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AESTHETICS – THE UNEASY DIMENSION IN ARCHITECTURE

Editors: Anne Elisabeth Toft and Magnus Rönn



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FOREWORD

Magnus Rönn and Anne Elisabeth Toft

This anthology is the proceedings publication from the 2013 NAF Symposium *Aesthetics, the Uneasy Dimension in Architecture*. As a co-production between the Nordic Association of Architectural Research (NAF) and the Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), it took place at NTNU in Trondheim, Norway, on 25–27 April 2013.

What motivated the collaboration was a shared interest in architecture and aesthetics of NAF and the Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts at NTNU. Suggesting that critical discussion on aesthetics in architecture and architectural discourse has become marginalized or almost non-existent at many universities and schools of architecture, the symposium wished to address this matter and what it means to architecture and our notion of it. In a self-reflexive manner, NAF and the Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts at NTNU also wished to explore how this influences architectural research and the way architectural research is carried out in different research contexts.

Taking their point of departure in a number of epistemological questions regarding architecture and its aesthetic dimension, presentations at the symposium were framed by keynote lectures given by Peter Wilson, Juhanni Pallasmaa, Peter Buchanan, Yael Reisner, and Alexander Booker.

This proceedings publication collects seven articles written by authors who all presented papers at the symposium. The articles represent a selection made by the editors of the book. All of the articles published here have been submitted to a double-blind peer review process, following a peer review template developed by NAF.

We are very grateful to all the individual authors who have contributed articles to the publication and to the many peer reviewers who have supported NAF and its work by offering their time and professional expertise to reviewing the articles. We would like to express our gratitude to all of these people.

Our thanks are also extended most particularly to Associate Professor Eivind Kasa and Vice-Dean Gunnar Parelius, both at NTNU, who organized the symposium and conceptualized its programme in collaboration with the NAF Board.

Finally, we would like to sincerely thank NTNU and its Dean Tore Haugen, Professor in Architectural Management and Facilities Management, for hosting the event and giving a platform to its discussions.

Magnus Rönn and Anne Elisabeth Toft, Editors

ON THE NORDIC ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH (NAF) AND ITS HISTORY

Magnus Rönn and Anne Elisabeth Toft

The 2013 NAF Symposium *Aesthetics, the Uneasy Dimension in Architecture* coincided with the 25th anniversary of the Nordic Association of Architectural Research (NAF). NAF, an independent association of architectural researchers from universities and schools of architecture in the Nordic countries, was founded in 1987. Its primary function is to facilitate the research collaborations of its members and their exchange and dissemination of research results. Through its research symposia and its peer-reviewed scientific journal *NJAR*, NAF sets a standard for the scientific and artistic level of architectural research produced in the Nordic countries. NAF represents a pluralist approach to research in the area of architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture, supporting academic freedom and scientific independence. It welcomes researchers ranging from PhD to senior researcher level, providing them with critical mass and an engaging and supportive research community.

NAF symposia are held once a year. They are important platforms for critical reflection on architecture and architectural research in the Nordic countries. The fact that the symposia are conceptualized and organized in collaboration with various partners and each year hosted by a different university or school of architecture ensures their dynamic and democratic format. Each year, the symposium focuses its discussions on a topic or theoretical framework representing the current research interests of NAF and its collaborating partner. The plug-in structure of NAF symposia allows for crossover collaborations between research institutions, and it stimulates individual researchers to explore new research contexts and cultures within the larger research community of NAF.

The history of the association and its journal can be divided into six different phases:

Conceptualized in 1987 by researchers in Gothenburg, Stockholm, and Lund, the association began as a purely Swedish project. It was managed by the Department of Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology, and

Professor Jerker Lundequist was by law responsible for its journal. The association – then known as The Association of Architectural Research – was founded in response to the growing need of Swedish research communities at universities and schools of architecture for a unifying platform. It was the first independent association in the Nordic countries to formalize discussions on architectural research, its research questions, theories, and methods.

In 1992, another seminal year in the history of NAF, the association became a truly Nordic association with a board consisting of members from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland. The association changed its name to The Nordic Association of Architectural Research, and its journal was given its present name *The Nordic Journal of Architectural Research (NJAR)* and a signature layout.

In 1995, a new board was selected for the association. This was dominated by members from Norway and had Professor Birgit Cold from NTNU as its president. This change signifies a third important phase in the history of NAF. The objective of the new board was to transform NAF into a common Nordic project for architectural research communities in the Nordic countries. From the mid-1990s onward, NAF symposia began to be organized on a regular basis, offering researchers critical mass and lectures by invited international keynote speakers.

The history of NAF entered its fourth phase when, in 1999, the *NJAR* peer review system was developed and professionalized. Associate Professor Pia Bille became editor-in-chief of *NJAR*, and the journal moved from Sweden, the Department of Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology, to Denmark, i.e. to Aarhus School of Architecture. Bille was editor-in-chief from 1999 to 2005. In her time as editor, the journal developed into a top-ranked scientific journal on an international level. During the same period, Professor Niels Albertsen, also from Aarhus School of Architecture, became president of NAF, followed by Dr. Katja Grillner from KTH, Stockholm, in 2000, Dr. Lena Villner from KTH, Stockholm, in 2002, Dr. Eivind Kasa from NTNU, in 2004, and Associate Professor Peter Thule Kristensen from KADK, in 2007.

In 2006, *NJAR* moved from Denmark to Norway when Eivind Kasa took over the responsibility as editor-in-chief of the journal. This shift, which represents another significant phase in the history of the association, was symbolically marked by a new layout for the journal.

The year 2010 represents the beginning of a sixth phase in the association's history. 2010 was the year when *NJAR* became a digital journal and NAF began developing its website. Following an ever-increasing interest from researchers to publish in *NJAR*, the editorial work of the journal had grown significantly. In 2011 not only one but three new editors-in-chiefs were consequently selected: Professor Claus Bech-Danielsen, from Aalborg University, Dr. Madeleine Granvik, from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and Dr. Anni Vartola, from Aalto University, School of Art and Design. Dr. Jonas Andersson at The Swedish Agency for Participation and Trond Haug, Head of Publications at SINTEF, were made responsible for the NAF website and its maintenance, and they began the extensive work of digitalizing and archiving all previously published issues of *NJAR*; a job they successfully completed in 2015.

The above initiatives were all instigated during the presidency of Associate Professor Magnus Rönn from KTH, Stockholm, who was elected president of NAF in 2010. Anne Elisabeth Toft, Associate Professor at Aarhus School of Architecture, became president of NAF in 2015 with an ambition to carry on the work of her predecessor, yet turning NAF into an even stronger, more far-reaching association and brand.

The future of NAF looks bright as its journal has just been ranked at international top level, not only in Denmark and Norway but also in Finland, making it, to date, the only scientific journal in architectural research in the Nordic countries ranked at the prestigious top level 2.

The present proceedings publication, which was published by NAF's own publishing house, is also a token of the focused development and professionalisation NAF is currently undergoing. Thus, 2016 was the year NAF established Nordic Academic Press of Architectural Research – an academic publishing house reserved NAF's own peer-reviewed publications in book form.

Magnus Rönn
President of NAF 2010–2015

Anne Elisabeth Toft
President of NAF, 2015–ongoing

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