

Call for papers

(deadline for sending proposals: March 1st, 2023)

International conference

(french, english)

# Researching beyond words

Investigating architectural  
research by drawing

**30.11 >**  
**1.12.23**

École Nationale Supérieure  
d'Architecture de Lyon

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If research conducted on architecture, the urban, territory and landscape cannot do without words to explain the research process and its results, it is also stated and constructed outside of them. Researchers who examine human settlements produce a wide range of “traces” to observe, describe, annotate, abstract, schematized, measure, analyze, project, problematize and provide feedback... By taking into consideration the way researchers do things “beyond words”, this call for papers proposes more precisely to take a look at the “drawn figures” they produce. In the framework of this call, by the word ‘drawing’ we mean the group of objects and “inscriptive practices” (Lucas, 2019) aimed at the visual mediatization of both the scientific investigation and the architectural design process. The figuration of a phenomenon can thus contribute to the clarification and analysis of empiric elements, the objectification of perceptive data and the identification of sensitive and qualitative materials (Olmedo, 2015), revealing specific characteristics which go beyond simply putting them into words. By questioning the production of visual objects made in a research situation, we take into consideration the modes of fabrication of these representations, the methods in which they are utilized and the tools they use as well. Because it seems to us that this epistemology of “research by drawing” produces interfaces with epistemology of design (projet), the reflections carried out will, no doubt, allow us to continue the debate on the relationship between architectural research and design<sup>1</sup>. Finally, it means questioning the specificities of research in architecture and its convergences with disciplinary fields that also question their drawn productions.

In order to explore these questions, three fields of investigation are proposed. The first looks at graphic productions themselves as they reveal a look at reality which acts on the production of research. The second questions more specifically the relations between the researcher and drawings while the third is devoted to the multiple mediations into which drawings are incorporated.

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**1. From ‘research by design’ to ‘design-research’, from ‘action-research’ to ‘research-creation’, there is no shortage of expressions to qualify the plurality of these relations which continue to be debated and renew the epistemological questions about architectural research.**

## 1. DRAWING AS GAZE

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Drawings create a selective gaze upon reality(ies). If they allow us to see what words keep silent, they do so through a process of abstraction which implies that there is a discrepancy in the represented, between what is exposed and what is occulted (Levy et al., 2004 ; Tiberghien, 2007). Drawing is both a way to reveal and to put at a distance by operations of substitution which separate the visible and the invisible. (Coulais, 2014). The visual representation can thus make us question it as a non-neutral point of view on the studied object (Ali-Touati et al., 2019). As a mode of interpretation and a signifying process (Peirce, 2017 ; Descola, 2021), the act of figuration testifies not only to ways of seeing but also to ways of doing. By expressing and constructing itself through drawings, research conditions specific views on studied objects and gives rise to certain questions :

- If architects' drawings are implicitly governed by singular points of view, shared norms, conventions or habitus, how do researchers justify and objectify the codes and rules that govern their representations, considering what they invisibilize, but also the spheres-academic, professional, or otherwise-with which they enter into dialogue ?
- Does drawing transform the way research is done ? Does the maieutic and heuristic power of the visual representation process contribute to the generation of new knowledge or to the development of new discoveries ? We can thus wonder about the potentially active role drawings play in the problematization of a subject, the establishment of questioning and the construction of hypotheses. Can we attribute a scientific value to visual thinking (Arnheim, 1976) ? What kind of knowledge (Borgdoff, 2010 ; Cross, 2006 ; Foqué, 2010 ; Gibbons et al., 1994 ; Vigano, 2016) do drawings allow one to develop ?
- Finally, we can explore the case of prospective visual representations which, by projecting what does not yet exist, perhaps echo architectural drawings. How can the representation of a possible future participate in the construction of a research project ? By setting up hypotheses in the form of project scenarios (Vigano, 2016 ; Uyttenhove et al., 2021) ? By developing models that predict the evolution of the territory ? Through invention processes that create analyzable samples ? The study of the representations produced by the research project could then allow us to question in a different way the relationship between the project and the architectural drawing that the design brings together (Boutinet, 1990, p.116) ?

## 2. THE DRAUGHTSMAN-RESEARCHER

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Because they express a point of view on the studied object, certain figurations demonstrate the commitment of the researcher, both political and ethical (Rabatel, 2013 ; Ghitti, 2000). The researchers' drawings thus question their significant and non-neutral positions with regard to their fields of study. Research through drawings sends them back to their status of producers of visual representations. What kind of producers are they? Creators, mediators, analysts, critics, observers, investigators...? By shedding light on the bilateral relationship between the draughtsman and the drawing, we can explore different types of interrogations :

- What tools of representation do researchers share with the designers who make and develop inhabited environments? In what way do their representations take up, displace, transform or deviate from those tried and tested by designers in their project practices - architects, urban planners, landscape designers...? What place does the researcher give to the aesthetic dimension of his visual productions? Does the research have an implicit aesthetic dimension? Can researchers' drawings lead to imaginary or scientific creations?
- What transformative agency can drawings have on the researcher-producer himself? As an 'initiating agent' (Souriau, 2009), the latter becomes the receiver of what he produces. At what point do his own representations escape him so that they exist in an autonomous way? If we recognize the power of the fascination for images, we can then ask ourselves if the researcher is also confronted with this power and what he does with it in that case.
- What role does the researcher's bodily implication play in his drawn productions? As a mechanism that accompanies field practices or as a process of realization (Tixier, 2016), these representations incorporate sensitive experiences, gestures, know-how, techniques, tools and practices that question the relationship between the body, emotions and the production of knowledge (Sennett, 2022 ; Ingold, 2017 ; Schön, 2013). Conversely, can the process of representation compensate for the researcher's bodily absence? Or is it sometimes a matter of immersing oneself differently in a reality that one cannot inhabit (because it does not yet exist, or because one cannot physically go there)?

## 3. THE MEDIATOR-DRAWING

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The social life of representations (Appadurai, 1988) examines the relations between the researcher, his research object and others. Multiple possibilities of dialogue emerge no doubt from the different roles played by drawings: mediation tool, communication element, instrument of persuasion, meeting facilitator, narrative device, suggestive figuration, data transmitted and/or delegated to others, exhibited object, etc. The performativity (Féral, 2013) of drawings could thus be probed to reveal the way they mediate research practices and the projects these practices target. Several lines of thought are thus possible :

- As boundary objects (Trompette & Vinck, 2009), drawings can be subject to divergent interpretations. What do these variations reveal about the postures, imaginations and dispositions of each stakeholder? Do drawings promote intercultural exchange or indisciplinaryity (Catellin et Loty, 2013)? To what extent does figuration constitute a field of mediation between scientific, professional and social cultures? What relationships of power, domination or subversion does the use of images involve? How does the researcher critically mobilize the capacities to mediate and influence that drawings possess?
- As a support for exchanges and interactions, drawings translate a design that refers to the project it supports and mediates. What projects do the researchers' figurations support? If architectural research questions the very notion of projet (Boutinet, 1990 ; Besse, 2018 ; Chupin, 2015 ; Findeli, 2005), do their drawings push the limits of what is meant by project in the practices of project management or in pedagogical workshops? Could other forms of project be mediated through research processes? To what missions do these projects respond? Who defines them, to whom are they addressed, what are their objectives, their framework and their temporality? Conversely, what role does research play in a project?

## ABSTRACTS SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

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This call for papers is addressed to researchers, doctoral students and lecturer-researchers in the fields of architecture, urban planning, landscape and land use planning. It is equally open to researchers who also question drawings within their disciplinary field (anthropology, sociology, arts, aesthetics...), as well as to designers who participate in research projects.

Proposals must be filed by **March 1, 2023** on the website <https://horsdesmots.sciencesconf.org>

### Submission format :

1. A title, a resumé of 400-500 words (in French or English)
2. One to five captioned images
3. A short biography (six to eight lines)

The symposium papers will be presented in French or English. The study day will result in a publication after review of the papers by the scientific committee.

### Contacts and practical issues relating to the symposium :

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## ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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- **Julie CATTANT**, architect, PhD in Architecture, Senior Lecturer at ENSA-Lyon, researcher at EVS-LAURE and research fellow at GERPHAU
- **Rovy PESSOA FERREIRA**, architect, Associate Lecturer at ENSA-Lyon, PhD student-researcher at EVS-LAURE

## SCHEDULE

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**December 15, 2022 :**  
opening of the call for papers

**March 1, 2023 :**  
deadline for receiving communication proposals

**May 15, 2023 :**  
selection of papers and contacting the participants

**September 15, 2023 :**  
sending supporting articles for chosen papers

**September 30, 2023 :**  
end of registration

**November 30 and December 1, 2023 :**  
symposium at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Lyon

## SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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