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**Mikkel Bille & Tim Flohr Sørensen (eds) 2016. *Elements of Architecture: Assembling Archaeology, Atmosphere and the Performance of Building Spaces*. Routledge, London. 444 pp. ISBN: 978-1-138-77541-1**

#### PABLO ARBOLEDA

After having studied for several years and graduated from a school of architecture, I usually avoid reading anything that includes the term ‘architecture’ in its title. My position, which may sound somewhat radical, draws on the thought that architects are, quite often, professionals who have not been trained to express themselves through writing – and so, when they write, their texts tend to be too technical or too poetic, with no in-between. Thankfully, this is not the case in the exceptional volume *Elements of architecture: Assembling archaeology, atmosphere and the performance of building spaces*, edited by Mikkel Bille and Tim Flohr Sørensen. Here, theoretical weight and sophistication, together with the broad scope of contributions coherently written by archaeologists, geographers, anthropologists and philosophers, ultimately denotes the intrinsic interdisciplinary character of architecture, for which I have always advocated.

In short, the book delves into something that seems to be evident, though, living in an era where we are bombarded by images, is commonly

overlooked; that is, that architecture cannot be reduced merely to its tangible and visual attributes. If the purpose of architectural works is to be lived in, experienced and inhabited, why should we restrict ourselves to a cold analysis? What is the role of full embodied perception and affect(ion) in all this? The editors wisely address these issues in their introduction through the theorisation of the keywords that are, in fact, present in the volume’s title. Hence, the term ‘elements’ in plural importantly reflects the perspective, as the editors’ phrase it, ‘architecture, we argue, is what emerges when the elements are assembled’ (p. 12). This subsequently leads to a comprehension of ‘assemblage’ as *more* than just the sum of single elements/parts. Further, ‘atmosphere’ is defined as the *sense of presence* that is needed in architecture, which is described as ‘an intangible phenomenon in people’s lives’ (p. 13), while ‘performance’ contributes to the complete realisation of architecture beyond the limitations of simple planning. And even though these thoughts may seem excessively theoretical (indeed, certain parts of the introduction are quite dense), the editors have utilised a set of well-known architectural projects to clarify, and materialise, these ideas in a successful manner.

The volume consists of 22 contributions that have been coherently grouped into 4 different parts: Form and temporality; Atmospheres; Performance and process; and Disintegration and unfinishedness. The editors sufficiently justify and enlighten these themes both in the main introduction and in the brief forewords that precede each part, and I will not retrace these. However, I would like to highlight a few (common) aspects of the various contributions, regardless of their placement in the volume, that I found to generate a sense of coherency and density to the work. Due to limited space I am unable to go through every contribution in-depth but this will allow me to deal with the volume as an assembled whole and establish some links between its parts.

The first point I would like to mention regards the volume’s scope, both in terms of disciplinary spectrum (as already mentioned above) and the range of case studies, reflecting both geographical and temporal breadth: from Neolithic long barrows to unfinished developments in China as products of the recent speculative crisis. In between,

volume. I can confirm that, after several weeks working with it, it is a durable hardcover book with extensive graphic information and beautiful black and white pictures in large format. An interesting contribution on Brussels' architectural eclecticism mediated in the form of a photo-essay is an emotive example of this. In sum, for a volume that deals with the notion of 'assemblage', there should be no better compliment than saying that the book functions as an assemblage in itself: the whole is much *more* than just a collection of essays.

Leaving aside one's own background, every reader will find that fundamental questions are tackled admirably; to someone who has always seen himself as an architect among social scientists and social scientist among architects, this is definitely the case. And, ultimately, the volume confirms my suspicions: people who are not architects have a lot to say about architecture.

## FUNDING

This work was supported by Bauhaus-University Weimar [Thüringer Graduiertenförderung]

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**Ólafur Rastrick & Valdimar Tr. Hafstein (eds): *Menningararfur á Íslandi: Gagnrýni og greining. Háskólaútgáfan, Reykjavík, 2015. 371 pp. ISBN 978-9-9352-3066-9***

ÁGÚSTA EDWALD MAXWELL

*Menningararfur á Íslandi: gagnrýni og greining* is a book with an agenda. Its authors offer a timely critique of heritage construction in Iceland and clearly demonstrate how discourse and performance shape our understanding of the past. While this critique reflects the prevailing currents in the world of

heritage studies (for example, Waterton and Watson 2015) it is an original and important contribution to the academia and heritage sector in Iceland. The tone is set in the introduction where Rastrick and Hafstein set out their definition of heritage. Heritage is defined by change rather than continuity. It is constructed in the present to fit a particular view of the world. The following chapters successfully support this definition, showing how specific things – books, bodies, clothes, food, houses and boats – are made into heritage, shaped by their ever-changing context. This is especially clear in those papers that take a historical approach to the objects under study. The history of the heritagization of medieval manuscripts (Hálfðanarson), female national dress (Aspelund), turfhouse architecture (Hafsteinsson and Jóhannesdóttir) and replicas of 19th-century Norwegian fishing boats (Karlsson) are traced, clearly demonstrating how the historical context and political and cultural agendas shape the understanding and celebration of these items (or not, as in the case of the fishing vessels). This leaves the reader in no doubt: there is no such thing as heritage that is out there waiting to be discovered (see Smith 2006). Heritage is created through political discourse (e.g. Hafstein, Hálfðanarson, Rastrick) and performance (e.g. Björgvinsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir and Schram).

I have three interrelated observations to make, which I put forward as questions. These are not necessarily posed to the authors as such but rather are inspired by the book and its provocative agenda.

## 1. IF THERE IS NO HERITAGE OUT THERE – WILL ANYTHING DO?

The one paper which jars against the proposition that there is no such thing as heritage that is out there to be discovered, although not in direct opposition to it, is Helgi Þorláksson's paper on information boards. Þorláksson is concerned with false representation of the past and he criticizes directly the fabrication of heritage in the presentation of highly disputable facts on information boards for travellers in the south of Iceland. Þorláksson's paper, furthermore, is the only one that offers a clear alternative to the situation he describes: suggesting we promote quotidian activities of the past that historians