

Editorial

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*There is only one thing that is certain about Architectural Education and that is its complete uncertainty.*¹

1. Royal Institute of British Architects, 1952. Report of the RIBA Visiting Board upon the School of Architecture, the College of Art and Crafts, Birmingham. London: RIBA

In October 1952, the Royal Institute of British Architects dispatched a Board of Inspection to the Birmingham School of Architecture. Douglas Jones, head of the Birmingham School from 1951-1962, later wrote eleven pages of comments in response to the board's report (which totalled just ten pages), including the quote above. Three decades later, in a polemic for the *Architectural Review (AR)* that argued "almost everything" was "wrong" with architectural education, the architect and writer Peter Buchanan observed that:

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Change of all sorts (for instance in financing and contract management, in technology and in proportion of work that is now fit-out or refurbishment rather than new-build) has been dramatically transforming much of the building industry and its procedures. Yet these and the corresponding changes being faced by and within the architectural profession are quite unrecognized by almost all architectural schools, no matter where.²

2. Buchanan, P. 1989. 'What's wrong with architectural education? Almost everything.' *Architectural Review*, 19(5), p. 24.

3. Buchanan, P. 2012. 'The Big Rethink: Architectural Education'. *Architectural Review*, 232(1388), p. 92.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that thirteen years later, Buchanan wrote another piece in the *AR* that "we are in the throes of massive epochal change that must profoundly impact architecture."³ So to Douglas Jones's belief in the certainty of perpetual uncertainty in architectural education, we would like to suggest that there is an additional certainty - that of perpetual change. Those engaged in architectural education are, after all, educating students for techniques, processes, materials, politics and practices that we cannot predict. Or to put it another way, in an appeal to recover our "lost judgement," Jeremy Till wrote in 2005 that

- Every week a new edict lands on my desk: new forms of building legislation, new forms of disabled access requirements, new issues of sustainability, new skills needed to cope with the information society – the list is endless. And so every week I feel exhausted on behalf of my students. In each case there is a concomitant demand or inference that these edicts should in some way be reflected in a revised curriculum ... The request for ‘relevant’ forms of new knowledge is therefore distracting, because what is new now is going to be out of date, irrelevant even, by the time our students face the world. Societal, and thus spatial, constructs are emerging with such rapidity that we are can no longer educate for a fixity; instead we must educate for moving targets.⁴
4. Till, J., 2005. Lost Judgement. In: E. Harder, ed, *EAAE Prize 2003-2005 Writings in architectural education*. Copenhagen: European Association for Architectural Education, p. 171.
5. Royal Institute of British Architects. 2013. *RIBA Plan of Work 2013* Overview. London: RIBA.
6. Building Futures. 2011. *The Future for Architects*. London: RIBA.
7. Rory Hyde. 2012. *Future Practice: Conversations from the edge of architecture*. London & New York: Routledge.
8. Zygmunt Bauman. 2007. *Liquid Times: Living in an age of uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- The majority of difficulties faced in realising this issue of *Field* on the subject of architectural education through its long gestation have been due to the fact that the ground has continued to shift under our feet. The RIBA validation procedures – by which all British and many international schools of architecture receive their professional validation – were revised in September 2011, introducing a supposedly rationalised set of General Criteria by which students’ work must be appraised. Furthermore, this journal was commissioned and its authors invited to submit before the 2012 change in higher education fees in the UK. So like most of our predecessors, we have struggled to make sense of the landscape of architectural education. Changes in education are occurring alongside changes in practice: this year (2013) the RIBA Plan of Work was updated to recognise the shifting terrain of practice, in terms of both the work being undertaken by architects and the contractual frameworks through which it is procured.⁵ The RIBA thinktank ‘Building Futures’ questioned ‘The Future for Architects?’ in a report which prophesises the rejection of the status of ‘architect’ as useful for small practices, which increasingly take on work that was traditionally outside the bounds of the profession, and the challenge for large practices to keep up to date with rapidly changing information technology for collaboration and delivery.⁶ Hyde in his collection of interviews with international practitioners⁷ draws attention to the ‘crisis’ of the profession as a long-running recognition of the limitations of the traditional business model of architectural practice, which persists despite 60 years of questioning, and in the face of growing uncertainty and change.
- We recognise the global conditions of liquid uncertainty⁸ and fast-moving change as the choppy sea in which we are working to teach, to support, and to learn alongside future generations of architects. At the same time we must also recognise the backwaters and still pools of the profession, the

traditions that run deep, and practices we, sometimes unthinkingly, repeat that maintain the architectural habitus.⁹

9. Pierre Bourdieu. 2005. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

In the main section of this journal, we present five papers united in their rigorous and attentive concern for architectural education, written by seven of the most engaged and active pedagogues working in this field today. They are all linked by a concern for change and improvement in architectural education, and through their writing they describe the conditions that can contribute to the education of graduates who are prepared for a lifetime of uncertainty.

In his paper *Survival of the Species*, Alex Wright looks in detail at the implications of the recent changes in Higher Education funding upon architectural education. The paper presents worrying projections about the long-term affordability of architectural education for both its graduates and taxpayers.

In *Seeking Responsive Forms of Pedagogy in Architectural Education*, Ashraf Salama addresses some of the negative tendencies that characterise the way in which knowledge is delivered in architectural education, highlighting the important distinction between mechanistic and systematic pedagogies.

In their paper *From Bourdieu to Freire (by way of Boal)*, Bob Brown & Patrick Clark challenge the normative traditions of the architecture design studio and the patterns of behaviour inherited therein, proposing Augusto Boal's theatre forum as an alternative model for conceptualising the design studio.

In *Fear and Learning in the Architectural Crit*, Rosie Parnell and Rachel Sara present the findings of recent research amongst architecture students and tutors on the use and value of that familiar pedagogical tool, the crit. They ask how a truly critical dialogue can be supported in the crit, presenting powerful ideas for architectural students and academics alike.

In *Marginal Voices*, David McClean, Neil Lamb and Andrew Brown describe a pedagogical project to subvert the tutor-student power dynamic that is so predominant in the design studio.

Finally, in the review section we present perspectives on the health of architectural education from across the UK. From London, we present a dialogue with David Gloster, Director of Education at the RIBA; from Sheffield, a review of 'Common Grounds', a doctoral initiative to explore methodologies of research transferred from training for architectural practice, and from Scotland we present a review of the first few years' work of the Scottish Architecture Students' Assembly (SASA) by Dele Adeyemo.

Returning once more to the 1952 RIBA report on the Birmingham School of Architecture, its head defended a number of the school's pedagogical innovations against somewhat harsh critique, including what were probably the first live projects in architectural education. He concludes his responses to the Board's report with the prescient observation that:

Two views are held on the subject of Architectural Education. The first of these views is that of the architect who maintains that students on qualifying should make useful assistants and justify their existence by paying their way as soon as they qualify. If the School concentrated entirely on turning out good assistants for Private Offices they could probably succeed but - and this is the other view - it is the duty of the Schools not only to try to train useful assistants but also to train people who will one day make good architects with vision and initiative. Nobody has yet discovered whether these two things are entirely compatible."

Fifty years on, we appear still not to have discovered whether they are compatible, and indeed whether this compatibility is desirable, but as this edition of *Field* demonstrates, architectural education is populated by students and academics who continue to challenge and test its capacity for change.