

Press release

The University Is Now on Air: Broadcasting Modern Architecture UK / 1975–1982

15 November 2017 – 1 April 2018

Curator: Joaquim Moreno
Exhibition design: APPARATA, London and Basel
Graphic design: Something Fantastic, Berlin

cca.qc.ca/A305
cca.qc.ca/BroadcastingA305

#UniversityNowOnAir #TheOpenUniversity #CCAexhibitions



Front: Lee Balternamn, The demolition of Pruitt-Igoe, 1972, The LIFE Images Collection, Getty Images. © Lee Balternamn.
Back: Peter Trulock, A student watching an Open University broadcast, 1971, Hulton Archive, Getty Images. © Peter Trulock

Montréal, 15 November 2017 – The exhibition *The University Is Now on Air: Broadcasting Modern Architecture* is produced by the CCA based on the module A305, History of Architecture and Design, 1890–1939, written and produced by The Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom. All rights are reserved. The CCA gratefully acknowledges The Open University for their collaboration.

The University Is Now on Air: Broadcasting Modern Architecture

While higher education today is facing a crisis of access and quality, MOOCs (massive open online courses) offer a way to reach wider audiences but also raise questions about who produces knowledge and who is responsible for mass education. MOOCs are part of a long lineage of attempts to mobilize new media environments for educational purposes.

The exhibition *The University Is Now on Air: Broadcasting Modern Architecture* offers a close reading of a pioneering case study: A305, "History of Architecture and Design, 1890–1939". This third-year undergraduate arts course, offered by The Open University via television and radio broadcasts between 1975 and 1982, was a radical project for sharing knowledge through the convergence of mass media and mass education.

The Open University — founded in 1969 with headquarters in Milton Keynes, UK — was a key experiment in distance and adult education, and part of the socially progressive reforms of the Labour Party between 1964 and 1970. Through courses such as A305, The Open University extended higher education beyond a typical class of students by using media as a tool to transform both the production and transmission of knowledge. A305 used publication, correspondence, and a complex system of local tutors organized in regional centres to disseminate that knowledge across an entire country.

"We are open in many ways, but first of all to people. We are open as to places. This University has no cloisters – a word meaning closed. We have no courts – or spaces enclosed by buildings. Hardly even shall we have a campus. ... The rest of the University will be disembodied and airborne. From the start, it will flow all over the United Kingdom. We are open as to methods.

... Every new form of human communication will be examined to see how it can be used to raise and broaden the level of human understanding. There is no restriction on techniques. We are open, finally, to ideas."

Geoffrey Crowther, Lord Crowther of Headingley, first Chancellor of The Open University (1969-1972). Discourse at the first meeting of the Congregation of the Open University, July 23 1969

Curatorial statement

Higher education today is facing a crisis of access and quality; MOOCs (massive open on-line courses) offer a way to reach wider audiences but also raise questions about who produces knowledge and who is responsible for mass education. The University Is Now on Air: Broadcasting Modern Architecture attempts an archaeology of this contemporary situation through a parallel inquiry into the Open University's televised education, and the history of modern architecture broadcast in England in the second half of the 1970s through its third-level course, A305: History of Architecture and Design, 1890–1939. The course mobilized the convergence of mass media and mass education to broadcast modern architecture to an audience far broader than its enrolled students, reaching BBC primetime evening audiences and the constituents of the architecture culture: practitioners, educators, and students. This overexposure of education in public media transformed both the transmission of knowledge and the knowledge being transmitted, and radically opened up its means of dissemination. The exhibition contrasts A305's historical account of modern architecture with its context in the 1970s, a moment in which architecture itself was in great transformation. It also recreates the shared yet domestic experience of a door-to-door university education directly in the home, and offers insight into the machinery, logistics, and infrastructure required to bring about this educational innovation.

The Open University was a blended system of higher education for adults. It combined radio and TV broadcasts with mail delivered study materials, in-person tutorials, and residential summer sessions on conventional university campuses. It welcomed everybody irrespective of educational background and provided interdisciplinary foundation courses to foster a common denominator of academic preparation across a very diverse student body. The Open University's concept of "openness" contrasts with that of Umberto Eco, as articulated in his *Open Work*, roughly from the same generation. While Eco was interested in ambiguity through a proliferation of meanings, the Open University was interested in opening the doors and walls of higher education and opening up access to knowledge. Broadcasting education, however, implied reducing ambiguity for the sake of effectiveness. This central contrast provides an extraordinary opportunity to analyze the role of mass media and the university in the transformation of architecture culture, and for a close-up on the Labourist radical, political, and social project of sharing knowledge through open-channel mass media.

Joaquim Moreno

The publication

The University Is Now on Air: Broadcasting Modern Architecture is also a book. It will explore the Open University as a critical point of convergence between mass media and mass education, focusing in particular on the course A305, History of Architecture and Design 1890-1939, as a reference point for current discourse on open-source and online educational models. The publication will include contributions by Joaquim Moreno that analyze different aspects of A305; five conversations between Joaquim Moreno and key actors of the creation and production of the course—Stephen Bayley, Tim Benton, Adrian Forty, Nick Levinson, and Joseph Rykwert; and four essays that frame broader questions of architectural historiography, media history, and the pedagogical and political circumstances of the period—written respectively by Joseph Bedford (Virginia Tech), Ben Highmore (University of Sussex), Laura Carter (Cambridge University), and Nick Beech (Queen Mary University of London). A co-publication with Jap Sam Books, designed by Jonathan Hares (Lausanne and London). Available Spring 2018.

Oral Histories

The exhibition presents a series of oral history films featuring protagonists of the arts course A305, History of Architecture and Design, 1890–1939, produced by the CCA and directed by Shahab Mihandoust. The films include interviews between Joaquim Moreno, the curator of the exhibition, and Stephen Bayley, Tim Benton, Adrian Forty, and Nick Levinson.

The exhibition and the films, available on CCA's Youtube Channel (CCAchannel) will be a point of departure for a roaming public conversation on the relationship between media, technology, architecture, and public education, which will continue through 2018.

Prior to the opening in Montreal, the oral history films premiered on 28 October 2017 in Lisbon at the CCB Garagem Sul-Architecture Exhibitions, as part of the program organised by CCA c/o Lisboa. CCA c/o Lisboa is the first of a series of worldwide, temporary initiatives carried out by the CCA, which are locally anchored and seek to define new thematic explorations and broaden collaborations responding to different contexts. The film premiere was followed by a conversation on how the internet and new media are making us rethink education, communication, and cultural production today, with the participation of António Guerreiro (teacher, literary critic, and newspaper columnist at Público), Ana Naomi de Sousa (journalist, documentary filmmaker, and media collaborator at Forensic Architecture), and André Tavares (architect and CCB-Garagem Sul Programmer), and moderated by CCA c/o Lisboa (Lucinda Correia and Ana Jara). The recordings of the conversation will be published on CCA's Youtube Channel (CCAchannel) in December 2018.

Broadcasting A305: 24 episodes on cca.qc.ca/broadcastingA305

In the context of the CCA online issue “A history of references”, the CCA is revisiting the twenty-four television episodes of the course by publishing one per week over the course of the exhibition, to invite reflection on the timeliness of authoring new histories and what it means to disseminate these histories in an always-particular moment in time.

Between 1975 and 1982, The Open University broadcast a series of televised courses on the genealogy of the modern movement: A305, History of Architecture and Design 1890–1939. Through twenty-four programs aired on BBC 2, the course team aimed to offer students and viewers a critical understanding of the intentions and views of the world that fuelled the modern movement, and to present some of the alternative traditions that flourished alongside it. The course nevertheless avoided the more dismissive positions of its contemporaries, while engaging political issues of its day such as postwar urban planning and the housing question.

Schedule 17.11.2017 – 29.03.2018

The schedule recreates the order originally intended by team course leader Tim Benton and primary BBC producer Nick Levinson.

- 17 November 2017 – What is Architecture? An Architect At Work
- 24 November 2017 – The Universal International Exhibition, Paris 1900
– The International Exhibition of Decorative Arts, Paris 1925
- 1 December 2017 – Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Hill House
- 8 December 2017 – Industrial Architecture: AEG and Fagus Factories
- 15 December 2017 – Frank Lloyd Wright: The Robie House
– R. M. Schindler: The Lovell Beach House
- 5 January 2018 – Erich Mendelsohn: The Einstein Tower
- 12 January 2018 – Adolf Loos
- 19 January 2018 – The Bauhaus at Weimar, 1919-1923
- 26 January 2018 – Berlin Siedlungen
– The Weissenhof Siedlung, Stuttgart, 1927
- 2 February 2018 – Hans Scharoun
- 9 February 2018 – Le Corbusier: Villa Savoye
- 16 February 2018 – English Flats of the Thirties
– English Houses of the Thirties



- 23 February 2018 – Wood or Metal? English Furniture in the Thirties
- 2 March 2018 – Edwin Lutyens: Deanery Gardens
- 9 March 2018 – The London Underground
- 16 March 2018 – Moderne and Modernistic
– The Other Tradition
- 23 March 2018 – Mechanical Services in the Cinema
- 29 March 2018 – The Semi-Detached House
– The Housing Question

The A305 television broadcasts were part of a broader body of work which included broadcasting supplements, radio programs, a radiovision booklet, anthologies, and other course materials.

Public programs

Counter-tour: Tim Benton's Cut **Thursday 16 November, 6:30pm**

Tim Benton presents another reading of the new exhibition through a counter-tour. Rather than a tour through the galleries that gives voice to the curator's ideas, counter-tours propose critical, subversive, corrective, or alternative versions of a given project through encounters with the particular perspectives of special guests. The presentation will be followed by a discussion with Joaquim Moreno, curator of the exhibition. Tim Benton is Professor Emeritus of Art History at the Open University. He has also taught at Columbia University, Williams College, and the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne. He was the course team chair of A305, History of Architecture and Design 1890–1939, the first Open University course on the history of architecture.

Conversations: contemporary institutional attitudes and agendas of mass education today

The CCA initiates a series of collaborations around the exhibition *The University is Now on Air: Broadcasting Modern Architecture*, which explores the convergence of mass media and mass education through a case study of the Open University and with special attention to A305, its course on the History of architecture and design from 1890 to 1939. Looking at how universities share knowledge today, there remains great interest in opening up access to knowledge and education, and in the deployment of new media environments. Yet the roles of mass media and the university in the transformation of architecture culture urgently need to be discussed in a critical way. How has openness been pursued, institutionalized, and implemented historically—and how should it be? What might be the contemporary form for a “university of the air”? Over the next year, conversations at universities will reflect on the contemporary institutional attitudes and agendas of mass education today.

Conversation: The School that Never Was **Monday 20 November, 6:30pm**

A conversation with Joaquim Moreno and Mary Lou Lobsinger, moderated by Associate Professor John Harwood. This event is a joint initiative with the University of Toronto's John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design as part of their series *What is a school?*. Mary Lou Lobsinger is a writer, artist, and an architectural historian. Her research on the histories and theories of modern architecture and urbanism focuses on issues of historiography, and on technology and the techniques of articulation. Registration is required for this event: www.daniels.utoronto.ca

Live-annotation: Owen Hatherley presents episodes of A305 **Thursday 25 January 2018, 6:30pm**

A performance of live annotation, where author and critic Owen Hatherley will contextualize, edit, and re-narrate selected episodes of A305 for contemporary public concerns. Owen Hatherley is the author of *Militant Modernism*; *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain*; and *Uncommon*, about the pop group Pulp.

Lecture: Douglas Spencer on precarity and the education of the student-entrepreneur **Thursday 1 March 2018, 6:30pm**

The Open University was created within a particular idea of expanded public education—mass education. Today, the situation is quite different. Douglas Spencer is author of *The Architecture of Neoliberalism*, and X TITLE at the AA.

About the curator

Joaquim Moreno graduated in Architecture from the University of Porto, and holds a Master's from the Barcelona Technical School of Architecture and a PhD from Princeton University. He is adjunct assistant professor at Columbia University, Minho University and Autónoma University. Moreno was one of the editors of the Portuguese journal *InSi(s)tu* and co-curator, with the philosopher José Gil, of the Portuguese representation at the Venice Architecture Biennial 2008. Moreno is an active member of the *Jornal Arquitectos* team and co-curated with Paula Pinto the exhibition *Guido Guidi – Carlo Scarpa's Brion Tomb –* at *Garagem Sul/CCB* in 2015.

About The Open University

The Open University (OU) is the largest academic institution in the UK and a world leader in flexible distance learning. Since it began in 1969, the OU has taught more than 1.8 million students and has almost 170,000 current students, including more than 15,000 overseas.

In the latest assessment exercise for university research (Research Excellence Framework, 2014), nearly three quarters (72%) of The Open University's research was assessed as 4 or 3 star – the highest ratings available – and awarded to research that is world-leading or internationally excellent. The Open University is unique among UK universities having both an access mission and demonstrating research excellence.

Regarded as the UK's major e-learning institution, the OU is a world leader in developing technology to increase access to education on a global scale. Its vast 'open content portfolio' includes free study units, as well as games, videos and academic articles and has reached audiences of up to 9.8 million across a variety of online formats including OpenLearn, YouTube and iTunes U.

www.open.ac.uk



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About the CCA

The CCA is an international research centre and museum founded in 1979 by Phyllis Lambert, on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive collection, exhibitions, public programs, publications and research opportunities, the CCA is advancing knowledge, promoting public understanding, and widening thought and debate on architecture, its history, theory, practice, and role in society today.

cca.qc.ca

Facebook: @cca.conversation

Instagram: @canadiancentreforarchitecture

Twitter: @ccawire

Youtube: CCAchannel

Canadian Centre for Architecture

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Hours

Wed – Sun 11am – 6pm

Thu 11am – 9pm

Mo – Tue closed

Admission

\$10 for adults

\$7 for seniors (ages 65+)

Free entry for students, children, and Friends of the CCA

Free admission for all on Thursdays after 5:30pm

Press contacts

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