Zeitschrift: Trans: Publikationsreihe des Fachvereins der Studierenden am

Departement Architektur der ETH Zürich

Herausgeber: Departement Architektur der ETH Zürich

Band: - (2017)

Heft: 31

Artikel: "What about critique at an institution, Mr. Emerson?"

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-918699

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«What about critique at an institution, Mr. Emerson?»

different positions and pedagogical methods. At ETH, the most important journeys students and teachers like many continental school, there is a strong need to search for.» hierarchy between professor, student and assistant. When I was studying at Cambridge, I would never call «Do you think that it is your job to provide this confimy professor: «professor». It's almost unthinkable. dence to students?» What you call a professor is not so important but it does make authority and power visible which runs all "Yes, that is most certainly part of my job and their job. the way through teaching to evaluation.

structure in Cambridge is that a teacher is never have to try and channel their comments critically and allowed to grade his or her own students (this is done productively. At the same time, I wonder how easy it is by a committee of examiners from other studios). to feel safe in your protest in a group a 60-65 students? Students can therefore have a very lively relationship. One voice in 65 is a very small minority. In the UK, we with their professor; one that is full of conflicts, of have 12 or 14 students in a studio. One voice rings stimulation and agreement but it can never be carried louder. to the assessment (which does not necessarily produce better work). The evaluation and the strong hierarchy at cultural and political situations that are pretty much ETH is a factor in the maintaining of a certain status defining our times. It is not only in architecture that quo. It can be more difficult for a student at ETH to critical debate could be stronger, it is also in political disagree than it would for a student in Cambridge. I engagement. I wish that students would be more politiwould not say that Cambridge or the AA are better cally assertive, that I would be more often challenged schools. I believe that ETH provides one of the best by different positions. The way in which your generaeducations in architecture in the world. But there is tion exercises its opinion, its power, its feelings, is very space for more critical discourse. The AA has more different to previous generations. The media, means, cross-studio forums within which the work is debated. and processes are fundamentally different. Where am This means that it's not just the work of the students I supposed to find a sense of identity and the confiwhich is discussed but it's also the position of the dence to be critical? It's fascinating. Macron, Trump studio. The people leading the studio, whether they're are they both the product of the same system, a new professors or not, are accountable within the school. type of popular, highly individual rejection of estab-At ETH, the structure is almost like separate studio/ lished positions and institutions? Is there going to be a professorship silos. Each one is untouched by another. revolution at ETH next year? I don't know. You know it Maybe the students do not see us debating enough better.» amongst ourselves.

lot of inertia. It's difficult to change a culture that is criticality with the pavilions that you have so often deeply rooted in the institution, in the structure, in the done?» building. But we are witnessing an interesting time in the department. There are and will be many new «There are various theoretical and thematic ideas in professors within a very short period of time. It will be these projects but there are also social ones. It has to interesting to see how that evolves. I'm excited but I do with getting students to know one another, to trust wouldn't expect radical changes overnight. It is more each other, to realize what they can get from one anlikely that there will be a progressive evolution. Institu- other, as well as from their teachers. Creatively and tions like the ETH shouldn't change too fast, they critically it is an interesting process to go through. would lose a lot of the depth that is in the department. When do you stand up and say: (no) and when do you It's not just the chairs which are powerful, it's also the just participate and help push the whole thing along? collective knowledge and traditions. Where power It does not mean being endlessly individualistic. Being comes from and how it's exercised is not that well critical is knowing when there is a bigger purpose understood or transparent in the department. If it was that's worth working for. It's about the confrontation more visible, we could squeeze, push and twist more of the idea with individual authorship and responsicritically. I try to create an environment in which critibility towards one's own work, and one's responsibility cism is encouraged. I'm not easily offended and if towards what is fundamentally collective and shared. somebody disagrees with me it's fine. It requires a cer- Architects need to know the difference and how to tain amount of maturity, confidence and mutual behave accordingly.» respect on both sides to accept significant differences and allow them to be under the same roof. It's also about the pedagogical methodology. To what extent are you Zurich and London the 16th of June 2017 by Vincent Bianchi and Yann instructing, or do you know the correct solution before Salzmann.

you started? If this inquiry is open ended, there's more space for students to be involved, critical and forming the agenda as well as responding to it. Finding the balance between developing a precise position and «The department at ETH is very large with many offering enough freedom to be critically active is one of

I hope that I allow students to talk about what they One of the sacred parts of the academic think and what they feel in an honest and candid way. I

I think this also has to do with the broader

The ETH is such a big school that it has a «And maybe, as a final question, how would you relate

This text is taken from the skype interview with Tom Emerson between