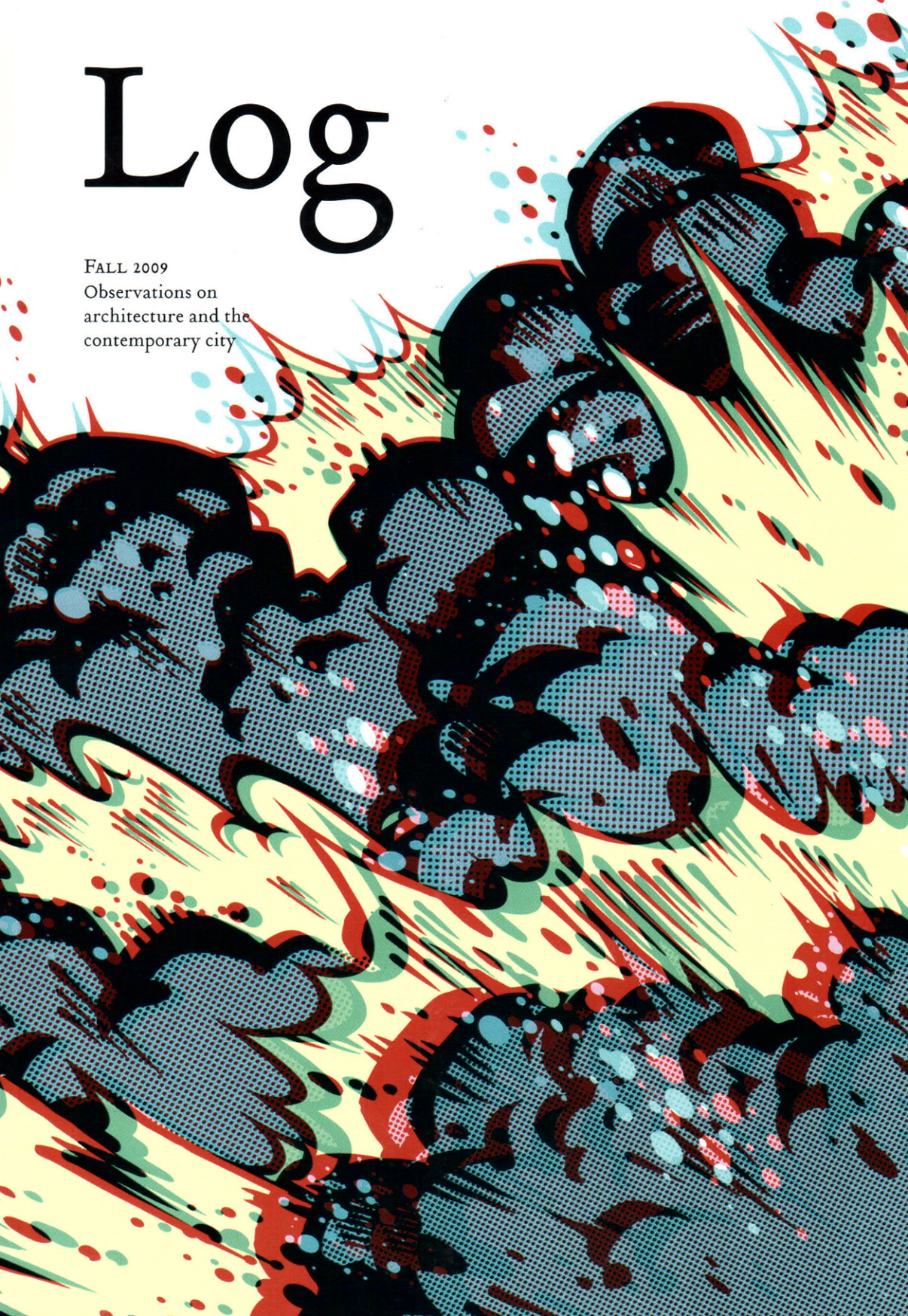


Log

FALL 2009

Observations on
architecture and the
contemporary city



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<i>Cover Story:</i>	<i>Untitled</i> , by Tristan Eaton, 2009.
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The Zero Degree Of Ideology

Since Leon Battista Alberti's theoretical overturning of Vitruvius's *Ten Books of Architecture* with his own, architecture has found itself broadcasting ever-changing alibis that define it as either an artistic practice, the result of philosophical or political theory, or the product of measurable scientific data. This latter tendency is currently enjoying a resurgence in the profession as new courtships between program, technology, and sustainability emerge, but it aims toward no ultimate scientific truth, no penultimate discovery, and no unifying theory for or against which its practitioners might continually drive. Instead, architectural developments today, even the scientifically biased ones, tend to be somewhat looser affairs, relying on day-to-day technological opportunities and lucky discoveries of yet-unclaimed material palettes, programmatic arrangements, or digital processes. This looseness opens architecture to the influence of manufacturing techniques, natural metaphors, personal relationships, and an endless stream of seemingly weak forces. This susceptibility to influence, however, is actually a great strength, allowing architecture to swim through the manifold currents of contemporary culture – emerging with new opportunities that enable the testing, adopting, and reforming of new formal and conceptual horizons.

In the absence of broad consensus, but bound by related interests in the specifics of these influences, smaller groups of architects converse casually, although rarely converge to tackle the intractable, much less produce anything as *passé* as a manifesto. Instead, a system of ad hoc dialogues has formed. Ironically, architectural dialogue has perhaps never been quite so much fun – or so informal – showing up in Blackberry'd texts, over cheap post-symposium Chardonnay, and at jury junkets to far off academies, where one feels special, even exotic – in part for meeting at all. But this relaxed form of dialogue comes with a price. In the absence of the articulated ideologies of yesteryear, or even their fruitful “oppositions,” we are left with neither a collective consensus nor any prescriptive direction as to how architecture might proceed. If anything, it is clear that in a seemingly ideology-free architectural world, we no longer have an obvious vehicle

with which to unite developments across the broadest of generational spectrums. This does not mean that meta-themes are not somehow in play, only that the diversity and volume of our group discourses make any larger theme difficult to detect above the somewhat productive din of our atomized chatter.

If the unpardonable security tactics of the post-9/11 world have taught us anything, it is that the surveillance of seemingly trivial chatter frequently yields more significant bodies of information. It is in this spirit that we made *Log 17*, codenamed "The Superficial Issue," not as a validation of the thoughtless, but as an opportunity to imagine what common undiscovered territory might reside in the surveillance of our own casual chatter. We invited a diverse group of contributors to offer thoughts on the seemingly most insignificant of architectural modalities and the apparently most superficial of topics via purposefully far-reaching analogies to past and present forms of insurrection in disparate disciplines, thereby inviting a broader speculation on the current state of architectural affairs. In the absence of a manifesto, we posit that any larger picture, if it is to exist at all, must arise from a collective of smaller and somehow tangentially related interests. The method of shaping this issue was largely intuitive – factoring in the presence of multiple discussions dancing around a topic dense with recurring thematic notes on aesthetics, affect, effect, sensation, beauty, and other forms of sensory or emotive experience. We believe that something hazy, unformed, and not-quite recognizable, yet certainly alive has crept out of the dark, abstract forests of intellection, process, and criticism to seek new forms of engagement in architecture through the non-verbal and sensate. This does not preclude thought, but rather introduces, in rehearsals of similar historic observations by Immanuel Kant, Conrad Fiedler, and Ortega y Gasset, the idea that the sensations associated with aesthetic experience are largely independent of active intellection, and that the relationship between us and our architecture can be more than *only* linguistically and intellectually based. Such a shift anticipates a conjoining of Renaissance anthropomorphism with Modernism's rote mechanical-cum-political equalities into a newly rescaled version of the Copernican principle, where, in the world of human sensations, *there simply are no privileged viewers.*

MARK FOSTER GAGE IS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AND ACTING ASSISTANT DEAN AT THE YALE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND FOUNDER OF GAGE / CLEMENCEAU ARCHITECTS IN NEW YORK CITY. FLORENCIA PITA TEACHES AT SCI-ARC AND IS PRINCIPAL OF FLORENCIA PITA MOD, BASED IN LOS ANGELES.

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Guest Editors
Mark Foster Gage
Florence Pita

Michelle Addington
Sir Peter Cook
Joe Day
Hernán Díaz Alonso
David Erdman
Kenneth Frampton
Todd Gannon
Georgina Huljich
Lisa Iwamoto
Jeffrey Kipnis
Sylvia Lavin
Clover Lee
Elena Manfredini
Thom Mayne
Alex McDowell
Branko Mitrovic
Bruna Mori
William O'Brien Jr.
Jason Payne
Heather Roberge
David Ruy
Mohamed Sharif
Kivi Sotamaa
Marcelo Spina
Teresa Stoppani
Tom Wiscombe
Peter Zellner



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