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A conversation with Adam Nathaniel Furman about influence

After a few emails, I call Adam quite spontaneously on a grey morning from our office. He answers right away, his dog in his arms, some of his colourful work behind him in a small room filled with objects of different shapes and sizes, all brighter than the other. It's invigorating.

TM You are giving lectures at universities, you published a book, you have massive numbers of followers, you are talking to the future generation and seem to want to induce some new movement. You must know about the impact of your influence but do you see it already?

ANF It is difficult to gauge the impact, you know, one doesn't really realize it because people don't necessarily interact a lot. I have been present on the Internet since the 90s, so it has been quite a long time already. What I have found is that some colleagues have done things over the same period of time and I thought that we were talking to a void and it turns out we weren't: years later I come across people who have read me: architecture students in Argentina, Russia, America, who actually found some of the things I wrote very important for them and I never knew.

So I guess the short answer is: I was doing this anyway, I wasn't aware of the influence but have come to be aware of it. Certain things that I have been posting have been influential over quite a long period of time.

TM Would you see immediate reactions to your posts?

ANF No, and that specifically because what I have done is that I massively cut off and reduced the amount of things I followed. I had some instances over the past years where I came across people ridiculing things that I've done or that I've said and I got into some stupid arguments—and you can't. There is a limit to the productive conversation that you can have online that doesn't just turn into a sort of hating match. So I've stopped looking and I've become very controlled: I end up not knowing if my posts were taken up and discussed elsewhere and I don't really want to know. I sort of put some things out there and then leave.

TM We saw some of your posts on Millennials and how you engage with them ironically, turning those negative headlines into something funny but also very real. Do you think we should make ourselves heard?

ANF Yes. I find architecture students a particularly odd breed, in the sense that they're always full of ideas and criticism—they will make the effort of doing a zine or writing some radical manifesto—but the work is oddly always the same and actually oddly deferential. You see people of the same age dealing with the wider world, dealing with politics, dealing with economic injustices, dealing with art and theoretical ideas in the fine art world and they are so much more radical and open to a myriad of different influences and approaches. So I do really wish that architecture students would actually talk less and do more. One of the many ways in which they can express themselves would be using online tools in a more interesting way, which they don't! Where is your desire to use every single tool that is at your disposal to smash things? There is none, and it's a little bit annoying. You should have it and use it, it would be nice if you did.

TM More voice and more medias! But then, why not keep on with your collection of posts on Millennials?

ANF I guess it's a theme—not a theme I came up with—that encompasses a bigger issue: there is a general generational divide. People who are 40 and above and people who are 40 and below. It's a divide (you know it, Trump, not Trump, Brexit, not Brexit, Gilets Jaunes, not Gilets Jaunes) that is running across society throughout the western world. Because the economic circumstances we grew up with—if we are 40 and below—are so radically and wildly different to those of people who are 40 and above, that we are almost different human beings, or at least in the way we perceive

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"Millennials don't read. They don't think as critically as they could. And they're not interested in learning for learning's sake."



Millennials: the age of entitlement
timeshighereducation.com



adamnathanielfurman • Abonné(e)

adamnathanielfurman True, we never read, never discuss, never debate, we don't know how to learn, we're actually just sacks of potatoes in human form 🥔🥔

baxendale_studio The rest of us are, you're okay

adamnathanielfurman
@baxendale_studio 🤔 th funniest thing is almost all these articles are talking about people who are our students' age, and they're not millennials.. they're generation Z or something... and now THEY, they are terrible potatoes! 🤔🤔

ellie_meure Omfg

lucaguerini1805 ...but we also have flaws



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adamnathanielfurman • Abonné(e)

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Millennials don't need living rooms, says top architect

'For many young professionals who are out and about networking 24/7, a small, clean, private hotel room-sized central patch serves their needs perfectly well,' says Patrik Schumacher

Maya Oppenheim | @mayaoppenheim |

adamnathanielfurman Hell we don't need bedrooms cos we stay up all night watching netflix on our phones and could do that just about anywhere, and separate bathrooms? I mean privacy? What's that? We share everything on instagram so we don't deserve privacy, little attention-whore snowflakes that we are... in fact, we don't need homes, do we, at all, we just need selfie spots that look like home where we can take a few pictures of ourselves everyday to post on instagram after which we'll all just go and sleep in human piles around publicly provided street USB charging points and charity sponsored toilet kitchens, yes



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4 JANVIER

Ajouter un commentaire...

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the world. What's happening is, that you get a lot of grumpy, angry, 40-something radicals who are now really rich and look at younger people and start bashing them. Effectively they use arguments from 30 years ago that superficially misinterpret what's being done by the younger generation as being the same thing as what they were doing when they were younger, because they see some of the visual cues. But they don't see under the surface, to all of the societal and economic reasons as to why these things are happening, they just see the aesthetics of it. And then they go for some kind of tabloid dismissal of this generation of snowflakes and they combine it in order to dismiss everything that has been done. Which is of course ridiculous, but actually had currency because it's this perfectly-knit package and it makes them feel really good about themselves. So rather than making a collection of bashing posts—which really upsets a lot of people and is really dismissive of a lot of groups—I would prefer to go to another format where I could take the opposite side seriously and respect their opinions before breaking everything down methodically.

TM What I understand is that you try to trigger thoughts in people. If you are planning to initiate a discourse, you take your time to do it, to construct it and then you publish it...

ANF Yes, and I have done that, but virtually no one reads it. And, to be honest, I don't really mind because when I do them it is more for myself, sort of to get my thoughts clear. For instance, last year I wrote an essay on the freedom of aesthetics. I am a liberal and I was trying to expand the relationship between liberalism and aesthetics and nobody ended up reading it. But it helped me to clarify my thoughts! I've been invited to write another essay for the new edition of Architectural Design, specifically on social media, which is going to give me the opportunity to better understand what these formats mean that I've been playing with. It will give me a chance to explore that, textually and theoretically.

TM This leads us to the final question, relating to a somewhat broader context. We are experiencing new ways of defining people, genres, styles and even though it takes more time in architecture, we see a shift coming. Do you think this is true?

ANF There is a lot of continuity here in the UK. It is difficult to say. There are very specific lineages of schools of thoughts. But that's in the academics; it feeds itself. Outside of that, I do know quite a few people who are from the academic world but who have totally different practices and who are very much on the fringes of architecture. People operating on the borderline between the fine arts, computer game design, virtual reality design, social engagement practices and who are mixing these spheres of operations together in interesting ways. They are not—because they are not direct descendents of particular groups it is much more difficult for them to get positions in universities as teachers—easily defined yet as being useful to architecture. They're all my age, basically people in their mid thirties. So to come back to your question I would say yes and no: no because those lineages are making sure that their babies are all getting positions, but yes, because there are some really, really interesting people doing very interesting things who I think will be able to teach eventually.