

Dorian Wiszniewski and Chris French

INTRODUCTION: ARCHITECTURE DESIGN RESEARCH

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DRAWING ON: ARCHITECTURE DESIGN RESEARCH EDITORIAL TEAM

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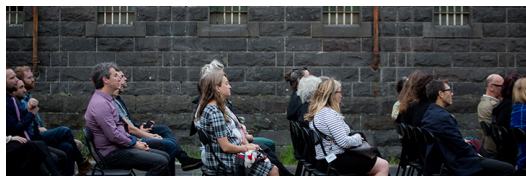
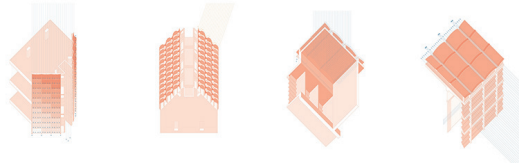
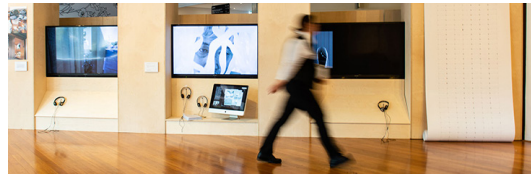
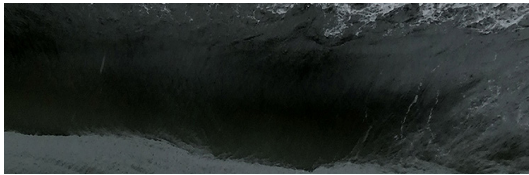
INTRODUCTION: ARCHITECTURE DESIGN RESEARCH

This issue of *Drawing On* was precipitated by a request from our colleagues Sarah Breen Lovett and Mathew Aitchison in the Architectural Design Research group at the University of Sydney Department of Architecture Design and Planning. Having established this research group as a “shared initiative” across Australia and New Zealand, Sarah and Mathew organised the inaugural Annual Design Research conference (*ADR18*) held at the University of Sydney in October, 2018. This conference, the first design research conference to be set up in Australia as an annual event, sought to give architect designers the recurring, refereed research forum that other disciplines already enjoy. Mathew, chair of the Architectural Design Research Group notes in the proceedings to the *ADR18* conference:

“Unlike the other research groups in the School, it struck us as odd that there was no annual conference that could fully embrace our work. In Australia, we were aware that architectural history and theory has an annual conference (SAHANZ: Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand), as does architectural science (ASA: Architectural Science Association) and heritage studies (ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites). Until recently, the Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia annual meeting often had a strong design research focus, but we understood that this was not so much a standing conference, but rather one organised at the discretion of the group on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, we were also aware of the work going on in the multi-institutional Design Architecture Practice Research (DAP_r) group, led by RMIT, but to our knowledge it was not intended to be an ongoing forum.”⁰¹

The publication was to be a means to further discussions emerging from this forum, an outlet to further the design research work emerging from that event. We gave their request much thought. In principle, as editors we were more than happy to consider this as a special issue of *Drawing On*; we were delighted to learn that such an initiative was underway and equally happy to be asked to be involved. However, we were concerned from the outset to maintain the independence and critical autonomy of *Drawing On* from the emerging research group in Australasia, and from the conference, and likewise to allow this research group and all those who organised and participated in *ADR18* space to develop their own agendas. Although we share a similar desire to have design research formalised, recorded, disseminated and, most of all, encouraged, *Drawing On* does not represent any particular institution or regional/national constellation. Although we maintain a strong connection to the PhD Architecture by Design Programme in ESALA, University of Edinburgh, where our journal was first established, many of our editors (most of whom are graduates of the ESALA PhD Architecture By Design Programme), are now spread internationally and work closely with our ever growing team of volunteer reviewers who are recognised scholars from different international institutions. Neither we nor they represent a totality.

The publication of this issue was predicated on this mutual commitment to furthering both the multiplicity of design research practices explored through *Drawing On* and *ADR18*, and allowing these research platforms to develop independently. As a result, the process of selecting for the conference and selecting from the conference for



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Contributions to *Drawing On: Architecture Design Research*.

publication in *Drawing On* were entirely separate and used different criteria. All the work included in this issue was peer-reviewed by both the conference reviewers and attendees, and subsequently by the *Drawing On* reviewers. This issue of *Drawing On*, therefore, does not replicate the work of *ADR18*, but provides a further platform for the development of some of the *ADR18* submissions as design research projects.

The work included here is a selective snapshot of the work presented at the *ADR18* conference, chosen by *Drawing On* in dialogue with the conference organisers. In the spirit of the conference, this issue is therefore something of a survey; it is a secondary survey, a survey of a survey of current design research work and practices in Australasia. We make no claims for ourselves or on behalf of *ADR18* to how accurate or complete this survey is. We are aware that many aspects of architectural research by design underway in Australasia have probably been missed by the conference and therefore also by *Drawing On*. However, the productive relationship with the organisers of *ADR18* has provided us with useful insight into—and developed our ongoing appreciation of—the design-led discourse in Australasia. Although the number of works we are taking forward through *Drawing On* represents a small percentage of what was presented at *ADR18*, the selection still feels representative of the conference. Like the conference, the issue includes work that has been presented through exhibition, installation and performance, and work that has been described through written papers. It offers, in each case, alternative means by which to re-present that work through the structure of the journal. The pieces included here have therefore been extended, re-framed, and re-formatted from how they were presented at *ADR18*, and have developed such that they describe in further diverse ways the making of their respective design-research projects.

Like the ADR group behind the conference, *Drawing On* also has an expressed interest in multi-modal design enquiries. In anticipation of the wide range of design research methodologies the ADR conference wanted to encourage, Mathew Aitchison thought the submissions were best generated through a “Call for Proposals” rather than a “Call for Papers.” The *Drawing On* mission statement declares: “design-led research involves, and indeed relies upon, multiple modes and means to fully elaborate its thinking.” However, perhaps a nuance in our different approaches, and hence something of an explanation as to

why we have made the selections we have for this issue, is an interest and commitment to what we at *Drawing On* call Research by Design. A propositional base to research is not uncommon. Given that *ADR18* is an initiative born out of the Australian academy, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the conference submissions reflect the common co-extensive aspirations of being professionally relevant and scientifically and/or technically framed. *Drawing On* respects all kinds of design-led research. However, it makes no bones about its particular interests in the complexities of representational questions in the various design modes. We would like to see design research to be as much about the unavowable and unexpected as the avowed or expected outcomes. The design-thinking we would like to encourage is a thinking in itself for itself as directed by the work of design.

However, like our ADR colleagues, one of the reasons *Drawing On* was developed was to provide a platform for making more present the perceived absence in both the academy and publishing worlds of the varied media of design-led research outputs. It is not so much that there is a lack of discourse on design. As Bryan Lawson stated in his excoriating review of Murray Fraser’s edited compendium, *Design Research in Architecture: An Overview*, “there never has been an argument that design research in architecture exists.”⁰² To make claims to offer an “overview” presented more as a “sampler” frustrates Lawson immensely. This appraisal by a proponent of the previous generation of some representatives of the newer generation of design research, for Lawson, presents a lacuna in such an overview: it excludes anything of the work of the Design Research Society, first established in 1966 and which continues today. It is for sure there is an apparent difference in sensibility between Lawson’s Empiricism and, for example, Grillner’s Phenomenology which marks the overall difference in aspirations between the DRS and Fraser’s new compendium. However, of greater concern to *Drawing On* in Fraser’s publication is that there is no design in evidence. There is no evident interplay between what they say and what they are talking about. Therefore, for *Drawing On*, what is more at stake in the selection of work for inclusion in our journal from *ADR18* and generally is the character of research: not whether it is just about design, but that it is by design.

Crucially, therefore, the aim in presenting this work is not to capture a totality of design-research practices; as Mathew Aitchison notes in his own review of Fraser’s book,

“diversity of thought is perhaps an acknowledgement of the maturity of the discourse.”⁰³ The pieces selected and presented here are not representative of a totality, or of a prescribed set of practices. Rather, they offer something of a re-framing of methods that we observe as emerging from *ADR18* but hopefully also where each method touches upon an aspect of the “representational crisis” at the heart of all design questions—within and between the varying media and how, then, the media in question advances the subject of research. Examining the conference proceedings, a recurrent reference for presenters at *ADR18* was Christopher Frayling’s ‘Research in Art and Design’.⁰⁴ Frayling is evidently an influential figure in the outputs from the Design Research Society and the work of the DRS is clearly influential in the Australasian schools. In his short text, Frayling develops a framework, put forward by Herbert Read, by which he understands art and design research as operating in three guises: research into art and design, research for art and design, and research through art and design. We question the absolute separation of these modes: conducting research through/by design, we would argue, entails a knowledge of and research into design, which might foster the production of a piece, i.e. become a piece of research for design that is subsequently significant to developing research through design. However, Frayling’s/Read’s categorisation is helpful in that it allows such complications to be stated, and contested.

The pieces selected here, from the broad array of projects presented at the conference, can be described—to differing degrees—in terms of those research modes described by Frayling. “Finding Byadhuk: Field Notes,” for example, offers an account of preparatory work that could be described as an exemplar of Frayling’s research-for-design. It narrates Chuan Khoo’s encounter with a place (Byaduk, Victoria) and how this encounter informed particular makings. Khoo’s description of ethnographic practices, of the written and visual accounts that document a recurrent engagement with a place, and of the significance of these accounts (in this case both literal and cognitive) for conceiving installations foreground makings. Khoo’s encounters with Byaduk, like Picasso’s experiences of Barcelona,⁰⁵ are precursors to, and instigators of, particular representations of the historic (material) and live (atmospheric) conditions of that place. Likewise, Campbell Drake’s “Spatial Tuning: The Cyclical as Critical Performative Practice” and Jorge Valiente, Amaia Sanchez-Velasco and Gonzalo Valiente’s (as

Grandeza/Bajeza) “New Geographies of Violence,” might both be described through their resulting pieces. Drake’s series of public events, in which the tuning of a piano—a preparatory, un-scored act—becomes a performance, foreground a set of operations intended to encourage audience awareness of particular spatial politics. Tuning ‘uncertain’ situations by these uncertain performances in varying senses—geographic (the historically contested territory of Culpra Station), geo-political (the boundary between a landfill near Hobart and the Mount Wellington National Park) and socio-political (HM Pentridge Prison, Coburg, Victoria)—reveal in greater certainty what is disputable in those situations. The ‘piece’ (the performance) represents spatial politics. Grandeza/Bajeza’s installations/performances *The Plant* and *Valparaiso Post-Liberal* both engage with contemporary urban political conditions. These installations are described as instances within a protracted practice that articulate both evolving thinking and a response to particular emerging realities. By invoking audience participation, they bring to light (represent) specific social conditions.

Urs Bette’s “Unreasonable Creatures: Architecture & (Bad) Behaviour” documents what we might describe as a project of research into design, where the subject of that research is the designer’s own practices, and where what is revealed through these practices are those assumptions that underpin architecture’s disciplinary behaviours (the use of recursive techniques for design and representation, for example, or the recycling of imagery and text). Kathy Waghorn and Nick Sarjent’s “The City as a School” offers an approach to architectural design pedagogy through descriptions of the design studios ‘Muddy Urbanism Lab’ and ‘Event Studio’, both of which encourage architecture students to engage closely with the multifaceted nature of contemporary architectural practice, including stakeholders, budgets, and regulatory limits. This contribution, too, could be considered a project of research into design, whereby what is designed is a set of pedagogical principles and practices, and what is researched is both the efficacy of those pedagogical practices in generating understandings of and approaches to the city, and the impact of the situation in which these pedagogies are enacted on the generation of those understandings. Perhaps the clearest example of this category, however, might be Erik L’Heureux’s “Hot and Wet: Architectures of the Equator,” in which a series of studies of modernist buildings in Indonesia, Ghana

and India that engage with the demands of their specific climates inform strategies for contemporary buildings in Singapore, buildings in which the ‘temperate hegemony’ of architectural discourse is contested.

These pieces, however already begin to challenge categorization. “Finding Byaduk: Field Notes,” begins to stretch what might be readily categorized as research for design by questioning the recurrent relevance and impact of the constructed artefacts for Byaduk; by enacting and performing live meteorological data through found engineered objects, at a distance but with material links to that place, the work complicates any description based on linear narrative (from research to thing). It suggests that the objects made have value beyond their status as representations of a particular thinking (closer, in some respects, to Frayling’s research through design, but without the ‘discoveries’ expected of research led by experimentation). They are, instead, markers of a particular moment in a (personal) practice, and also invitations and instigations to reconsider the material history of a particular place and its presencing (be it the tourist signage describing the town’s history, or the material histories of particular buildings). Similarly, “Hot and Wet: Architectures of the Equator” might be said to combine research into and research for design modes. L’Heureux’s study of equatorial architectures reveals the limits of particular drawing practices; describing architecture in an equatorial condition, L’Heureux notes, requires the development of new representational conventions. A body of research into specific architectures therefore reveals the limits of a specific representational lens, and simultaneously questions the representational assumptions under which design operates (the ‘means’ implicit in any work conducted through design). Bette’s presentation of work is, on the one hand, a record of practice, but is at the same time an exploration of media, of how format might offer new insights into our working practices. The field of images, overlapping text, diagrams, sketches and drawings plots a body of work spatially, in order that this work might become navigable—to readers, and to the author-as-reader—and subsequently, revelatory.

These projects, therefore, begin to embody the agenda of this issue of *Drawing On* described above in response to the *ADR18* conference. They begin to explore methods. We do not see an argument against architecture existing in a cloud or the anatomy of an animal (in reference to

Frayling’s invocation of Leonardo da Vinci, Stubbs and Constable). Nor do we expect such enquiries to be reduced entirely to a technical exercise (as interesting as this may be). Rather, we are interested in how design practices will establish how architecture can be found in clouds or anatomies and, furthermore, how these processes can be recorded and made present to others interested in such methods. In presenting these methods we intend to test the limits of those definitions that circumscribe (and, increasingly, ‘validate’ in certain terms and situations) design-research practices.

With this aim in mind, this issue of the journal provides space for a selection of those pieces that either actively question the separation suggested by Frayling’s categorisation, or implicitly question these categorisations through their methodologies and outputs. It provides support for speculative design investigations, design-research not driven by perceived urgencies toward specific ends. ‘Canyon: Experiments in Drawing a Landscape’, by Simon Twose, Jules Moloney and Lawrence Harvey for example, is concerned with an extension of drawing practices; it records, invokes and embodies the landscape of the under-sea trench of Kaikōura Canyon, Aotearoa, New Zealand. In developing drawing practices, it also questions forms of representation. In exploring the role of the installation as a representation of particular landscape conditions (through a description of the installation *Canyon*, at Palazzo Bembo for the XVI Venice Biennale, 2016), it develops (and indeed prioritises) non-visual representation. Through representational techniques ranging from developed rubbings and sketches to the precise—if unpredictable—orchestration of a score of overlapping, intersecting digital sounds in space, it critiques accepted representations of landscape and their associated imaginaries (engaging with histories of colonialism, the sublime, and the picturesque), and challenges the very idea that landscape is visually-conditioned. It develops methods of and critiques representation.

Similarly, Rachel Hurst’s “Megalomaniacal Plans: Exploiting Time and Transparency” describes an investigation into plan drawing: the plan as drawing and the drawing of plans. Hurst’s work focuses not only on the plan as a particular organisational or representational practice, but on what plans reveal. By superimposing various historical plans onto one another through tracing, Hurst begins to describe patterns in the organisation

of space through time. However, her work also reveals through drawing something of the contingencies of drawing as a practice. In identifying through tracing a row of four superfluous columns in Etienne Louis Boullée's drawing of a Basilique—what Hurst terms 'Boullée's error'—Hurst describes a particular condition afforded by drawing: a becoming lost in drawing driven by repetition that induces a particular type of attentiveness. Her working method and her object of study begin to intersect. The evolution of these drawings into paintings and subsequently tapestry is not simply intended to develop new outputs, but to further an inquiry into methods, into the making of drawings. As with Hurst's work, Ainslie Murray's "Utterances of Everyday Life: Moving and Drawing in Sensitized Air" is concerned with iteration. However, for Murray iterative practices (or, as Murray describes them, the practices of 'everyday life') are at once the subject of a series of drawing experiments and the source of a set of potential architectural gestures. Murray's work proposes that everyday actions become invisible to us. The revelation of these actions through the recording of their effects on the air is a revelation of spatial practices. Air becomes sensitized to our movements, and our engagement with air as a substance re-frames the spaces of architectural practice. Representation (method), subject and object overlap. Finding ways to draw the air is critical to understanding or re-thinking spatiality (of air, of the body, of architecture).

Should we care why, to return to Constable, anyone wants to find architecture in a cloud, or, as in Murray's case, in the air? Perhaps. It is our hope that those pieces of work described above offer insight as to why this is an interesting question. However, perhaps it is sufficient that what has been found through these investigations—namely, architectural means—is enough reward. This is not to remove politics and all the professional, academic and institutional urgencies from design and reduce it to merely aesthetic practice. This is to ask deep questions of how design works, in as many varied ways as possible. As we recurrently say about our journal, it is as much a surveying device, recording what we find as a growing index through the themes and issues we organise in series, as it is a forum—like *ADR18*, the upcoming *ADR19* conference 'Real/Material/Ethereal' to be held at Monash University, and hopefully subsequent iterations of the Annual Design Research conference—for presenting, discussing, encouraging and further developing the epistemology of research by design.

NOTES

- 01 Aitchison, Mathew. 2018. "Foreword to the ADR18 Conference." *Proceedings of the 1st Annual Design Research Conference, Sydney, Australia 27th-28th September, viewed 19th September, 2019.* <<https://sydney.edu.au/content/dam/corporate/documents/sydney-school-of-architecture-design-and-planning/research/ADR18-Proceedings-Final.pdf>>
- 02 Lawson, Bryan. 2015. 'Design Research in Architecture: An Overview.' Review of Design Research in Architecture: An Overview, by Murray Fraser (ed.). *Design Studies*, Vol. 36 (January), pp.125-130.
- 03 Aitchison, Mathew. 2016. 'Design Research in Architecture: An Overview.' Review of Design Research in Architecture: An Overview, by Murray Fraser (ed.). *Journal of Architecture*, Vol.21 No.2, pp.308-312.
- 04 Frayling, Christopher. 1993. "Research in Art and Design," *Royal College of Art Research Papers*, Vol.1 No.1, pp.1-5.
- 05 Frayling cites an interview with Picasso from 1923 in which Picasso refutes the notion that he was a researcher. Picasso stated: "When I paint, my object is to show what I have found and not what I am looking for." Frayling, Christopher. 1993. "Research in Art and Design," p.2.

FIGURES

All of the drawings, paintings and images included in this piece were produced by the authors of the various papers included in this issue of *Drawing On*.

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