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 historian 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 architecture comes to reinventing itself 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 Bonnreux, 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 relevance of the key individuals and their respective contributions through the prism of the younger generation of American architects.

As young architects, friends, partners, and educators, the group fluctuated well beyond the handful of core members. Minor participants, such as James Stirling, Kisho Kurokawa, Oodi, and Hans Hollein, are better known today among students than among the official Team 10 architects such as Aldo Van Eyck, Giancarlo de Carlo, and the remaining buildings less sought out by current discourse, the scholarship limited, and the remaining buildings less sought out by current 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 1951 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 SIAUO, De Carlo’s Sienna-based think tank. Or, in other 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 schools, they 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 socialist artist Ewa Kaniewska 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 society, whether this means that we are looking to articulate utopia once 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 proposes “change without obstruction.”

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 Utzon, Avermaete made the argument that the work played a role in the reemergence of history as an active force in design. When De Carlo dined with the rich, 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 clothing 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 “Field” and Cluster houses were pre-consumerist by definition, along with the poetic, experimental, and political agenda and the continuity of issues and opportunities to achieve their social goals. But the participants in Team 10, all different from 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’ Bumbers 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 shewing 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 Le Corbusier and Woods and analyzed slums in Moroccan cit- ies, and an overview of the advents 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, not as the foundation of practice and of professional direction as Team 10 did.

The symposium did not suggest that architecture students are grumbling to understand this break with Modernist orthodoxy that has pressed the work of OMA, Aldo Rossi, Richard Rogers, and Norman Foster. But the scholarship emphasized an ending 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 practitioners and sustainable design, are part of its legacy.

—Clare Weisz

Weisz (b) is a critic in architecture and partner in the New York firm Weisz + Yoda. 1. Team 10 announcing the “death” of CIAM at Otterlo in 1959 with Jan Bakema, Peter de Bretteville, O. M. Van Eyck, and Van Gent. Courtesy NAI.