

**CA<sup>2</sup>  
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MILANO

# Au — — th or ship — — (s)

Book of Proceedings

Conference for Artistic and  
Architectural Research

AUID



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# Authorship(s) Book of Proceedings Colophon

**CA<sup>2</sup>RE-Milan AUTHORSHIP(S): Conference for Artistic and Architectural Research**

**Editors**

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**Scientific Committee**

As mentioned in Section 8.

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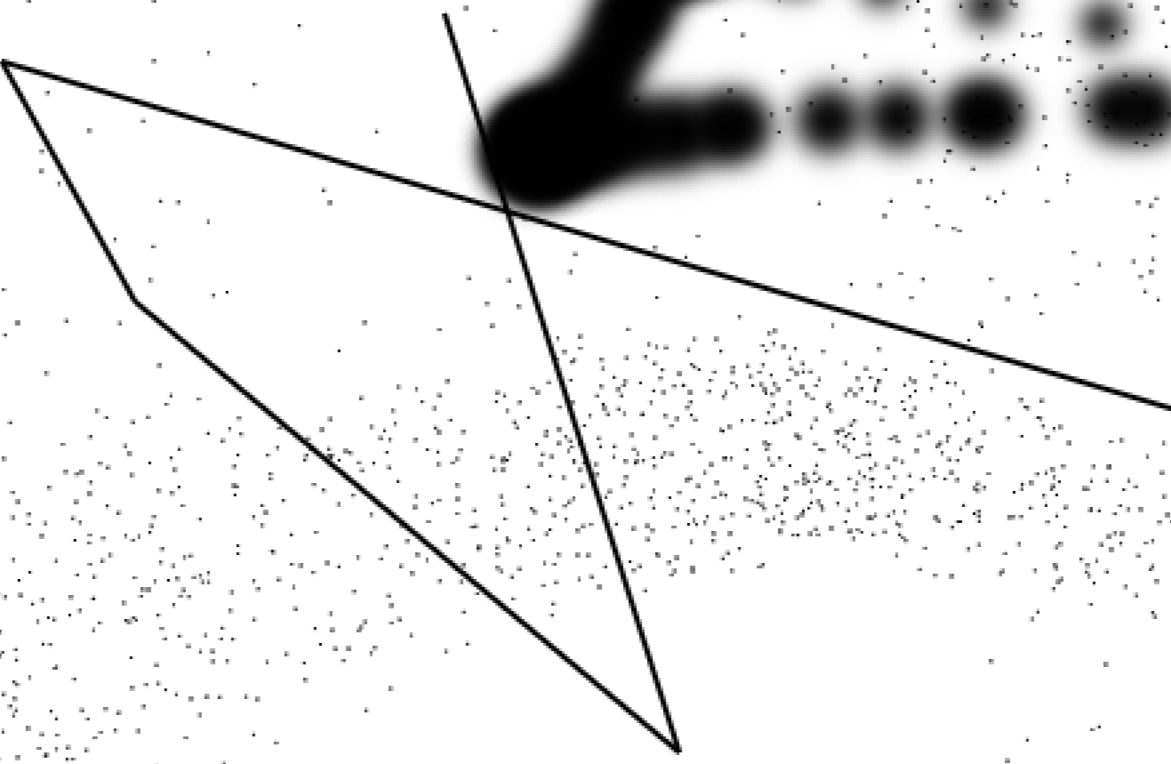
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# Introduction

# 1



# Author/ship(s)

Fabrizia Berlingieri, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

The Milan CA<sup>2</sup>RE conference delves into the topic of *authorship* consciously recognizing its controversial modern legacy. According to the Oxford Dictionary<sup>1</sup>, the term – as original, and legally recognized act – first appeared at the beginning of the eighteenth century, starting from the notion of the individual as the source of creativity during the Enlightenment and Romantic periods<sup>2</sup>. From a contemporary perspective, it is particularly interesting that this shift coincided with the rise of the printing press and copyright laws, a moment of radical changes not only in techniques but also in the way of advancing knowledge when patents and licenses began to codify what a scientific work should be, explicitly orienting it towards a process of standardization (Benjamin 1936). Still today, in everyday use, *authorship* evokes issues of paternity and ownership of work in literary, artistic, and scientific realms. It implies not only the official nature of a work's creation but, more important, its responsibility and recognition. This becomes even more evident within academic settings, where the term has come to embody a kind of cultural nightmare and obsession, due to the contemporary emphasis placed on originality and innovation within the scientific domain of research, often driven by automatic parameters such as citation counts, measurable scientific impact, and qualitative rankings. This, in turn, influences how funding establishments assign value to it, directly impacting the reputation and credibility of both the author/researcher and the affiliated academic institution.

In this context, we are not concerned with the idea of authorship as 'signature' and intellectual property, nor with the author as individual bearer of knowledge. On the contrary, we start by quoting a famous statement of Roland Barthes: "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author"<sup>3</sup>. The aim of this conference is not to revise or redefine the role of the author in the knowledge-production process, but to reflect on how this process – or, more precisely, the act of the work itself – is produced, in what forms and under what conditions, and, in turn, what kind of relationship it establishes with the authorial dimension. This is exactly where also Michel Foucault offered a possible transition regarding the role of the author, toward being a vector of a situated discursive field. The *author-function* (Foucault, 1998), he claimed, is not universal: it changes over time and by discourse. And authors are historically produced by disciplinary, legal, social, and institutional forces:

**To accomplish this rather demanding theoretical goal, Foucault had to reduce the author, ceremoniously buried by Barthes, to the author function, characterising "the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses in society". (Procházka 2024, 2)**

And indeed, if we look closer to the etymology of the term *author/ship*, as a compound noun, it traces back to the Latin *auctor* meaning "one who brings forward or increases", and later connected to the English suffix *-ship*, transposing its meaning from that of the subject to the concreteness of a certain action, fact, or relationship. In this sense, authorship can be understood as the action of advancing and increasing the body of knowledge by shifting from the subject to the work itself and thus placing

the author's *aura* in the background. According to Leo Tolstoy an author who speaks about his own work is always a bad author, since:

**A real work of art destroys, in the consciousness of the receiver, the separation between himself and the artist – not that alone, but also between himself and all whose minds receive this work of art. In this freeing of our personality from its separation and isolation, in this uniting of it with others, lies the chief characteristic and the great attractive force of art. (Tolstoy 1904, 153)**

This movement from isolation to unity, from the subjectivity to the exteriority of the world, also recalls Immanuel Kant's speculation on the *sensus communis*<sup>4</sup>. In his *Critique of Judgment* (Kant 1987) the term 'common sense' does not belong to the empirical sphere of the perception, but rather it defines an idea – a principle that underlies the existence of a shared capacity for judgment as intersubjective confrontation – and refers to the communicability of the feeling of pleasure and beauty within the aesthetic realm.

It may be worth revisiting the importance of a purely humanistic meaning of authorship, by undertaking it as a progressive action in the domain of knowledge production through human experience. In fact, *author/ship* claims for more complex dynamics in the contemporary context, for several reasons. While it is unquestionable that – regardless of disciplinary specifics – the researcher must address 'where' and 'how' knowledge production becomes authorial, it is equally undeniable how much emerging technologies, open-source accessibility, and the increasing technification of processes are reframing both research agencies and the very meaning of author/ship. The rise of collaborative tools, networked research, digital shared media, and interdisciplinary methods all contribute to destabilizing its traditional forms and even more so, the notion of being 'authentically' authorial. Even institutional evaluation systems – for funding, hiring, disseminating – that rely on individual outputs are being challenged by practices that do not fit easily into those schemas. Materials, methods, technology mediate authorship, raising serious questions about what it means to 'author a work.'

According to Sylvia Lavin, over the past 30 years there have been multiple disciplinary efforts to shift the meaning of what architectural production, as a cultural output, can be. She refers to the "inadvertent step" made by Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (Venturi 1966) as a clear example: a body of work – his architectural (built) projects, explained within a precise theoretical framework of curatorial collecting, presented in book format – making it difficult to define the boundaries and conditions of what can be considered an authorial architectural work.

**This newly flexible attitude toward what might constitute a work of course derives largely from poststructuralist literary and critical theory through which many forms of interpretation were enfolded into the notion of textual analysis, allowing the much looser notion of text to distend not just the category of literature, but to set into motion the entire hierarchy of writing genres and by extension differences**

between mediums and cultural typologies more generally. This is the same intellectual proposition that permitted architecture to be distinguished from building, to become also drawing, which became text, texts which in turn became constructions, and so on. (Lavin 2010, 6)

An interesting parallel to our contemporary stage is offered by the research project *The Other Architect: Another Way of Building Architecture*. This collection of alternative architectural practices and agencies, presented in an exhibition curated by Giovanna Borasi at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, traced a moment of role confusion and openings between profession and research in the 1960s and '70s, while also demanding 'other' authorial dimensions:

**They [the selected practices] explored possible forms between collectives, collaborative groups, partnerships, fellowships, and networks. These modalities are more open and pluralistic – often, they are explicitly multidisciplinary – and they are better suited to engaging with new fields of investigation. The attributes that we can identify in the names of some of these entities, words like “laboratory”, “institute”, “agency”, “group” and “unit”; further suggest a search for other institutional forms than those of an architecture firm or an architecture school. They highlight a will to seek out different operating models, structures based on the fluidity of roles, and modes of exchange among diverse subjects. (Borasi 2015)**

Alongside the rise of curatorial approaches in architecture – which through *assemblage* methodologies challenge notions of authorship, authenticity, and originality – there are other emerging practices that move toward more blurred boundaries. One such case is *co-authorship*, recently investigated by Ana Miljački and Ann Lui, who report that:

**Contemporary conceptions (and forms) of agency in architecture exceed, spill around, and challenge the model of architectural authorship that dominates both architectural discourse and the market. Because most of these alternative conceptions of agency are not codified or stable, understanding them (...) may require to accept the shifting grounds, to enter the space of political and identity negotiations, to relinquish absolutes, and to open up to multiple forms of agency and their manifestations. (Miljački & Lui, 2022, 9)**

Design-driven research is not exception to this discussion, currently undergoing profound changes due to the emergence of an expanded idea of the design realm, more reticular and multidirectional. To the point that even doctoral, independent, or individual research, is often no longer the product of a single author, but rather relies on specific tactical constructs designed to connect heterogeneous disciplines and contributions, without expecting unified or coherent outcomes. Both in terms of techniques and of approach, we see how “research on, by, and for design” (Roggema 2015, Schoen 1983, Frayling 1993), today works as a connector between different sets of knowledge, enlightens dismissed historiographies, and introduces lateral perspectives, by assembling heterogeneous and preexisting fragments in new and unexpected

narrations. The definitive shift from author as singular creator to author-function, co-author, network, curator, reflects the changing conditions on several levels: technological, institutional, cultural. Yet even as we move away from singular authorship, issues of subjectivity do not disappear. Rather, author/ship(s) becomes more situated: embedded in place, context, identity, and materiality.

Within the context of the CA<sup>2</sup>RE conference, we aim to broaden the spectrum of contemporary author/ship(s) considering its plural forms as an unavoidable, critical and situated action, a *conditio sine qua non* for practicing and researching in architecture and artistic fields. We propose the following open questions, directed both to presenters and to CA<sup>2</sup>RE consortium members:

What is the role of subjectivity, situatedness, and intersubjectivity in authorial practices today? Is it still about cultural and personal positioning, research precision, and the balance between subjective experience and recognizable, communicable processes, or can all these aspects now be considered obsolete? Can the plurality of author/ship(s) be reconciled with institutional needs for recognition and evaluation?

However, when we look at the type of contributions we received through the open call, it is striking to note that out of 97 submissions, around 90% are authored by individuals, and nearly the same number presents individual research experiences. That inevitably brings to minds Caspar David Friedrich's painting *The Wanderer above the sea of fog* (1817), the vision of the solitary explorer turning his back towards gazing into the unknown.

This rich Milanese occasion – through the conference working sessions, the book and journal presentations, the institutional roundtable and the opening dialogues – aims to open up the discussion within our international and transdisciplinary platform, and possibly to add more pieces to the puzzle of contemporary author/ship(s), for embracing lateral research approaches, expanded agencies and shared values in the field of Design Driven Research.

1 The *Oxford English Dictionary* online website: <https://www.oed.com/>.

2 «If, as was commonly believed since antiquity, the genius derives his extraordinary creative power from a propensity to be moved by external forces, how could he claim at the same time to be the source and therefore the legal proprietor of his work? (...) As the proponents of authors' rights soon realized, to grant authors legal rights to their work on the basis that it bears the imprint of their unique personality meant that the nature of creativity needed to be redefined.» (Piroux 2014, 353)

3 «The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (...). His [the author's] only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them.» (Barthes 1977, 142-148).

4 The etymology of the expression can be traced back to the Greek term κοινή αἴσθησις – *koinè aisthesis*, common sense – which Aristotle claims in the *De Sensu* and *De Anima* to describe the perceptual faculty that integrates the inputs of the various sense organs, attributing them to a single external source. As the unity of individual sensory data, this common sense accompanies every act of perception and represents its self-awareness.

See: "Senso comune" (voce) , in *Dizionario di Filosofia*, Enciclopedia Treccani online 2009, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/senso-comune\\_\(Dizionario-di-filosofia\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/senso-comune_(Dizionario-di-filosofia)/) (accessed 08.10.2025).

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