

PROMETHEUS

04



BUILDINGS, CITIES, AND PERFORMANCE, II

Edited by Mehdi Ashayeri and Ezgi Bay

Journal of the PhD Program in Architecture
IIT Architecture Chicago

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Journal of the PhD Program in Architecture

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PHD RESEARCH IN ARCHITECTURE INTERVIEWS

Kenneth Emig. "A View from Two Sides." Top view, 2016. Adawe Crossing on the Rideau River, Ottawa, ON, Canada. Photo courtesy of City of Ottawa.



INTERVIEWS: WHY NOW?

Architecture theory is constructed in the shadow of buildings, history, and ideas over time—it can take place as forethought or as afterthought, just like design happens before construction and survey happens after construction, as a re-reading.

—Federica Goffi

With the continued growth of PhD programs in architecture and the simultaneous broadening of research—through history and theory, criticism, design research, practice-based research, creative practice, urban studies, materials science, cross-disciplinary research, industrial applications, and social sciences—self-reflection is an urgent necessity to contextualize the diversity of approaches. We began a timely full-relief survey into a wide range of doctoral programs internationally to observe a kinetic image of architecture research in academic settings. This all-around exploration values the discipline in the plural for how it contributes to current debates at a societal level in the context of the expanding horizon of architectural inquiry from a variety of perspectives over the last 20+ years. Just like every survey, the interVIEWS denote that which is represented as much as the re-presenter; it is a reading, which becomes possible from the viewpoint/counterviewpoint of how interviewer and interviewee meet, determining a fusion of horizons that reflects history as much as it has a potential to direct future stories of research through the reading of the gaps between well outlined positions.

InterVIEWS is not a history book, nor a methodology book. Given that we are present on the scene, we chose to start in the middle by calling for program directors to engage in a critical questioning that contributes a vital document to the future history of architectural pedagogy.¹ The agenda was developed in a PhD Colloquium at the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism (ASAU), Carleton University. The ASAU PhD in Architecture is an innovative and comprehensive program inviting students to engage critical forms of historical research and architectural practices through a

written dissertation and other mediums manifested in an “epistemic object”—a *verum ipsum factum* demonstration in the making, which embodies thinking in architecture. The Carleton PhD in architecture rigorously prepares graduates for academic and professional fields, aiming at developing multidisciplinary approaches to individual scholarship. The interVIEWS started in October 2014 and lead to this publication and the funding in 2019 of the Carleton Research | Practice of Teaching | Collaborative –CR|PT|C– in Ottawa, Canada. The interVIEWS with PhD program directors function as a compass that needs calibration; the calibration is given by the currency of the questions of a new generation of emerging scholars and architect-scholars. The inter-argumentative relations on the practice of teaching and research contribute to the ongoing discussions on doctoral programs.

The artwork chosen for the front cover of the book is a 2016 piece by Ottawa-based artist Kenneth Emig titled “A View from Two Sides,” on the Adàwe Crossing on the Rideau River, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada (Figures 1, 2, and 3). Adàwe is an Algonquin word which means trade. Emig defines the piece as a kinetic observatory, and in his own words:

“The original call for submissions required an artwork that would connect both neighbourhoods, both sides of the Rideau River. The spheres reflect into one another. There are many contrasting scenes and views available, for example, comparing the surrounding environment to the concentrated image of the environment in the spheres or the sky and the water. There are also no sides on a sphere. What are the two sides?”²

Indeed there are no sides to a sphere and what conversely emerges is a kinetic contiguity of place and continuity of

Excerpts of interviews with current (Michelangelo Sabatino) and former (Harry Francis Mallgrave) PhD Directors, published in Federica Goffi’s (ed.) *InterVIEWS: Insights and Introspection on Doctoral Research in Architecture* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge, 2020).

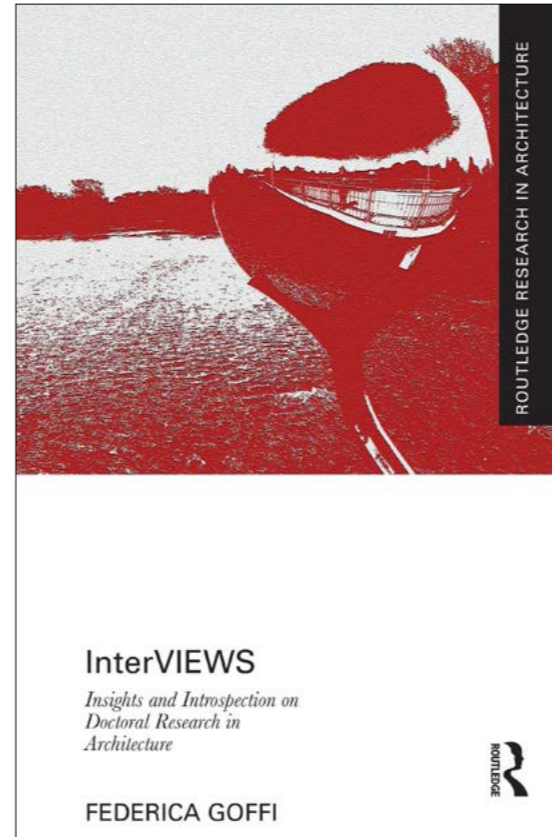


Figure 1: Cover of the book *InterVIEWS: Insights and Introspection on Doctoral Research in Architecture* edited by Federica Goffi. © Courtesy of Routledge 2019. On the cover an artistic photograph by Goffi of “A View from Two Sides,” by Ottawa artist Kenneth Emig, 2016. Adàwe Crossing on the Rideau River, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

time suggesting that we cannot fragment or segment the land or its people from the stories in place; there is however a multidirectionality, as a result of a multicultural society and diversity of backgrounds.

As for the book, the foundational agenda was set in a dialogical, discursive and conversational approach narrating the recent stories, which may one day amount to a history of PhD programs in architecture in the world. These positions form not so much a contraposition of opposites, as a continuum of change of research and education. ‘Questioning’ and ‘theorizing’ emerged as ongoing transformative processes, offering a tangible record of current research attitudes and discourses, probing into contemporary lines of investigation, and drawing-out the characteristics of each program as a broad spectrum of attitudes in addressing history, theory, and design.

The majority of interVIEWS, presented in chronological order, are not exhaustive of the approaches currently pursued in academic institutions worldwide and were primarily with doctoral programs with a well-established history in the Anglo-Saxon educational system. Some programs were the first of their kind in architecture schools: MIT, Princeton

Notes

1. Gadamer, Hans-Georg. “The Hermeneutic Priority of the Question.” In *Truth and Method*. London & New York: Continuum, 2006 [1960]: 356–371.

2. Kenneth Emig responded to an email on November 15, 2019 by Federica Goffi asking about the naming of the piece.

3. See www.criptic.org, accessed December 19, 2019. Rana Abughannam, Émélie Desrocher-Turgeon, and Pallavi Swaranjali coordinate CR|PT|C along with the editor of *InterVIEWS*, Federica Goffi.

4. Wang and Groat (2013) covers research methods in architecture: historical research, qualitative research, experimental and quasi-experimental research,

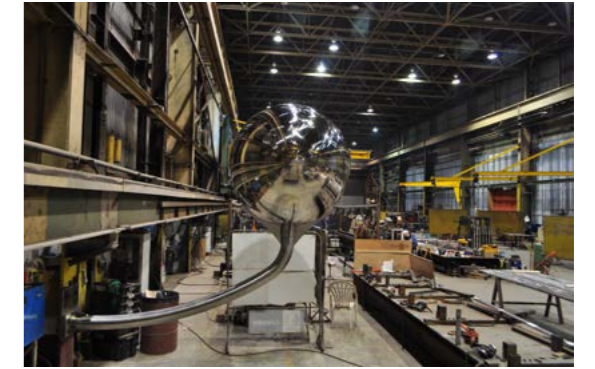


Figure 2: Kenneth Emig. “A View from Two Sides.” Factory view, 2016. Montreal, QC, Canada. © Kenneth Emig.



Figure 3: Kenneth Emig. “A View from Two Sides.” Detail view, 2016. Adàwe Crossing on the Rideau River, Ottawa, ON, Canada. © Kenneth Emig. Photo courtesy of City of Ottawa.

University, McGill University, the Bartlett, and RMIT, which then became paradigmatic of approaches followed elsewhere. Others are recently established programs, like the Creative Practice PhD at the University of Auckland, and the PhD in History and Theory at Penn State University. Selecting from within the above criteria, we looked for a broad diversity of research definitions.

The survey of doctoral research in architecture begun with *InterVIEWS* (Routledge 2019) will continue through podcast interviews that will be made available on the CR|PT|C website,³ with the intent to expand the project geographically and in terms of research orientations over time.

While several publications have addressed a main research approach:⁴ history and theory,⁵ criticism, research by design,⁶ practice, or creative practice,⁷ it is seldom the case that the diversity of approaches is given prominence.⁸ Conversely, *InterVIEWS* acknowledges the diversity in approaches to research in architecture to evidence meaningful differences and a range of contributions in academic institutions by contrasting diverse positions, valuing a range of attitudes, and documenting their simultaneous developments. The usefulness of a full-relief self-reflection

simulation research, logical argumentation, case studies. Borden and Rüedi Ray (2014).

5. Hartoonian 2018. Porphyrios 1981, addresses assumptions inherent in Hegelian and hermeneutical approaches to history.

6. Joost, et al. (2016) and Fraser (2013) discuss design research and its differences from design practice. See also Hensel 2012.

7. Jenner 2013: 203–220. Elkins 2009.

8. Lucas (2016) explores research methods in material culture, architectural history, politics of space, philosophy, phenomenology, ethnographic research, drawing.

becomes apparent in the vibrant and, at times, divergent viewpoints that offer a thought-provoking opportunity to consider the openness and breadth of the field. Diversity should be recognized, valued, and maintained, preventing homogenization, which is, at times, seen in research models typical of scientific approaches. Considering the concerns raised for the number of PhDs across scientific disciplines, this variety of approaches promises that doctoral research in architecture as a whole prepares for a wide range of professional directions not limited to teaching, and including practice, industry, government agencies, and other institutions.⁹

This book contends that the diversity of research attitudes in architecture is better exposed not by manuals that exemplify research methods, but by leading figures guiding doctoral programs, offering a fuller spectrum of tactics through storytelling. The continued growth and implementation of new approaches add to the recent history of doctoral research in architecture and show how diverse research approaches can augment each other sustaining the needs of the discipline in the plural.

This in-depth probing supports readers to situate their undertakings in the context of academic research, opening up new readings in between well-outlined positions to consider one's stand in architectural research. As a collection, the interviews opened-up a dialogue that allowed invited scholars to discuss the educational approaches, exposing the distinctive nature of research paths at each institution, while positioning each program in the broader context of doctoral research at the national and international level. While through well-constructed essays, scholarship operates a transmission of knowledge, through the medium of the interviews, the voices of architectural scholarship emerge in the act of sharing urgent ideas through uncompromised questioning, and thus—rethinking became the subject of the book.

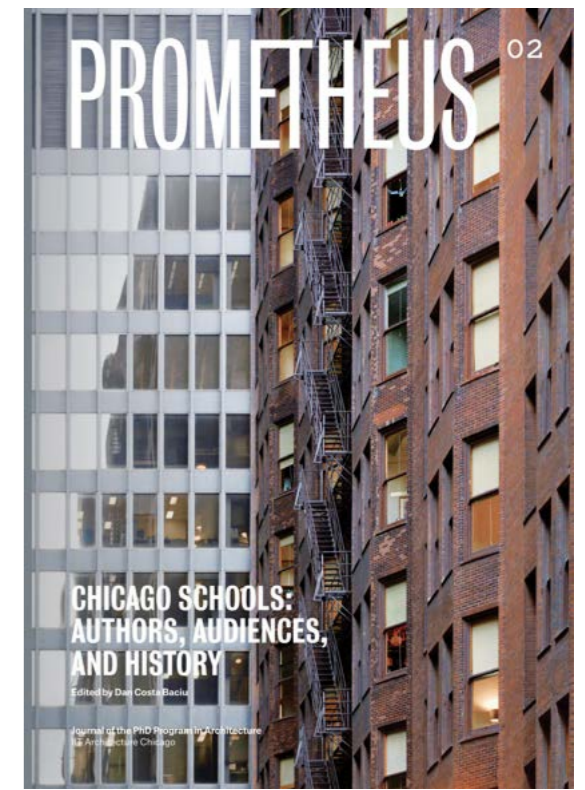
Fraser (2013) probes design research in Europe, U.S., and Australia, establishing its role, scope, and contributions.

9. See the articles accessed July 21, 2019: // www.nytimes.com/2016/05/06/science/phd-post-doc-positions-study.html; // www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/upshot/so-many-research-scientists-so-few-openings-as-professors.html; // www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/who-will-hire-all-the-phds-not-canadas-universities/article10976412/.

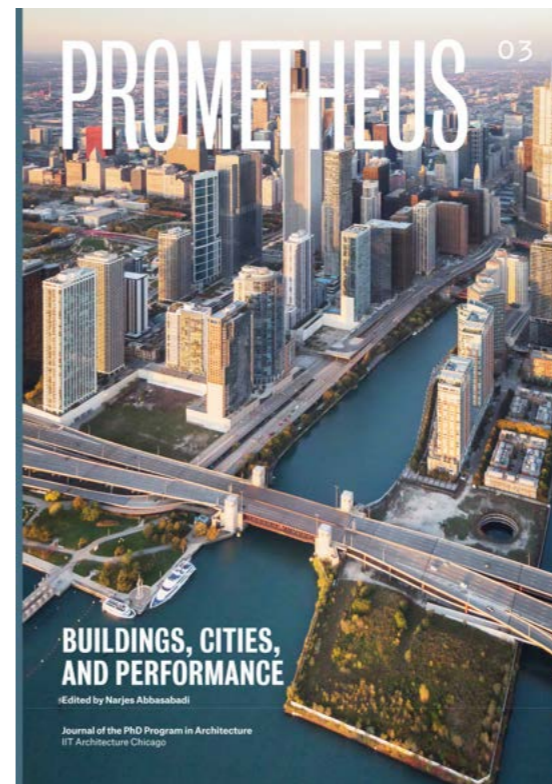
Despite the concerns expressed in *The New York Times* and *Globe and Mail* about the high number of doctoral degrees, there are only few schools with limited enrollment that currently award this degree in architecture in Canada.



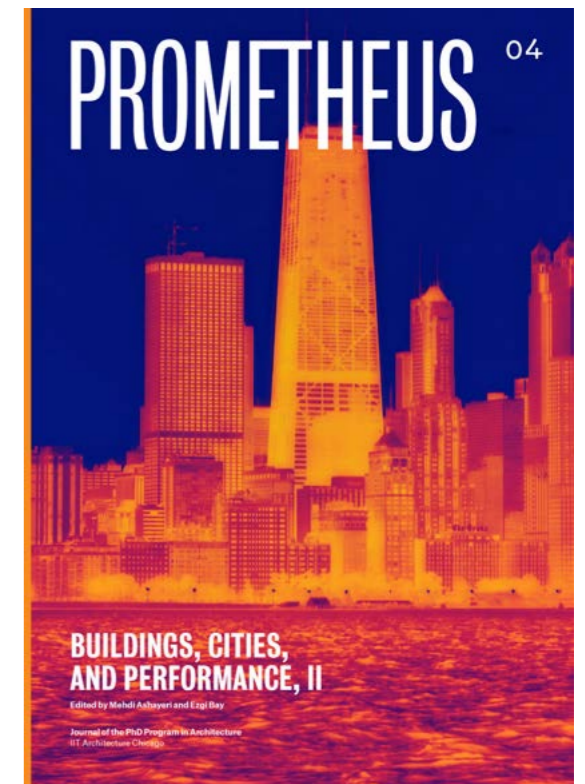
Cover of *Prometheus 01, Journal of the PhD Program in Architecture: Petroleum Modernism*. Edited by Mohammed H. Alkhabbaz and Saad Alghamdi.



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Cover of *Prometheus 04, Journal of the PhD Program in Architecture: Buildings, Cities, and Performance, II*. Edited by Mehdi Ashayeri and Ezgi Bay.