

# DISCOURSE

## 03 THE AGENCY OF FORM

RMIT Architecture & Urban Design values ideas-led ventures design experimentation and exploration. To be ventures is to be brave and take risks. At RMIT students are asked to articulate the positions contained in their projects, to be critical and assert their interests and future directions. It is important that architectural projects and ideas are situated within wider discussions in the discipline and that propositions are formed that suggest how a contribution can be made to disciplinary, as well as to wider contexts and ideas in the world.

The Architecture & Urban Design Discourse Series will use five themes as catalysts to initiate conversations amongst design studio leaders and reveal their positions, attitudes and propositions. There is a long standing tradition of discourse at RMIT and this series aspires to reveal our collective and diverse concerns and facilitate speculation on how these might contribute to advancing the discipline and the wider terrains that they engage in. If we drill down and look behind the statements made at design studio presentations, what do they explicitly refer to, what do they suggest and what do they lead to? Vivian Mitsogianni - Deputy Dean Architecture & Urban Design

Friday 21  
August 6:15pm

Swanston  
Academic  
Building (SAB)

Building 80,  
Level 4,  
Room 11

**Convenors**  
Michael Spooner &  
Leanne Zilka

**Moderator**  
Michael Spooner

**Panel**  
Pia Ednie-Brown  
Leanne Zilka  
Carey Lyon  
Gwyllim Jahn

Form is not immured to geometry. My studio equates form with the substantiation of the vital. Participants are implicated in the volatile experience of knowing and Being embodied through a confrontation with aleatory alignments, absurd actions and by subterfuge. The 'agency of form' names the improvisation of a domain that permits a life to move freely about.  
Michael Spooner (2015)

A dog scans the city for the vertical not distinguishing between pole and tree when deciding which to urinate on. This pragmatic attitude is how I develop form - through an understanding that there is no difference between form, existing conditions, program elements, site conditions and materials for any given project.  
Leanne Zilka (2015)

In the context of law, an agent is someone who acts for someone or something else. Does form act for something other than itself? I believe it does, in that specific forms resonate with other forms (not all of which are visible), together acting out a mode of composition - a way of configuring relationships - which come with political, social and ethical implications.  
Pia Ednie-Brown (2015)

Form has agency in so far as it provides access to the murky reality of objects as we encounter them. I am the ontographer of form that withdraws from this encounter, beneath veils of data, walls of pixels, billowing nebulous simulations, clumsy gestures and wicked physicality.  
Gwyllim Jahn (2015)

Formalism, it was enough to get you shot in Russia in the 1930's. How is it that, even today, culture wars can be fought over form; too much, too little, a mere vessel through which meaning and intention passes, or not. We seem to be in an era where the form war is being lost again, that architecture has some other agency - social engineering comes to mind. Our practice studios try to be fearless with form - make it, discover it, examine an excess rather than a minimum, work out what it might do for us - it's all we have.  
Carey Lyon (2015)

**Formula, formulaic, formation, formidable, formalism, formalist, formalise, formant, formative, formatting, former, formless, formwork, deformed, transform, chloroform, malformed, misinformed, perform, conform, cuniform, reform, uniform.....**

**The discipline of architecture has wedded the agency of form to an excessive number of form-fitting and ill-formed concerns. Through aesthetic detours, mythical narratives and technological illusions encompassing everything from the cadastral to the monumental, our contemporary capacity to situate form as an intellectual pursuit is conceived within a design studio environment marked by degeneracy, fatigue and celebration.**

**Consequently the argument that form has agency must be considered concurrently as an appeal to something else entirely and as that which is captured without ambiguity in the substantial of form alone.**

**The Agency of FORM is left to ask:**

**Is there architecture without form?**