
Esther Choi and Marrikka Trotter, cofounders and coeditors of Work Books, bring us Architecture at the Edge of Everything Else, intended to be the first in a series of publications that focus on contemporary design research and discourse. Divided in three parts—“How to Interpret,” “How to Intervene,” and “How to Imagine”—the book presents essays and project proposals interspersed with informal conversations. Each contribution broaches different aspects of spatial practices exploring the many directions that contemporary architectural discourse can take while exposing the blurry lines between practice and theory, art and architecture, social engagement and architectural practice.

Contributors come from a wide range of backgrounds including architects, artists, and scholars, such as Sylvia Lavin, K. Michael Hays, Sanford Kwinter, Liam Gillick, Philippe Rahm, and Teddy Cruz, as well as emerging voices from young architects. What all of the authors have in common—aside from a connection to Harvard Graduate School of Design (the editors’ alma mater)—is highly interdisciplinary practices and research interests.

The design of this book is attractive, if slightly distracting at times, but, particularly in the conversation pieces, the font weight and color can prove challenging to read under anything less than perfect lighting. That being said, the integration of images behind and around text blocks and the dynamic design enforce and illustrate the ideas being discussed. Each section uses different graphics and images while the overall design remains cohesive throughout the book. The use of two distinct fonts, one reminiscent of a typewriter font for the conversation pieces and another one for the more formal pieces, compliments the change in tone between the writings. The quality of the binding and printing is questionable and library copies will likely require repairs even under moderate use.

The multitude of voices and formats brought together in Architecture at the Edge posit thought-provoking ideas regarding architecture in a broader cultural context where it constantly intersects with other disciplines. Although one might not share some of the opinions expressed by some of the authors, most of the writings in this book are successful as they elicit important discussion about current and potential roles for architects and architecture and promote experimentation that will continue to push the boundaries between disciplines. Architecture practitioners and critics are faced with a myriad of challenges as well as opportunities inherent to programmatic, social, and political constraints and possibilities. Architecture at the Edge presents several avenues to apply the power of architecture to influence change from the pragmatic to the sublime.

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