

ETH Zürich
D-ARCH Departement Architektur
Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur gta

Teaching and research are focused on the history and theory of contemporary architecture. The Chair seeks to understand the profound changes in technology and society that took place over the course of the twentieth century – on the one hand as a new framework for architectural production and on the other as new points of reference in architectural design. Established methodologies in the history and theory of architecture are thereby complemented by approaches derived from the history of technology and social history. Thus the traditional understanding of architecture – as a discipline defined primarily in terms of authorship – is called into question and assessed in the light of actual building practice. Architecture is here taken to encompass the artefact itself (hence architecture, including auteur architecture, plus any equipment, device or infrastructural installation that decisively influences the built environment), as well as the various factors and players involved (not only users and specialists but also building regulations, patents, economic constraints, and so forth). The aspiration to a “theory of practice” here implied also strives to elucidate those sources or media decisive for how architecture is envisaged today. The challenge lies in the contradictory preconditions of architectural theory: for neither a purely speculative blanket approach that imposes a normative system on different cultural, social or technical developments, nor a model all too closely deduced from professional practice and dismissive of any form of systematization can do justice to the broad-ranging tasks of this academic discipline.