

Architecture Depends / Jeremy Till.—Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, March 2009.—254 p.: ill.—ISBN: 978-0-262-01253-9 (cl., alk. paper): \$24.95.



Jeremy Till

Award-winning architect Jeremy Till, Dean of Architecture and the Built Environment at the University of Westminster, has developed a tripartite series of essays devoted to exposing the inherent paradoxes of the architecture profession. Roaming through a wide array of architectural theory, sociology, and philosophy, Till explores the gap between reality and expectation. While architecture as a profession has claimed its autonomy predicated on philosophical ideals, dependencies constantly impact architectural practice.

Questioning everything from its educational system to its canonical histories and its renaissance and modern icons, Till attacks the profession's tenets. Especially informed by his admiration for Polish émigré sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, Till posits architecture within the context of an ordering society (a vision/a metaphor) that belies the inherent contingencies of time (reality). *Architecture Depends* supports what Till refers to as a "praxis of contingency", a Robert Smithson-derived acceptance of and collaboration with entropy. Embracing contingency as an agent, adopting its potential to harness the imagination rather than relying on "the prison yard of architecture's own making" (p. 189), forms the basis of Till's new architecture.

Till provocatively interjects anecdote and memoir into an argument grounded in a sustained intellectual engagement with the academic and speculative writing of such figures as Italo Calvino, Henri Lefebvre and Roberto Mangabeira Unger. As a text that vacillates between literary modes, *Architecture Depends* appropriately culminates with the hopeful reconciliation of architecture's lofty ideals and its earthbound dependencies in the hallucinatory shape of Wim Wenders's cinematic angel who has chosen mortality over the divine.

Although the book's marketing might imply a general readership, the content requires otherwise. It should be noted that despite the fact that *Architecture Depends* nods to popular culture and contains humorous asides, its literary references – and assumptions about foreknowledge – depend upon an educated reader versed in architectural and social theory. Explanatory footnotes enhance important contextual information; illustrations appear sporadically, at times disconnected from relevant text.

The book is especially recommended for graduate architecture programs.

Keli E. Rylance, Head, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Special Collections Division,
Tulane University Libraries, krylance@tulane.edu

