

Productive introspections

In this edition of **arq**, Luciana Fornari Colombo reflects upon designs by Mies van der Rohe, observing that the courtyard house as a building type is ‘characterised by strong introspection’ (pp. 123–132). She suggests that this inward-looking architecture of self-examination is surrounded ‘with peripheral protective walls that have minimum openings, the interior spaces of the house searching for light, air and views into private walled gardens that are open only to the sky’. This issue examines productive introspections, peering into those walled gardens of the creative mind which can at times open up private intuitions to light, air, and view. It explores the outward consequences of inward thinking and recounts novel and significant insights that emerge from the private perimeters where they originated.

Marisela Mendoza’s article about the structural engineer Felix Candela (pp. 149–160) notes his continuing inner dialogue with the philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset, out of which formed a ‘peculiar propensity to face risks with an ingenious intuition’. Lejla Vujicic highlights the architect Vittorio Gregotti’s inward intellectual preoccupation with the influence of history and historical time on architectural thought (pp. 161–174). Both offer accounts of those designers’ buildings – Gregotti’s 1972 project for the University of Calabria, Italy, and Candela’s 1963 warehouses in Stevenage, UK – which illustrate how their protagonists’ introspections were concretised. Claire Jamieson and Rebecca Roberts-Hughes, meanwhile, examine the experimental thinking of Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates as expressed in design briefs presented to students in the late 1970s – together, initially, and then separately following their intellectual divergence (pp. 110–122). Jamieson and Roberts-Hughes evoke the collective introspection of the studio unit as a site of experiment and reflection. Digital devices have an atomising effect on society, it is frequently assumed, encouraging people to live together alone. Richard Koeck and Gary Warnaby test this assumption, examining co-creative processes and practices (pp. 183–191) in mapping technologies, exploring the idea of ‘digital chorographies’ as a means by which a place’s spatial narratives may be constructed.

The articles collected here illustrate the productive outcomes of moments of introspection, whether spent alone or together. Moving beyond the trope of the lone genius architect, the articles demonstrate that creative, reflective inwardness can have a significant influence on the collaborative endeavours of design, building, and living in cities.

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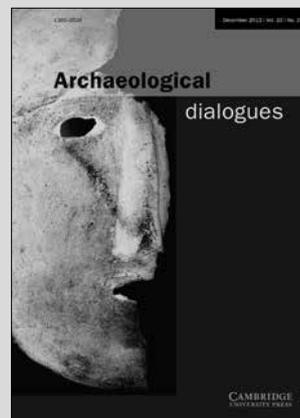
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