

Introduction

Drawing Conversations

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This book has its origins in a research project that was initiated at KU Leuven in Belgium by Riet Eeckhout and Arnaud Hendrickx with the intention of exploring, debating and exhibiting practices of contemporary architectural drawing. Titled 'Drawing Architecture', it aimed to investigate the work and approaches of contemporary authors who pursue architectural research through speculative acts of graphic inquiry.

In 2019, a cohort of architects, critics and curators met in a series of symposia to present and discuss their ongoing work in relation to current drawing practices and modes of production. These events were structured in relation to drawings or drawing-related artefacts produced by the participants, around which a dialogue was developed. Beyond the usual representational imperatives that often constrain discussions of architectural drawing, the group focused upon its status as a site of emergence and of imagination.

The word 'conversations' of the title of this book – *Drawing Architecture: Conversations on Contemporary Practice*¹ – is intended to carry a double meaning, referring both to the presentation of the drawings themselves, which, through their collection and positioning in this volume, are put into dialogue with one another, and to the interactions of the authors in extended discussion, affording readers a dynamic insight into the way they articulate and think about their work. The authors' conversations are presented in 14 edited transcripts developed from recordings made at the three symposium events. These are presented in four sections – 'Drawing as Material Practice', 'Methods and Modes of Working', 'The Agency of Drawing' and 'The Limit Conditions of Drawing and Other Disciplinary Considerations'. The transcripts are printed together with key drawings by the various contributors, who include Laura Allen, Bryan Cantley, Nat Chard, Peter Cook, Mark Dorrian, Riet Eeckhout, Adrian Hawker, Perry Kulper, C.J. Lim, Shaun Murray, Mark Smout, Neil Spiller, Natalija Subotincic, Michael Webb, Mark West and Michael Young.

Augmenting the transcripts, specific content-related phrases featured in the conversations are elaborated in short reflective commentaries by the authors. These work as 'keyword' essays, in which specific terms and phrases that have a particular conceptual and/or operative value for the authors are highlighted and reflected upon. Taken together, they form an accumulating glossary that runs through the volume.

Finally, the book includes a sequence of interpretative framing essays by Nat Chard, Mark Dorrian, Riet Eeckhout, Thomas-Bernard Kenniff and Carole Lévesque and Michael Young, which reflect on the materials and themes contained in the book and on issues to which they give rise, situating them within an expanded cultural-historical and theoretical context.

We believe that the significance of this publication lies not only in the way that it collects and presents drawings by its contributors but also in its documentation of ways of thinking – how the different authors interpret their work, the way they see it in relation to that of others, and

¹'Drawing Architecture' symposium, London, October 2019. Left to right: Mark Dorrian, Peter Cook, Mark West and Michael Young.

what they understand to be at stake in it. The small number of crossings in space and time that the book records through its transcripts were events that continually implicated larger histories, which are refracted and negotiated with in different ways by the various voices in the discussions. But, importantly, the meetings were also future-orientated and, in that spirit, our aspiration is that this book will play its part in extending these 'drawing conversations' beyond their initial settings into a wider sphere, where, we hope, they will animate and inspire the work of others.

1 A related exhibition, *Drawing Conversations*, was held between September and November 2022 at the Design Centre, Montréal, Canada (Director: Louise Pelletier; Exhibition Curators: Carole Lévesque and Thomas-Bernard Kenniff; Exhibition Design: Arnaud Hendrickx).