

# E D I T O R I A L

r e f l e c t i o n s o n t h e p r i n t e d p a g e

Even the fringes of publication, where we find ourselves, are implicated in the play between architecture and publicity. In a culture defined by mass media, architecture has come to rely foremost on the magazine for its dissemination. Through periodical publication, this solid discipline distils into a currency that flows through present mechanisms of reproduction and consumption. In the mainstream, professional journals are a tool for promotion, showcasing the current and fashionable. This has meant that publication is the key to and measure of success in the profession. But magazines are not solely agents of mainstream architectural promotion; their absorbent pages respond equally well to radical theory and technical data. The magazine's role is that of an ephemeral agent that mediates between mute building and a public conditioned by electronic communication technologies. The magazine supplements architecture, lending it the power of ubiquity but at the cost of its solidity. The architectural magazine is, however, directed at the architectural community, making it a medium through which architecture regards itself. The magazine has a privileged role in the perception of architecture, but how much does it reflect back into its production?

To be viable, a magazine invariably imposes conditions on its content. Mainstream journals are dependent on advertising and must be preoccupied with appealing to a target market. Even magazines funded by institutions have their criteria; the notion of audience is central to all publication. In addressing its audience, the architectural magazine in particular relies heavily on graphic impact. Photography, which possesses an undeniable graphic authority, has, through the proliferation of the magazine, become by far the most prevalent method of representing architecture. Even drawing techniques have become more pictorial and captivating while specifically architectural drawings, such as sections, have declined. In the process buildings become reduced to a series of photo opportunities. The complementary effect is fairly obvious. One need only consider the way that downtown developers' billboards anticipate their labours to see photo opportunities under construction. On the other hand, the magazine as a text could add to architecture a voice and the continuity of periodical publication could propagate discussion. Avant-Garde movements such as Futurism and Constructivism took up the magazine and employed advertising tactics to broadcast their intentions. The possibility of the magazine overtly challenging architecture is heartening, and called upon to counter the pacifying influence of mainstream magazines' hidden agendas. The greatest weakness of the periodical is its predilection for novelty: What it promises is what's new and upcoming. Magazines create and sustain an appetite for innovation, to the point where buildings are consumed before they're built. The magazine becomes the site and threatens to collapse architecture's intention to address the built world. When this occurs architecture is left without weight or bearing. Lost in self reflection, it can assume no more dimensionality than that offered by the page.

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