

Archizines' Rustling Pages, and Species of Architectural Discourse

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On a glorious spring day, when New York's Storefront for Art and Architecture folded open its gallery walls onto Kenmare Street, a breeze rustled thousands of bound, clipped, and stapled pages inside. Perched on metal rods rising from the floor were 80 alternative and independent architectural publications representing a wide variety of formal and editorial formats, countries of origin, topical content, and graphic styles. Some specimens were so slight that a small gust of wind would've sent them airborne, so they had to be fastened to their stands. Yet all throughout the gallery, all species of periodicals – magazines, zines, journals, broadsheets – exhibited an animation and restlessness; they flapped their pages in the breeze, hinting that at any second they could take flight.

Archizines was born as a web catalogue of dozens of publications. It featured cover shots and some interior photos, along with official editorial statements and metadata, including language, format, size, price, etc. In 2011 the project took physical form as creator Elias Redstone partnered with the Architectural Association to launch an *Archizines* exhibition in London. The show later traveled to Milan and Barcelona before stopping in New York, after which it was slated to make stops in Berlin, Montreal, Porto, Paris, Bratislava, and Dublin, and perhaps ever farther afield later on. The physical exhibition transformed the flat-and-factual online catalogue into a library (or perhaps “aviary” is more appropriate) of dimensional, dynamic specimens, each of which has a distinctive material character made all the more apparent by the animating force of the breeze streaming through Storefront. Those publications composed of heavy cardstock flapped their pages in slow motion, while those made of a few stapled-together sheets of newsprint, and those with onionskin dust jackets, fluttered feverishly. And as they rustled, they occasionally flashed their interior shapes and colors, inviting closer inspection.

The *Archizines* exhibition is only the latest in a flurry of recent exhibitions, events, and publications exploring the past, present, and future of architectural periodicals. As the materiality of architectural practice itself has shifted dramatically over the past 20+ years, we've witnessed a growth of interest in the materiality and politics of architectural discourse. Much design discussion has moved online, but *Archizines*, as the exhibition's organizers suggest, reflects our “residual love of the printed and paper page.” Love, yes – but our interest in these objects isn't merely about vestigial affection or nostalgia; it's rooted in the conviction that “printed matter matters.” These objects, waving in the wind and then surrendering in readers' hands, are vibrant matter; they have the capacity to give rise to public spheres and imagined communities. They're vital elements of a whole ecosystem of material architectural discourse and mediated representation.

Archizines' Storefront installation, designed by , was intended to “evacuate[e] all other content from the space, creating an information vacuum that focuses the visitor's attention on the objects themselves.” Yet one couldn't help but sense the presence of other discursive elements. Mounted on the gallery walls were iPads playing video interviews with the periodicals' creators, many of whom also stopped by in-person or via Skype to participate in a two-day publishing symposium in mid-April. Apparent here were the social contexts and interpersonal dynamics and material practices that give rise to these printed objects. And by early May (unfortunately, after this article was completed), the zines were joined by a parallel exhibition of architecture-related books pulled from the shelves of Printed Matter, New York's famed artists' book shop. *Archizines* were

thus put into dialogue with *Arch-Art! Books* – both neologisms, or portmanteaux, representing two “residual” genres of design discourse.

Storefront itself, that Clip-Kit of a gallery, has throughout its 30-year history served as a medium for other media – a space where myriad species of architectural discourse can intermingle, and where the people making, distributing, and using those various media can gather together and see themselves constituted as a vibrant discursive public. It seems fitting, then, that with its many-paneled façade there’s always a breeze flowing through Storefront. There’s always something rustling, whether pages or voices or new ideas about what Beatriz Colomina calls architecture’s “overlapping systems of representation.”