A Day in the life of an Architecture Practice

Citation for published version:

Link:
Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer

Document Version:
Early version, also known as pre-print

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On the 4th of September 2009, a Twitter account was registered by the London office of Foreign Office Architects. The login details were distributed to all staff, and everybody in the office was asked to Tweet on their activities as they changed throughout the day.

The subsequent stream of information chronologically documented the different range of tasks, jobs and processes that supported the work of the architecture practice. Detailed as though it was a monologue from one individual, the variety of activities hints at the complexity of sustaining a contemporary office.

The FOA Twitter feed is compared against the English monastic summers day that was introduced during the early to mid eleventh century (Burton 1994:160).1


Architecture appears by organizing labour, and is political as it is aesthetic. Architecture establishes policies that create a distribution of the sensible—a system of sensible facts that disclose the existence of something in common and define the respective parts and positions within it. Architectural policies establish the terms of work employed by building, and determine the relative visibility of that work, awarding some work a public appearance, and other work obscurity. Historically, architecture has given pride of place to the linearity of decoration over the utility of building, the fantastic image of the machine-work over the evidence of the handcraft, and to the free-floating component over its defining lining. Architecture often makes claims concerning its transparency—about its ability to immediately make manifest work as work, without an intervening hierarchy of visibility—claiming to simply present the immanent logic of some kind of material, distribution, fabrication, assembly, maintenance or demolition. However, this appears to be precisely what it can’t do, in organizing construction, resolving building junctions, architecture can’t help but put one kind of work before another.

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1 Jacques Rancière, The Politics of Aesthetics, Continuum, 2004

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Office Time | A Day in the life of an Architecture Practice

Foreign Office Architects & Chris Speed

1. convoluted junction: Internal corner profile, section, Corinthian capital, architecture, beams and columns
2. direct junction: Interior corner profile, plan/section, Villa La Roche/Jeanneret
3. involuted junction: Interior corner profile, plan/section, Velfac 200 rainscreen, interface for steel frame and aluminium cladding
10 a.m. Preparation for night office, time centres and packed medals
5.00 a.m. Vespers (night office, five lessons or matins) including prayers for the royal family and for the dead
5.15 a.m. Monday's Mass and the angelus, and change
5.50 a.m. Time centres
6.00 a.m. Vespers
Monday, Mass, Chapter
7.00 a.m. Work
8.00 a.m. Snug, More
9.10 a.m. Reading

10 a.m. FOALondon: opened office
9:09 a.m. FOALondon: checking email correspondence
9:16 a.m. FOALondon: preparing a finishes list for the qs to price
9:28 a.m. FOALondon: doing hotel research!
9:31 a.m. FOALondon: having breakfast infront of the monitor
9:32 a.m. FOALondon: and preparing prints for meeting later
9:35 a.m. FOALondon: pick up milk from corner shop
9:41 a.m. FOALondon: ok back on finishes...
9:43 a.m. FOALondon: update coments on drawings
9:53 a.m. FOALondon: talking about water filters
9:53 a.m. FOALondon: Research hotels for visiting client
9:53 a.m. FOALondon: reading about world architecture festival
9:57 a.m. FOALondon: rendering the columns
9:58 a.m. FOALondon: learning how to use the twitter...
9:59 a.m. FOALondon: updating the diagrams
10:03 a.m. FOALondon: moveable walls
10:08 a.m. FOALondon: email correspondence
10:10 a.m. FOALondon: discuss office cleaning
10:21 a.m. FOALondon: figuring out how to say something
10:25 a.m. FOALondon: downloading drivers for external hard drive
10:38 a.m. FOALondon: finishes again
10:41 a.m. FOALondon: correspondence to the bank
10:47 a.m. FOALondon: preparing for meeting
10:49 a.m. FOALondon: rendering floor mask for color adjustments
10:55 a.m. FOALondon: meeting client
11:32 a.m. FOALondon: telephone messages
12:34 a.m. FOALondon: countertop to be plywood and smooth finish mdf backing. high gloss smooth polyurethane epoxy floor coating system ISC Garland or eq
12:47 a.m. FOALondon: distribute post, open post
12:52 a.m. FOALondon: how the team will work together
13:01 a.m. FOALondon: drawing very nice sections
13:08 a.m. FOALondon: searching through old powerpoints for sketches
13:08 a.m. FOALondon: organise correspondence in project folder
13:19 a.m. FOALondon: photoshopping
13:41 a.m. FOALondon: having lunch
13:43 a.m. FOALondon: fee discussions
13:46 a.m. FOALondon: back from meeting on site
14:12 a.m. FOALondon: rendering....
14:36 a.m. FOALondon: telephone messages
14:54 a.m. FOALondon: back to the section after the lunch break...
15:25 a.m. FOALondon: stationary orders
15:38 a.m. FOALondon: receiving journalists for interview. tea
15:54 a.m. FOALondon: drawing
16:00 a.m. FOALondon: reading architecture blogs
16:31 a.m. FOALondon: email correspondence: invitations, spam, product info, student inquiries, applications, cv’s, newsletters, sales, press
16:35 a.m. FOALondon: adjusting the image in photoshop
16:36 a.m. FOALondon: oh yes revolving doors!
16:36 a.m. FOALondon: now some correspondence
16:36 a.m. FOALondon: ok done with finishes finally and back from lunch
16:37 a.m. FOALondon: intumescent paint count!
16:37 a.m. FOALondon: preparing for the discussion
16:38 a.m. FOALondon: waiting for the other rendering to be finished
17:25 a.m. FOALondon: 3metros drawn, one to go
18:23 a.m. FOALondon: up dating the presentation
18:42 a.m. FOALondon: correspondence about travel arrangements for a conference
19:23 a.m. FOALondon: correspondence with intumescent paint sales people
20:00 a.m. FOALondon: prints for discussion on Monday morning and off

12.30 a.m. Sat
12.30 p.m. Dinner
1.30 a.m. Preparation for night office; trina oratio and gradual psalms.
2.00 a.m. Nocturns (night office) (later known as matins) including prayers for the royal family and for the dead.
3.30/4.00 a.m. Matins (lauds) at daybreak; wash and change
5.00 a.m. Trina oratio
5.10 a.m. Reading
6.00 a.m. Prime
8.00 a.m. Terce
5.30 p.m. Supper
6.00 p.m. Vespers
8.00 p.m. Compline
9.15 p.m. Bed