

Towards a Critical Phenomenology



m frascari 2012

The Frascari Symposia@Carleton

The sharp conflicts between Dangland's precise 'why?' and the commissar's nonchalant 'I don't know' punctuated the squad's investigation. None of the others tried to understand the role of this bitter struggle between accuracy and vagueness, but they all favoured one side or another.

The Positivists thought that Adamsberg dragged out investigation, taking them willfully into the fog, leaving his colleagues trailing behind him without instructions or road maps.

The others, the cloud shovellers – thus named after a traumatic visit by the squad to Quebec thought that the commissar's results quite justified the vagaries of the investigations, even if the essentials of his work methods escaped them.

According to mood, or to the circumstances of the moment, which might inspire either jumpiness or relaxation, someone could be a positivist one day and a cloud shoveller the next or vice versa. Only Adamsberg and Dangland, the two principle antagonists, never varied their position.

Fred Vargas *The Night's Foul Work* Vintage 2009

What has Phenomenology to offer architects today?

It is quite possible that the use and abuse of language, philosophy and architecture has not only led to a number of theory-speak volumes and dictionaries but a pretence that has clouded the very discipline and practice of architecture itself. Can we put that another way? Consistent attempts to use language to claim more than architecture can achieve, have led to innumerable triumphs, innumerable disasters. From the tragically hip to the tragically uncool, phenomenology in architecture has struggled to maintain the critical significance it attained in architecture from the 1960s to the 1980s. Did it indeed collide with Post-Modernism as recent new scholarship maintains? Does this indicate a historical takeover for a (critical) minority of theoreticians, academics and practitioners, or is this critical hindsight useful for scholars but – as usual - not practitioners? Do practitioners still find the concept of the phenomenological ‘spooky’ but useful, if the language and codes can be used to support intuition and the invisible? Yet we still must ask this question: how much is the poetic act – the invisible and unknown, that moment just a little beyond our reach and comprehension - still considered essential to a resistant process in architecture?

In the context of at a school of architecture (Carleton) which saw Alberto Perez Gomez as director in the 1980s and Marco Frascari more recently, it seems fitting to re-visit and re-assess the initial seduction of phenomenology as it seeped into architecture from its various philosophical residues. It is relevant, here in Carleton, to acknowledge Marco Frascari as a thinker and architect who himself has offered a parallel reading that to some extent aligns with the Phenomenological project yet suggestively attempts to re-awaken and explore a lost imagination in architecture. The first Frascari Symposium will take on this exercise and respond to this legacy in a critical manner by inviting some of those who have studied under and worked with Frascari over the span of his teaching career. Hale, Emmons, Ridgway and Kunze in a series of presentations with respondents will place us both within this legacy of Phenomenology, whilst signaling the singular significance of Frascari's work and offering some pointers for the future. To close the first Frascari Symposium, in a public lecture in the National Gallery of Canada, Kenneth Frampton will respond in a way to this thinking whilst posing another challenge in a lecture called *What role is there for the Architect in a Destitute Time?* In a bridge to the second Frascari Symposium (Winter 2014) Frampton will, amongst other aspects, set out a challenge to the future architects in the 21st century by re-positioning the architect in the current moment, echoing and re-assessing the work of Heidegger and Arendt.

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The Frascari Symposium 1

February 8th 2013

The Pit, Azrieli School of Architecture & The National Gallery.

1000 Roger Connah introduces the **Frascari Symposium**

10.15 Jonathan Hale

Critical Phenomenology:

from the pre-human to the post-human

11.15 Paul Emmons

Phenomenology and the architect's orthographic eye

lunch

14.00 Sam Ridgway

Demonstrations – 3 Frascari Projects

1500 Donald Kunze

Anarchic Thinking - the Fear and Loathing of Phenomenology

1600 Round table

1800-2000 Kenneth Frampton

What Role for Architects in Destitute Times?

Forum Keynote lecture (National Gallery of Canada)

(followed by a discussion)

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Jonathan Hale is an architect, Associate Professor & Reader in Architectural Theory at the University of Nottingham. Within the Department of Architecture and Built Environment he is Deputy Head of the Architecture + Urbanism Research Division, and Coordinator of the Architectural Humanities Research Group. Research interests include: architectural theory and criticism; Phenomenology and the philosophy of technology; the relationship between architecture and the body; museums and architectural exhibitions. He has published books, chapters, refereed articles and conference papers in these areas and has obtained grants from the EPSRC, the Leverhulme Trust, British Academy, and the Arts Council. He is founder and Steering Group member of the international subject network: Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA); a member of the interdisciplinary Science, Technology & Culture research group, hosted by the Department of French at the University of Nottingham. He is currently working on a book for the Routledge 'Thinkers for Architects' series on the work of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty.



Paul Emmons is a registered architect and Associate Professor with tenure at the Washington Alexandria Architecture Center of Virginia Tech where he directs the PhD program in Architecture and Design that was founded by Dr. Marco Frascari. Emmons earned a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Architecture from the University of Minnesota, where he also taught. His research on architectural drawing practices has been presented internationally at lectures and conferences and has been widely published. Recent efforts include editing *The Cultural Role of Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2012) and contributing on the history of "Teaching Drawing and Representation" to *Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America*, edited by Joan Ockman with Rebecca Williamson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), published for the centennial anniversary of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. He has also served on editorial boards of several scholarly architectural journals, including the *Journal of Architectural Education*.



Donald Kunze has taught architecture theory and general arts criticism at Penn State University since 1984. He continues to write, teach, and advise as an emeritus professor and is currently editing a collection of essays, *Architecture Post Mortem*, on architecture in times of decline, recessionary and otherwise. His articles and lectures on architecture theory, geography, film, literature, and philosophy have engaged a range of topics dealing with the poetic dimensionalizing of experience. His recently completed manuscript, *Atlas of the Obverse*, investigates “horizontal space-time.” He is devising a methodology for personalizing strategies of the architectural studio for non-vocational uses.



Sam Ridgway is an architect and Senior Lecturer in the School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Adelaide, South Australia. His teaching, practice and research explore the poetics of construction. Publications in this area include: “The Imagination of Construction” *Architectural Research Quarterly* (2005), and “The Representation of Construction,” *Architectural Theory Review* (2009). Prior to a recent two-year stint as Acting Head of School he taught courses in construction, and a series of theorized design studios exploring, among other things, the analogical relationship between food and architecture, and the human and architectural body. He received his PhD titled *Theorizing the Construction of Architecture* from the University of Sydney in 2010 and is a member of the editorial committee of *Architectural Theory Review* published by Taylor and Francis.



Kenneth Frampton was born in Woking in 1930. He is currently employed by Columbia University and has numerous awards we could mention. Online it says rather awkwardly, randomly, that he wrote Harry Seidler, Le Corbusier, Hariri & amp; Hariri and Japanese building practice, among other things. It's odd and true but that's hardly all. And yes, he has worked as a writer, an author, an academic and a historian. But they ignore that he is also co-founder of Impossibles Ltd... ...Actually such a statement does not do justice to Kenneth Frampton. He is simply incomparable in today's architectural world; and yet another bio listing out his numerous books and significant works would also not do justice to what we can still learn from this man. I have stolen an online image which is I think the best image I have seen to accompany a bio. I hope I will be forgiven. You see, it's all about a man and a dog; and in English 'going to see a man about a dog' is very, very important. (RC)

The Carleton Frascari Symposia on Architecture 2013-2014

1 Towards a Critical Phenomenology

The Frascari Symposium 1 Feb 8th 2013

(invited pre-symposium event)

Feb 7th Thursday (Invited guests, faculty and colleagues)

Venue: the Frascari Library (Building 22, Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism)

Guests include: Hale, Emmons, Ridgway, Goffi, Fai, Sgarbi, Harag

Lunch 12.00

1.30pm The Archive - Roger Connah introduces the issue of the Archive today.

The Notebook : A way of working: Pietila, Merton & Frascari

4.00 The Frascari Reader (closed meeting)

5.30 All School Reception

8.00 Invited Dinner

2 Critical Minority Reports

The Frascari Symposium 2 - Fall 2014

3 Phenomenology Today (Nottingham)

The Frascari Symposium 3 Winter 2014

Carleton University in collaboration with Nottingham University School of Architecture

Organized in association with the Azrieli Endowment, Forum Lecture Series Sponsors and Co-Founders; Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism and OAA: Ontario Association of Architects. The organizers express our profound thanks to Marco and Paola Frascari for their continued support.

Roger Connah

Jonathan Hale

Federica Goffi

CARLETON UNIVERSITY AZRIELI SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE & URBANISM