

## **SCALE: AHRA Conference November 2010 – University of Kent**

Scale is a word which underlies much of architectural and urban design practice, its history and theory, and its technology. Its connotations have traditionally been linked with the humanities, in the sense of relating to human societies and to human form. To build in scale goes virtually without saying in the world of 'polite' architecture, but this is a precept observed more often in the breach when it comes to vast swathes of commercial and institutional design. The older, more particular, meaning in the humanities, pertaining to classical western culture, is where the sense of scale often resides in cultural production. Scale may be traced back, ultimately, to the discovery of musical harmonies, or it may reside in the arithmetic proportional relationship of the building to its parts. One might question the continued relevance of this understanding of scale in the global world of today. What, in other words, is culturally specific about scale? And what does scale mean in a world where an intuitive, visual understanding is often undermined or superseded by other senses, or by hyper-reality?

### **Questions of scale**

The conference seeks papers that might address the following questions:

#### **- in a post-humanist age:**

Do we associate good scale relationships with particular places and/or times in history? Do body metaphors still have resonance? How does scale relate to measure, and how does its perception and use mutually correspond? Should humans be the ultimate scaling device governing the design of artefacts from chairs, to interiors, buildings, towns, and landscapes? How do urban grids and networks affect scale? What is the politics of scale?

#### **- in the age of digital reproduction:**

What might scale mean in the world of virtual imagination and production? What are the implications for scale of the techniques of parametric and algorithmic architectures and environments? How have the computer and its screen affected scale? What effect do the seamless scale differences commonly seen in non-orthogonal designs have on perception and experience? What are the tools of scaling today?

#### **- in design practice:**

What happens to architectural practices as they grow (or shrink)? What happens to their ethos, and their quality of output? Are particular economic models more conducive to producing well-scaled environments, or is scale *sui generis*, a law unto itself? Is a practice's ability to deliver across a range of scales a good sign of its general health? What impact does the scale of a client or end-user have on the built environment?

#### **- in technology:**

What does scale mean when building materials, components, and entire buildings can be manufactured 'on demand'? What are the consequences of prefabrication for scale? Are certain materials more conducive to producing good scale relationships than others? Is there a lingering sense that scale and craftsmanship are intrinsically linked?

### **Invited keynote speakers:**

Nathalie de Vries (MVRDV), Hannah Higgins (University of Illinois), Brett Steele (Architectural Association) and Robert Tavernor (LSE).

Papers are invited from architects, urban designers, artists, landscape designers and other thinkers and makers who look at scale in its various manifestations. Please send your 300 words abstracts for papers to: [scale@kent.ac.uk](mailto:scale@kent.ac.uk) by 1 April 2010. Selected papers will be published as an edited book as part of the AHRA series.

The conference organisers also welcome poster submissions which explore questions of scale.

### **Timetable**

1 April 2010:	submission of abstracts (300 words)
April 2010:	selection by reviewing committee
May 2010:	notification of selection
1 October 2010:	full papers submitted

### **Conference: University of Kent**

Friday 19 November – Saturday 20 November 2010:  
University of Kent, Canterbury