

icam18

Session

Rethinking Collections and Archives

Chair: Aric Chen

The distinction between an architecture “collection” (with its emphasis on the autonomous object or “work” as the embodiment of a designer’s intention) and an architecture “archive” (which suggests bodies of materials of primarily documentary or research value) has long been reinforced through institutional frameworks and their entrenched, art-historical biases. However, at a time of evolving architectural, museological and display practices that just as easily rely on research and narratives as they do on objects and images, is this delineation still useful?

In many respects, the difference has never been clear: with rare and debatable exceptions, museums do not “collect” architecture per se, but rather the (often “archival”) specimens and outputs of its representation, processes and discourses. What’s more, at a time when both architectural practice and exhibition-making are increasingly focused on mediation, research, systems of production, and modes of social engagement — phenomena not easily represented through, say, models or drawings — orthodox approaches to collecting seem even less stable. In this context, how might museums adjust their strategies for collecting architecture — or do they need to adjust at all? What challenges and possibilities lie in the display of archival materials, which can be especially demanding for audiences? And how has the onset of digitization and digital design processes informed our concepts of collecting and archiving, and the relative importance of the material artifact versus the information it contains?

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Session

Architecture Museums and Research

Chair: Andres Lepik

Many Architecture Museums are operating on the base of historical collections that they preserve, study, present and publish — the archive is their backbone and, in most cases, their original *raison d’être*. But it is only through research that the collections are systematically explored and that they keep their public value as repositories of and for architectural knowledge. And the archives and collections only define their mission and academic profile through research. While research can partially be supported by online tools and digital platforms, the physical presence is necessary to check the original material and to meet the academic staff, to exchange knowledge. A few of the major international collections offer their own fellowships to stimulate research but the majority depends on academics who come with external fellowships. And only a few have sufficient resources, personally and financially, to do substantial research on their own.

The main questions related to research in Architecture Museums are based on these unequal conditions and even more on the changing expectations of our audience:

- many local collections lack the attention of research, how can this be addressed?
- are historical exhibitions falling out of favour with our audience?
- what are the main areas of interest for research, and which parts need more attention?
- What do museums get back from external research?
- how can more research be stimulated with the existing material?
- how can research and exhibition activities in a museum be connected?
- What is the role of universities in relation to architecture museums?
- What do researchers expect from our collections, how can we attract more to come?

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Session
Architecture Museums and Events
Chair: Maja Vardjan

In the last few years we have witnessed an increase in the number of architecture events throughout the world. Biennials, festivals and other manifestations of spectacular event culture have become significant players in the field of architectural discourse. Their impact reaches far beyond the traditional exhibition formats, to fields such as economics, politics, social development and city branding. Usually conceived to reflect recent developments in architecture and society, these events often work as testing grounds for developing new kinds of (critical) content, challenging traditional representations of architecture and even new productions of space.

This raises questions about the position of institutions — museums and archives — in relation to transitory events. What is the relevance of events like biennials in comparison to museum programs and exhibitions? Are generally perceived opposites between events as fast, dispersed, experimental, flexible and museums as slow, central, conventional, rigid still valid today? Do events encourage more inventive curatorial practices? What can be the institutional contribution to the events and vice versa? Can they collaborate with each other?

Ljubljana has an outstanding tradition of recurring cultural events that are organized by national institutions, including the Biennial of Design (BIO), which is organised by Museum of Architecture and Design. The call for papers is to explore the history, practice and potential of different types of events in relation to museums and institutions.

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Session
Audiences
Chair: Pippo Ciorra

Not too long ago the architecture museumgoer was mainly an architect or a student/scholar in architecture. He/She would physically go to one of the not many museums expecting to find exclusively architecture items, and mainly look at *representational* materials (drawings, models, photos). None of these assumptions is to be taken for granted today. Architecture museums (many more) are increasingly attended by non-specific audience of all ages; they are expected to have a *second* or *third* lives online that have very little to do with the traditional idea of a website (IE the TATE's *fifth gallery*); they are used to display architecture, photography, art and media art, installations and 'social' actions in the same project; they indifferently display in the same exhibition traditional "materials" (drawings, models etc.) and the *real thing*, i.e. real architecture "works" specifically designed to be built and displayed in galleries and possibly preserved in the collection. What is the impact of the growing significance of the online life (and visitors) for architecture museums? Is there a need for specific strategies for the architecture museum, different from the — interactive, 'augmenting' — actions art museums are developing in this field?

How does the increasing presence of a general [non-architectural] audience impact on museums' policies for the display of the exhibitions/collection?

Is the architecture museum expected to 'go out of its walls' and expand in the urban space (installations, events, guided tours) directly engaging the life of the city and of its inhabitants in order to capture the attention of a larger audience?



international confederation of architectural museums

Is the architectural museum expected to compete with the expanding number of 'architecture festivals' (biennale, triennale etc.)? Or does it have to emphasise its diversity and its focus on collections and archives and more 'scholarly' programs?

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Session

The History of the City versus The Architecture Institution of the Future

Chair: Kent Martinussen

Institutions of architecture do not share exactly the same history as either the 19th century encyclopaedic museums of history, science and nature, or the 20th century museums of art. Architecture museums are in essence *re*-presentational instead of presentational; architecture is rarely *inside* the museum, its representation is. What is being researched, re-presented, exhibited, debated and disseminated, more or less always refers to a reality and a phenomenological presence outside the institution. Outside in architecture, in buildings — and, most likely, in the city. This call encourages investigations and discussions on topics such as:

- How can architecture institutions explore and take specific advantage of the fact that what is presented is always *re*-presented? How can the reality of drawings, virtual media, models and other representational artefacts become more relevant for the broader audience of city dwellers? How can institutions offer a deeper understanding of the relationship between representation and lived reality?
- How can architecture institutions rather than becoming one of the pearls on a string of cultural institutions in a city, become the string itself? How can they synthesise the history and the future for city dwellers as well as for the tourist?
- As the city produces not only a vibrant cultural scene for its inhabitants and its visitors but, increasingly, is the vehicle of welfare, how can architecture institutions interrelate with the city, its political leadership and management and its inhabitants and visitors, thereby staging and orchestrating the co-creation and development of the city? Should outreach be non-site-specific, promoting inclusion, integration, entrepreneurship and open source welfare production?

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