

Architecture and ephemerality

In the taboo-busting 1960s, polemical projects like those of Cedric Price, Archigram, and Co-op Himmelb(l)au challenged the widespread notion that architecture should be designed for permanence and perpetuity. Ephemerality, for these designers, was a matter of commitment to less precious, more disposable, more culturally- and socially-nimble spaces of transience and change. Their work has been seen as part of a longer tradition of the design of transient structures in architectural culture, from Sebastiano Serlio's fifteenth-century theatre sets to numerous twentieth-century experiments in portable, relocatable, demountable, and temporary buildings, including Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion houses, and countless variations on the prefabricated mobile home. Relatedly – concentrating not on buildings but instead on the circumstances that act upon them – certain architects have also demonstrated an enthusiasm for the ephemeral through a deep appreciation of the action of time, weathering, sunlight, and landscape on architecture. Indeed, questions of ephemerality have lately become a matter of renewed scholarly focus, prompted by the proliferation of recent architecture exhibitions that seek to curate spatial experiences using temporary structures.

This issue of **arq** begins with Stefano Corbo's reflection on architectures of air and atmosphere, including the ephemeral clouds of Fujiko Nakaya's Pepsi Pavilion at the 1970 Osaka Expo, and Diller+Scofidio's Blur on Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland, 2002 (pp. 188–193). Isabela de Rentería and Claudia Rueda Velázquez study transitional spaces in two projects by Luis Barragán and José Antonio Coderch: Casa Prieto López, and Casa Ugalde (pp. 194–204). The architects' approaches are characterised in terms of ephemerality, contrasting Barragán's emphasis on highlighting the changing qualities of landscape with Coderch's concern for the experiences of moving around spaces, curating glimpses inside and out. Ana Bonet Míro reconstructs the film made about Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood's famous Fun Palace from the mid-1960s: a lost, ephemeral evocation of an unbuilt project, which has nevertheless since become elevated to the canon of high architecture (pp. 215–224). Raúl Martínez Martínez, meanwhile, examines shifts in the historian Colin Rowe's dialectical methods over time, specifically his preference for provoking interactions between conflicting ideas as a way of ensuring ongoing exchange (pp. 205–213). A counterpoint to these articles is provided by Igor Fracalossi's study of serial design experiments conducted by Guillermo Jullian de la Fuente in the design of three embassy projects (pp. 225–240), which attempted to distil timeless theoretical and geometrical architectural insights, in contrast to ephemerality.

An extended 'reviews' and 'insight' section in this **arq** (pp. 256–280) explores the ongoing revival of interest in postmodern architecture, as both a historical phenomenon and a source of contemporary design inspiration. The rediscovery by postmodern architects of historical sources frequently involved reproducing and abstracting traditional forms in 'disposable' materials, simultaneously celebrating and undermining both Classicism and the idea of timelessness regularly associated with it, and thus promoting a contradictory historicising ephemerality. The recent listing of postmodern architecture in the UK – at the same time as unsympathetic alterations to postmodern buildings like Terry Farrell's London headquarters for TV-AM – raises questions about how we should conserve postmodern architecture. Should we treat it as heritage as we do other historic architectures, or should we instead embrace its concern with ephemerality, and be more accepting of its continuing change and reinterpretation?

THE EDITORS