Research Statement of the Chair of Architectural Theory

The research of the chair of architectural theory concentrates on the concept of a critical epistemology of architecture. As digital technologies increasingly interfere with existing knowledge practices and transform them to meet their own standards, architectural theory must react by readjusting its theoretical basis and expanding upon critical theory-- as practiced in the second half of the 20th century-- into what can be called a critical epistemology of architecture.

1 Notes on theory Architectural theory departs from the simple notion that there is never any architecture without theory, as unconscious as this may be. Practice in architecture is always prefigured by unconscious matrices of judgment and models of behavior. An indicator for this is the simple fact that people tend to follow similar, often predictable patterns of behavior, such as the architect who often finds him or herself drawing similar figures on the tracing paper, willingly or not. This suggests an unconscious following of certain theoretical models of behavior. As a conscious practice this is then classified as "individual style".

There is no pre-theoretical architecture. Hence, the task of architectural theory is to bring these unconscious models of thinking and doing to the surface, making them explicit, discernable, and able to be analyzed, eventually developing new models of thinking about architecture that reflect its changing cultural context. Thus, 1. theory always works from within architecture, 2. theory always displaces theory, and 3. theory is only conceivable as a critical theory of architecture.

2 Research Methodology Methodologically a critical epistemology has to be conducted on three levels: *critical theory*, *post-structuralism* and *epistemology*. *Critical theory* is deployed with the aim of bringing the dialectical contradictions within architecture to the forefront. When it focuses on hidden and suppressed texts, theory deploys a *poststructuralist model* of analysis. While searching for the relational logic of architecture, theory must refer to *epistemological methods*. Theoretical analysis deploys these three models of critical thinking separately, with the aim to eventually unite them under a broader picture of a critical epistemology of architecture.

Moreover, knowledge in architecture is not only conceptual but also features performative as well as sensual elements. Thus, architectural knowledge can be classified in regard to sensory reason, performative reason, and conceptual reason. Hence, a critical epistemology must be based on aesthetics (sensory reason), anthropology (performative reason), and epistemology (conceptual reason).

3 Publication projects The research of the chair of architectural theory aims toward a systematization of the knowledge of the theory of architecture. In this regard and in the past years, various topics have been addressed in scientific essays and journal articles, such as: the digital sublime, perception, holocaust memorials, brutalism, theory of history, theory of avant-garde, theory of design, phenomenological semiotics, traumata of modernization in Japanese postwar architecture, theory of ornament, etc.

Yet, the main focus is on the publication of a book series that will present a concise, comprehensive and systematized survey of critical epistemology of architecture. Among the book publications in preparation are:

Theory of Architecture. Basic Knowledge. Traditional Theory – Critical Theory – Critical Epistemology, 3 vol., Berlin: DOM Publishers. Vol. 1: Traditional Theory of Architecture 1863-1938 (to be published in 2018)