

WEEK 10- MEDIUM

ARCH-572, ARCHITECTURE THEORY AND CRITICISM

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What is a medium? How is it related to architectural design and why are we questioning the role of possibility in it?

'Possible mediums' is a project initiated by a group of faculty members who all studied in UCLA and later taught in the midwest. They realised that there was a similarity between all their colleges with young faculty members encouraging experimental techniques that challenged the students to utilize new methods of architectural design[16]. The conventional "Digital turn" which dominated between 1990-2005 had now started to dissolve. New orders and objects like cartoons, balloons and kites had started to emerge[16-17]. The project does not portray the opinions or belief of a certain architect. Instead it is a collective approach where "Design techniques are laid bare, free to be taken up by others, and combined with alternative approaches to produce strange, new hybrids"[18]. By this, what they mean is that there is not one way to produce architecture, and is no more a privilege of a few[19]. Today, the design approach is open to the diversity and independent thoughts which is not governed by cynicism or divisiveness[20].

John McMorrough argues that we cannot describe an architectural medium, as that would give it a distinctive definition, which is not what it means[21]. John says that "Medium may be the most adequate term to address the varieties of scales and the range of motivations of recent work. It is a set of work particular to this volume, but also specific to a more general historical development" [22]. A medium is not just what it is constituted. It is also the container/ surroundings, that makes the content of the medium possible. For example, water is the medium of wave, yet it is not the only reason for the wave to occur. There are many external factors for the wave to occur, like moon gravity. Hence, medium can be defined just as a "state between two extremes"[27], which acts as a middle ground between possibility and impossibility. The idea of medium comes through a set of logic, challenges and opinions of architecture. Hence, no matter what medium one chooses, the plurality gets embedded with a common belief of potentially instantiating their practice[28].

According to Dora E. Jones, " 'The Possible' is imagined as all that exists beyond the likely, the probable, the normative, and the common"[194]. The Possible always lies within a realm of the totality of factors including knowledge and experience that defines its existence. In Architecture's realm, Possible in Classicists time was related to proportions, plans and volumes, where it did not include experimentation, but just productions and reproductions in its own realm. However, in modern era, "Realm of Architecture is pretty good: just generous enough to allow for experimentation, variation and discourse, not so generous as to do away with the Realm altogether"[195]. With experimentation, there also lies a risk of believing in absence of universal truths like gravity, or air and light, which is not possible in the real world. However, according to Dora, this still should not restrict one from experimenting and peeping into the unreal world[196]. Architecture itself has been lying in two realms at the same time. From the outside, Architecture seems extravagant and crazy, whereas from the inside, it is just "a fluid chaos-sphere of allegiances, histories and hummable tunes"[196]. Hence, it can be argued that architecture is never absolute. It has some other possibilities that are closer, some that still are far and unpredictable. For example, parametric architecture today is possible, but Walrus architecture is still very unlikely[197].