



CAN WE OPEN UP THE DIALOGUE?

As one of the Creative Directors of Parallax: 2009 National Architecture Conference, Gerard Reinmuth lays the foundation for a series of different dialogues challenging the limits of current architectural practice, and introduces the event's international speakers.

Too often in architecture we are confronted with the righteous zeal of the cult figure and their followers as a substitute for nuanced, complex and sometimes oscillating approaches to the difficulty of architectural practice.

The safety and certainty of the cult limits the potential that exists in the grey areas and inconsistencies that exist in any position. How long will we listen to Sydney architects dismiss the work of major Melbourne practices, or vice versa, rather than interrogating each other via these inconsistencies? Why is it so rare for architects to see potential in the positions of others to inform their own view? Why not see it as a productive provocation to think and rethink?

Slavoj Žižek talks of the parallax gaps within and between contexts—spaces that, in their indeterminacy, open up possibilities. At TERROIR we have come to value these spaces in our design practice for the challenges they pose and the productivity that arises from their exploration.

Research and teaching, collaboration, politics, media, philosophy and the role of younger practices in the city are some of the key contexts within which our practice works—harbouring these gaps as we crisscross from one to the other as a design problem is considered from multiple points of view. By exploring the practice of architecture from within the frame of these different contexts, different conclusions may be reached about similar problems. Thus the potential exists to debate across these boundaries, to widen even further our understanding of what may be possible and to prise us from our reliable prejudices.

My co-Creative Directors and I hope that delegates to the conference are faced with challenging propositions worthy of consideration, given the calibre of participants, and be encouraged and inspired to extend their practice beyond current limits. More importantly, they may see architecture not as the professionalisation of knowledge about building, but rather, as Aaron Betsky notes, as a way of figuring out what we need to build.

Can the facade of a building really be a political space? Alejandro Zaera-Polo certainly thinks so. Can a teaching career based in highly speculative urban interventions of a highly speculative nature provide the bedrock for a serious commercial practice? Peter Wilson certainly thinks so. Can young people be trusted with major projects in the public realm? Sou Fujimoto and Tatiana Bilbao certainly think so. Explore these positions and the gaps within them at Parallax. **M**

Parallax 2009: National Architecture Conference, Melbourne, 30 April—2 May