

## ALBENA YANEVA

### SUMMARY.

We can say that the approach to architectural theory of Albena Yaneva is like the *Slow Ethnographer* which analyse Architecture and buildings in a such meticulous way, day-by-day, and in its intrinsically relationship. To explain with her words, in synthesis, “*in Architectural practice the Slow ethnography helps us to witness the difficulties and the unpredictable turns in the process of its design and invention*” (Yaneva).

She graduated from *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* (DEA) and held a PhD from *Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Paris* (2001). She has worked as Visiting Professor at Princeton School of Architecture (2013), Parsons, New School (2015) and Politecnico di Torino (2018). She was the holder of the prestigious Lise Meitner Visiting Chair in Architecture at Lund University, Sweden (2017-2019). She actually teaches Architectural Theory and leads the MARG (*Manchester Architecture Research Group*) at the University of Manchester in the UK. She is also a guest editor for the editorial series of *Ardeth*. She was awarded the RIBA Chancellor’s Award (*President’s award for outstanding research*).

Albena Yaneva’s analysis spans multiple disciplines, as well as scientific research, psychological feature anthropology, study theory, and political philosophy. Her work has been translated into multiple languages, providing extra references and views for knowledge domain architectural research. Her works are related to the processes that intervene in building (*upon and after the designing and realisation of them*) such as in: *The Making of a Building*, co-authored by the OMA, *made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture an Ethnography of Design* (2009), and to the cities involving relationship *Mapping Controversies in Architecture* (2012). Then she wrote another book in cooperation with Alejandro Zaera-Polo *What Is Cosmopolitical Design? Design, Nature and the Built Environment* (2015) followed by her own *Five Ways to Make Architecture Political* (2017). Then we see *Crafting History: Archiving and the Quest for Architectural Legacy* (2020) and She conjointly co-authored *The New Architecture of Science: Learning from Graphene* (2020) with the Nobel Laureate in Physics Sir Kostya S. Novoselov. Her last work is *Latour for Architects* (2022), in which she introduces the argumentation of Bruno Latour<sup>1</sup> in the architectural field both in design and in the pedagogy.

She announced that she will be releasing *Architecture After Covid*, in 2023. She analyses the turnaround that the pandemic brought to daily life and how it changed the typology of buildings.

### EXTENDED BIO.

In the intro of her first work (*The secret life of Architectural objects*) Yaneva describe her experience in the CCA (*Canadian Center for Architecture*), and gives to us the framework of

1 *The milestone of Latourian theory is the motto “Walls are a nice invention, but if there were no holes in them, there would be no way to get in or out... They would be mausoleums or tombs” Latour 1988.*

the archiving: conserving, cataloguing, processing archives, archiving born-digital material, registering and curating. We can see here, according to our personal point of view, the real spark that made her fall in love with this profession, but also a synthesis or an advance of Yaneva's approach to the theory of architecture. We will find some echoes in her article *Architectural Theory at Two Speeds*, (Ardeth, 2017) as we'll see later. She asks herself about this if this approach (relating to CCA) is antiseptic cantered on *Technics and deontology* or is a passionate focused on *Theory and Fascination*, because it requires both an unbridled passion and a very strict (*and perhaps enthusiasts*) scientific approach that sometimes does not even allow you to touch the objects not to ruin them<sup>2</sup>.

She explains as "*each project has its own internal life, surviving the office through successive mutations, we haven't a storage space, but a mega laboratory*" (Albena Yaneva). In this centre "*the exhibition and the research publication are tools for developing a cultural discourse and setting the intellectual position of the institution*" and so "*exhibits follow acquisitions*" as wrote Mirko Zardini. Finally, she mentions what the archival system creates for Bruno Latour: "*how architectural object become archival as they get enmeshed in fine webs of relations*".

In her book co-authored with OMA they explore how the design of advanced nanoscience laboratories affects the method scientists think, conduct experiments, interact, and collaborate, Albena Yaneva combines an analysis of their distinctive style options with anthropology observations that capture the variability of complicated technological infrastructure and therefore the human experiences it facilitates. At the equivalent time, she encourages the field of study community to even be inquisitive about social science and to ascertain the intersections of architectural anthropology. The particular psychological feature complexities of evaluating, preserving, and collecting large, complex scale models are examined supported by a discussion of the technological changes in architecture and the way new depository technologies affect the contemporary field of the study practice.

Yaneva in 2012, with *Mapping Controversies in Architecture*, advocates the importance of subjective perceptions of the city: "*It is people, not spaces and structures, that make cities vibrant*". Also, she insists on de-abstracting the city from perception or framing, neither encouraging a personal vision of the city nor employing objective images from maps and surveillance cameras. Moreover, she argues that cities are not built by humans alone, but are accompanied by a complex relationship between cities and various non-humans and with nature. In general, Yaneva thinks about the city with a greater focus on the role of people, but also on the relationship between the city and the environment.

In the first volume of Ardeth, in 2017, in her article, *Architectural Theory at Two Speeds*, Yaneva has provide a view about ethnographic method applied to architecture. The author shows two categories to reflect different approach in the matter: the so-called *slow ethnographers* and the other ones the *fast sightseer*. The first offers a very careful approach to the details and relationships that occur at the architectural level and does not stop at the aseptic contemplation of the container. Here we see an anticipation of the theory that buildings are not static but are in continuous motion, as the relationships that involve them every day are a fundamental part of the study of the architectural object itself. This is the key concept of her article co-authored with Bruno Latour *Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move»: An ANT's View of Architecture*, (Ardeth, 2017). They explain that the problem of studying building in its relationship is the opposite of *Marey's inquiry*<sup>3</sup>. The authors show that the building look

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2 Vletter: "*It is an archive of people that build less, and think more*" regarding the CCA.

3 In 1882, the spread of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* led to growing concerns about ventilation, light, movement and mood. Trying to respond to these concerns, architecture gradually became a powerful healing machine, a force against the traditional houses that produced the debilitating effects of tuberculosis. New features of modern design aesthetics - roof gardens, pilots, glass walls, clean air, natural light - became the medical equipment of that machine. This

static in the representation (both in article as in drawings) and we would need something that lets us see “*the flight of the seagull*” in both the spatial and temporal dimensions, to study the relationships that are interwoven with the building, and how it works. So, we can assert that they were in search of an artificial tool that functions as a “*reverse photographic gun*”.

In 2021 Yaneva summarised Beatriz Colomina’s latest book, *X-Ray Architecture*, which explores the long-standing link between architecture and disease and is a ground-breaking study that proposes a new internal normative perspective to explore modern architecture. There are the main research questions in the book: What does architecture have to do with illness and the suffering body? Can architecture provide healing or alleviate suffering? To what extent can architecture induce or impair health?

According to Yaneva (2021), Colomina’s research brings some of the forgotten and repressed stories to the foreground<sup>4</sup>. She brings further discussions of contemporary architecture to the forefront beyond the traditional rhetoric of technical and visual efficiency that often dominates the architectural discourse.

However, the book leaves us wondering: if an obsession with a disease can produce new architecture and aesthetics, what is the unique architecture of the widely spread neurological disease (tuberculosis) of the 21st century? If architecture finds itself increasingly incurable (quite the opposite - just as sick building syndrome suggests that architecture can be a source of disease - what new architectural theories will emerge? What is the new paradigm?) What is the role of architectural institutions in a world that spreads viruses like the coronavirus we have just experienced? What new technologies are available for containment and visibility? How do they contribute to the dissolution of today’s architectural boundaries? While this book offers a new and unconventional historical account of modern architecture, it also traces an effective research program by architectural theorists in which architecture absorbs technological change and reflects on it. Just as the new medical technologies that emerged at the turn of the last century changed our understanding of architecture (*altering the boundaries between public and private*), new technologies have the potential to become paradigm givers.

Next year She’ll publish *Architecture After Covid*, in which she analyses herself the effect of pandemic in the architectural field, and how the daily pandemic routine changes our way of living and the consequently reflection with the building typology.

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*was related to a new social paradigm: beginning in the 1880s, the aristocracy and high society started spending summers in sanatoriums and therapeutic spas to cope with neurological disorders and other modern diseases. Walter Gropius’s biography, for example, is filled with stories of his life in which sanatoriums served as social arenas and healing and psychological machines for his many afflictions. Colomina brings a phenomenological perspective to the historiography of architecture, placing the body and the senses at the centre of architectural fabrication. And good design is given a new social mission: to provide a good life and produce a unique way of living.*

<sup>4</sup> *The invention of his “photographic gun” wanted to stop the flight of a seagull to be able to see statically every single instant of flight.*

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