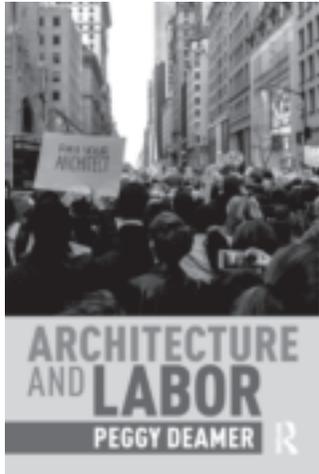


Books by Former Faculty

Peggy Deamer



Architecture and Labor Routledge, 2020 192 pp.

Identifying the Labor of Architecture

“The first step in liberation is to force [a boss] to treat you like a boss, to tell him ‘no, f*ck you, no comradeship, treat me like a boss and give me explicit orders.’”

— Slavoj Žižek, *Vice*, 2013

I can still clearly remember a presentation at my middle school in which a career counselor actively, and even passionately, advised us against considering architecture as a career. The reasoning was that the discipline was poorly compensated in terms of the time and cost of the education and licensure process it required.

Once I ignored this advice and actually attended architecture school, I initially bought into the culture around it, construing architecture as a creative calling and thus not real “labor.” This premise kept us working late at night on designs in the studio, considering unpaid internships, and undervaluing our worth as budding professionals — the norm for many of the people with whom I attended school.

In her book *Architecture and Labor*, Peggy Deamer — an architect, theorist, activist, and Yale professor emerita — explores history and firsthand experience in practice for evidence that defines architects as laborers. This identification, Deamer argues, is key to the next step — questioning the agency in order to improve the potential and effectiveness of the architectural laborer:

How can we see through the limiting dogmas we have been handed and replace them with new

narratives, new organizations, and new methods of production? How can architects sit at the decision-making table in order to combat short-term real estate interests in favor of long-term social and ethical gain? How can we as architects drag our discipline — its conceptualization, its pedagogy, its enactment — into the twenty-first century without succumbing to the neoliberal paradigm?

In the 13 chapters that follow, Deamer analyzes the current condition of architectural labor and proposes new ways to move forward. Together the essays materialize the process by which architecture is produced.

The book begins with a conversation around subjectivity and making, emphasizing the relationship between work, creativity, and aesthetics. This is followed by a discussion on the impact of BIM and technology, on how architectural labor is managed, and on architecture as a product in the neoliberal context of capitalism. Deamer then turns from the theoretical and technological aspects to focus on some of the legal and contractual requirements of architecture as a profession in the U.S. context. The book ends by proposing possibilities for ways to move forward, looking at the roles of unions, cooperatives, and collective practices in changing the culture of architecture. This conclusion reflects Deamer’s overall approach: clearly laying out the issues while looking at how to turn ideas, debates, and discussions into potential actions. The book also demonstrates a collective ideal of work since she has invited a series of architects and educators to collaborate in some of the final essays, including Aaron Cayer, Keefer Dunn, Shawhin Roudbari, and Manuel Shvartzberg.

I cannot help but wonder how the field of architecture would change for the better if some of these ideas for new models of practice were implemented — and what would middle school career counselors advise then?

— Quilian Riano

Riano is the founding principal of architectural and urban design studio DSGN AGNC and associate director of Kent State University’s Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC).

Barbara Littenberg and Steven Peterson



Space and Anti-Space: The Fabric of Place, City, and Architecture Oro Editions, 2019 300 pp.

Charting the more than 40-year careers of distinguished academics, urban designers, and architects Steven Peterson and Barbara Littenberg, this book is one of the few recent titles I have seen that examines urban design in a rigorous and theoretical manner using references from disciplines as diverse as science, mechanics, art, and philosophy. Perceptive insights on the form and function of the public realm and its role in creating interesting and equitable cities are animated by drawings and vivid descriptions detailing what makes successful urban space.

The titular essay is inspired by debates of the 1970s — an era of ideas when the book’s authors were postgraduate students studying with Colin Rowe at Cornell University, starting a journey of research and polemical writing that offered a robust challenge to Modernist architects and their preoccupation with the object that became dominant across the world. It is a remarkable piece of writing, a history of architecture and space placing Modern architecture within that evolution. Written with wit and rigor, it challenges the ubiquity of modern space and contrasts it with interior volumetric space in vivid terms. In part one, an essay on Mies van der Rohe explores the deficit in modern space formed through abstraction. Employing a trinity of ideas from Thomas Aquinas’s “realization of knowledge,” the authors consider the idea, reality, and perception in his architecture, exploring the form, and materiality, and undefined space.

After approximately 110 years of “modern” architecture, the authors inter-

rogate its meaning within architectural history. This is explored through analytical plans of building types of enclosure and solidity from the past 2,000-plus years, from Hadrian’s Villa, Medieval castles, and the Renaissance through to John Soane and Louis Kahn. The spatial qualities of these projects are described in both drawings and text. Great effort is taken to articulate the manipulation of depth and mass through the use of thick walls and other architectural devices that help to define both internal and external spaces of each building.

The particular skill of this publication is how it frames the limitations of Modernism. Rather than offer a singular reaction such as Post-Modernism, the authors make their own research and design practice extremely relevant to the urban challenges of today and the future. Anti-modern writing such as *Complexity and Contradiction*, by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, and *The Architecture of Cities*, by Aldo Rossi, is explored through seven subtexts and shifts the focus from individual architectural spaces to the city scale. The critique of these texts from a spatial and societal perspective is refreshing, and it is used to explore the wider urban fabric with ideas of continuity, form, streetscape, and the public realm.

The publication offers a perspective on the thinking of great urbanists such as Colin Rowe, Leon Krier, and Peter Carl, as well as Peterson and Littenberg, who have been able to add layers of understanding and experience to define what makes good places and cities. The opportunities for individual learning and architectural experimentation are manifest within the techniques of figure/ground, context, phenomenal transparency, and collage. These processes could also be overlaid with contemporary issues such as climate change, energy efficiency, materiality, local industry and production, program, ecology, equity, and a democratic public realm to help make more responsible and responsive environments in the twenty-first century.

Providing plenty of material for a compelling series of discussions and debate, this quietly radical book should be a staple for architecture students everywhere. The authors have woven a history of architecture and urban design with conversation and drawings in an informative and accessible book. I highly recommend it.

— Paul Karakusevic

Karakusevic is founding partner of London-based Karakusevic Carson Architects.