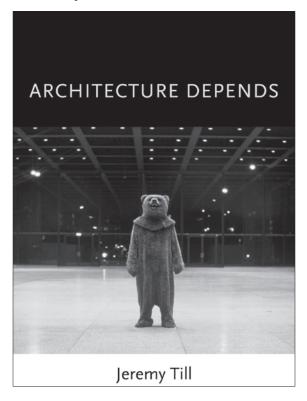
Scapegoat

The value of *Architecture Depends* does not lie in having responded to a new problem. Nor does it lie in the analytic rigour with which the author pursues each topic he discusses. The true value of the book is that it presents, in a relatively tight space, a wealth of smart anecdotes, analogies and images that help us conceive of a more worldly architect. To list a few, most readers will find Mr. Till's case for the analytic value of trash, the acrobat-architect analogy, and the significance of Joyce's *Ulysses* for architecture compelling and illuminating. The book performs a wonderful contextualizing function, making architectural intervention, from idea to event, depend on the wide range of human habits and spheres of influence that we normally sum up as "the world."

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Jeremy Till's reality check for the architect: your projects are subject to contingencies, like most other things cast into the world; act accordingly. This may seem like an obvious point to be making and, from the outset, Till admits as much. After all, most of us who have carried a "creative baby" to term, only to let it loose in the end, encounter the discomfort of turning an idea into an event. We can never fully anticipate what our work will be like amidst the various real-world forces that condition its arrival. Production is a nebulous affair. While such a conclusion hardly offends common sense, it is not something that architecture students and professionals are encouraged to face with productive enthusiasm. Quite the contrary, Mr. Till argues. His Architecture Depends is offered as a "tough love" lesson for a profession that struggles vainly to avoid cross-contamination, waste, and loose ends. In reality, Till stresses, architecture will always depend on a complex social and institutional mess: "mess is the law." With this insight squarely in the frame, he insists, there is an opportunity for the profession to transition from representing its practitioners as elite problem-solvers or legislators of hard space to conceiving of them as interpreters of space or "citizen sense-makers." Optimizing the agency of the architect depends on normalizing this transition, starting from the first days of architecture school.

Architecture Depends lays out the broad outline of a "perspectives course," one that avails us of the many minds that eschew the Vitruvian foundations of the architecture profession. Thankfully, he reminds us, for every Vitruvius there will be a Bataille. The first of three parts provides a collection of perspectives on architecture's cultural battle against contingency, describing the foundation and transmission of architecture's culture of detachment and elitism. Till illustrates that, in general, architecture "tribesmen" continue to manifest a range of unworldly pathologies, from narrow social indifference to delusional messianism. Part two is a whirlwind tour through the coincidental nature of space and time, one that aims to demythologize the authoritative terms of "purity" and "stability" and to expose the practical disadvantages of blandly privileging space over time as the subject matter of architecture. He suggests that timing concerns are inadequately conceived and communicated at the various stages of architectural planning and production. Part three moves on to promote the architect's agency as an interpreter of space and as a facilitator of spatial possibilities. Mr. Till shifts our attention from the architect-expert who "sets the scene" from outside to the "situated" architect-citizen. In this way, the book ends by highlighting a kind of democratic ethics appropriate for the architecture professional.

Scapegoat Reviews 22