

Thursday, 14 June
14.30-17.15

Track: Discovery and Persistence
Room: *National Library, Auditorium 3107*

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE: LOCATING ARCHITECTURE IN EARLY MODERN ERUDITE WRITING

Session chairs: Freek Schmidt, VU Amsterdam
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In the early modern age, architecture surfaced in many ways and with different intentions and meanings in the written work of eminent scholars and erudite thinkers from various backgrounds. Although individual cases have been investigated, the attention devoted to architecture in learned writing and its position within the world of knowing is fragmented and incidental. This session brings together contributions on comprehensive writings on architecture that were produced in early modern centres of learning. These texts were often part of extensive 'scientific' interdisciplinary literary oeuvres, where knowledge was collected and presented in extensive anthologies and repositories. Erudite individuals assembled knowledge related to architecture from multiple branches of scholarly interest. These repositories of architectural thought demonstrate a thorough understanding of architecture and testify to its prolonged, concentrated study. The focus on architecture that appeared in many of these texts could be practical, produced to provide models for building, but was often contemplative or functioned as a model for thinking. Specific centres of early modern thought and erudition provided particular impetus to this thinking about architecture.

This session focuses on the treatment and appearance of architecture in these writings. How was architecture addressed in these repositories? Particular attention will be paid to writings that do not fit the Vitruvian mould nor follow established types of architectural treatises, but instead offer alternative systems of thought about architecture, its principles, its meaning, its application, and effect. Which sources were used and how, and how was architecture embedded in these repositories of knowledge? What purposes did these writings serve? The contributions improve our understanding of the scope, variety, and originality of early modern architectural thought and knowledge.

PAPERS:

Rabbinical Scholarship, Antiquarianism, and the Ideal of 'Good Architecture': Jacob Judah Leon's *Retrato del Templo de Selomo*
Robert Madaric, University of Tübingen

A true bestseller translated into seven languages, *Retrato del Templo de Selomo*, written in 1642 by Rabbi Jacob Judah Leon, is the representative work for scholarly interest in the architecture of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. It forms a topic that, in the wave of renewed interest for the literal meaning of Biblical text, reoccurs frequently in early modern erudite writing. Although initially intended as a guidebook to Rabbi Leon's major project, his architectural model of the Jewish Temple, this relatively short, well organized, and concise work became fairly popular due to the fact that it represented a good repertory of contemporary knowledge on the Temple. It appealed not only to scholars, but also served as an introductory reading on the subject for the curious common citizen.

The aim of this paper is to point out multiple ways in which the architecture of the Temple has been addressed and used in Leon's *Retrato*. The reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, in its different historical stratifications, focuses on its topographical setting within the Holy City, its design, and elevation, based on the detailed inquiry of Biblical texts, Josephus, the Talmud, and other Jewish sources. At the same time, Leon uses the architecture of the Temple as a framework in which he embeds a broader discourse on Jewish worship, biblical history, and numerous other antiquarian and

philological observations. Finally, his writing also shows familiarity with contemporary debates on the architecture and style of the Temple in Jerusalem. By taking into account some commonly shared positions of architectural scholarship, his reconstruction became more persuasive in the eyes of his contemporaries, and thus more successful among the broader readership of Jews and Christians alike.

François Rabelais *sapiens architectus*

Olivier Séguin-Brault, McGill University

For a long time, Rabelaisian criticism has commented on the influence of Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* on François Rabelais's work, and especially on the construction of the abbey of Thélème. Even more than a reminiscence of the Italian work, the architectural structures of Rabelais testify to an undeniable architectural mastery.

This paper seeks to reveal new evidence of the influence of the Vitruvian and Italian architectural treatises on Rabelais's work, from the description of Thélème (*Gargantua*) to the Temple de la Dive (*Cinquième livre*). The translation of a Vitruvian anecdote in the *Tiers livre* (which constitutes in itself an original contribution to Rabelaisian and Vitruvian criticism), the thorough descriptions of entire structures, the insertions of the *Briefve declaration*, and the intertextual references to contemporaneous architects, permit us to add to the personal 'library' of the author either an Italian or Latin edition of the *De Architectura*, but also the French translation by Jean Martin (1547) and the *Annotationes* of Philandrier (most probably the composite editions of 1550 and 1552). These elements also participate in a linguistic project linked to the promotion of the French language and to the projects of national architectural orders that began in Europe during the *Quattrocento*. Considering the prescriptions of Vitruvius and Alberti, Rabelais shows on multiple occasions that he not only masters the rules but plays with them, creating new meaning and alternative principles. In terms of reception, while the most notable influence of Rabelais in the architectural field can be considered the publication of the *Topographia Antiquae Romae*, the absence of documentation surrounding the reception of architectural treatises in the modern editions of Rabelais's work must be pointed out. Ultimately, this paper looks forward to unveiling the architectural watermark of François Rabelais's work.

Architecture of Method: *Theories of Disposition in the Kunstkammer*

Mattias Ekman, University of Oslo

The increased scholarly concern in recent decades with early modern collecting and the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* has brought new understandings of how architectural arrangements of collections developed within discourses on knowledge, scientific method, and learning. This paper will address two well-known treatises on the organisation of collections, J. D. Major's *Unvorgreifliches Bedencken von Kunst- und Naturalien=kammern ins gemein* (1 edn, 1674) and C. F. Neickelio's *Museographia* (1727), with regards to the disposition of collections in buildings, rooms, on shelves, in cabinets, and in drawers. The treatises draw on a vast repertoire of visits to collections, written accounts, catalogues, previously published treatises, et cetera, and mirror *Kunstkammer* architecture of the period and contribute to its development. By addressing the relationship between the owner or chamberlain, who orders the objects, and the visitor, who records and memorizes them, I aim to contextualise the recommendations of the two treatises in early modern erudite culture.

The ideal architecture of the *Kunstkammer*, I claim, should not be understood as the adaptation of Vitruvian or other early modern architectural theory, but arises in the process of ordering knowledge artefacts and specimens in physical space, relating the architecture to concepts such as *dispositio*, *ordo*, *methodus*, *memoria*, and *loci communes*, ultimately derived from rhetoric and dialectic. Not particularly Vitruvian—although often with a classical aesthetic—the *Kunstkammer* interiors, I will demonstrate, were fundamentally indebted to prevailing knowledge practices such as methods of

questioning, commonplacing, and excerpting, developed by or under strong influence from intellectuals like Erasmus, P. Melanchthon, and P. Ramus. In order to provide original understanding of the rationale behind early modern *Kunstkammer* architecture, the paper will highlight how such practices concerned with the ordering of knowledge, contributed to the envisioning of entirely new and unprecedented kinds of spaces, ultimately building the foundation for the museum.

Architectural Transactions: Communicating Architectural Knowledge in the Early *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (1665–1677)

Gregorio Astengo, University College London

In 1665, three years after the Royal Society of London was officially established by King Charles II, the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* were created. This was the revolutionary monthly peer-reviewed journal of the Society, initiated and edited by its secretary, Henry Oldenburg. In Oldenburg's own words, the publication's primary objective was 'improving natural knowledge and perfecting all *Philosophical Arts and Sciences*', by 'the communicating of [...] such things as they are discovered or put in practice by others'. The journal's intense publishing, at once erudite and inclusive, was meant to transfer the achievements of natural philosophers to a collective milieu, in line with Oldenburg's own pansophic intentions. Alongside astronomers, doctors, chemists, anatomists, antiquaries, mathematicians, and physicists, '*Architects* [Oldenburg added in 1666] do require some variety and store of Materials for the further satisfaction of their Judgement in the Choice'.

This paper presents the ways in which Oldenburg's foundational editorship (1665–1677) drove and displayed such 'variety' of architectural knowledge in the early *Philosophical Transactions*. For the first time, architecture, largely intended as an experimental and 'mechanick' meta-knowledge, was being discussed in a scholarly periodical—one specifically dedicated to natural philosophy. Within the contexts of post-1666 London and the growing European culture of periodicals as radical intellectual media, Oldenburg's architectural intentions were voluntarily made of 'promiscuous experiments'. Through such figures as Henry Justel, Robert Boyle, or Martin Lister, Oldenburg was building a disjointly connected architectural field, made of antiquarian accounts, optical devices, building experiments and treatises, travel reports, mechanical drawings, and maps. These and other philosophical experiences promoted a quintessentially non-prescriptive 'store' of profoundly anti-Vitruvian 'Materials'.

This paper ultimately locates the early *Philosophical Transactions* as the innovative vehicle for a promiscuous, 'transactional', and largely ephemeral architectural culture of polymaths and *virtuosi*, driven by exploratory Baconian convictions and struggling to legitimize their ideal of modernity.