

LECTURE:

"GLASS HALF EMPTY: ARCHITECTURE AND THE EUROPEAN IMAGINATION"



**WITH CASPAR PEARSON
(UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX, SCHOOL OF
PHILOSOPHY AND ART HISTORY)**

The future of the European Union (EU) is currently the subject of heated debate. Over the last decade, the organization has struggled to contain the effects of a severe economic crisis and an ongoing migration crisis. With elections to the European Parliament looming in May, the EU faces the threat of a rising tide of nationalism and populism. Meanwhile, Brexit – the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union – threatens to weaken the EU, even as it propels the UK towards potential disaster. These debates have involved not only politicians, but also architects. A highly ‘Europeanised’ group of professionals, who are especially concerned with issues of space, place, and program, architects have often demonstrated an abiding interest in the EU – one that is mirrored in the organization’s own continual use of architectural metaphors when describing its institutions and procedures. This paper will explore how architects have intervened in, and contributed to, debates about the EU in recent years. Focusing above all on installations at exhibitions, the paper will touch on the work of practices including OMA, Caruso St John, and Stefano Boeri, among others. In so doing, it will consider the ways in which architects have participated in broader efforts to forge new national and European imaginaries.

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