

# Team 10: Symposium



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A symposium, “Team 10 Today,” was held on September 21, 2006, in conjunction with the exhibition *Team 10: Utopia of the Present*. Organized by associate professor Keith Krumwiede, it brought together Yale faculty Peter de Bretteville and Alan Plattus and historians Ana Miljacki of Columbia University and Thomas Avermaete of the Delft University to discuss the influence of Team 10 in today’s contemporary architecture culture.

The Venice Biennale is the nearest contemporary architects come to convening as an international group, presenting new work and discussing the crosscurrents buffeting the field of architectural thought and production. Each curated event in the Arsenale is freestanding and open to the public. In contrast, the series of closed meetings conducted around Europe by Team 10—from 1959 to the death of Jaap Bakema in 1981 and the last real meeting in Bonnieux, Italy, in 1977—come closer to a research guild. Team 10’s history reads more as a school of schools, a group of like-minded architects getting together to critique one another. The exhibition on display at Yale and organized by the Netherlands Institute of Architecture, *Team 10: A Utopia of the Present* covered the group’s legacy, while the symposium at Yale, “Team 10 Today,” addressed the legacy of the key individuals and their respective contributions through the presentation of five talks on the subject.

As young architects, friends, partners, and educators, the group fluctuated well beyond the handful of core members. Minor participants, such as James Stirling, Kisho Kurakawa, Doshi, and Hans Hollein, are better known today among students than the official Team 10 architects such as Aldo Van Eyck, Giancarlo de Carlo, and perhaps even Alison and Peter Smithson. But, as suggested at the symposium by Peter de Bretteville of Yale, who had worked for De Carlo in the 1970s and chaired the first session of the symposium, what exerted a sustained influence on a younger generation of American architects was exposure to the members as teachers and employers, rather than their built works. The waning of awareness of this group has perhaps been abetted by the lack of a public presence so that even today, the knowledge of this work reverberates mostly through architects with academic ties.

Kenneth Frampton’s talk “Structure, Identity and Existence in the Work of Team 10,” on September 18, set up a framework for Thursday evening’s event. Frampton’s personal familiarity with almost all of the key architects involved, as well his book, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, has put him in a position to take on a regular reassessment of Team 10’s relevance. He emphasized, “Team 10 was one of those last moments in Europe when it was

still possible to envisage a more or less consciously planned pattern of sustainable land settlement and urbanization before the Pandora’s box of late consumerist capitalism, driven by the universal ownership of the automobile, finally sealed the environmental fate of the species.”

Thursday evening’s symposium, moderated by Peter de Bretteville, included discussions by Thomas Avermaete, associate professor at the Delft University of Technology; Ana Miljacki, adjunct assistant professor at Columbia University; and Alan Plattus and Keith Krumwiede, of Yale, linking architecture and the dynamic postwar period—which ultimately settled into the “-isms” of the late 1970s to the 1990s. The speakers argued that most of what we see today in both formal and programmatic terms was first explored provocatively by the network of Team 10. Collectively, the five presentations made the case that Team 10 took on indeterminate and complex ethical concerns at their various meetings and struggled with transitioning from postwar recovery to consumerism in each of their respective countries. Many participants argued for two readings, one of Team 10’s legacy, as disseminated in *AD*, *Forum*, and *Spacio e Società*, and the other as built work, reflecting the various personalities of each of the architects and their respective countries. The social reality of the commissions have had a deep, geographically dispersed influence that is increasingly felt as the global economy matures. Unfortunately, there wasn’t time to hear the presenters debate the reasons why this work is less referenced than it should be in current discourse, the scholarship limited, and the remaining buildings less sought out by architectural tourists.

Krumwiede, de Bretteville, and Avermaete presented the work of the Smithsons, De Carlo, Aldo Van Eyck, and Candilis-Josic-Woods, who are each considered the most representative and connected to the Team 10 legacy. As a group of educators, many taught in the United States, for example, at Cornell in 1971 through O. M. Ungers, or James Stirling, and Shadrach Woods and De Carlo at Yale in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as in Europe at ILAUD, De Carlo’s Siena-based think tank. Or, in atelier work settings such as the Candilis-Josic-Woods office, where many architects including Jean Nouvel and Charles Gwathmey gravitated. Yet for many younger faculty now teaching in architecture programs, who were children in the socially turbulent 1960s and graduate students in the 1980s, there are still a series of resonant ideas and buildings that give life to the current debate about the social program of architecture.

Historian Ana Miljacki presented in her talk, “Practicing Utopia”, the relatively unknown Team 10 member and Polish architect Oskar Hansen and contended that a reassessment of his legacy is “just

in time, as perhaps the most urgent task seems to be again the definition of the role of architects in today’s world, whether this means that we are looking to articulate utopia again: as a projection, as a fantasy, as a sense of hopefulness about architecture’s capacity to intervene or as a relentless struggle to do any or all of the above against overwhelming odds.” Hansen, who was isolated in the Eastern bloc, can be related to the current climate of design globalization and ideas of “open architecture as an architecture that could accept change without obsolescence.”

Panelists also discussed projects such as Ralph Erskine’s Byker Wall, the Economist Building by the Smithsons, and the Wheels of Heaven Church by Van Eyck, each of which has a distinct image and ethos about scale and the social diagram. Projects such as the Berlin Free University have been restored and expanded, yet they have not become part of architectural pilgrimage itineraries. In the case of Urbino, Avermaete made the argument that the work played a role in the reemergence of history as an active force in design. When De Carlo dared to use arches, oval windows, and sloping roofs, it paved the way for a more complex formal vocabulary. The Team 10 struggle—to describe living a contemporary life while making links to the past—was the first break into Post-Modernity.

Certainly the early work of George Candilis and Shadrach Woods, as well as that of the Smithsons, shows the radical nature of their architecture. One can see a formal and ideological debt in the work of contemporary architects such as Calatrava and Foster. The soaring structural clarity of the Coventry Cathedral project in particular demonstrates that it was not just the Smithsons’ provocative clothes and media savvy that generated interest in their work, but their talent for creating original form and their interpretation of the urban fabric. Avermaete also underscored how De Carlo’s social form of architecture, such as Terni Housing, resulted in a richer functionalism, beloved by its residents and admired at the time by his colleagues. In parallel, Frampton noted his interest in Team 10’s architecture despite the impossibility to recreate the social conditions to which it was responding. He noted the Coventry Cathedral project, *The Economist* building, and how their “Fold and Cluster houses were pre-consumerist by definition, along with the poetic, existential vision of Nigel Henderson. All of this was “before Guy Debord’s narcissistic *Society of the Spectacle* finally took hold.”

It is in housing that Team 10’s legacy is most debated. Yale’s Alan Plattus presented a rebuke to those who extolled the architectural virtues of projects by the Smithsons such as Robin Hood Housing and Bagnol sur Ceze—urban extensions and ideas about the Stem and the Open

System that provided the fodder for much Team 10 discussion in the 1960s about how to translate program into urban fabric. Plattus reminded the audience of others, such as James Stirling, Kevin Lynch, and Gordon Cullen, who informed the urban design debate as it matured into a more elaborate, layered approach to urban situations. But the participants in Team 10, all from different countries, had diverse opportunities to achieve their social goals. Another part of Team 10’s legacy is both the consciousness of an emerging environmental agenda and the continuity of issues such as the means of production of both building and urban form. Krumwiede, in his talk, “Thoughts on a Shiny New Brutalism,” presented the Smithsons’ Burrows Lea Farm, alluding to the flexibility in formal interpretation and even an emerging environmental layer, allowing the architects to clearly diverge from Modernist orthodoxy.

Krumwiede in showing the Smithsons’ diagrammatic sketch sections, perspectival photo collages, and photographs by artist Nigel Henderson, (of the Golden Lane competition), clarified the influence of Team 10 on contemporary design. This graphic and conceptual break from CIAM’s dogmatism seems to herald the individualism that became part of the new generation’s work and a connection to more conceptual thinking. The schism also inspired an exchange between disciplines, as when Candilis and Woods analyzed slums in Moroccan cities, and makes sense of the adventure that was the Rem Koolhaas book *Delirious New York*, as well as AMO’s research in Lagos. The idea that the vernacular was in fact a basis for architecture was something Le Corbusier had commented on and used, but not as the foundation of practice and of professional direction as Team 10 did.

The symposium did not suggest that architecture students are gravitating to understand this break with Modernist orthodoxy that has presaged the work of OMA, Aldo Rossi, Richard Rogers, and Norman Foster. But the scholarship emphasized an enduring legacy of theory based upon building and a sustained multinational search for an individual’s place in global and economic hierarchies. Much of Team 10’s built work was constructed in the vanguard of postwar reconstruction, and now it has been altered or eroded. It was hard to miss the implication through this concentrated look at the production of Team 10 that many of the current critics and architects, considering global practice and sustainable design, are part of its legacy.

—Claire Weisz

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1. Team 10 announcing the “death” of CIAM at Otterlo in 1959 with Jan Bakema, Alison and Peter Smithson, Aldo Van Eyck, and Van Ginkel. Courtesy NAI.