

Editorial

CARTHA

The Possible Progress issue continues, further speculating the paradoxical nature of progress as culturally and spatially significant. The fundamental prompts remain: exploring the shifting landscape of futurity in contemporary society, accumulating research regarding the very possibility of progress in these new conditions compared to that throughout history, all the while understanding architecture as a privileged barometer of the movement towards disparate notions of progress at different times.

The Answers Series, as the title suggests, is dialogue-inherent, wherein both questions and answers are proposed, conversations are prompted and new ideas about progress are verbalized. Progress itself implies a vectorial movement between two points: one of departure and one of arrival. The departing point is where a situation is perceived as problematic and from which questions emerge. The arrival point proposes answers to the questions: it promotes a vision, a desire, but it does not necessarily speak of how to get there.

A selected group of architects, photographers, social scientists and historians were invited by Cartha to engage with the notion of progress in the domain in which they specialize. A part of this group respon-

ded directly to the question: “is progress possible in architecture?” ; and the other, to provide two images that conveyed both a ‘problem’ and a ‘solution’.

Posing the question “is progress possible in architecture?” prompted very direct responses, ones that tackle both pragmatic and experimental practices in architecture as well the social, political, and cultural repercussions of such processes. The exercise to recognize both a problem and solution through images invited storytelling, produced narratives of context and society not only in design but also in the ideas of image culture itself. With the invited contributor’s research, Cartha puts forward Answers to the Possible Progress: photographs, drawings, texts, screenshots, and design approaches that are both determinate and speculative, a curated culmination of thoughts from some of the most interesting practitioners worldwide.

Aprdelep (Mexico City) analyzes photographs of Balbuena station, taking note of the ways in which image-making tells a story in itself. Séverine Marguin and Henrike Rabe (Berlin) use office architecture as scientific case studies for an experiment on progress. OMMX (London) deals with material degradation of the Palace of Westminster through avenue of architec-

tural drawing. Ciro Miguel (São Paulo) captures vectorial moments of symptomatic change, and Young & Ayata (New York) digs into the aesthetics of images, problematizing digital shadows with the Nolli plan. Tibor Joanelly (Zurich) speculates on the concepts of newness and innovation in practice. Bernard Khoury (Beirut) creates the story of Salah, a Syrian runner, freedom fighter, and prisoner of war. Marie Jose Van Hee with Sam De Vocht (Ghent) repositions the window at the core of space making. Phineaus Harper (London) questions if progress is even appropriate as an architectural aspiration, while Assemble (London) directly addresses the issues of equality in the field. Along with Theodore Spyropoulos (London) and Brandlhuber (Berlin), the Answers Series draws clear lines of progress in social, political, academic, urban, architectural, and ecological platforms, recognizing starting points and respective goals of openly defined players.

The whole cycle was aimed at dissecting a notion that seems to permeate current perspectives on almost everything. Political progress, socially progressive, natural progress, uses of progress -- all too familiar and all too untouchable. The need to reflect on the mechanics of progress and, most importantly, on the hands that move the levers, took us on this one-year investigation. The texts, visual essays, drawings, installations and projects which emerged from it shed a light on the moving parts of progress by offering autonomous visions one can freely inspect. We thank our contributors for embracing our call and invitations in their wholehearted and sincere ways, allowing us to share with you an issue which, in its certain provisional state, brings progress to a level all can engage with in a constructive way.

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