

Counterfoil

Archis

Editorial

Laboratory as a manifesto

Text

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Desktop

Archilab

Laboratory as a manifesto

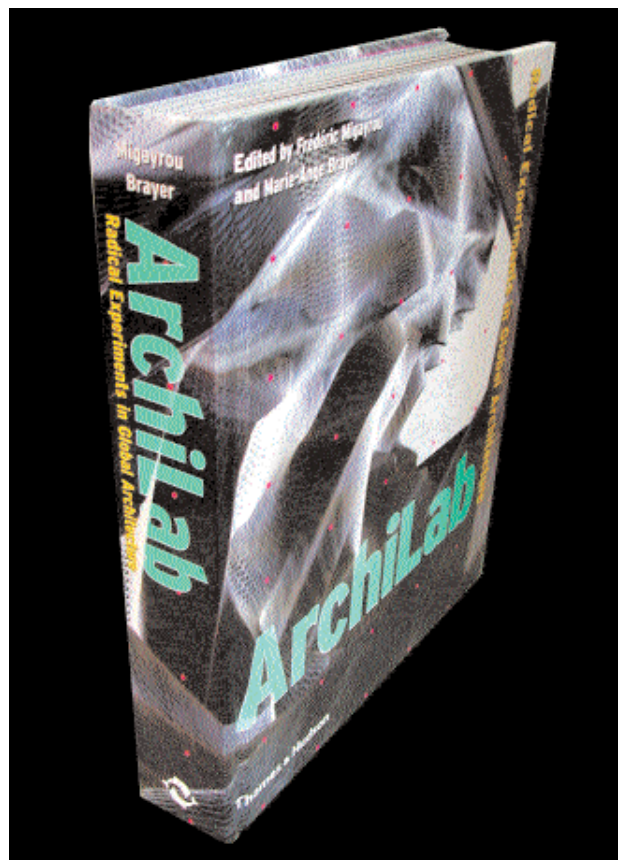
This issue of Archis is full of ideas about ways talented young architects and professional training could come together. It is also full of work resulting from those ideas. It is a tribute to emerging talent which is not yet cursed with the restrictions of professional practice.

Restrictions? Does architectural practice necessarily have to be restricting? The work shown in this issue might just as easily be said to suffer from insufficient contact with reality. There could plausibly be a pool of creative talent that only reaches its mature phase once it struggles out of the breeding pond and hops onto the marshlands of the building industry. For that is precisely the parting of the ways, between those who see the transition as an excuse for conformism, and those whose creative juices really begin to flow.

It is a moment that comes some way after the completion of formal education but it is a decisive one nonetheless. Unlike graduation, it is a moment that is fairly hard to pin down, particularly when it involves the state of play of a whole group. That is why it is so rewarding when occasional efforts are made to assess the visions of the generation that stands at the threshold of international success or is at least striving towards it. Archilab, in Orléans, is one such attempt. It is an astonishing initiative which came into being through a curious coalition of enthusiastic organizers, regional government, the national art world and a group of designers in urgent search of feedback.

Frédéric Migayrou and Marie-Ange Brayer recently launched their book *Radical Experiments in Global Architecture* (Thames & Hudson) presenting the results of their talent-scouting. It highlights the work of 60 innovative architecture studios. The sheer quantity of material produces a certain sense of sameness, but the book makes it clear that the promising developments are decreasingly to be sought in novelty of form or ingenious structures, but instead in less strictly architectural aspects. Inevitably, there is as always a dose of deconstructivism accompanied by blobs and countless folded floors and walls. The rising power of computer drawing tools moreover makes spatial effects possible such as we have rarely if ever seen before. But what stands out above all else is the strength of the designers' social and psychological involvement with the brief. Interactive media, new synthetic materials and subtle process techniques are used not to make buildings so much as to proffer experiences that reach far beyond formalism. Some designers even go so far as to make social intervention the core of their design. The trend is so pronounced that we may well wonder how long it will be before someone will, once again, turn around and say 'everything is architecture'.

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