



On Balance

RCA School of Architecture
Graduate Student Colloquium

Friday 22 June 2018

Cleon Peterson "A Balance of Terror"

Call for Proposals

"Balance, like all our fundamental things is something we can find, keep, lose and use. It is something we often want."

Adam Phillips "On Balance", 2010

The foundation of modern epistemes – of justice, of environmentalism, of finance, of psychology, of social equity – relies on the concept of balance. We balance equations, work and life, musical scores, personalities, and accounts. We weigh costs and benefits, we consider pros and cons, and on balance, we act. But is balance a good thing? Could we consider 'balance' as a form of cruel optimism (to borrow Lauren Berlant's term), that is akin to 'when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing'? If so, what alternatives to balance can we imagine? Or is balance so normatively, politically, and physically fundamental that a shift from either it, or its antonym, is an impossibility?

Pervading into every aspect of today's society, from inequality to climate change, there is a spatial dimension to these 'balancing acts'. For instance, the post-war housing schemes in London were aimed at re-balancing historic social and economic inequalities. Contemporary speculative housing developments work from a neo-liberal argument of balancing supply and demand. Balance as an argument can be used for multiple ends.

This colloquium is concerned with understanding balance as a paradox in architectural, urban and related spatial and artistic disciplines. The aim is to explore together architecture's role in the balancing acts of our contemporary structural, environmental, financial, political, social, anthropological and aesthetical realms. The discussion will interrogate how the conditions of balance in the 21st century can be read through broader histories and theories of architecture and related spatio-political disciplines.

On Balance invites scholars, researchers and practitioners interested in critically investigating 'balance', its corollaries of stasis, equilibrium, fairness, dependency, and antonyms of excess, madness, too much, instability, as an object, a characteristic, a position, or an act. We encourage performative, scholarly, historical, theoretical or other contributions that explore a variety of scales.

The format of the colloquium divests from traditional academic performance. Rather than formal conference papers or presentations, we invite emergent contributions exploring this theme to be presented within 5 minutes in any format including text, images, videos, case studies, performance, etc. The day-long event is catalysed by these contributions that will trigger facilitated discussion.

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Submission Guidelines

Deadline for submission: 10th of June 2018

- 100 word that consider the paradox of balance
- 50 word biography
- Specification of the format for 5-minute contribution (text, image, or video)

All submissions should be submitted online at: <http://onbalance.space>

Questions or inquiries to: on-balance@rca.ac.uk

Decisions will be sent out by email on the 12th of June 2018.