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Riviste di architettura. Traiettorie

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a cura di Fernanda De Maio, Anna Ghiraldini e Michela Maguolo

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The Journal as Community or School

Tim Steffen Altenhof

When it comes to architectural journals, I'm a virtual outsider. Right off the bat, I should say that I hardly read them. Somehow, I've always gravitated towards books and daily newspapers, and the numerous copies of "Arch+", "LOG", or "Baumeister", which I buy nonetheless, either end up on my book shelf or accumulate on a pile of unsorted readings and other paraphernalia close to my bed. For more sustained discussions on culture. I've come to find it easier to commit to an outlet like "The New Yorker" or "Die Zeit", weekly magazines or newspapers that ever so often cover architecture without satisfying my professional curiosity. They address a more general audience. So why not read more journals? My reserve towards magazines and journals might partly stem from an overwhelming abundance on the market, a discursive maze which makes it easy to feel disoriented: tumbling from "Domus" to "Casabella", from "Abitare" to "OASE", from "Architectural Record" to "AA Files", from "Volume" to "A+U", one can spend days and weeks reading about individual practices, buildings, or themes both abstract and palpable, pertinent or eminently forgettable. Some are scholarly, even peer-reviewed, others are more accessible as they address designers and architects, which is to say, those who would rather build than write.

Journals and magazines are technically speaking not the same. This might seem like a semantic quibble, since both are periodicals addressing a different readership. Compared to other disciplines in the humanities – comparative literature, history, or philosophy – architecture attracts a host of scholars from different backgrounds, but even if its research sector increasingly balloons, it is above all else a profession. This difference between profession and discourse also inflects the direction of a

publication. The expectations of a scholarly readership might not match those of the architectural reader.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the journal is by definition a "periodical publication containing news or dealing with matters of current interest in any particular sphere". Its etymology goes back to the Old French *jornel*, which means daily, and ultimately to the late Latin *diurnãlem*, of or belonging to a day. The journal has been a record of events and different stages of a passage, for instance, taken by a traveller or a ship. Even if this meaning is now obsolete, it can still be a register of daily activities. Since its inception, then, the journal combines notions of recording time, and providing information on a regular basis. In its current use, by contrast to the more general magazine, it is aimed at a scholarly audience, providing in-depth analysis of specialized topics. The earnest journal represents a repository of expert knowledge, something one tends to consult for a specific reason, but nothing one reads in the most ordinary of its meanings.

And yet, can there ever be enough journals in architecture? I suppose not. Some of them are well-established, while others are legendary and long discontinued, their prestige further fueled by myth and anecdote. The object-like "San Rocco" (designating itself as a magazine) might belong to this last category, and certainly "Oppositions", the intellectual mouthpiece of New York's Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. At times, journals are linked to institutions, as was the case with "Oppositions", and it holds true for many others, such as "Horizonte" (Bauhaus University), "AA Files" (AA), "Candide" (RWTH Aachen), "Rumor" (Princeton), or "Perspecta" (Yale). Depending on the editorial process, such journals may reflect the culture of a school only to a certain extent, as is the case with "Perspecta", a canonical publication globally disseminated for which graduate students at Yale draft a proposal with which they enter into a competition to select the editors of issues yet to come. But in contrast to the pluralistic and dynamic voices of its house, although satisfying the expectations of a scholarly magazine, Yale's "Perspecta" has never been about the community of graduates in the school of architecture. Instead, the board's selection process seems opaque, and mono-thematic issues take years to come to fruition, drawing on a wide range of international contributors, many of which are well-established in their respective fields.

Despite the engagement of students, they often edit their respective issue after graduating, a process only increasing the chasm between journal and school (cf. Kemper 2016).

In 2014, the void at Yale left by "Perspecta" (and, for that matter, "Retrospecta" and "Constructs", the other two long-standing publications) came to be filled, when a small group of students set out to found "Paprika!", a new discursive platform in the style of "Fulcrum", the student publication emanating from the AA between 2011 and 2014. As an oftenweekly broadsheet, "Paprika!" is at once student-curated and uniquely designed by students from Yale's Graphic Design program – part of the reason why it is also unlike "Fulcrum", the glaring dialectics of which had been reinforced by but two authors writing for each issue; it turns out that the co-founding editors of "Paprika!" hardly knew about "Fulcrum" at the time (cf. Kemper 2020).

Named after Rudolph Hall's glowing orange carpet, home to the Yale School of Architecture and quite literally the ground for final reviews and numerous badminton games, "Paprika!" reflects more than an expressive hue, oscillating between the colours of the juicy citrus fruit and that of the famous bell pepper. In "Paprika!" students write for themselves and the community that has formed around them, but the format also engages in conversations about architectural culture more broadly, thus appealing to an international readership not confined to the school alone. This is one of the few publications I tend to read, not least because I graduated from Yale (and edited an issue). Because each issue is uniquely designed, it has the appeal of an artwork, and because each issue is curated by different editors, its themes could not be more diverse.

If the presence of an editor shapes a journal's identity, what might be the impact of a pool of editors? How can there be coherence, control, and continuity? In the case of "Paprika!", the implementation of protocols and a set of shared values produce a stable framework for student journalism and its individual adventures, bound by the journal's material and formal identity (and not by ideology). What is called the 'Baton', a constitutional document organising these protocols, is in fact the blueprint to the journal: a painstaking list containing a set of principles, describing its products and the role of each contributor, from coordinating editors to

issue editors to archivists. The result is a fine balance between stability and versatility, between continuation and turnover. Admittedly unarchitectural at times, some issues appear to assess everything but architecture, at least at first glance: *Pure Devouring, Mixtape*, or *Fashion* are but few recent examples whose architectural consequences are far from obvious. Others again turn out to be radically building-oriented, such as *Life After Love*, an issue that seeks to address the state of Rudolph Hall in times of a global pandemic.

Print subscriptions ensure a dispatch of physical copies to your local address, while digital versions of each fold are freely accessible through its own appealing webpage. It is by virtue of its frequency, unlike most architectural journals, that the weekly bridges a gap between slow print and rapid web presence. Donations, subscriptions, and recent grants by the Graham Foundation help to support the non-profit organisation behind it. The nonprofit, in turn, serves the elected student leadership, and is entirely independent from the school's administration. There is here, then, a radical reordering of the journal culture and its priorities - of community, not tribalism, of participation, not exclusion, of agility, not slowness, of conciseness, not elaboration, of transparency, not opacity. From early on, contributors of "Paprika!" could seek guidance from associate editors, often classmates ready to help polish an article, or to strengthen an argument. Through intellectual exchange, students can tap into a powerful resource: dialogue with peers, without the cumbersome process of peer-review.

The educational focus of this interaction is quite clear. Students together hone their editing skills, and they learn to write outside the confines of seminar papers often compromised by academic conventions and the pressure of time accruing towards the end of the semester. There is value to this: architects tend to be bad writers. And yet, this platform does not exclude voices who already made a career in architecture. "Paprika!" features content from leading figures of the profession, from Keller Easterling to Peter Eisenman, from Robert A.M. Stern to Deborah Berke. And so even if the broadsheet includes some of the discipline's luminaries, it is entirely student-driven, a community's record at once raw and rigorous, firmly latched to the present. Such a blend of voices is not

only informative, but also entertaining, a factor more scholarly oriented journals omit.

Printed on a 25x23 virtual square format, "Paprika!" is folded twice and with its basic four-column layout - which, depending on the designer, gets subverted more often than not - is more akin to a newspaper than to a magazine. And yet, some of the graphic designs are so experimental and dynamic, that legibility is not a first concern. One of the central tenets most newspaper layouts share is clarity. The ways in which "Paprika!" designers have text cleverly float around on the page or placed in columns off-kilter invite readers to engage with the paper in more playful ways: folding, unfolding, rotating, tilting, flipping are all actions one should master before reading some of the issues. As a weekly broadsheet, it lacks the qualities of an object, but thanks to its graphic design, it is worth engaging and collecting in print. This same spirit was carried over into a journal produced in New York City since spring 2019, the so-called "New York Review of Architecture", a brainchild of Nicolas Kemper, the publisher who had previously helped launch "Paprika!" before graduating from Yale [Fig. 1].



1 | "New York Review of Architecture", cover pages.

NYRA carries the most obvious and boring name, only to present content at once quirky and cool. In appearance more muted, more tamed than the energetic "Paprika!", its seemingly antiquated logo is synonymous with an unassuming approach to journalism, the kind favoured by readers of "The New York Times" and other reliable news outlets. It gleans information about New York's architecture scene while advancing the discourse in a timely fashion. This specific combination – a reliable source of local information and a platform for observations about the present – makes NYRA worth reading. The city serves as its anchor. For Nicolas Kemper, every publication needs to be rooted in a specific place (Kemper 2016). And indeed, as the journal's editors declared in the first issue from May 1st, 2019: "Here, today, now, we set out to be New York's ghostwriter" (NYRA 2019, 1). A world of global transfer seems to call for local discourse. The thing is, it appeals to readers outside of New York too. As does "Paprika!" reach beyond Yale.

About half of NYRA's subscriptions come from New York City, the rest increasingly from around the world. Local constraint spawns general interest. In the first issue, for instance, Rosana Elkhatib's candid assessment of a new developer-generated community in Brooklyn immediately made me think of Berlin's Tacheles, a new urban quarter designed by Herzog & de Meuron, where a square meter for apartments costs a median of 14,800€. Through a local lens, we see international phenomena writ large. While certain magazines tend to develop a project or propel a certain worldview, the print edition of NYRA covers multiple themes over time, spanning a breadth of topics from architecture to urbanism, and from education to the building industry. Articles discuss a wide range of topics, from deer populations in New York to standing water in subway tunnels, from Heatherwick's failed public spaces to the pandemic's impact on the Venice Biennale.

NYRA might well become "The New Yorker" for architects – just more compact. Released as print-only ten times a year, it is supplemented by a weekly email called "Skyline", a newsletter covering upcoming events in New York City and its vicinity. "Skyline" started as a column in the print edition of NYRA and is now distributed as an email. In terms of content, it can perhaps be best compared to the "The New Yorker"'s famous section "Goings On About Town" a calendar showcasing New York City's cultural

happenings, from theatre to nightlife, from art to music and film, except that "Skyline"'s focus is on all events architectural, including snappy previews of symposia, lectures, and roundtable discussions. In addition to the calendar, authors also review a handful of recent activities for those who missed them.

The newsletter owes its name to "Skyline", the architecture and design review published by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies from 1979 till 1983, although, in fact, NYRA as a whole was inspired by this monthly tabloid format newspaper, which set a precedent for reporting on the architectural scene of New York City. It continues a tradition and knows its history. For Kemper, the social media feed on Instagram, together with the email newsletter and the print edition can be compared to the different speeds of a watch, illustrated by the second hand, the minute hand, and the hour hand. Of the different media contemporary culture has to offer, only the podcast seems to be missing, foregrounding the voice over the written word. And yet, the printed object is still the centrepiece, the linchpin of a community one can collect and engage with.

Each issue comes as a limited edition Risograph print, which is precious both in appearance and materiality. The Japanese vintage technology, popular due to its low production costs, is hard to master, leaving a small degree of unpredictability to the final product. Produced by a83, an exhibition-printshop hybrid that also serves as an archive for art, architecture, and design in New York, a fold of NYRA is something fun to open, not unlike "Paprika!". As a whole, NYRA creates a holistic form of discussion and a record of time, two functions fundamental to architectural discourse. Contributions are generally fast, timely, and incisive. They might be the prototype for a new generation of readers whose main format of exchange is no longer the laboured essay intended for a learned, albeit tiny readership, but one that is compact and personal, controversial and rooted to a place.

Such a format speaks to architects with limited time who want to stay tuned to the discourse. The weekly produces a comprehensive recording of New York architecture's many facets – buildings, interviews, events, books – a compendium of witty commentary on all things architectural. With its focus on writing, and on the voice, it can in the words of Paolo

Portoghesi "resist the lure of size and visual content" (Portoghesi 1983, 11). Often, the "Review" makes funny observations, for instance, when it visits the highly contested Hudson Yards, dedicating a headline to it only to state that there is "nothing to note" (NYRA 2019, 2). It can also be dead serious, when it discusses the bigoted associations between architectural style and ideology, or when it reassesses exhibitions by now deeply entrenched in the canon, such as Matthew Allen's discussion of MoMA's Deconstructivist Architecture show from 1988. My point is, the breadth of topics is vast. Which, of course, has always been the best way to be cool and inviting.

Could NYRA become a role model for other cities? What kind of architecture scene does it take to foster such a publication? In many ways, a publication is not unlike architecture itself: content is analogous to program, paper conforms to the site, and graphic design to the composition of a building. Thus conceived, it can become a playground for emerging architects on which they learn to establish a support structure. Intellectual and not material, this support structure is decisive for any community. In the case of "Paprika!" and NYRA, it consists of writers, editors, designers, illustrators and photographers; and equally important, of a committed readership whose time perhaps is the most important currency of all.

The periodical as a conduit to connect those who do architecture with those who write about it can also become much more than that. It can become the site where a set of shared values and a range of protocols elevate everyone's work, ultimately forging a community that is bound to a certain place, while also exceeding it. At the same time, like many little magazines, it also "remain[s] as the surprisingly permanent but almost invisible record of the pulse of a moment" (Colomina 2010, 8). In architecture, the school has increasingly become a magazine, a packaged and mediated product for customers rather than students. For Thomas Weaver, this was the basic assumption when he took on the role as editor of the "AA Files" between 2008-2018.

If architecture schools increasingly operate like magazines, could an editor invert this logic, turning a magazine into a school? And what would this imply? A school open to students and not catering to the desires of

international consumers of a branded corporation would have to be pluralistic instead of themed (parametric, tech-savvy, political, environmental), combining highbrow and lowbrow, young and old, ideally presenting everything instead of something.

Transcribed to a journal, such approach would make it didactic, perceptive, but also amusing. The magazine as school would address a panoply of issues by a range of authors, channeled, however, through the observant eye of an editor, someone able to tell good sentences apart from bad ones. Following the BBC's mission statement to serve all audiences through "services which inform, educate, and entertain" (BBC), the "AA Files" 57-75 make a case in point for a biannual journal that is thoroughly researched, reputable, and relevant, and yet unlike any of the earnest academic journals. There are comics, full spreads dedicated to photographies, but also brief reflections, interviews, and conversations, sometimes even with the ones who passed. A retrieved talk Mies van der Rohe gave at the AA in 1959 found its way into issue 66. Cutouts and foldouts increase the complexity of the printed object, bringing pleasure to an activity that usually stops short of engaging with paper: reading. Emma Letizia Jones's article *The Wanderer* for instance, published in "AA" Files" 72. contains a large foldout of Eduard Gaertner's Panorama of Berlin (1834); "AA Files" 74 features cut-out views of the cupola of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, one page arranged such, that a portrait of Immanuel Kant on a historic stamp appears just behind the cupola's cut out oculus. as if gazing down into Borromini's church [Fig. 2].

With its monochromatic covers – pale yellow, deep blue, variants of rose – the journal calls for attention only through silence. First published with Weaver's deft editing in 2008, this format has little in common with the two publications discussed above, not least because of its frequency.



2 | A page from "AA Files" 74 featuring Immanuel Kant within the oculus of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane's cupola.

There is also more depth to it, more endurance. Issue 57 began with 84 pages, while the last one, covered in soft red, grew more than twofold and features 206 pages. Here, too, we notice a wild blend of contributors, those with influence and renown, but also ones that demonstrate a youthful inquisitiveness. A good gatekeeper is able to secure quality without streamlining the breadth of input, elevating the inexperienced without neglecting the experts. Writers from within and without the AA delivered scholarly material, but many issues are replete with enjoyable anecdotes, for instance, when Peter Eisenman reveals in an interview with Weaver how he was sent to school in knickerbockers. The result is a confluence of chit-chat and scholarship, entertainment and education, packaged into a visually appealing object. Much like NYRA focuses on buildings, Weaver's "AA Files" employed a "language addressed to the universality of architecture through its most appealing and universal of things, its buildings" (Weaver 2020, 51).

Ultimately, the zine, broadsheet, or journal will have to keep up with the new media, with Dezeen, e-flux, and all other online magazines. It has to keep up, too, with the unfettered access to information provided by some

of the more consumable formats such as Instagram and its myriad outlets, from stories to reels to posts, addressing a generation of architects increasingly accustomed to the consumption of images. As Portoghesi presaged in 1983, "[...] the only way of successfully tackling the problem is, perhaps, to go back to producing quality magazines, those periodicals in which 'body' and 'clothing' are incomparably blended" (Portoghesi 1983, 11). In the case of "Paprika!", NYRA or the much slower "AA Files", this blend is and was accomplished by producing an immaculate, pleasurable product, both in terms of graphics and content. If the former two attempt to create a community, the latter sought to establish a school.

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English abstract

This article identifies two essential ways to conceive of an architectural publication today: as a form of community, and as a school. "The New York Review of Architecture" and the "AA Files" are exemplary for these two conceptions, which make a case in point for publications that seek to inform, entertain, and stimulate debate. Unlike the more earnest academic journal, peer-reviewed and slow, other formats such as the ones described might serve the architectural community in a different way: they address both scholars and architects through a cleverly designed print object with content that is deftly edited and incredibly rich.

Keywords | Architectural Publications; Editing; Journals; "Paprika!"; "New York Review of Architecture"; "AA Files".

"Terreno Comune" Una conversazione sul progetto

Laura Camerlingo, Alessia Sala, Cesare Sartori



"Terreno Comune" 1 (gennaio 2020), *La strada*. Busta in formato A4 in carta kraft e borsa del Senato degli Studenti.

"Terreno Comune" è un progetto editoriale nato nel 2019 su iniziativa di alcuni rappresentanti del Senato degli Studenti dell'Università luav di Venezia. La proposta ha avuto origine dall'urgenza di costruire uno spazio di confronto tra pari e di dialogo tra le diverse discipline del progetto, un grande assente all'interno della comunità studentesca. "Terreno Comune" si può quindi meglio definire come una piattaforma che si è declinata in una rivista nel momento in cui questa esigenza ha incontrato la curiosità nei confronti del mondo dell'editoria. Il progetto ricerca nei temi del contemporaneo i pretesti per lo sviluppo di ciascuna pubblicazione, il cui



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