Drawing and the Primacy of Expression

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INVITED KEYNOTE

This keynote address explores the potential of drawing in contemporary practice as a vital form of creative visual thinking. It argues that drawing, in all its varied forms and diversity of techniques, remains fundamental to primacy of expression in design professions that are increasingly globalized and homogenized. Architects engage in drawing as an experimental process, in order to work through problems - they draw in order to discover. The visual language of architecture is not simply a medium of communication, or illustration, but a process of thought, a kind of visual intelligence. This talk addresses the ways in which the visual intelligence of drawing is embodied in physical materials and actions, and considers the ways in which expressive mark making will continue to make a distinctive contribution as technical capabilities respond to the human challenges of design.

David Dernie is an architect and academic: key to his work is the practice of drawing, and questions of materials, colour and representation in architecture. His work focuses on drawings and creative thinking at the early stages of architectural design. Previously Head of Manchester and Leicester Schools of Architecture, he became Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Westminster in 2012. He was twice Rome Scholar in Architecture (1991-1993) and elected a Fellow at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge (1999). He has lectured widely and exhibited his drawings internationally. In 2005 he curated and built the architecture section at the Prague international biennale for contemporary art and has consulted extensively in architectural and exhibition design. His published books include Architectural Drawing (2010), Exhibition Design (2006), Material Imagination (2005), New Stone Architecture (2003), Villa d’Este at Tivoli (1996) and Victor Horta (1995). Recent publications include: The Crystal Imagination, Architectural Research Quarterly; Elevating Mallarmé’s Shipwreck, in Buildings; Material Conditions of Drawing in Tracey; and Exhibition Design in Handbook of Interior Design. He has recently completed extensive revisions for the second edition of Architectural Drawing, a new monograph Material Imagination in Architecture, Routledge in 2016, and Walking: Reflections, a set of mixed media images to be published in 2016. He is currently completing work on Victor Horta and Belgian Symbolism (Thames and Hudson, 2018) and a set of related collages and parallel text with author Olivia Laing entitled Shipwreck.