

Six Traditions

Department of Architecture
University of Coimbra

Theory of Architecture I/II
History of Architecture III/IV
Bruno Gil (coordinator)

The role of play in the creative process is to free up the habitual links between things and allow new ones to occur, the role of directed research is to provide an ordering principle. So, in a successfully creative institution, or individual, both these contrary impulses have to be cultivated. (Jencks, 1995, p. 156)

Presenting the Brief

In the academic year 2017-2018, an experience was launched in 4 course units: Theory of Architecture I and II, and History of Architecture III and IV. The researched object would be the same, while aiming at its intrinsic variations as a way to unravel common and uncommon grounds between theory and history.

Besides my voice in the “role of directed research” and the students’ voice in “the role of play”, I felt the need to introduce a third voice, one that would help to “free up the habitual links between things”, in theory and in history. It was how Charles Jencks was introduced to students. The challenge was to question his mappings of architectural evolution, by scrutinising his “evolutionary trees”.

In 1973, Charles Jencks published *Modern Movements in Architecture*, a book resulting from his doctoral dissertation with Reyner Banham’s guidance. It presented a critical mapping of modern architecture, as a solely movement, through the rereading of moments, objects and actors according to “Six Traditions”: logical, idealist, self-conscious, intuitive, activist, and unself-conscious (80% of environment). The permanently incomplete and questionable “evolutionary tree” – yet always intriguing –, had been updated by Jencks himself: in 2000 (Fig. 1), and in 2015 (Fig. 2). With the latter, new six traditions replaced the previous ones. The Exhibition “Six Traditions” aimed to reveal these two updates.

In History of Architecture III and IV, the works focused on the themes of the twentieth century, while in Theory of Architecture I and II, the focus was on the themes of the last twenty years. In group work, written essays introduced, described and questioned the topics within the maps, and were complemented by posters, which would be the core of the Exhibition “Six Traditions”. The work was displayed at the Department of Architecture of the University of Coimbra between January 15th and February 28th, 2019.

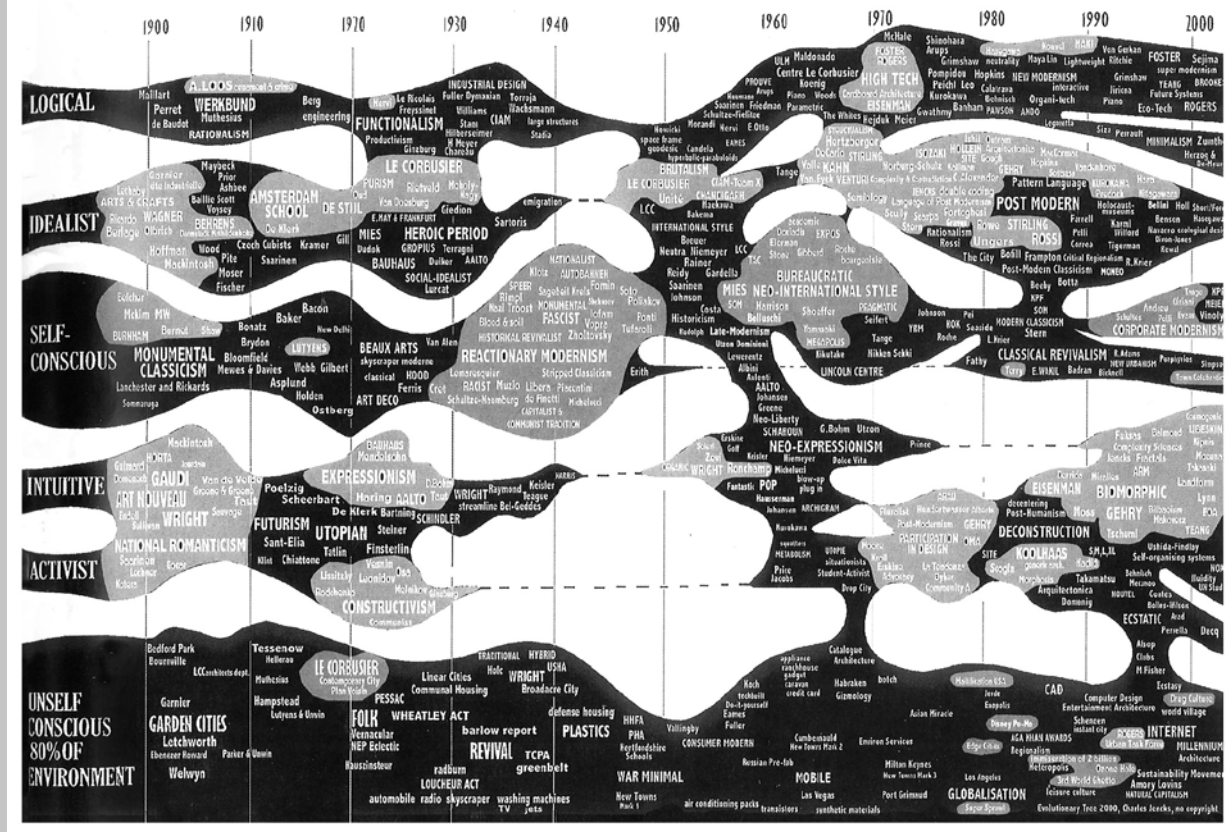


Fig. 1 Published in Charles Jencks' article
 "Jencks's Theory of Evolution: an overview of
 twentieth-century architecture". *Architectural
 Review*, 208(1241), July 2000, 76–79.

Conceiving the Exhibition

One room, 2 projected diagrammes, 64 vertical posters and 300 metres of 6 different coloured string, assembled the overall exhibition.

Recovered from obsolescence, two overhead projectors brought to light the two diagrammes. On opposite walls, the contents of both images were linked with coloured threads (corresponding to each of the traditions) to every poster. Hanged from the ceiling and laid out next to each other, the panels worked as an augmented reality of the interbreeding between what Charles Jencks usually referred to as “architectural species”.

Ultimately, the exhibition space suggested a mingled interchange between the “six traditions”, while threading a web of connections. By presenting a third dimension and other readings to both “evolutionary trees”, the display disclosed a speculation over the original speculation attempted by Jencks, questioning linear interpretations but also underlining pluralism.

Coincidence or not, only after dismounting the exhibition, we understood the unconscious condition of mimesis. This exhibition resembled to Marcel Duchamp’s installation “Sixteen Miles of String”, conceived for the First Papers of Surrealism exhibition, in New York (1942).

Recurrence or evolution?









Six Traditions – A Talk with Charles Jencks

After seeing the above images of the exhibition, Charles Jencks replied enthusiastically to our request and in two weeks, after a fruitful exchange of ideas, he would present us with a lecture¹ on his life-long research on “architectural evolution”. The paper “The End of Species” (Barras, 2019), which Jencks sent to us the day before the talk, gave the motto: when there are 34 different ways of categorising the living world, where species interbreed and become hybrid – and as such ultimately unclassified –, “perhaps it is time to rethink the whole concept”. And in architecture?... The lecture and the talk revolved around this parallel. Jencks ended with a sentence to record and recall:

Influences come from within architecture and outside. It's clear that architecture is like opera. Opera has song, it has scenery, it has a

story, it has many things. It's a hybrid form. Architecture is affected by the economy, by society, by taste, by groups, by the client, by money and yet by other architecture. So, it's very hybrid, like opera. Good architectural criticism, and history, shows what comes in and what comes out from the architect's imagination. I am arguing for a mixture of influences. Influences can be diagrammed. It doesn't tell you how good they are. May be bad influences but they're there. Architectural critics and architectural historians should be making that transparent, more transparent.

Now that one hundred years have passed since Bauhaus was founded, it is worth mentioning Jencks's chapter "Recapturing the Bauhaus Spirit: Yalp", published in *The Architecture of the Jumping Universe*. Jencks recalls meeting a depressed Walter Gropius, towards the end of his life, "I asked myself, 'could this be the founder of the Bauhaus – what went wrong?'" (1995, p. 154). And claimed that, somewhere along the line, Gropius had lost the sense of play, creative play, which had been the hidden principle behind the famous "idea of the Bauhaus". A principle, that was secretly linked with Johannes Itten's mantra "Play Becomes Party - Party Becomes Work - Work Becomes Play".

Last February 27th, the day we all in our school were lucky to exchange ideas with Charles Jencks, we all shared a sense of play. And it is how we will remember him, when we met so near the end of his life, after having a truly inspiring, incredibly intelligent, and playful talk.

Play became play.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank to Nacira Lebnaoui, personal assistant to Charles Jencks, for her unique kindness, and to Lily Jencks, daughter of Charles Jencks for her warm reaction to this exhibition and keeping alive the idea of Jencks Cosmic House museum, which will open next year.

1 → Six Traditions – A Talk with Charles Jencks, in a live videoconference (London-Coimbra), with Bruno Gil, Jorge Figueira, and Students, February 27th 2019.

References

Barras, C. (26 January, 2019). The End of Species. *New Scientist*, 3214, p.36.

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Jencks, C. (1995). *The architecture of the jumping universe: A polemic: how complexity science is changing architecture and culture*. London: Academy Editions.

SIX TRA DITI ONS

A TALK WITH CHARLES JENCKS

EXHIBITION SEIS TRADIÇÕES

CLOSING SESSION

STUDENTS' WORKS TEORIA DA ARQUITECTURA I, II HISTÓRIA DA ARQUITECTURA III, IV '17'18

27 FEB 2019 . 4.30 pm

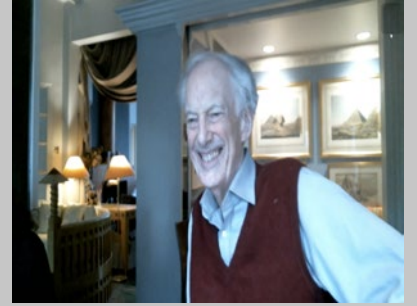
CHARLES JENCKS IN A LIVE VIDEOCONFERENCE WITH BRUNO GIL, JORGE FIGUEIRA AND STUDENTS

DARQ UC . ROOM T3

ORGANISATION: BRUNO GIL

DARQ

Departamento de Arquitectura
Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia
Universidade de Coimbra



Students

Theory of Architecture I/II

Alessandro Nunes	Laura Marques
Alexandra Ferreira	Leticia Callou
Alexandra Ventura	Luiz Coelho
Aline Tomaz	Luiza Barbosa
Ana Carina Pacheco	Marcelo Rocha
Ana Carolina André	Márcio Ferreira
Ana Pinto	Maria Inês Aragão
Ana Rita Caniceiro	Mariana Martins
Ana Rita Queirós	Marina Gasparini
André Correia	Marina Paiva
Andreia Guimarães	Michelle Ferreira
Bárbara Lopes Nunes	Miguel Moraes
Beatriz Ricardo	Nuno Brás
Beatriz Silva	Nuno Gonçalves
Beatriz Soares	Pedro Faneca
Beatriz Sousa	Raquel Lopes
Bruno Silva	Rebecca Rios
Carlota Secco	Renato Cardoso
Carolina Ribeiro	Rita Costa
Cassimiro Scheid	Romeu Guimarães
Catarina Jegundo	Rúben Jácome
Catarina Oliveira	Sandrine Pedrosa
Catarina Ribeiro	Sofia Soares
Cátia Baptista	Susana Pimenta Dias
Daniela Bragança	Tiago Silva
David Neto	Valter Faria
Duarte Santos	Vitória da Silva
Estêvão Marinato Lopes	Yohan Duque
Ewa Hejducka	
Frederico Ribeiro	
Gabriel Ingber	
Helena Carlota Lobato	
Inês Abrantes	
Inês Bailão	
Inês Gouveia	
Inês Oliveira	
Jénifer Cunha	
Joana Abrantes	
Joana Almeida	
Joana Correia	
João Pereira	
Julia Pacheco	
Juliana Vassallo	
Júlio Falcão	
Laura Almeida	

History of Architecture III|IV

Álvaro Vilarinho	Júlia Vidotti
Ana Afonso	Laura Paulos
Ana Cunha	Madalena Oliveira
Ana Luísa Afonso	Mafalda Topa
Ana Luíza Guimarães	Magdalena Lipowska
Ana Margarida Cunha	Marcos Giovelli
Ana Rita Rodrigues	Maria Barcelos
André Almeida	Maria Magno
Andrea Leoni	Maria Inês Cunha
Andreia Anjo	Maria Montes
Andreia Pires	Maria Teixeira
António Carvalho	Mariana Vinha
Bárbara Machado	Marianna Sousa
Bárbara Silva	Marina Almeida
Beatriz Baptista	Marlene Dias
Beatriz Casaleiro	Milena Lorusso
Carolina Magalhães	Nadège Barros
Cláudia Morato Costa	Nino Cubelic
Coling Lima	Nuno Santos
Daniela Soares	Patrícia Delgado
David Flores	Patrícia Soares
David Neto	Paula Chaves
Diogo Santos	Paulo Dias
Duarte Sobral	Rafael Fragoso
Eduardo Braga	Rafael Rebimbas
Eduardo Henriques	Rafaela Alves
Erickson Fortes	Rodrigo Passos
Fernando Loureiro	Rogério Barroso
Flávia Bellesia	Sara Barros
Francisca Guedes	Sara Rua
Gabriela Vasconcellos	Simão Lopes
Guilherme Pereira	Sofia Dias
Gustavo Cardoso	Sofia Eghteda
Helena Mora	Tatiana Carvalho
Helena Peixoto	Tomás Almeida
Inês Cordeiro	Vanessa Mendes
Inês Correia	
Inês Rosa	
Inês Valente	
Inês Veríssimo	
Ivo Gomes	
Joana Ferreira	
Joana Santos	
João Viveiros	
Jorge Dias	