

INTERSTICES 06

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Introduction

A.-Chr. Engels-Schwarzpaul, Ross Jenner, and Albert Refiti

In February 2004, a series of lectures was announced jointly by the School of Architecture, University of Auckland, and the School of Art and Design, Auckland University of Technology, to re-initiate the critical work carried out between 1989 and 2000 in the *Under Construction* lecture series and the resulting *Interstices* publication. In the past, writers and presenters such as the 2005 Pritzker winner Tom Mayne (USA), Mark Wigley (USA), Francesco Venezia and Renato Rizzi (Italy), and Mark Goulthorpe (France, now teaching at MIT) were involved with *Interstices*, contributing to contemporary local and international debates. The fact that both the lecture series, with its lively and collegial discussions, and the publication then lay fallow for some years was felt as a sad gap by many in the architectural and arts community in New Zealand.

It was Albert Refiti's entrepreneurial spirit that brought about discussions of a joint venture between the two schools and institutions. Ross Jenner and Laurence Simmons—old *Interstices* activists—were thus joined by Albert Refiti, Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul, and Mark Jackson to forge a theme that would attract interest and participation from a wide range of academics and practitioners of architecture and related arts, in and beyond the two schools and institutions.

Thus, last year's lectures and the current *Interstices* issue *Animal/Impulse* set their sights on what is perhaps a central problematic for contemporary culture and theory. *Animal/Impulse* raises a series of questions regarding the idea of the human/animal divide in Western thought. What are the formations/formulations that discipline the body and impulses from outside? How are the natural forces, that are but fortuitous bundles, controlled and striated in the animal/person/body? How do they, in turn, contribute to the construction of meaning? These are philosophical and ethical questions that go to the root not just of what we think but of who we are. In response, contributors to *Animal/Impulse* explore a set of coordinates for the representation of these issues in and through contemporary architecture and related arts.

Our aim was, from the beginning, to open *Interstices'* reach beyond the local ground, on which it had begun and developed, and to address a readership beyond—both within New Zealand, and further afield. It was encouraging to see how many architects and academics of high standing in other countries were willing to join the editorial board to support and guide the publication through the next issues. A few, such as Nigel Ryan, have been involved with *Interstices* already at the very beginning. With Peter Wood, we were able to welcome a colleague from the University of Victoria at our lecture series, who later also submitted his paper for publication. Regarding *Interstices 6: Animal/Impulse*, we are very proud to count Marco Frascari (Ottawa), Deane Simpson (Zürich), and Anthony Hoete (London and Beirut) amongst the contributors. For the current lecture series, *Genius/Genealogy*, we have the pleasure to welcome Andrew Benjamin from the University of Sydney and Jonathan Lamb from Vanderbilt University.

As in the past, *Interstices* is committed to providing an interface between theory and practice, and writing and drawing, in recognition of different ways of theorizing architecture and the related arts. The issues are composed of a strictly thematic, double-blind refereed part and a lighter and more diverse non-refereed part, which more loosely addresses the theme of an issue through reviews of exhibitions or books and reports on project work in New Zealand and overseas. Thus, *Interstices* brings together local and international contributors and juxtaposes locally conducted art and design practices, and research and scholarship, with those from outside New Zealand.

It is intended that *Interstices* will be published at least once a year, with guest editors at other institutions in New Zealand and Australia to bring a greater variety to the journal. We also look forward to the institutional sponsorship and involvement of the Schools of Architecture and Design at Victoria University of Wellington and Unitec Institute of Technology. The journal will remain a forum for the dissemination of research and debate on architectural and art practices. It will continue as a critical platform for the review and discussion of current projects in New Zealand and overseas. The annual lecture series will become, yet again, the point of contact between practitioners and academics to develop a critical culture focused on contemporary practice. As in 1989, *Interstices* is not intended

to reaffirm existing normative standards and canons, nor to rest comfortably in the supposed self-sufficiency of the building object, regional identity, composition, nature, function ... but to explore the interstices, the gaps and fractures within an institution that appears solid, secure and fixed.

Interstices is about "the spaces between idea and thing where perfect correspondence is never quite found, demanding a realm of endless negotiation and interpretation that we see as productive" ("Introduction", *Interstices 1*).

In the current issue, *Animal/Impulse*, Mark Jackson opens this realm with "Impulsive Openness: Boredom and Bio-politics". In a close reading of aspects of Martin Heidegger's 1929-30 lectures *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, and Giorgio Agamben's *The Open: Man and Animal*, the latter's notion of 'bare life' is traced in his reading of Heidegger. For a concern

with animality, 'bare life' is an indication of the substantial political conflicts of modernity clustering around animality and humanity.

In "Heidegger and the Herringbone Cowshed", Laurence Simmons similarly explores the question of animality in the theoretical context of Heidegger's, Derrida's and Agamben's writings. He also engages with a local instance of technological innovation: Ron Sharp's 1952 change of his twelve bail walk-through milking shed to what became known worldwide as the herringbone cowshed. Simmons suggests that while it is urgent to think the animal beyond mechanical paradigms, it is equally important to investigate the blurring lines between human, animal, and machine.

From a very different perspective, Sarah Treadwell and Paul Veart investigate in the animation *Beyond* the blurring of lines between animal and architectural movement, which give rise to an unexpected animal/architectural drawing: "Animation, the cat and escaping drawing" traces the porosity between the categories of animal/human/drawing/architecture. The theoretical reference here is Hélène Cixous' "Without End, no, State of Drawingness, no, rather: The Executioner's taking off", where drawing is somehow always beyond her strength but nevertheless looks back at itself.

Such interest in animal cunning is shared by Peter Wood, who explores the human animal's environmental responsiveness and non-intellectual aspects of aesthetics and architecture. In his paper "Architecture = Building + Value: Exploring the Social Purpose of Architecture" he addresses atavistic factors operating through art in the evolution of human relationships. With the help of such a change in perspective, the oppositions between building and architecture, body and intellect, become unsettled and open up for re-inspection.

"Woven Flesh", too, is concerned with the space-between of human bodies, animals and ancestors. Albert Refiti engages two motifs: one of the impulse in Albert Wendt's works, and the other of the animal in John Pule's. The two motifs are read against the thematic *animal/impulse* in an attempt to open up discussion of an architecture of the body in Polynesia. If the body is the dwelling of the ancestors, then the impulse is its long-time resident and the animal its temporary lodger.

Dispersed and difficult to control, impulses are also historically contingent. In "Frontiers of Shame and Repulsion", A.-Chr. Engels-Schwarzpaul explores connections between the efficiently circulating sewers of suburban developments and the exhibition of a 'dunny' at the 2004 Sydney Biennale. While not immediately obvious, aspects of the 'civilising process' demonstrate an increasing distance between human bodies and their excrements. This moulding of affects is necessary for both sewers and art work to function.

The peculiarly moulded affects of Italian Futurism and Rationalism lend themselves to an architecture leaning towards transcendence. There would appear to be little hope of finding in it forms of lightness that seek freedom *within* earthly matter. But, as Ross Jenner shows in "What Goes Up Must Come Down", they can indeed be found in a suspension, caused by the engagement with the contradictions of the regime, in the works of Persico and Albin. A different concept of lightness emerges, a lightness of 'thinking otherwise'.

In the non-refereed part of *Interstices 6*, an interesting mixture of speculation, review, translation and reporting rounds off the theme. Marco Frascari's "Gee Wiz" is a speculative account of the cosmopoietic dimensions of architectural criticism buried deep inside the closet of architectural culture. At present, Frascari maintains, most architectural judgment works by a refusal of the power of recognition that properly belongs to animal experience and, being uncritically open to memory-less scientific or artistic fashions, forgets the links between the arts of building, living and thinking well. This paper is an antidote.

While Frascari uses cheese as metaphor, Deane Simpson employs that of misfits to counteract certain tendencies of the last 75 years of urban planning, which often failed due to an excess of will and intention. Simpson discusses collaborative projects in Detroit and Copenhagen where the strong will of 'master' planning was suspended in favour of experiments with open and auto-reactive systems. These 'instinctive systems' challenge the genetic identity of particular urban 'species' through the generation of urban mutations.

During the production of this issue, Anthony Hoete, 1990 graduate of the Auckland School of Architecture, came to New Zealand on a visit from his permanent base in London to visit family—but also to begin a commission for the design of a house. In an interview with A.-Chr. Engels-Schwarzpaul, Albert Refiti and Ross Jenner, he reflected on his 1995 design for his father's house on Motiti Island and its relationships with his own, highly mobile life in architectural designing and teaching.

The interview is followed by two reviews of the *Fale Pasifika* at The University of Auckland by Semisi Potauaine and Jeremy Treadwell. Potauaine discusses Tongan architecture around the theme of "The Tectonic of the *Fale*", and Treadwell recounts, in "Chains of Negotiations: Navigating between Modernity and Tradition", the complex processes and dilemmas involved in the design and construction of the *Fale Pasifika*. Subsequently, John Walsh and Peter Bartlett explain their views of the exhibition *Models for Living: 1905–2005: A survey of 100 years of New Zealand residential architecture* held at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, 8 April–19 June 2005.

Maria O'Connor provides a tantalising review of one of the key texts informing this issue, Giorgio Agamben's book *The Open: Man and Animal*. Rather than (or over and beyond) explicating the text, or giving a relatively fixed account, O'Connor appeals to those readers who will benefit from Agamben's ethico-political stance in relation to their own projects, through an active and personal engagement with the text.

Finally, a translation of Félix Guattari's "L'énonciation architecturale" by Tim Adams, "Architectural Enunciation", shows how the French psychotherapist and activist applied his considerable conceptual apparatus to the problem of architecture. This was a subject dear to his heart, about which he often wrote. It is strange that this important work has been so long overlooked, especially given the attention paid by architectural theorists to the work of his collaborator, Gilles Deleuze. This translation goes some way to address this oversight.