The Multiple Faces of Identity in the Designed Environment

Architectural Design and Global Difference Research Group
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Contents

- Information
  - Conference Information  7
  - Programme Day 1  8
  - Programme Day 2  11
  - Presenter Index  14

- Keynote Speakers
  - Nezar AlSayyad  18
  - Eva Jiricna  28
  - Liane Lefaivre  30
  - Nick Temple  40

- Abstracts  55
The Conference

Recent interest in identity has been suggested to have arisen out of several interconnected factors:

- the changes produced by technology in the social, cultural and financial contexts;
- the mobility of people across the globe;
- the anxiety crisis in response to the perceived dilution of long-entrenched identities.

The erosion of the sovereignty of the nation state, precipitated by the expedited global processes of exchange, has provided autonomy to evolved collectives that inhabit the spaces of globalisation. The formation of new and fragmented identities – the latter at its extreme even suggesting the emergence of a new set of universally shared ideals and images giving rise to a homogenised or shared global culture – has called into question the conceptual foundations of identity. Yet, the nature of the present globalising culture has also made it possible for traditional identities to coexist with the emerging ones, engendering an arguably unprecedented complexity in spatial and representational expression within the designed environment.

Through its various themed sessions, the conference aims to address and explore this complexity. It aims to attract people from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, including architecture and design, art and art history, cultural and technological studies and the social sciences.

At the core of the conference is the belief that interdisciplinary events are the most fertile ground for generating creative and innovative thinking regarding the trajectories of identity in the age of globalisation. It is generally accepted that architecture frames our experience of the world, helps to develop our sense of belonging and structures our memories as well as being shaped by these. However, as the 21st century progresses, new ways of experiencing, interpreting, remembering and building the world have emerged from the intersection of the diverse cultures, spatial and representational orders and emergent technologies.

The conference aims to further our understanding of the relationship between identity, memory, technology and architecture by examining the nature of their intersections and transgression of their traditional boundaries in the present day. It also explores their consequences and the manner in which these represent the zeitgeist of our time.
Patsy Hely

Australian National University

Buildings and the Performance of Identity.

On the eastern coast of Australia, edging Sydney Harbour's Bennelong Point, the Sydney Opera House stands suckered, mollusc-like - its massive piers and footings gripping the rocky tidal shelf below. Two centuries ago, between 1790 and 1795, a small three-metre-square clay-brick house with one opening for a window and one for a door sat almost in the same spot on the narrow rocky platform. It was built by the newly arrived British Governor, Arthur Phillip, for the local man Bennelong; and the house and the events leading up to its construction were documented variously, though with little detail, in early eyewitness accounts of the colony.

Bennelong Point is one of the best-known places in Australia and although it has been home to four major buildings, it is the first and last of these - Bennelong's house and the Sydney Opera House, that have most ensured its renown. In terms of design, technologies and materials each house/house was markedly different from anything previously experienced by its occupants/audience. Both - in their own ways - provided spaces where the enactment of behaviours congruent with the aims of the state could take place and both contribute to the site's ongoing political and cultural charge. This paper will chart the mythologising of both buildings and tease out issues of place, buildings and national identity.
The Architectural Design and Global Difference (ADGD) research group is interested in the influence of current global conditions on architectural design education, theory and practice. Its investigation covers a wide range of current issues such as globalisation, identity, place, memory, emerging technologies, technology transfer and educational issues.

The ADGD research group aims to bridge the distance between different research groups across Nottingham Trent University and create productive links and research networks, nationally and internationally. We actively welcome opportunities of collaboration with research partners and encourage postgraduate students from all countries and cultures to study with our group.