

# MoMA A&D talks: on curating architecture and design

Luis Michal, Amanda Saba Ruggiero\*

**D**uring Fall 2016 we had the unique opportunity to participate in the regular internship program of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and assist with ongoing exhibition projects in the Architecture and Design Department (A&D). This Department was established in 1932 as the first curatorial department dedicated to architecture and design and built on an ambitious collection covering major figures and movement of architectural culture from mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. With looking back on a rich history of influential exhibitions such as *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* (1932), *Architecture Without Architects* (1964/65) or *Deconstructivist Architecture* (1988) it has been one of the key institutions to push the format of the architecture exhibition and which it keeps doing up to today.

\* Luis Michal is an architect with a Master Degree at Technische Universität München, Germany; next to his studies he could gain a wide working experience in the fields of architecture, curating and publishing; he is interested in challenging formats of architecture and exhibition practice by the means of new media among others and furthermore researches on contemporary Chinese architecture and culture.

Amanda Saba Ruggiero is a professor at Institute of Architecture and Urbanism, and a postdoctoral researcher enrolled at Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism - University of São Paulo, Brazil; since the master and PhD, developed studies on architectural modern and contemporary history, focusing the relationship with modern and contemporary art, at museum and urban spaces, also investigating exhibitions and narratives on Latin American Art and Architecture.

Having this in mind we both came to New York with great respect and honored to gain insights in this institution for a period of three months. The department currently employs around 15 people which made it a really pleasant, intimate place to work with highly passionate and professional individuals full of remarkable expertise and respect for each other. This said and with the department going through some recent (at that moment) personnel changes, most notably the new directorship of Martino Stierli since 2015, as well MoMA reconfiguring and adding gallery spaces set to be open in 2019, we felt it was a very interesting moment for us to talk to our curator colleagues about their personal history and professional ambitions as curators at MoMA as well specific challenges of exhibiting architecture and design.

Being both educated in architecture in different countries (Brazil and Germany) we could gain not only a lot of professional insights but also talk about personal aspects of the curators' – not always linear – careers. In total we conducted six interviews with all (senior) curators and one curatorial assistant of the Architecture and Design Department, all of whom we asked the same, around ten questions in order to produce a complete "panorama" of the departments staff at that very moment. In

the following we would like to share with you the second half with Juliet Kinchin, Martino Stierli and Sean Anderson. The first three interviews with Paola Antonelli, Barry Bergdoll and Michelle Millar Fisher, were published on RISCO v.16 n.1 2018.

From the interviews, Juliet Kinchin had an approach since a student into intellectual debates and design history rather than architectural history, while Martino as a professor, was also engaged doing exhibitions. Sean Anderson struggled being a professor and practicing architect, and curation for him "means also being able to condense ideas and questions". Since they had different backgrounds before arrive at MoMA, the teaching position and a special love for research is a shared common background for them.

Juliet Kinchin argues that the curator's activity apart from the responsibilities also means communicate and creating view points and arguments in a spatial and material form, while Martino touch about the work of curating a show as very much about a teamwork. For Sean Anderson also the very strong critical sensibility, is a must have skill for a curator.

Sean Anderson's advice to young curators is to ask questions and to have as many experiences in the world as possible. Juliet Kinchin talks about integrity it makes the difference in your work, and Martino in the same way, reinforce the idea to do what you love and so you will be successful.