Doing is thinking (1/2)

During the first week of April 2025, over the course of three days, the conference series “Hacer es Pensar” (*Doing Is Thinking*), focused on technique and architecture, was held in the city of Barcelona, featuring 12 international speakers with diverse professional backgrounds. The event was part of a project supported through the competitive call for the promotion of scientific culture by the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT – FCT-23-19087, 2023). The outcome of these lectures, round tables, interviews, and discussions served as the basis for the production of two issues of the journal, edited by the curators of the series, Olga Felip and Queralt Garriga-Gimeno, and directed by Professor Alberto Peñín.

Since its first issue in 2011, *Palimpsesto* has paid special attention to the three aspects that structured the conference, as expressed in its founding statement: “learning, the project through its material and technique, and reflection.” Since then, issues such as “*The Cheshire Smile*” (#6) or the eponymous “*Doing Is Thinking*” (#5) have explored these three vertices through interviews, project publications, critical texts, and reflections on learning. This not always explicit corpus underpins the content of the conferences held in 2025 and justifies their dissemination as one of the outcomes of the call.

The conference also served as the inaugural event for the Interdisciplinary Architecture Research Institute of the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (IRIA/UPC) and aligns with the aim of promoting reflection and research in architecture at the highest international level. We understand that the approach, content, and outcomes of these debate sessions exemplify what this institute aspires to be.

“Hacer es Pensar” is a cultural project for the dissemination of architectural knowledge, conceived with continuity, and characterized by a transversal and interdisciplinary vocation. It involves the three schools of architecture of the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (ETSAB, ETSAV, and EPSEB–Building Engineering). It is interdepartmental and connects academic knowledge with industry (ROCA and other companies that made it possible) and with society (Fundació COAC). The conference also sought to reach the widest possible audience and, to this end, was held at different venues across the city, on different days and at different times. It was supported by the Blanca–CIMSA Chair, as well as by sponsors Roca Gallery, Aislux, Bandalux, and Sika, and collaborators Natursystem, Zinco, Knauf, Jansen, Neolith, Technal, Rosagres, Ulma, and Compac.

At a time of profound technological and environmental transformations, the conference invited reflection on the role of technique within the discipline, as part of material culture. That is, understanding technique not only as a set of functional tools and procedures, but also as a cultural manifestation that reflects the values, knowledge, and ways of life of a society at a given time.

More specifically, the round tables were framed around technique as language, technique as a projection toward the future, and technique as a commitment to sustainability. The event brought together speakers from diverse backgrounds and contexts, who shared their perspectives on how technique influences their design processes:

• 01/04/2025: Round table on Technique and Language (ETSAB/UPC), moderated by Marina Povedano, with David Kohn, Sofia Pezo, and Carolina B. García-Estévez, exploring how technique shapes architectural expression and its communicative capacity.

• 04/04/2025: Round table on Technique and the Future (ETSAB/UPC), moderated by Clara Solà-Morales, with Pedro Gadanho, Philippe Rahm, and Carlos Bañón, debating technological advances and their relationship to the climate challenges facing architecture today.

• 04/04/2025: Round table on Technique and Sustainability (COAC), moderated by Josep Ferrando, with Bernice Pan, Mary Duggan, and David Van Severen, addressing technique as a tool for environmental responsibility and conscious design.

Each speaker presented, prior to the round table, their personal approach to the topic through their professional work.

In parallel, four keynote lectures were also held: Sofia Pezo (Pezo von Ellrichshausen) (01/04/2025, ETSAB/UPC), David Kohn (01/04/2025, ETSAB/UPC), Philippe Rahm (03/04/2025, Roca Barcelona Gallery), and David Van Severen (OFFICE) (04/04/2025, COAC).

Edition: **Olga Felip and Queralt Garriga-Gimeno**
Coordination: **Queralt Garriga-Gimeno**

Summary

An interview with Philippe Rahm

Queralt Garriga-Gimeno
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The interview with Swiss architect Philippe Rahm addresses the role of architecture within the context of the contemporary climate crisis and its relationship with technology, history, and culture. Rahm proposes understanding architecture as an essentially climatic discipline, whose purpose is to create habitable microclimates through design strategies based on physical principles —such as conduction, convection, or evaporation— rather than through formal or symbolic resources. Throughout the dialogue, Rahm contrasts the concepts of infrastructure and superstructure, drawn from Marxist philosophy, to explain how current material transformations call for a profound renewal of architectural practice. The conversation explores issues such as vernacular architecture and its passive strategies, as well as the technological challenges of the contemporary era, highlighting the urgency of a paradigm shift. In this sense, Rahm advocates a practice capable of reconciling scientific knowledge with material and formal definition, at a moment of critical ecological responsibility.

Key words: climatic architecture, infrastructure, sustainability, vernacular technique, ecology.

QUERALT GARRIGA-GIMENO. PhD in Architecture (UPC) and Professor at the Department of Architectural Design of the E.T.S.A.Barcelona.

Window Wall

Sofía von Ellrichshausen
DOI: 10.5821/palimpsesto.28.13940

The text “Window Wall” brings together several reflections on the artistic and architectural practice developed by the studio Pezo Von Ellrichshausen. Drawing from the homonymous book, it explores the relationship between painting and architecture, between representation and construction, and between the notions of window and wall as metaphors of perception. From a poetic and philosophical standpoint, the text addresses themes such as the reciprocity between subject and object, the continuity between nature and artifice, and the capacity of architecture to shape ways of inhabiting and thinking about the world. The article describes a practice grounded in seriality, intuition, and attention to process, where every work —painting or building— is conceived as an act of knowledge and a form of relationship with reality.

Key words: architecture, painting, perception, representation, art.

SOFIA VON ELLRICHSHAUSEN. Architect (FADU-UBA).

Material sustainability, personal identity, and architectural practice: An anthropological perspective on climate change

Mary Duggan
DOI: 10.5821/palimpsesto.28.13941

The text offers a reflection on material sustainability from an anthropological perspective, exploring how human-material relationships can reshape architectural practice in the context of climate change. Drawing on the work of Strathern, Bourdieu, Mauss, Gell, Ingold, and Geertz, it argues that materials are not neutral components but relational agents embodying memory, identity, and reciprocity. The author contends that sustainability should extend beyond metrics of efficiency or carbon reduction to become a cultural transformation grounded in care, exchange, and continuity. Within this framework, architectural education and design methodologies should integrate an ethnographic and relational sensibility capable of recognizing materials as mediators between ecology, community, and architectural practice.

Key words: sustainability, anthropology, materials, architectural practice, culture

MARY DUGGAN. Architect (Bartlett School of Architecture).

Design for change, Head- Heart- Hand

Bernice Pan
DOI: 10.5821/palimpsesto.28.13942

The text presents the conceptual foundations behind DEPLOY, a fashion brand that conceives clothing as an instrument of cultural and ecological change. Using the metaphor of “head, heart, and hand”, it proposes a business practice that unites thought, sensitivity, and action, aimed at repairing the broken system of the design industry. In contrast to the consumerist model based on overproduction, DEPLOY advances a circular approach that reconceptualizes clothing as an interface of care: care for people, for materials, and for the planet. Through strategies of modular design, reuse, and dialogue with users, DEPLOY seeks to minimize waste and extend the lifespan of each garment. The text reclaims the role of design as an ethical and transformative force, capable of linking creativity, responsibility, and sustainability within a single practice.

Key words: sustainable design, fashion, circularity, ethics, care.

BERNICE PAN. PhD in Architecture (Brunel Univeristy).

Technology and sustainability A reflection on technical practice in times of ecological crisis

Josep Ferrando
DOI: 10.5821/palimpsesto.28.13943

The text reflects on the relationship between technology, sustainability, and architectural practice within the context of the current ecological crisis. It argues for moving beyond instrumental or quantitative approaches to recover a philosophical understanding of technology, conceived not only as a means but as a way of knowing and relating to the world. Through references to Heidegger, Ingold, and Haraway, among others, it presents technical practice as an ethical and poetic act linking thought and action. It also advocates for a pedagogy of making that values learning through direct experience with materials, attention and ecological responsibility. Ultimately, the text calls for a life-oriented technical culture capable of fostering fairer, more sensitive, and more sustainable ways of inhabiting the world.

Key words: technology, sustainability, ethics of making, ecology, pedagogy.

JOSEP FERRANDO. Architect (E.T.S.A.Barcelona).

Panel Discussion: Technique and Language

Sofía von Ellrichshause, David Kohn, Carolina B. García-Estévez, Maribna Povedano
DOI: 10.5821/palimpsesto.28.13945

The text records a conversation between Sofia von Ellrichshausen, David Kohn, and Carolina B. García-Estévez, moderated by Marina Povedano, on the relationship between technique and language in contemporary architecture. Through a dialogue between practice, theory and history, the discussion addresses questions about the possibility of a shared architectural language today, the role of technique in constructing meaning, and the need for a conscious and ethical practice. The participants reflect on the loss of a unified language, the tension between technique and expression, and the importance of craft, care, and material authenticity in contrast to productive uniformity. The debate concludes by emphasizing the architect’s responsibility to give meaning to technical progress through decisions grounded in knowledge, sensitivity, and professional ethics, understood within their cultural and situated dimensions.

Key words: technique, architectural language, craftsmanship, materiality, architectural practice.

SOFIA VON ELLRICHSHAUSEN. Architect (FADU-UBA) and professor at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Santiago de Chile and Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT).

DAVID KOHN. Architect (Cambridge University). He has been profesor at the London Architectural Association de Londres.

CAROLINA B. GARCÍA-ESTÉVEZ. PhD in Architecture (UPC) and Professor at the Department of Theory and History of Architecture of the ETS Arquitectura de Barcelona.

MARINA POVEDANO. Architect (E.T.S.A.Barcelona) and Professor at the Department of Theory and History of Architecture of the ETS Arquitectura de Barcelona.

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