

RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS FOR THE SESSION, 'ARCHITECTURE AND PERFORMANCE', ACSA ANNUAL MEETINGS, MONTREAL

REVIEWS: This paper was composed and submitted to the ACSA topic session on the subject of the performative in architecture. Rejection is a common experience and not to be taken personally, since there are often many submissions competing for only a few positions in a session. Reviewers make distinctions based on their experience and assignment from the session organizers, so in some sense the review is not abstractly objective but dutiful. Often reviewers, forced to reject a paper or inclined not to like it in the first place, give reasons for rejection that call for a response from the author, who is technically unable to deliver it. This posting allows me to respond to the reviewers remarks. Reviewers' comments have not been edited but copied exactly as they were received. Reviews are in *italics* and replies are in **bold**.

This is an excellent paper for what it does - explain a psychological theory to architects. However it delves so deeply into Lacan that I lose the analogy with architecture almost entirely. The paper concludes that architecture originates deep in the psyche and can be aligned with the uncanny. OK. But the uncanny itself is a slippery term, by nature. If architecture is DA - mostly dead and a little bit alive, a compelling idea, then how is performance tied in? I think that if the paper were shortened and more focused it would be stronger. Perhaps the author tried to do too much for this format

The term D_A is used to connect architecture to sacrifice. Temples are the place for ritual sacrifice and the *templum* expresses this through the geometry of the intersecting *cardus* and *decumanus*, which was itself applied to the quadration of the victim. The idea of D_A is carried forward through the idea of 'between the two deaths', the interval between actual and symbolic death used in all cultures to define the period of mourning, but also the basis for the structure of the underworld as labyrinth. The labyrinth is, in fable, the first architecture. The paper concentrates on ethnographic examples and uses Lacan's idea of fantasy as necessary to describe the idea of the 'extimate', the inside-out logic and topology of the performative. If this were not explained, the reader might think that the author is just 'making it up'. This idea however is not new and not even original to Lacan. Lacan however is unique in that he laid out the consequences of the extimate and related them directly to behavior and culture. Isn't an explanation required for a thesis?

The author sets out to argue that architecture and the performative are inextricably intertwined, and the intertwining takes place within the domain of the uncanny. The discussion is primarily on the notion of the uncanny, defined by Ernst Jentsch, Freud, and Lacan, and how they could relate to architectural performative. What is missing is the discussion on the significance of understanding the relationship between architecture and the performative by these particular definition of the uncanny, and in particular, how it relates to the call for paper. The reviewer recommends the author to integrate some concrete instances of architecture or urbanism in applying these definitions.

The call for concrete examples is a continuing pervasive theme in many reviews. Examples do not prove a case, they may illustrate what is already explained to help the audience grasp the point. In cases where concrete conditions are cited (city foundations, building practices, cultural practices) reviewers tend to disregard these examples because they are generic. The less a specific example is needed, the more it is demanded.

This essay is a delightful Lacanian romp through the latent possibility of an uncanny ground of architectural theory. The provocative misidentification of the uncanny as performative, and the generic claims of this performativity remain too

abstract - they might require clarifying evidence from specific cases.

Mladen Dolar notes, in his perceptive article on the Lacanian uncanny, that before the French Revolution the 'sites of the uncanny' were almost exclusively performative: ritual, folklore, daily practices. Because many if not most of these practices were related to architecture and spatial situations, the case hardly needs to be made that the uncanny is performative and the uncanny-performative involves 'an architecture' (general conception of time and space) and architecture specifically, as in the case of festal architecture. Does one need a 'specific case' to be able to imagine such universal events as Carnival, New Year's, etc.? Some typical cases were described.

This essay was hard to follow at moments. The theoretical and elemental contrasts and crisscrosses presented were interesting, yet at times failed to engage the architectural aspects the paper should contain. It would be helpful to present a visualization, an architectural description of an imaginary or real space that has been designed with these theories, to help fully understand how the architectural performative and the uncanny engage.

The argument of the paper was that the uncanny/performative lies at the origins and historical heart of architecture. These reviewers are professional teachers of architecture. Why do they have trouble visualizing (and spelling)? The paper is not the same as a presentation, where images of specific examples provide a background to the oral argument. Examples prove nothing unless the audience can see them within a systematic, reasoned context.