Abstracts Multitudes 20 (2005)

25 April 2005

ANNE QUERRIEN
Fabriquer des seuils à une troisième nature

The Japanese architect Shin Takamatsu gives industrial shapes to his buildings, making them both attractive and strange. His work renders the productive presence of industry in society visible, transforming it into a system of signs struggling with the environment to produce the image of an emergent “third nature”. Other attitudes have been taken by architects in relation to the environment and industry: functionalism and minimalism claim to exert the least possible violence on the environment, but they don’t build with it because they forget that architecture is first and foremost a threshold.

JOHN RACHJMAN
Rendre la terre légère

By placing emphasis on the “lightness” of the earth, Nietzsche opened up pathways that architecture has hardly begun to explore. Constructing new spaces and temporalities can also mean abandoning the earth as ground or gravity, and discovering lightness as experimentation and nomadism, beyond the themes of immateriality and transparency. Architecture can then maintain fertile relations with the sciences, mathematics, and the arts, particularly dance.

ERIC ALLIEZ & JEAN-CLAUDE BONNE
Matisse-en-Amérique. Le devenir architecture de la peinture

At the Barnes Foundation in 1931, Matisse undertook the painting of a large decorative panel entitled La Danse. Its stakes are considerable: the disqualification of the painting form and the drawing genre, in favor of an environmental art infused with a decorative vitalism that redefines the architectural function itself at the deepest level, beyond any question of site-specificity.

BEATRIZ PRECIADO
Mies-conception : la maison Farnsworth et le mystère du placard transparent

With the Farnsworth house, Mies van der Rohe constructed the first transparent building in history. But how could you live in it? Was it a building doomed to failure, mi(e)s-conceived? Transparency, the blurring of public and private spaces, forced the inaugural resident, Miss Farnsworth, to struggle with the architecture, to inhabit it without giving into it, following risky paths through the subjectification of gender and sexual orientation.
PHILIPPE MOREL

n extensions à Extensions de la grille. Sur la production contemporaine et la notation partir de Le Corbusier et Ludwig Hilberseimer

Le Corbusier still believed that architecture’s fundamental measure should be man. With the exception of Hilberseimer, who more perspicaciously believed in the advent of an abstract, conceptual, and computational form of production, architecture has been late in grasping the interlinkage of science, industry, and capitalism. Even if it means a questioning of its own foundations, it can no longer feign ignorance of a production process that relies increasingly on linguistic constructions, on an “ambient factory” of interconnected PCs.

BENOÎT DURANDIN

Monstruosité dans le cryospace

Architectural realisations, as well as the practices and know-how of architects, can only quite partially define what architecture is or might be. The virtualities that run through it are the best ways we can grasp it. The histories of the sciences and of architecture have continuously overlapped and intertwined over the course of the last century because of numerous analogies between the virtualities they bear. Constants have appeared between their modes of emergence, like the search for a unified world via a rationalisation of processes and breakthroughs, or the eruption of monstrosity as a factor of regeneration and instability. Monstrosity, always renewed and never domesticated, then becomes the element that allows one to outline the fields of action we could take up and inhabit.

CONSTANTIN PETCOU & DOINA PETRESCU

Au rez de chaussée de la ville

ECObox is a project initiated by the Self-Managed Architecture Workshop, offering the inhabitants of La Chapelle the chance to occupy an abandoned space and to transform it into a participatory garden and a place for debate. The practice of the Workshop tests and provokes the “availability” of the city through “urban tactics” directed toward the interstitial condition and multiple temporalities of certain spaces in the city. At stake is a spatial production from the bottom up, re-energising spaces and collective uses through micro-devices that spring from common dynamics and everyday ways of doing things. The ECObox project is a platform of urban production through a heterogenesis of practices, mixing the knowledge and know-how of inhabitants, architects, researchers, and artists. It is a “heterotopian” worksite where the city is fabricated in real time, by an experimental interpenetration between specialized and common knowledge, springing from lived experience; a worksite at the “ground floor of the city,” in which any inhabitant can enter at their own level and propose a cultural, social, or political project to the others.

MICHÈLE COLLIN & THIERRY BAUDOIN

Architectures et démocratie productive, le projet de rénovation des Halles à Paris

New forms of democracy are arising in the European metropolis, in concrete relation
with major architectural projects. A plurality of groups assert their specific needs, their own visions of the city. The current renovation of Les Halles in Paris is a case in point, allowing us to analyze both the progressive slippage of Fordist technology towards spectacular architecture, and the way that citizens’ expertise reveals new needs, hitherto ignored by the institutions. In these transformations, the technical and aesthetic dimensions of architecture allow it to focus on the exchanges between these different points of view in the city. The Parisian situation also displays the unwieldiness of a state-centred system in comparison to other European capitals.

PAOLA YACOUB & MICHEL LASSERRE (Entretien réalisé par PASCALE CASSAGNAU)
O.V. (Original Version)

In this interview with Pascal Cassagnau, Paola Yacoub and Michel Lasserre discuss their treatment of images as consisting mainly of various forms of editing. The point is to set (and let oneself be carried away by) relations of proximity, displacement, and neighbouring – i.e. to explore (and experiment with) the very mechanisms through which images are knit together in order to compose a worldview.

ISABELLE STENGERS (Entretien réalisé par ANDRÉE BERGERON)
Le défi de la production d'intelligence collective

In this interview with Andrée Bergeron, Isabelle Stengers casts fresh light on the question of expertise, which now confronts the movement of the intermittents – like other movements both yesterday and today. She recalls that the figure of the expert is not a contemporary “invention”, and that it includes multiple realities which are rarely free of political consequences. On the contrary, the choice of the expert, the definition of acceptable questions, and the degree of “deafness” to “democratic events” are all eminently political problems. By acquiring the tools to ask the questions that matter to them (the new model law, the citizens’ sociological study) the collective of intermittents and precarious workers has already created a “democratic event”. Now it is a matter of rising to a double challenge. For the movement, the challenge is that of fabricating a collective intelligence that can transform the knowledge produced into interventions capable of making people think and feel. For the researchers in the social sciences, the challenge lies in succeeding to consider this event as the experimental sciences consider the laboratory, namely, as that which makes innovation and learning possible. Constructing the choice of a counter-expertise therefore means learning to double the struggle around what Deleuze and Guattari call axioms with a practical invention of a quite different sort, involving a minority becoming a collective intelligence that does not contradict but creates.

FRANK BEAU & JÉRÔME TISSERAND
De la politique culturelle à la nouvelle “culture politique”. Propos introductifs sur l’émergence publique

There are different ways of considering the movement of the part-time theater and audiovisual workers, or intermittents. A classic, distanced way, sees a professional group protecting its rights and ideologies in the face of an unemployment reform presented as a campaign against cheats. A more inward and forward-looking way shows the
movement’s productivity, what it is symptomatic of, how it foreshadows a deeper political transformation. Intermittence is a particular seismic zone between two tectonic plates of our values: culture and labor. Questions of employment practices, subjective relations to time, discontinuity of activity and creative process, more than exchanges of opinions about high culture, are what have allowed the movement to persist, construct, and propose. The many additional human and circumstantial ingredients have finally brought forth, at least in our minds, the idea of a particular emergence of law and of common things. Still fragile and relative, this emergent juncture leads us to a fresh questioning of the public debate via another process of work, elaboration, and creativity around the lived substance of things, and not around their symbolic representations. This process, which is the intermittent’s daily condition, could unexpectedly lead to a transformation of politics via the obligation to approach all these common things differently – these common things whose very process of emergence seems to be transforming.

LA COMMISSION DES MOTS DE LA CIP-IdF
Expertise. Un point de vue

The Words Commission is involved in the exploration of all things conveyed by the sphere of terms that surround us. The choice of a word is the fruit or product of many different factors, etymological, political, cultural, philosophical, aleatory, etc. Part of my brain knows all that. In neurology it is said that there exists a region of the brain, called the sorcerer’s pool, which stores all human knowledge since the origin. It’s a theory that explains, for example, the cases of glossalia: someone who, during a fit, begins to speak a language he or she never learned from Adam or Eve. The commission is working “on” our words, remembering their histories and what they lead to, consciously or not, unfolding words (from the Latin, to unfold). In this contribution, the words expertise, objectivity, independence, research, and involved are unfolded.

PERMANENCE CAP, CIP-IdF
Entre le Je et le Nous, l’expertise vivante CAP

Inside the social movement of the intermittent and precarious workers, the “CAP expertise”, in response to the application of the revised protocol governing the unemployment regime of these workers, represents a new comprehension of a possible daily life for the “We”. It is a collective construction of knowledge about the reality of a changing set of regulations that exclude people. Through the living vehicle of their narratives, three CAP intermittents tell us about their practices, their emotions, their doubts about the creation of an expertise that could provide dynamic knowledge of what people are living through. This expertise is founded on the triptych of mutual help, exchanges, and the mobilization of those directly involved. This contradicts traditional expertise, which is founded on the academic knowledge of a single expert delegated by the state. Thus the people directly involved become the primary experts of social reality.

BEATRIZ PRECIADO
Savoirs_Vampires@War

Can the abnormal become an expert? Can the subaltern speak? What kind of objectivity does the expertise of the abnormal, transient, intermittent, handicap or drug-addict produce? What can be called “knowledge” in a post-organic time? Taking as a starting
point Donna Haraway’s “situated knowledge”, this text draws a diagrammatic cartography of displacements from dominant knowledge towards a multiplicity of local or minority knowledge (postcolonial, postfeminist, queer, and transgender critiques) as well as from the epistemological debate about feminist objectivity towards a political genealogy of the production of knowledge.

**TOM REUCHER**

**Quand les trans deviennent experts. Le devenir trans de l’expertise**

Tom Reucher uses excerpts from the writings of various psychology specialists who operate as experts with respect to transsexuality. A close reading shows that these texts produce discrediting, insulting, sexist, homophobic, and transphobic discourses. These writings show the fear of the so-called “experts”, whose attachment to obsolete theories leaves them ignorant of the questions surrounding transsexuality. Transsexuals and transgenders who speak up against the professionals and experts speaking in their place is a new phenomenon in France. It goes along with the re-appropriation of their identity by self-naming and the creation of organizations to defend their rights. Medical and surgical practices can lead to the violation of the human rights of transsexuals and transgenders. The protocols of care for transsexual and transgender patients are maladapted and out of synch with the evolution of knowledge and of society. Transgenders are excluded from the system of medical care.

**CHANTAL NADEAU**

**Sang-statut, sang-loi : le sang sans sexe (Notes sur l’union civile, les queer et l’État)**

In this reflection on the debates that surrounded gay marriage in Europe and North America (especially Canada), Chantal Nadeau wonders what the costs and benefits are for the queer and the nation state when blood-as-sex is traded for blood-as-status within a legal apparatus that is pro-family and pro-nation, working as a vector of social cohesiveness. Queer sexuality is no longer imagined as an aberration or as a misalliance, but rather as a machine of inclusion and erosion of difference, producing a new emblematic figure: the queer family man. In its obsession with filiation, blood-as-status resurrects a community within which the alliance between the queer and the State guarantees the protection of the “ordinary” citizen: the normal, reasonable, patriotic citizen, whose sexuality no longer carries any dynamics of differentiation.

**MAURIZIO LAZZARATO (Entretien réalisé par YVES CITTON)**

**Puissances de la variation**

In this interview, Maurizio Lazzarato revisits his interest in the work of Gabriel Tarde (which plays a central part in his two latest books). He then reflects upon recent uses of the pairing of biopower/biopolitics, as well as upon the place of the “common” in the theory of the Multitude. He concludes by sketching some of the political implications of the philosophy of difference, which invites us to recognize and unleash the productive powers of variation and experimentation.

**Published 25 April 2005**

Original in **French**