Think.Design.Build
Architectural Matters

Conference dates	2 - 3 June 2016
Organisation	Institute for Architecture, TU Berlin
Topic	The 1st International Conference on contemporary architectural practice
Contributors	12 invited presenters/1 keynote speaker, 16 doctoral students (by call for papers)
Departments	Architecture, Architectural Theory and History of Architecture, Engineering, Philosophy and Science of Art
Venue	TU Berlin, Architecture Building (Forum and lecture hall A 151)
Website	www.thinkdesignbuild.tu-berlin.de The conference will be held in English. Free admission.

Synopsis

The conference will focus on the multiple correlations between idea (think), creation (design) and realisation (build), which shape the process of architecture. The far-reaching transformations that the discipline undergoes today underline the conference's relevance. Pressured by data driven dynamics of development regarding simulation (building information modelling), computerisation (ubiquitous computing) and digital networking (internet of things), we detect a growing de-differentiation of architecture. Instead of being an active agent, architecture seems to have turned into a passive, silent witness of our society's transformation. With the ongoing process of technological development that massively transforms everyday life, architecture more and more renounces its social aspirations. This is especially the case where architecture mimics the tools and machines, which should be at its service.

Architecture's current crisis demands a critical analysis of the discipline's knowledge practices and its complex synergies. The conference therefore critically examines the three knowledge practices of thinking (concept/word), designing (drawing/model) and building (material/structure) and their respective mediality, mode of action, and knowledge potential. On the one hand we will analyse the three conceptual levels in regard to their respective guiding principles, methods and medial tools. Moreover, we will investigate the interdependence of these three conceptual levels and how specific architectural knowledge is transferred between them.

The conference aims to connect questions of research, teaching and practice. Focussing on that which can be expressed in words (idea), represented in drawings (creation), and constructed in material (realisation) the three pillars of architectural education will be addressed and critically investigated. Hence, by analysing the three conceptual levels of thinking, designing and building the conference wishes to clarify also methodological questions of architectural education. The focus on the correlation between the three conceptual levels will furthermore allow to confirm the unity of the architectural process.

Architecture's three knowledge practices The conference will focus on the three conceptual levels of architectural practice: The practice of thinking (concept/word), designing (drawing/model) and building (material/structure) with their respective mediality. Each of these practices has its very own knowledge potential, and each of these practices holds its very own architectural knowledge with the respective understanding of intellectual clarity and sensory conciseness. The distinct separation of the three practices can be traced back to the Renaissance and Leon Battista Alberti. Alberti demanded the separation of idea and execution and the negotiation of the two by means of the notation of architectural ideas in drawings and models. This commitment to record the architectural idea by means of the drawing raised the status of architecture and turned it into an intellectual and artistic discipline. This moment brought about the modern understanding of architecture.

In practice, however, these three theoretically separated levels are not strictly separated at all. Instead, the architectural process demands a close and diverse interaction between the three. This raises the question: how is that which can be expressed in words (idea), represented in drawings (creation) and constructed in material (realisation) connected? How is specific knowledge transferred from one level to the other, from one medium to the next? What happens at the intersection of idea and design? What during the translation from drawing to material form?

To approach these questions it is important to be aware of the fact – and architects do know this from their everyday designing routine – that in each of these three knowledge practices the knowledge of the other two is always implicitly present. Therefore we can speak of "anticipation" and a "shared awareness" (Edmund Husserl) which is connecting the three levels of knowledge practice. One could even say that each level is "infected" with the parameters of the following or preceding one. Thus, for example, beyond its intellectual content the word or concept always already contains a sensorial and figurative content. Hence, the architect reads two parallel lines not only as a sign and abstract representation of a wall but always also in terms of materiality and effect. With the sign the material and ideally its specific effect are anticipated. The same is true for the built object, which by means of signs and traces serves as an index of the design process that preceded the building process. Similarly, looking at the tree dimensional object, that which cannot be perceived with the eye (for example the interior of a building or the rear of a wall) is still somewhat unconsciously present in the architect's mind. How does this implicit knowledge, this "shared awareness" surface in architectural practice? How is implicit knowledge converted into explicit knowledge? And the other way round: how does explicit knowledge find its way into the unconscious?

Topicality The conference theme was chosen due to the ongoing de-differentiation of the architectural process caused by the new media technologies. It seems that, in dominating the process, the computer's digital matrix supresses Alberti's practice of the three conceptual levels. The growing demand for the visualisation, simulation and medialisation of the architectural pro-

cess influences the established procedures and changes the relationship between thinking, designing and building. What does it mean if, an omnipresent imagery does not allow for abstraction anymore, if everything must be immediately represented graphically, simulated three-dimensionally and connected ubiquitously.

For some time we have observed how the "apps", "cookies" and tracking services of our smart phones and tablets change – if not manipulate – our perception. In guiding our perception, in influencing what it is we attend to actively and what peripherally, these devices sharpen our senses for certain things and inure them for others. Thus these intelligent devices create new mental connections which then establish new systems of classification which operate subconsciously and therefore dominate the architect's imagination and the design process. Aim of this conference is to recognize and realize these subconscious processes and thus to explain the origin and the effect of contemporary architectonic practices.

It can hardly be overlooked that the new media aesthetics influences the architectural practice. Japan is in this context a telling example. Here the aesthetic expectations have been influenced for years by the hard white light of the computer screens. Everything is white, bright, glaring. Within a few years a merciless bright light has superseded the traditional aesthetics of muted light, semi-darkness and shadows (Tanizaki). Sanaa's *Kanazawa Museum* or the *Rolex Center* in Lausanne bear testimony of this shift. One of the aims of this conference is to expose the media technology's subliminal influence on architecture. Thus the conference aims at restoring the architect's authority in the field of design and at reclaiming the architect's position as active agent of the complex architectural as well as the cultural processes in general.

History Architecture is as much an intellectual (rational) as it is a creative (sensorial) practice. It appeals to our mind as well as to our sensory perception. The sensory effect and thus architecture's persuasive power are, however, weakened where – as with parametric or computational design – the conception and the process of making architecture are no more visible. In general sense and sensuousness are interdependent entities. One may also refer to the complementarity between Aisthesis and Noesis or the "blending of perception and thought" (Hermann Schweppenhäuser).

The relationship between intellectual (rational) and creative (sensorial) practice has been one of the central question within the cultural history of architecture. The relationship between the two has to be renegotiated again and again. The medieval cathedrals are one example: Erwin Panofsky has demonstrated how, in the cathedral, the scholastic tradition has been directly translated into an aesthetic experience. The art of stonemasonry (expertise in materials and workmanship) and scholasticism (thought) were folded in one another and both – Aisthesis and Noesis – determined the great effect of the gothic cathedral. Sigfried Giedion noted a similar phenomenon for the 19th Century. The new building materials steel and glass and the new production methods allowed for buildings like the Eiffel tower which appeared to be made of light and air. The new technologies allowed for a specific sensuous experience as they became manifest through the sharp edges of the steel – and glass profiles and later through Le Corbusier's precisely cut objects, the architecture of the Neue Sachlichkeit. Giedion spoke of the "unity of thinking and feeling" which was expressed in these new buildings.

Considering the history of architecture, the question of this conference is not at all new or unique. However, today's challenges posed by new media, underline the urgency to once again address these questions. Parallels can be drawn to the Enlightenment where the recognition of the necessity to educate the senses ("school of perception") was one of the central insights. The "school of perception" concerned both sensory perception as well as aesthetic judgement. This

education was considered as the precondition for the emancipated man: *Aesthetics and Ethics – a new unity*. Walter Gropius expanded on the Enlightenment idea with the headline: *Art and technology – a new unity* (*Kunst und Technik – eine neue Einheit*). Gropius regarded this unity as the foundation from which to re-conceptualize the relationship between intellectual and artistic practice in the Industrial Age (i.e. the age of the analogue machine).

Since the Enlightenment and the Bauhaus the circumstances have certainly changed. The questions, however, remain the same. What would a „school of perception" for architecture look like today? Wouldn't it be necessary to demand an intellectualisation of perception also today? When the protagonists of modernism, though, asked for the intellectualization of perception they always also considered the flip side. This means a move towards a new sensitivity as in the case of German Expressionism, the Subjectivism and Mysticism of the Russian Avant-garde or French Surrealism. How does the relationship between intellectual, sensory, and material practice, between idea, creation, and realisation change over time? And what remains the same? And, most importantly: What does this mean for the training of architects, for teaching and research at the universities?

The conference **Think. Design. Build. Architectural Matters** addresses practicing architects, engineers, designers and artists as well as students of the respective faculties. The conference will be organised by TU's Institute of Architecture as the first in a series of four, which shall take place within the coming years. Against the background of the current disciplinary challenges each conference will question the role of and the relationship between research, teaching and practice in the field of architecture. Internationally renowned architects, architectural theorists and -historians, cultural scholars, philosophers and civil engineers will instigate a critical and comprehensive debate on the topic. Each of the three panels will focus on one of the central topics: *Panel I: Thinking Architecture, Panel II: Designing Architecture, Panel III: Building Architecture*. A fourth panel is dedicated to doctoral research. Here young scholars will be given the opportunity to present and discuss their research findings with international experts of the field. The contributors will be invited as a result of a call for papers. Panels I – III will be aligned with the subjects *Think, Design* und *Build* as described below.

Panels I-III

Panel I (thinking architecture) will look at the theoretical conception of architectural ideas and their sensory and figurative content (that which can be expressed in words). The panel will focus especially on the transition between the abstract content of language and its metaphorical potential for the conception of architecture. Architects often use a metaphorical language to express their first ideas which are not rarely accompanied by expressive gestures or rough sketches. What does this mean? Is the reason for this behaviour the architect's suspicion of words? This behaviour might be indeed justified since the question arises if ideas and first vague notions of spatial and material things can be linguistically communicated and (suitably) articulated by means of abstract concepts at all. Still words are indispensable in order to clarify one's intentions. What is the relationship between word and drawing, between the word and the built object?

Panel II (designing architecture) Architecture is more than the imagined space and more than the built space. Architecture's cultural responsibility manifests itself in the social meaning of the design process. Thus Panel II will look at the design conception of architecture between idea and realisation. This panel will therefore focus less on the built object but rather on the creative phase of the design process. During this phase various analytical and conceptual considerations are interlinked with the aim to translate them into built architecture. The panel will critically question the design process as an agent and catalyst between the expressible and the buildable focussing on the process's specific modes of communication. The panel will look at design as a system and will question how and according to which logic a draft is developed. The panel will furthermore look at the draft's journey through the different scales: from city to detail, from context to material, from structure to space. The design process will be discussed in its full range from the intuitive to the rule-based approach.

Panel III (building architecture) Design and conception increasingly recede into the background, where the production of architecture is largely dictated by construction economics, building regulations and political decisions. Panel III will therefore look at the production conditions of architecture (the buildable). Against the background of constantly changing economical, political, social and technological conditions of today's architectural production, the panel will question the possibilities to realise the theoretical conception, to implement the design and create the concrete material object. What is the potential of an architecture which has to reconsider its production processes and therefore also has to create new possibilities of implementation. How can the architect return to an active role in the production process? Which are the procedures, methods, tactics and negotiations, which would guarantee a better realisation of the architectural design, one which would reflect the architectural thought and the attitude towards design.

Conference Programme

Thursday, 2 June		Friday, 3 June	
09:00-10:00	**Welcome/Opening**		
10:00-10:30	Introduction	10:00-10:30	Introduction
10:30-13:30	**Panel I – Think**	10:30-13:30	**Doctoral colloquium**
	Lunch break		*Lunch break*
15:00-15:30	Introduction	15:00-15:30	Introduction
15:30-18:30	**Panel II – Design**	15:30-18:30	**Panel III – Build**
	Reception		*Coffee break*
		19:00-20:30	**Keynote lecture** Toyo Ito
			IfA Party