge as an active mode of architectural practice.

15:20 *Questo è a Mantova di mano di meser giovann battista alberti.* "This is in Mantua, of the hand of Sir Giovanni Battista Alberti," Elizabeth Merrill (The Warburg Institute)

The inscription, rendered in a neat cursive script, accompanies the distinctive ground plan of San Sebastiano in Mantua. The folio is one of several dozen included in a sixteenth-century architectural album, now conserved in the Drawing Matter Collection. This particular drawing of San Sebastiano, along with another annotated plan of the church included in the same album, are among the few surviving records of Alberti's remarkable design, commenced in 1460 and never completed. I first came to the album with the purpose of examining copies of machine drawings, arguably the defining contribution of Francesco di Giorgio (1439 – 1501), on whom I am currently completing a book manuscript. Francesco's graphic models were widely reproduced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and filled hundreds of model books, folio albums, and treatises. Today, these drawings are dispersed in archives and special collections worldwide, but in the Renaissance, they were staples of the practitioner's own archive. The drawing of San Sebastiano and explicit reference to Alberti offer further insight into the archive of the Renaissance architect. Approximately one hundred years after-the-fact, the abandoned design was not only catalogued in this album, but was also studied and transferred by other practitioners into their own archives. My talk will call attention to these graphic archives, relating their execution to Renaissance architectural education and workshop practices.

15:40 *Mind the Gap: Exploring the gaps at Avery Drawings & Archives*, Pamely Casey (Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York)

Even the most seemingly complete architectural archives will have gaps. For example, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives at Avery are remarkably comprehensive, yet, as we have discovered, there are limits to even the most extensive of archives. Missing elements might reveal the limits of a collector's interests or a creator's activities, or be the result of outside events or a deliberate sanitizing of a collection. Yet researchers come to repositories with expectations of what archives should reveal, expectations that inevitably extend to the professionals who curate and care for these materials. How do we, as archivists, make sense of these gaps for our users, while also setting boundaries about the work we can and equally should not do? In this paper for presentation, we will use our collections as a lens to explore themes of archival representation, and consider how archival principles and theory equip us to handle these issues as a profession, but also where we fall short in our practices. We will explore how, at Avery, we utilize archival description, instruction, and outreach to

address absences in our collections, including the creation of a dedicated lesson plan called “Gaps in the Archive” that addresses questions of gender, race and class – groups historically underrepresented in architectural archives – in order to probe the limits of collections: who is in the archive? Who is excluded? And why?

16:20 *The Legacy of Sub-Basement 8: The itinerant and diminishing archives of the LCC Architect’s Department*, Ruth Lang (Central St Martins)

Despite the London County Council’s reputation for meticulous record keeping and ‘paper pushing,’ and their vast remit for post-war planning and construction as set out in the County of London Plan 1943, there is little available material from which to determine how the architects of the Council’s Architect’s Department discharged their architectural obligations. In particular, information regarding the creation of the schools - considered the lynch-pin of the proposed neighbourhood planning strategy - has been dispersed and diminished from its original location in the mysteriously titled ‘Sub-Basement 8’ of County Hall, frustrating efforts to learn how architects were able to develop a sense of innovation and ingenuity despite practicing within a bureaucratic context. As a result, histories of the Department rely predominantly upon a singular, official, and sanitised version of events, devoid of controversies and creative dead ends which characterise the negotiation of architectural design processes. This paper calls into question the sources we consider to be ‘architectural’ and considers the value placed upon these in current archival practices. It highlights those currently under threat of removal or already lost, and the reasons behind this. In addition, it explores and proposes alternative sources which seek to ameliorate the effects of such practices in establishing counter-narratives to that of the official voice of the Council.

16:40 *The formation of the Computer Research Group and the state-academic-industrial complex in Britain in the late 1960*, Eleni Axioti (The Architectural Association)

The paper aims to highlight the efforts of the British state to introduce and populate the use of computers in the construction industry during the second half of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The paper will exhibit through the presentation of archival documents from the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works (MPBW), the formation of the Computer Research Group, that was established in a series of British universities in the mid-1960s. These initiatives were dedicated to research the applications of computers in architecture. The paper will outline the research that took place in these universities. More specifically, it will focus on the work produced at the Land Use and Building Form Studies Center at Cambridge

University that was established in 1967 under the direction of Leslie Martin and Lionel March. The center was formed with initial funding from the Ministry (MPBW) in order to produce research on the optimization of land use and the specification of office building forms with the use of computers. Gradually, the center formulated a specific scientific approach towards architecture, that was based on computers. It received funding both from the state as well as from private industrial partners and expanded its research in many domains. The paper will present archival documents from the work produced at L.U.B.F.S. center as well as outline the applications of this research in the construction industry. This way, the paper aims to trace the formation of a state-academic-industrial complex, centered around the use of computers in architecture during the late 1960s. The effects of which are evident in the ways architectural production has developed in the present.

17:00 *Classified: Architecture Archives in the Age of Secrecy*, Aaron Cayer (University of New Mexico)

In her 1988 study of records management and preservation practices for the large Los Angeles-based architecture firm Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall (DMJM), the firm's Chief Librarian and Records Manager wrote: 'The future of DMJM is dependent on knowledge of its past work. Among the materials that comprise this knowledge are drawings, structural calculations, specifications, renderings, correspondence, contracts, accounting records, reports, slides, and photos.' Yet since the 1980s, the archive at DMJM—presently named AECOM and the largest architecture/engineering firm in the world—has followed the trajectory of many large-scale corporate architecture firms: piles of paperwork and drawings were microfilmed during the late 1980s and 1990s, and they were stored and subsequently sealed off from public access. Due to the heavy engagement with military projects and civic structures, the archives of many large architecture firms are now governed by federal and state institutions—their clients—such that project and practice files are stamped as 'classified,' and as such, are entirely inaccessible without federal permission. While the history of architecture has largely depended upon open access to rich and complete archival records of (primarily) individual artists and architects, this paper asks: in what ways have the archives of larger, corporate firms—those whose work has been less defined as 'art'—been conditioned by the rise of government classification systems and practices of secrecy? In what ways can historical ethnographic tools and practices, as well as digital records of federal governments, help historians to overcome and circumvent such restrictions? This paper provides a historical overview of the politics and practice of record-keeping within large corporate architecture firms such as DMJM since the 1980s, as well as methodological interventions by contemporary historians.

