



# DT

## DOSSIER TRANSLATIONS

### Contested forms

Guest editor: Alejandra Celedón

## Introduction

Alejandra Celedón

Despite architecture tried to distance from “form” in the second part of 20th century, the arguments were articulated from its very negation: non-plan, formlessness, form as a flexible, open and variable process, were all discourses that emerged as a contestation to form. Today we still cannot scape, and furthermore, we witness a renewed interest in form itself, which grows in parallel with an expanded and polysemic understanding of the term that has embraced written, artistic, pedagogical, editorial and curatorial formats. Thus, beyond material form, this number covered a range of modes of practice taken as part of the repertoire of possible – and more critical – architectural forms.

The six articles that compose the dossier constitute an enquiry into the authority of form regarding the city, pushing the boundaries of what architectural form can be and do. Teaching form, the essay as form, forms of life, form as movement, morality and form, form and territory, are some of the entry points here covered.

Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen dwells on the teaching of form, particularly on Josef Albers ideas. Celebrating the square – the ultimate abstraction in terms of architectural enclosure – and through series-based work, Albers points out to families of potentialities, proposing that it might be a category of forms able to trigger or “affect” a territory.

Thomas Weaver writes about writing as a possible architectural form, vindicating the anthology of essays – the place for trying and rehearsing – as a place for architectural knowledge. Departing from Adorno’s “The essay as Form”, Weaver stands “against” the grandiosity of treatises and “for” the playfulness and simplicity of essays.

Francesco Marullo argues for the inevitability of form in architecture. “Form of life”, Agamben’s category where is never possible to take bare life as the biopolitical subject, would explain a shifting understanding of form as relations between forces and possibilities. Repetitive forms are no

more than a signal of the terrifying beauty of the 20th century: boredom.

Gabriela García de Cortázar proposes that the notion of form in architecture contains a paradox between a systematic rejection to the idea of movement and a central concern at the discursive level. By looking at the New Luxor Theatre by Bolles + Wilson, she unravels a more comprehensive mode of conceiving the relationship between the material and static form.

Daniel Concha, by means of a single built example, the Torre Velasca (1958), and through a dialogue between Peter Smithson and Ernesto Rogers, tackles a central issue revolving around architectural form: its morality.

Miguel Paredes, employing the geometric operations by Sejima and Nishizawa, interrogates forms which are not based on idealized geometries, but “anexact”, an attitude which respond to the repertoire of formal investigations dominating contemporary architectural scene.

The main source of contradiction of the notion of form in architecture has been a simultaneous effort to respond to external constrictions while attempting to be an autonomous entity. The moral obligations attached to forms implied that the rules governing them were coming from the outside, as it by themselves had never been enough. Where, thus, between the world of conceptualization and materialization, means and ends, self-empowerment and reliance, should we place architectural form? [m](#)