

Fitted landscapes: the Architecture Exhibition as a productive topos

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If shrinkage and smallness can be a design choice dictated by territorial and resource constraints – today more than ever –, they are also inherent to architecture exhibitions. This paper argues that exhibitions should not be understood as mere representations of architecture, but as architectural productions in their own right. Contrary to the literal meaning of the word ‘exhibere’, which suggests an outward movement, the exhibition practice fits full-scale projects into curated environments rooted simultaneously in spatial contraction and conceptual density.

Exploring concepts such as ‘displacement’ (Arrhenius et al., 2014) and architecture exhibitions as productive ‘heterotopias’ (Foucault, 1986) this paper analyses a range of exhibition formats – from two-dimensional displays to multisensorial experiences – approaching them as architectural practices that construct their own territory within the exhibition space. At the same time, the exhibition space itself – whether it is enclosed or not – is understood as never finished but always reinvented through what is displayed. While this is relevant for all exhibition practices, this condition becomes especially evident in architectural artifacts that function as a medium between what is outside and inside the curated space.

By examining exhibitions as sites of both contraction and production, the paper proposes the notion of exhibitions as topoi of smallness: spaces in which styles, buildings, time trajectories, landscapes and social contexts are juxtaposed and brought into dialogue. In doing so, it positions the architecture exhibition as a critical medium that ultimately reflects on the architectural practice as a whole.