

The Promise of an Object

Design Processes as Processes of Theory Construction

Abstract

The introduction of scale drawing by Leon Battista Alberti in the mid-15th century opened architecture to art and theory. Architecture rose from an *ars mechanicae*, a craft, to an *ars liberalis*, a free art. Beyond its material-constructive presence, architecture opened to the intellectualization of its knowledge practice. The exact copying of buildings and details in scale drawings and sketches made it possible to refer to, vary, and recombine other architectures and styles. This turned the architectural design process into a theory-building process. In the act of designing, form-finding as a creative act is intertwined with theory-building as a reflexive act. With computational design, a change in the Albertian paradigm is now underway. Scales are blurred, designing in discrete scales is weakened. Design and theory processes begin to diverge. The crisis of designing is as much a crisis of theory formation as it is a crisis of design practice.

Keywords

Theory Building, Computational Design, Object, Model, Abduction