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2008 international architecture research events

www.byzantinemuseum.gr/unbuilt/unbuilt.htm

The un-built has been historically associated with the so-called utopian or visionary architectural projects and with the operation of drawing or architecture writing as a critical tool. The 2008 international programme will run for the whole year in the form of small-scale exhibitions, lectures, panel discussions, workshops, seminars, conferences and other events that will investigate the theme of the 'un-built' in a multidisciplinary context.

Following an international call, 60 events proposals were selected which address aspects of the un-built, historical and contemporary, in a variety of ways. The events have been grouped together under broader themes. Each theme corresponds to a month as follows:

Building Economies, May 2008

Body/Psyche, June 2008

Un-built City, July 2008

Sound/Silence-Theology, September 2008

Art, October 2008

Publics, November 2008

December 2008

Genealogies

Negotiating the Un-built: Interdisciplinary
Interactions on Space and Democracy

Negotiating the Un-built: Interdisciplinary Interactions on Space and Democracy

International conference in the context of the “Space and Democracy Network” events, supported by ESRC, UK
Athens, 19-20/12/08 - Timetable: Friday 18:00-21:00, Saturday 10:00-19:30

During the last decade of the 20th century the concept of space/place has entered several debates in the humanities and social sciences in what has been summarized as ‘the spatial turn’. For other disciplines, such as architecture, space has been a central operative tool since the 19th century. Practitioners and theorists have approached it in a variety of ways in different periods of history, and it still remains today a valid concept with a constantly changing content.

Within the general context of the spatial turn, this event aims at highlighting the problematic of the un-built in both its dimensions, as a limit to be negotiated and even marked and acknowledged as well as an incarnation of the promise of architectural/political imagination and socio-spatial construction. The dialectic and/or disjunction between these two angles seem to stand at the centre of any attempt to discuss the relation between space and democracy.

The two distinct dimensions are evident both in political theory/practice and in theorisations/enactments of space and architecture. The un-built, for example, has been historically associated with unrealized projects that may be attributed to a wide range of reasons; from the ‘circumstantial’ ones related to financial or construction technology restrictions, building regulations or policy particularities, to the less apparent social, historical, political issues, and the cultural stereotypes operative in a given context. On the other hand, the un-built also denotes so-called utopian or visionary spatial/architectural projects and the operation of drawing or writing as a critical tool.

The un-built is that which cannot be built or awaiting to be built as much as that which is drawn and discussed but not meant to be realised. It indicates a state of abjection and repression, designates a condition of potential conflict and, at the same time, holds the promise of transformation. The un-built is therefore more than a mere void or empty space. If we consider it as ‘an agitated state of a seemingly balanced immobility in which all possibilities remain open, and all states of attachments can be potentially enacted’, it might form a basis for thinking the contemporary relation between democracy and space.

This is especially the case given the prominent theorisations of dynamics between emptiness and fullness in democratic politics (as highlighted by a series of contemporary theorists from Claude Lefort and radical democratic theory onwards), psychoanalytic theory (mostly in the Lacanian tradition), theories of space, etc. Here emptiness and lack is not an accident or anomaly that needs to be masked and covered over but a limit, a mark of contingency and finitude that needs to be ethically negotiated and politically marked. At the same time it stimulates the desire for the new. In these traditions the problematic of the un-built meets that of the unconscious, the abject, the unrepresentable, raising the issue of exclusion and its ‘administration’ in democracy and post-democracy (locally and globally).

The event will assume the form of a series of interactions between theoreticians, urban theorists and architects that will theoretically address issues related to the democracy of space in historical and contemporary contexts, and activist groups/teams or initiatives that work within the conditions of the un-built to create a space for democratic exchange and mobility in the current circumstances. ‘Speakers’ and ‘groups’ will be provided with equal time (30 minutes) to develop their arguments. The conference language is English. Programme attached.