KEYNOTE LECTURE

Materiality, Movement and Meaning: Architecture and the Embodied Mind.

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Bio

Dr Jonathan Hale is an architect, Associate Professor & Reader in Architectural Theory at the University of Nottingham. He is Coordinator of the Architectural Humanities Research Group (AHRG) and studio tutor for Unit 3 of the Diploma/Masters thesis project. Research interests include: architectural theory and criticism; phenomenology and the philosophy of technology; the relationship between architecture and the body; museums and architectural exhibitions. He has published books, chapters, refereed articles and conference papers in these areas and has obtained grants from the EPSRC, the Leverhulme Trust, British Academy, and the Arts Council. He is the founding chair and current steering group member of the international subject network: Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA); and in 2013 was a visiting professor at the Azrieli School of Architecture, Carleton University in Ottawa. He currently runs a blog/personal website at www.bodyoftheory.com

Abstract

To be human – and therefore to be embodied – is to be already extended into the world, into what Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his last writings called the 'flesh' of the world: a liminal realm where it is impossible to say categorically what belongs to the self and what belongs to the environment. This talk develops a new theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between architecture and embodiment – initially, by questioning the now commonplace view of the body's prosthetic relationship with technology. Drawing on the work of contemporary thinkers such as Bernard Stiegler, Raymond Tallis, and Tim Ingold, it argues that rather than treating new technological extensions of the body as in some way threatening to our sense of self, we should instead see them in a more positive way as part of a longer developmental trajectory in which 'the human' and 'the technological' are in fact mutually co-constitutive. By considering these issues within the framework of recent advances in evolutionary, cognitive and neuroscientific theory, the paper tries to draw out some of the more significant implications of both human and technological embodiment for designing, making and thinking about architecture today.