



## Editorial 2024: Architecture, Activism, Agency

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Can a journal of architectural history serve as an agent of activism? As it reached its 10th anniversary, *Architectural Histories* moved from being a newer publication in the discipline to an established academic community and driver of innovative approaches to scholarship. This editorial assesses its contribution to the ethos of Open Access and recent work to cultivate more inclusive working practices in the field.

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**Keywords:** Open Access; inclusion; early-career; mentorship; global; feminism

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## Quiet Subversiveness

It might seem disingenuous to begin an editorial by identifying as an outsider. In 2018, when I first joined the general Editorial Board of *Architectural Histories*, I was its sole ancient specialist and one of the few members working on pre-modern material. This composition remains unchanged in the present day. Throughout our tenure, I as editor-in-chief and Manuel Sánchez García, an early modern historian, as our associate editor have together frequently expressed bemusement that we lead a journal which dedicates so much space to the periods post-1800. As a discipline, architectural history is still very much dominated by Modernism, and many colleagues would also contend that its practices and approaches to the built environment on the whole are conservative, averse to changes in methods and dissemination. But the last four — indeed almost seven — years in total for me at *Architectural Histories* have demonstrated that the discipline can innovate, recalibrating to account for shifts in research interests as well as in response to timely political debates and developments.

One of the main reasons I initially sought a position on the Editorial Board was my desire to serve as a conduit for more publications on pre-modern material. What I got out of that initial experience was something unanticipated and far more instrumental. While the spread of articles the journal publishes still skews toward Modernism, the community within the journal embodies a remarkable willingness to push boundaries and subvert the status quo of the discipline. Serving on the board does not necessitate staying within one's own chronological confines or geographical niche. While the board aims to have a healthy spread of expertise and interests, the lateral connections between editors and the journal's cooperative approach to working provide opportunities to take risks and experiment, sometimes even courting controversy. This environment became the principal motivating factor for me to put myself forward for the position of editor-in-chief in 2020.

The last four years have seen *Architectural Histories* building upon its successes and deepening its commitment to interdisciplinary projects. It is fitting to see that one of the final submissions that we have received this year is a Field Notes entitled 'ACTIVISM!' Looking even farther back through our publication record, one can distinguish a particularly rich seam of work on feminism. Under the tenure of my predecessor, Petra Brouwer, the Special Collection 'Architectural Historiography and Fourth Wave Feminism' (2020) was published, serving as an important precedent for many more recent articles and collaborations, including another Special Collection arriving this month, 'Women's Display: Women's Exhibitions and Exhibition Design in the 20th Century' (2024). We have also allocated time and space for colleagues to address crisis, for example through a Position Paper by Sofia Dyak on the war in Ukraine (2023). This past summer, *Architectural Histories* inaugurated a collaborative

experiment, an extended Field Notes aligned with the EAHN general meeting in Athens (2024). Designed as an alternative scholarly guide to Athens through the lens of mobility, this collection was led by two of our editors, Petros Phokaides and Olga Touloumi. Overall, the weight and scope of *Architectural Histories* is secure. Arguably, the core ambition of the journal is not dominance in a specific field of research but instead distinction in *how* it publishes: It ensures quality and support through inclusive practices in academic publishing.

### Open Access Activism

Last year, *Architectural Histories* celebrated its 10th anniversary, shifting from being one of the newer journals in our discipline into a more established, rooted position with connections to several allied fields of study. With this change came greater recognition, growth and a wider reputation beyond Europe. Yet while the early years of the journal faced the standard challenges of obtaining funding and reaching sufficient article submission targets, *Architectural Histories* has also been from its inception a journal with activism at its core. Maarten Delbeke, our founding editor-in-chief, not only made the decision to have the journal digital-born and Open Access (OA), but he also had the foresight to build a financial underpinning that would continue to pay dividends to the present day. Since 2018, the Open Library of Humanities (OLH) has supported the publication costs of *Architectural Histories*.<sup>1</sup> It formally became the publisher of our journal in 2021, thereafter covering all APCs (Article Processing Charges), including typesetting. Such charges, usually levied to authors in commercial presses when they choose to publish Open Access, can be stifling. Without a doubt, OA ensures there are fewer barriers to publication and readership. At the same time, however, we must acknowledge that it requires ongoing financial support.

The tagline for OLH is ‘For free. For everyone. For ever.’ But, of course, few things in publishing are entirely free. Costs come from other directions, mainly in ways that remain hidden behind the scenes. For instance, our journal would not be able to retain its reputation without the deeply engaged work of our Editorial Board members — all of whom work voluntarily — and our specialist copyeditors. As the field journal for a learned society, the European Architectural History Network (EAHN), *Architectural Histories* has the good fortune to tap into other funding streams. In particular, the EAHN covers the copyediting costs for our articles, a task that is always vital to academic publishing and even more critical for *Architectural Histories* given that a large percentage of our authors are non-native English speakers. Lenore Hietkamp has been copyediting *Architectural Histories* since its beginnings, even before it became a fully-fledged journal, and more recently we have been joined by MJ Devaney. Their deft handling of our articles enables the voices of our authors to shine. This collective

work has paid off, with *Architectural Histories* rising consistently in the international journal rankings. In 2023, the journal moved into the Q1 of Scimago Journal Rankings (SJR) in both the *History* and *Visual and Performing Arts* categories,<sup>2</sup> while retaining its Q2 position in the *Architecture* category of the Journal Citation Reports (JCR).

While in 2013 many of our colleagues may have initially asked, ‘why Open Access?’, now OA is central to the identity of *Architectural Histories*. OA has rapidly become the standard vehicle for publication across many disciplines in Europe and, increasingly, is the requisite route of scholarly dissemination for EU-based grants.<sup>3</sup> Recently, when we surveyed our Editorial Board about their experience working for the journal, we found that opinions about the OA publishing model have continued to evolve since I began my tenure as editor-in-chief in 2021. As large commercial publishers sweep up many academic journals, OA stands out by offering an alternative pathway that is non-profit focused and encourages cooperative working environments with flatter hierarchies. Fairer access to publishing remains a key motivating factor for scholars seeking to join our board. But we now understand that OA can also offer something more: The collaborative nature of its design and process enfranchises its editorial community, offering platforms for discussion and decision making beyond the day-to-day publishing of peer-reviewed research articles. This approach in *Architectural Histories* has borne numerous fruits over the past four years.

To mark our first decade in 2023, we convened a special online panel to discuss editorial politics and Open Access as ways for scholarly publications to perform as agents of activism (**Figure 1**). Invited speakers included Allison Levy (Brown University Library), Stephen Parnell (Newcastle University) and Rafico Ruiz (Canadian Centre for Architecture). Moderated by Nokubekezela Mchunu, the conversation drew over 100 attendees from Europe, the United States and beyond.

### **European Locus, Global Focus**

*Architectural Histories* has gained a reputation as a journal of choice for early-career scholars because of its assiduous editorial oversight. Each article published receives attentive consideration and scrutiny from multiple sets of eyes. Less widely acknowledged is the composition of the Editorial Board itself, which also slants toward early-career scholars. Notably, the board has long held space for postdoctoral scholars and academics in their first years of tenure-track positions. There has always been an informal mentoring practice in place in the journal, with experienced editors working with newcomers to the board to assist in selecting peer-reviewers and revising articles. This kind of reciprocity was foregrounded and honed by Petra Brouwer, whose work

**SPECIAL GUESTS:**

**Dr. Stephen Parnell** -  
Newcastle University, joint Editor-in-Chief of the *ARENA Journal of Architectural Research*.

**Dr. Allison Levy** -  
Director for Brown University Digital Publications.

**Dr. Rafico Ruiz** -  
Associate Director of Research, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.

**CORRESPONDENT:**

**M.Arch Nokubekezela Mchunu** -  
Junior Fellow at *Architectural Histories*. PhD student University College Dublin.

**HOSTS:**

**Prof. Samantha L. Martin** -  
Editor-in-Chief *Architectural Histories*, University College Dublin.

**Dr. Manuel Saga Sánchez García** -  
Associate Editor *Architectural Histories*, Dumbarton Oaks.

In celebration of *Architectural Histories*' 10th anniversary, we are pleased to invite you to a special online panel organized around the discussion of editorial politics and Open Access as ways for scholarly publications to perform as agents of activism.

This activity is 100% online and free, open to scholarly audiences from different fields, backgrounds, and geographies. We particularly encourage emergent scholars to participate and pose their questions on Open Access and editorial activism.

Registration link:  
[https://ucd-ie.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_YQaM84U0QxmCnCWN1fNHFQ](https://ucd-ie.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_YQaM84U0QxmCnCWN1fNHFQ)

**10**  
**Architectural Journals**  
**as Agents of Activism**  
**10**

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIES** 09.05.23  
10:00am ET time / 15:00 UK time / 16:00 CET time

Design: Nokubekezela Mchunu

**Figure 1:** Advertisement for the *Architectural Histories* 10th Anniversary Panel, 'Architectural Journals as Agents of Activism'. May 9, 2023. Advertisement designed and produced by the journal's editorial fellows.

in building a collaborative editorial community provided the crucial foundation for initiatives under my tenure. In fact, one of the defining moments of my experience in the journal was a discussion that unfolded in Petra's closing Editorial Board meeting where we wrestled with our reservations about the epistemology of architectural history. To be clear, this was not a self-indulgent, rambling debate but instead a very pointed exchange on scholarly standards that was sparked by a single article in the journal's pipeline. This conversation, which is still informally discussed amongst former editors, catalysed a healthy disquiet toward prevailing assumptions in our discipline and a willingness to ask better questions about inclusion.

One of the main continuities between Petra Brouwer’s editorship and my own has been the ambition to break down boundaries in representation, both in terms of the material that we publish as well as our editorial community. While we are the journal of a learned society rooted in Europe, we are global in scope and continue to seek out and welcome submissions beyond the Western canon. During the last few years, the geographic breadth of our board expanded to six continents (**Figure 2**). Our reviews section, which has always foregrounded volumes that come from beyond the largest publishing houses, also expanded to include exhibitions and digital content, including material disseminated in languages other than English.

### Pursuing Agency

Two years ago, with the support of the EAHN, Manuel Sánchez García and I set in motion some new initiatives to build our readership and audience while also more deliberately mediating the gap between postgraduate students and early-stage career academics. This specific career phase always harbours uncertainty, and conversations amongst our editorial team have repeatedly highlighted the need to pay more attention to how emerging scholars gain exposure to publishing, both as authors *and* editors. Beginning in 2022, we welcomed our first two *Architectural Histories* fellows, Yağmur Burhan and Nokubekezela (Beke) Mchunu. Yağmur revitalised our social media presence,



**Figure 2:** Map showing locations of *Architectural Histories* Editorial Board members (as of June 2023). Created by Nokubekezela Mchunu.

consolidating our brand on platforms such as Instagram and X (formerly known as Twitter) through feeds based on the very same source materials, architectural plans and historical photographs highlighted by our authors. In addition to shadowing me, Beke worked side-by-side with Lenore Hietkamp, our copy editor, and our general editors, learning the ropes of line-editing and peer-review processes. This past summer we were joined by a new social media fellow, Katerina Bong, a PhD student at the University of Toronto, who has fortified our social media activity and is now working on further improvements to our streams of communication.

Our first two fellows were also instrumental to what became one of the largest outreach undertakings of the journal thus far. To coincide with the EAHN meeting in Madrid in 2022, they collaborated with three general board members, Hannah le Roux, Petros Phokaides and Yichi Zhang, to produce a day-long editorial workshop for emerging and under-represented scholars (Figures 3 and 4). The germination for

**An introduction to publishing for emerging and under-represented scholars**

**Architectural Histories Editorial Workshop**  
EAHN 2022 MADRID

Architectural Histories is pleased to announce our first editorial workshop aimed at postgraduate students/unaffiliated researchers to help navigate the process of academic publishing. It will be held on June 15, ahead of the EAHN 2022 Madrid biennial conference (June 15-18). Early career stage scholars who are from under-resourced programs and under-represented geographies/groups are especially welcomed. The workshop will include around 25 participants and there is no registration fee. This workshop will provide a platform where participants are able to deeply communicate with editors and reviewers from Architectural Histories and EAHN on how to enrich their reach, diversify their content, and expand their media presence. It aspires to support emerging scholars to contribute to more inclusive cultures in architectural histories and their academic publishing outlets.

Enquiries email:  
[editorial@journal.eahn.org](mailto:editorial@journal.eahn.org)

**Application materials:**

1. A long abstract or excerpt from current work that might lead to a journal submission (750 words).
2. CV (two pages maximum)
3. Short statements (150-200 words) responding to:
  - a) Motivation to join, or why this workshop could be useful to you?
  - b) What challenges have you experienced in trying to publish your research?
  - c) What alternative routes have you found to bring your research interests to public culture?

Attendees who also wish to attend the EAHN conference as well should register at <https://eahn2022.conference.aq.upm.es/registration>.

**Apply here:**

**Key dates:**

- 05 March: Call opens
- 30 March: Call closes
- 20 April: Results are announced
- 15 June: Workshop (in-person @ETSAM & online via Zoom)

**Figure 3:** Advertisement for the Architectural Histories Editorial Workshop, coinciding with the EAHN meeting in Madrid, June 2022. Designed and produced by the journal's editorial fellows.



**Figure 4:** Some of the editors, fellows, participants and mentors who participated in the Editorial Workshop in Madrid, 2022. Photograph courtesy of Petros Phokaides.

this event began in a discussion about inclusion in one of our general Editorial Board meetings a year previously. Ultimately, it drew over 30 participants and a dozen guest critics who volunteered their time as mentors. While we knew from the beginning that this project would help demystify the publication process for its participants, we could not quantify its future outcomes in advance. One participant is now on our Editorial Board and another has published with us. While it is not always possible to draw direct correlations between outreach initiatives and deeper interest in *Architectural Histories*, the responses to our calls for editors and fellows clearly demonstrate that the journal has an increasingly wide, global following. This year we received a combined total of over 70 applications for seats on the Editorial Board and one fellowship position. This kind of agency is a commitment that requires active and continuous engagement.

### **Conclusion: The Process of Consensus**

Over the last few years, I have often caught myself saying that Manuel Sánchez García and I received a sea-worthy vessel and that our job was to ensure it stayed afloat. Of course, a large part of running any organisation is keeping the lines of communication open. Immense credit is due to Manuel, who not only worked tirelessly behind the scenes to guarantee the smooth running of the journal, but also became an unwavering champion of its values and ethos, presenting at editorial seminars outside of Europe and in languages other than English. *Architectural Histories* has always approached consensus as a broader process that includes the entire community. This is something



that remains central to the culture of the journal. It includes deliberation and with that, struggle as well as conflict. Many of our most valuable ideas have emerged out of deeply serious debates on inclusivity, rankings, political positions, standards and ‘the canon’. These are all immense in scope and therefore our engagement with them must carry a sober awareness that one journal cannot wield huge changes in the discipline. However, *Architectural Histories* has made inroads — in architectural parlance, ‘interventions’ — and we hope that these have made significant impacts on scholars who will come forward as future authors and editors.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> OLH, Open Library of Humanities, <https://www.openlibhums.org/>.
- <sup>2</sup> SJR, Scimago Journal & Country Rank, 'Architectural Histories', <https://www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php?q=-21100867251&tip=sid&exact=no>.
- <sup>3</sup> European Commission, 'Research and Innovation', [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/our-digital-future/open-science/open-access\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/our-digital-future/open-science/open-access_en).

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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