

Preface

Since MIT Press first published *Why Architects Draw* in 1994, much has changed in the way architects visualize their projects through mostly drawing—graphically representing by lines an object or idea, a sketch, plan, or design—especially with the move to a reliance on digital media. Drawing has remained the crucial instrument of architectural creation and realization. If the techniques architects use to visualize have changed, the method they use to design has not.

Digital media, like computer-aided design and other drafting software and digital applications, have come to dominate architectural offices. In 1994, it would have been accurate to say, as I did, that when visiting architectural offices one would see people “sitting or standing at the various desks and tables often littered with paper” drawing (p. 2). These drawings would range from the rough and freehand to the rigorous, formal, and hard-edged. Today it is more likely that when entering architecture offices we would see designers sitting or standing in front of computer terminals.

These new digital techniques have undoubtedly offered new possibilities for the creation, development and realization of architectural designs. Whereas drawing from at least the fifteenth century allowed designers to work off-site and send their designs to the site for realization; the computer has reduced the space/time distance of practice. Today designers and

others involved in the creation of building can cooperate in real time using the same drawings and changing them together at the same time if necessary. Clients can view designs at home without the designer being present and can add to the designs without destroying the original. And while clients, consultants, and contractors may change and erase digital drawings, it is more straightforward than in the past for architects to edit these changes. Digital media have also provided tools that allow for greater levels of precision in visualization and documentation adding to the efficiency with which designers can produce drawings for complex designs, e.g., hospitals, airports. Using digital media offices today can go between two-dimensional renderings in digital form to printed three-dimensional models, which allows for a more direct and efficient test of their designs. Augmented reality allows architects to see their designs in three dimensions, in context, get a fuller sense of volumetric nature of the buildings spaces, and provide a seemingly three-dimensional contextual sense of the project to clients. Through digital media too, designers are now able to analyze more exactly and visualize the effects of such things as wind patterns previously problematic.

Yet whether created by hand or through digital media, drawing is still at the heart of architectural design. It still is as Rayner Banham noted the mark of

true architect. Drawing today as it was in 1994 still plays the pivotal role in the conceptualization, development, realization, and formalization of an architectural idea. It serves as inspiration for an idea, a basis for an internal dialogue between architect and their idea and as a record of that dialogue. It also forms the basis for developing, testing, and even transforming design ideas as the process moves from the initial creative spark to the actual creation of a full-blown design. Finally, as the formalization of the design idea, drawing provides a baseline for the final realization and eventual production of the design. Drawing is also a critical means of architectural communication, be it between the architect and their client, engineers, contractors, and even the media. Drawings also guide the actual construction of the material object.

As I argued in the book, and most important, drawing is a central tool for the architect to hopefully control the process of design negotiation with clients, and the public. It is a way of engaging and defining that discourse through a medium that the architect knows best. In a world where architects have little or no power, drawing still is the one instrument that the architect can use to at least attempt to enforce their control. In 1994, I also argued that if you know who does the creative, development, or production drawings and at what stage of the design, you have gone a long

way toward understanding the social hierarchy of an office. Today that would still be the case. And, today as in 1994, the limits of drawing both as a design tool and as a transparent means of communication with clients that I raised in *Why Architects Draw*, e.g., client manipulation, the emphasis on form and aesthetics over social practice and use among others, still holds.

So for me the issues first raised in *Why Architects Draw* about the social responsibility of the architect, the limits that drawing potentially places on the imagination, and the nature of the give and take between architect and client and architect and society when mediated through drawing still remain and demand greater mutual understanding and more informed dialogue. As I argued at the end of the book, the way architects use and understand the new media for visualization and how society will allocate social responsibility to those actors who deal with the relation of the virtual, be it visualizing on paper, or digitally, demands critical examination. As I said then, “A dialogue about drawing among architects and between architects and others is a crucial place to begin” it still is (p. 301).

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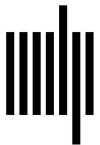
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