3RD ANNUAL

SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS OF GREAT BRITAIN

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH FORUM

SATURDAY, 11 APRIL 2015, 9:00 AM - 7:00 PM

HOSTED BY THE EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
PLAYFAIR LIBRARY, OLD COLLEGE
ABSTRACT ONE

Sedila in English churches: the consolidation of a genre
James Alexander Cameron, Courtauld Institute of Art

Sedilia are the seats for the priest, deacon and subdeacon celebrating high Mass. In English medieval churches, they often appear in a permanent architectural context: as three stone niches set in the south wall by the altar, surmounted by arches and divided by shafts. These characteristics seem to have been vital to their appearance in England, as other forms: such as wooden furniture, simple wide single niches, stone chairs and dropped window sills were evident, but not nearly as popular. Therefore sedilia can be considered in retrospect to be a kind of genre: an object with a specific language of forms, that I have dubbed the ‘classic’ type. This presentation will show how this ‘genre’ developed in England due to the peculiar character of English medieval architecture, largely influenced by the wholesale Romanesque rebuilding in the immediate wake of the Norman Conquest. The tendency for thickwall construction with linear decoration caused sedilia to develop through the truncation of fulllength dado arcading. Although such sedilia may have developed in a number of centres independently, it was only in England that the decorative trends were so mutually reinforcing in order to consolidate them into this ‘genre’. It will be argued that ‘classic’ sedilia initially developed in late Anglo-Norman Romanesque collegiate churches with square eastends: later ubiquitous but then an unusual plan. In the early thirteenth century, when ordinary parish churches began to match these previously exceptional institutions in terms of clerical staff, the square ended chancel with sedilia became popular throughout many regions of England. Subsequently, sedilia were included in prelates’ chantry chapels and at cathedral high altars with suitably extravagant forms, but ultimately, sedilia are an interesting case of an architectural feature that began in the middle rank, popularised toward the bottom, and subsequently became so ubiquitous as to influence the top.

ABSTRACT TWO

Recapturing early modern English urban defences: York and Kingston upon Hull.
Simon Webb, University of York

This paper stems from my PhD thesis of York and Kingston upon Hull’s early modern defensive walls from 1550-1700, which was submitted in January 2015. It will discuss the scope and historical value of studying urban structures that have either been restored or completely demolished over time. In accordance with the wider research aims of historical archaeology this allows for ostensibly medieval defences to be comprehended within their postmedieval contexts as active agents within the built environment, as evidenced through the integration and analysis of extant remains, the reconstruction of now lost forms, archival research and available art historical resources.

To date their study has often been limited to discussion within the medieval period or a European and military context that considers English defences as stylistically and militarily retrograde whose use was only rediscovered during the English Civil War of the 1640’s. The paper argues that they were neither retrograde nor limited to historical and military flashpoints and are central to our understanding of early modern cities and citizens. They are an overlooked historical resource that is able to provide a conduit to better comprehend the physical and theoretical perimeters of urban centres that were harnessed in the negotiation of the periods urban, civic, social, political and moral contexts, both nationally and locally.

The paper will argue that a Corporation’s urban defences were utilised in the administration of a town or city, the projection of civic authority, formed part of a recognisable and burgeoning civic bureaucracy and were tied up with notions of civic identity. In considering the utilisation of these structures, removed from their ostensibly medieval military exigency, it is possible to comprehend an urban phenomenon that was ubiquitous throughout England and Europe during the early modern period.

ABSTRACT THREE

A New & Renewed Use of Timber for L’Aquila’s Reconstruction
Arthur Trieu, University of Cambridge

This research project argues for a re-thinking of the post-seismic reconstruction and repair. It focuses on a study of timbered masonry’s material properties and its historical use throughout the world, and explores its relevance as an earthquake-resistant construction technique. Furthermore, an investigation of L’Aquila’s ancient and recent architectural history is used to clarify the reasons for the heavy damage it suffered. The project supports a design study that will be testing the viability of upgraded timber and masonry construction techniques in L’Aquila. Following the earthquake of 2009, around 70% of the built fabric of the historical town of L’Aquila was found either heavily damaged or destroyed. Yet Italy has always been an earthquake prone country and L’Aquila sits in one of its regions that are most at risk. The 2009 quake was not the first in the city’s history. One could naturally assume that those buildings that have endured the longest developed a certain earthquake resilience over the centuries. A large campaign of reconstruction is now being undertaken, involving obvious seismic retrofitting. However, as most of majorly destructive earthquakes in history were usually followed by a similar process of reconstruction and recovery, we can determine how the city has learned or failed to learn from the mistakes of the past. This raises the question of how to rebuild L’Aquila to prevent history from repeating itself. Such a study requires a thorough understanding of how such damage occurred. Many other heritage sites in the world have sustained more intense earthquakes with substantially less damage. All these structures’ resilience was owed to traditional construction techniques and materials, namely masonry and/or timber, techniques that are not alien to L’Aquila. Following this logic it should be possible to develop an anti-seismic architecture in L’Aquila by recovering ancient durable and proven building methods.
ABSTRACT FOUR

The Business of Architecture: The early work of Robert Adam’s London office, 1758-1759, Sidney Ayers, University of Edinburgh

Many scholars posit that Robert Adam’s success, after settling in London in 1758, was immediate and exponential, skipping from his Grand Tour (1754-1758) straight to major architectural commissions like Croome Court in 1760 and Syon House in 1761. But to infer that the establishment of his professional reputation was instantaneous overlooks the reality of the first two years of Adam’s London office. This paper seeks to redress this imbalance and illustrate Adam’s career during this precarious and formative period. It suggests that Adam’s early practice is indicative of the considerable economic risk and professional challenges Scottish, and English, artists and architects faced upon arriving and establishing a practice in London. However, Adam was at a distinct advantage to thrive because of his early training, European travels, family legacy and financial backing; each of these factors allowed him to succeed in expanding the family business from provincial Edinburgh to the commercial mecca of London. In examining the sources of his patronage and earliest commissions—Harewood, Kidleston, Thistleworth, and Hatchlands—it becomes apparent that what Adam did was at the same time both conventional and atypical for a professional architect. An investigation of these examples show the variety of commissions Adam took on, including unpaid consultancy, which would later lead him to larger commissions and further patronage. These new insights into Adam’s first two years in London can inform not only the way scholars look at the rest of his career, but can also provide an example with which to explore the making of a professional architectural career in London in the mid-eighteenth century.

ABSTRACT FIVE

Schinkel in the Provinces: Prussian Administration of Ecclesiastical Architecture in the Rhineland (1815-41)
Laura di Zereya, University of California, Santa Barbara

In 1835, German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) was at the summit of his profession: Director of the Prussian Building Ministry, he had just completed his Bauakademie (1832), regarded as a harbinger of architectural modernity. As he worked on these and other progressive projects for Berlin, Schinkel also wrote a twenty-page document on the design of Dorfkirchen (village churches) and participated in plans for more than a dozen rural churches in the German Rhineland. Why was Schinkel and his ministry expending considerable effort on rural churches in the distant Rhineland, 400 miles from Berlin? Annexed to Prussia in 1815, the Rhineland’s predominantly Catholic population and judicial institutions shaped by nearly two decades under French rule offered a sharp contrast to its new overload. As the centralized Prussian bureaucracy administered its new provinces, Schinkel and his ministry were required to approve all new Rhineland public buildings—a process characterized in the literature as “improving” and “correcting” provincial plans. The reality was never so simple, as projects sometimes lagged for years in bureaucratic chess matches between Berlin and the Rhineland. Prussian administration of ecclesiastical architecture in the Rhineland reveals several themes central to nineteenth-century German history: 1) the growth of the Prussian protomodern state apparatus; 2) the question of Napoleon’s legacy; 3) the cultural and political ramifications of confessional differences; 4) the role of the national versus the local in burgeoning notions of “German” identity. My research seeks to go beyond Schinkel’s “correction” of provincial designs by examining ecclesiastical buildings in the Rhineland as sites of contestation, as staging grounds for competing notions of identity across confession, region, and what it meant to be “German.” Presenting a case study of the parish church in Vallendar, I demonstrate how administrative practices, local materials, and stylistic debates offered Rhinelanders mechanisms to contest Prussian rule.

ABSTRACT SIX

The British Empire and the Harbour of Famagusta
Danai Konstantinidou, Cyprus Institute

In the first months following its annexation in 1878, Cyprus’s purpose for the British Empire shifted from a military base to a naval commercial station. Even though travelers and officials reported of no port able to accommodate the Empire’s fleet, British politicians pushed for the extensive development of the fourteenth-century Famagusta Harbour. Its development would guarantee the dominance of the trade in the area; its neglect would make Cyprus unsuitable for the purposes of the British Empire. This paper will explore how the architecture of this harbour came to be in the center of the British imperial agenda and how the justification for Cyprus being a part of the British Empire, became embedded in the numerous proposals for its development. It will argue that the British notion of reinstating the former glory of Cyprus, as well as the imperial agendas of promoting trade between the British colonies, had a direct impact not only on the architecture of this historic port but also on the city of Famagusta. By presenting plans and discussions in different levels varying from travelers’ accounts to parliamentary votes, this paper will highlight the role of the British politicians, such as the Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and the State Secretary for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain, in the reshaping provincial architecture. Using the harbor of Famagusta as a case study, I will urge for a new understanding of such British political choices as forming agents of the built heritage of the formerly British colonies.
ABSTRACT EIGHT
The Architectural Clubification of the Century Association of New York City, 1872–1888
Horatio Joyce, University of Oxford
The Century Association of New York City was established in 1847 as a composite of club and academy to promote the fine arts and literature. But over the next forty years it gradually relinquished its public mission and became one of the city’s most prestigious private members’ clubs. The final stage in this transformation was the new clubhouse, whose design and location was contentiously debated by members between 1872 and 1888. Ultimately the Club commissioned the leading architectural practice McKim, Mead & White to design a distinguished clubhouse in the heart of ‘clubland’ in Midtown Manhattan. This debate, protracted and well documented, presents a unique opportunity to consider the significance of space and place for understanding the rise of club life in New York in the late nineteenth century; a largely unstudied subject, despite their apparent mutual independence. He is therefore able to incorporate the material evidence from the Crystal Palace exhibition into his design principles. By doing so, he establishes an aesthetic theory that is both materialist and idealist, marking a significant shift in midnineteenth century aesthetic thought.

ABSTRACT NINE
Palimpsestous Eclectic in Suburban Los Angeles: From Factory to Mall
Dimitri de Preux, University College London
What are the architectural and stylistic remains when a production site—an inherently nonpublic space according to sociologists Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt (1974)—is transformed into a space of consumerism? During the largescale manufacturing industrialisation of Los Angeles in the 1920s, Morgan, Walls & Clements partially decorated the Samson building, a 1929 modernist, functionalist tire factory, according to the main Southern Californian architectural trend in the 1920s: historical eclecticism. The front and public facade of the factory were thus modelled after the décor and structure of an Assyrian palace erected in the 8th century B.C. After the closure of the factory in 1978, the site was sold by the local municipalities to redevelopers under the condition that they would keep intact the front Assyrian replica facade. The site was transformed into a shopping mall named The Citadel, for which the historical eclecticism served as the main recognizable ‘theming’. This trope was extended to the entire new site, thereby erasing the functionalist spaces. Very little has been researched or written about this building, although it is often cited as a key example of L.A. historical eclecticism. Conceived as a historical reconstruction, this paper explores both the conservation and transformation of the building in the context of a rising neoliberal economy. Moreover, The Citadel is considered against the notion of a ‘grey public space’ (Naomi Klein, 1999): a composite, privately owned space, the ‘public’ nature of which is rendered ambiguous, here both architecturally and socially.

ABSTRACT TEN
Style and Identity – Imported wares?
Bente Aas Solbakken, University of Oslo
In 1891 an opposition of young architects in Kristiania (Oslo) established their own society – Younger Architects Association (YAF). The group consisted of pupils of the architect and historian Hermann Schirmer, who taught the ornament class at the College of Arts and Crafts. One of the more heated debates in Norway around 1900 was how to achieve what was called a contemporary national style. At the time there was a complete consensus in that a contemporary style had to draw upon tradition, but how and to which tradition one should look was disputed. In wooden architecture Norway could offer a plethora of alluring models, but not so for architecture in stone. Schirmer had coined a theory of how Norman architecture in a certain sense could also be claimed to be Norwegian architecture, and urged his pupils to go to Britain both to further their education and to study the historical heritage. Obviously, these young architects were also deeply influenced by contemporary British architects. English impulgem in Norwegian architectural culture at this time may also have informed another debate – the one whether architecture should be regarded as an art or a profession. YAF was strongly advocating a view of the architect as an artist, in fact the main reason for setting up the YAF was to champion this position. These questions of different types of import to Kristiania from the British Isles are the topic of a chapter in my thesis The Artist Architect: An Architectural Culture in Kristiania about 1900. The proposed paper will aim to set the discussion within a framework inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of fields of cultural productions. The heated discourse regarding how to achieve a Norwegian style will also be read in light of constructivist historiography.
ABSTRACT ELEVEN

Sites of Memory Beyond Mourning? Remembrance and place in the war cemeteries of the old Western Front

Tim Fox-Godden, University of Kent

In his memoir ‘Goodbye to the Battlefields’, Captain HA Taylor wrote ‘...one finds no trace of that tangle of trenches, named after London streets’. Taylor catalogued the changing nature of the landscape and the loss of those distinctive features that had made up the battlefield. It is a consistent theme within the writings of those soldiers who returned. The Great War was epitomised by architectural and geographical spaces; the idiosyncratic naming of these spaces serving as a narrative framework for personal experience. The distinctive nomenclature of trenches and battlefield locations, influenced by thoughts of home or tongue in cheek Tommy humour, helped to give a sense of place to the individual’s involvement in the war. When, as in the case of Taylor, the soldier returned to ‘look about for his old home’ the geography of his memory and experience had disappeared without trace. Later writings on the battlefields, such as Jay Winter’s ‘Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning’, espouse aspects of remembrance that are solely focussed on the dead. There is little consideration for the role of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) architecture as anything beyond grave markers. This paper will explore how the cemeteries and memorials of the IWGC serve to commemorate the living and not just the fallen of the British and Commonwealth forces. It will seek to show how the cemeteries act as a lynchpin for the geography that defined the war experience of every soldier and will argue that these architectural entities are now the predominant representative of a lost geography of memory. The locations and titles of these ‘sites of mourning’ will be explored to show the role they have in maintaining the memories of those who survived— to consider them as sites of memory beyond mourning.

ABSTRACT TWELVE

Rereading I.M. Pei’s Museum for Chinese Art, Shanghai, 1946

Sa (Leah) Xiao, University of York

By examining the first museum project that I.M. Pei conceived as an expectation of modern Chinese architecture, this paper probes the architectural representation of Chineseness as it encountered the language of Western modernism in the 1940s. In February 1948, Pei’s graduation design for Harvard GSD, under the supervision of Walter Gropius, was published in Progressive Architecture. Though unrealised, the work was highly acknowledged as a monumental piece of modern museum design, as it presented an extremely modernist look combined with the theme of a traditional Chinese garden, while elements of the design seem to have been strongly influenced by Mies van der Rohe’s proposal for a ‘Museum for a Small City’ of 1943, as has been previously noted by Barry Bergdoll. However, neglected to date is the fact that Pei intended his museum for a very specific location, the unfinished urban plan of the Civic Centre in the Jiangwan District of Shanghai, a part of the Greater Shanghai Plan initiated by the National Government during 1929-1937, a scheme that promoted an architectural expression of Chineseness among the wider context of constructing a new Chinese architecture in the 192030s. This paper will consider this Chinese context in detail to address how Pei’s outlook for modern architecture and urban planning in China integrated influences from his American training in modernism, the metropolitan environment of Shanghai, as well as other Chinese architects’ attempts to devise new forms of architectural expression in 1930s China; by doing so it will demonstrate the project’s contribution to both Western modernism and the course of Chinese modernisation.

ABSTRACT THIRTEEN

Architecture for Revolution: Democracy and Public space Case Study: Tehran, Capital of Politics

Asma Mehan, Politecnico Di Torino

Common space and public open spaces are studied and investigated from various aspects in western contexts. What is the most considered in this study is the relationship between public open space and democratic functions in eastern context and especially in Middle Eastern countries. The notion of public is connected to the notion of people in the framework of the national state political organization. What was happened in Cairo in 2011, just as in Kiev in 2014, and Turkey 2013 was the prolonged and mass occupation of public space by citizens. Indeed, physical space for the expression of democratic rights and claims is important in modern democracy. Tehran is studied as the example of a contemporary metropolis that embodies spatial political tensions within its urban form. Tehran’s urban form remains deeply rooted in the historical ideologies of space in shaping a contemporary space of sovereignty. By reading the city through transformation of public spaces, the relationship between its architecture and political power will be exposed as an example in which the architecture of the city is charged with enabling an ideological interaction through action and reaction, revolution and resistance. This study focuses on Tehran during two major intervals 1921-1950 (politics towards modernity), 1951-1979 (Architecture for revolution) and the roots and results of these critical periods and their integration to political theology in contemporary middle east metropolis.

keywords: Public Space, Urban Form, Democracy, political ideology
PROGRAMME

9:00  Registration

9:30  Welcome by Julian Holder

9:45-10:45  Lightning Round 1 (Abstracts 1-3)

10:45-11:00  Coffee Break (Provided)

11:00-11:45  Panel 1: Roundtable Discussion
  Writing about architecture: rights and responsibilities
  Richard Anderson, University of Edinburgh
  Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Kent School of Architecture
  Hannah Malone, Magdalen College, University of Cambridge

11:45-12:45  Lightning Round 2 (Abstracts 4-6)

12:45-13:45  Lunch (Provided)

13:50-15:00  Lightning Round 3 (Abstracts 7-10)

15:00-16:00  Panel 2: Roundtable Discussion
  Architectural History Beyond Academia:
  Heritage/ Conservation/ Curatorship
  Chris Miele, Montagu Evans
  Olivia Horsfall Turner, RIBA Drawings Collection
  Kathryn Ferry, Freelance writer and scholar

16:00-16:20  Coffee Break (Provided)

16:20-17:20  Lightning Round 4 (Abstracts 11-13)

17:20-18:00  Keynote Speech
  The history and the historiography of modernism:
  Its present and future
  Iain Boyd Whyte, University of Edinburgh

18:00-19:00  Wine Reception (Provided)

20:15-21:30  Dinner (please email if interested, spaces limited, approx £25)

An architectural tour of Edinburgh will be given on
Saturday, 12 April 2015, 10:00-12:30 pm