

Residues of the real

In 2004, Peter Zumthor's partly constructed building at the Topography of Terror museum in Berlin was demolished. This now absent intervention into a charged wasteland that was once the scene of Nazi crimes is the subject of Claudio Leoni's paper in this issue of **arq** (pp. 110–122). Leoni addresses the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's discussion of 'the real' through Zumthor's museum. For Lacan, the real is what cannot be accounted for by the realms of 'the symbolic' – the codes of human life and culture – and 'the imaginary' – the dimension of images in relation to which we construct our identities. Leoni argues that the Zumthor museum, while it may only have been fleetingly real in the physical sense, sought to deal with the history of the site not by displaying narratives about what happened there but, instead, by being a space apart, a presence which could curate physical traces of the site's artefacts and mark the absence of victims and perpetrators. The 'realness of this project', Leoni claims, 'would have marked the "open wound" of the site in the city, "indicating healing while alluding to the real of history beyond perception and cognition'.

This is the first of a collection of theoretically inclined contributions about 'the real' – following various interpretations, not just those of Lacan – in this issue of **arq**; a theme important to architects who are necessarily involved in making real, physical buildings which navigate the shared codes of architectural and human cultures. David Leatherbarrow and Richard Wesley examine Victor and Aladár Olgyay's foundational work on environmental design from the 1950s and '60s in terms of cultural ecology (pp. 167–176). They find a trace of the real, of immediate 'emotional variation', in the shadows and shading devices that the Olgyays advocated, which they imagine as cutting through the functionalism of modern architecture. Related to the Olgyays' discussion of 'physiological measure' is the philosopher Martin Heidegger's idea of 'measure' not as a mathematical rule but instead as a measure of the heart, which is revisited in this issue by Glen Hill (pp. xx–xx). Chris L. Smith and Sandra Kaji-O'Grady, meanwhile, investigate how ideas of the spandrel and the helical stair have been translated back-and-forth between biology and architecture, where real architectural objects have become redolent images in a traffic of ideas which has reframed both disciplines (pp. 155–166).

The potential of 'imaginary speculative research' is addressed in Benjamin Leclair-Paquet's paper on the American HBO TV series *The Wire* (pp. 135–144). The series presents a 'grotesque realism', the author argues, depicting established but perverted moral codes outside the mainstream – among drug dealers and dock workers, for example – in conflict

with public institutions which, here, seem designed to maintain a self-interested status quo – such as the police, government and unions. *The Wire* offers a powerful ‘imaginary’, Leclair-Paquet claims, to explore decision-making, to test speculations about alternative futures. Following Anthony Giddens, he characterises the series as ‘utopian realism’, seeing its narratives as temporary utopias opening windows on the future, corroborating ‘the significance of “multi-sited” approaches in architecture and urban studies’. Through ‘failure points’, Leclair-Paquet concludes, ‘[t]he architect speculating within realism discovers and exposes the stumbling blocks standing between his or her capacity to turn tactics into strategies’.

THE EDITORS