

## Freedom and Creativity

A multidisciplinary symposium to be held on 28 November 2015 as part of the Royal Academy's autumn architecture programme

### CALL FOR PAPERS

Deadline 24 August 2015

Go into yourself. Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depths of your heart; confess to yourself whether you would have to die if you were forbidden to write.

This most of all: ask yourself in the most silent hour of your night: must I write? Dig into yourself for a deep answer. And if this answer rings out in assent, if you meet this solemn question with a strong, simple "I must," then build your life in accordance with this necessity; your whole life, even into its humblest and most indifferent hour, must become a sign and witness to this impulse.

– Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet (17 February 1903)

This autumn, the Royal Academy of Arts is organising a season of events on 'Architecture and Freedom', which will explore a range of issues around the politics of space, the ethics of architectural practice and issues of constraint and compromise. This symposium, which will act as the season's culmination, seeks to widen the scope to examine the interfaces between political and philosophical, and creative concepts of freedom – manifested through culture. We intend to consider these interactions, connections, overlaps, disjunctions and their implications through papers from a range of disciplines, from practitioners and academics, both established and emerging.

Artistic autonomy – that is individual creative practice free from all outside determinants – is a popularly cited manifestation of creative freedom, one which, in some understandings, can be understood as deriving from, or even operating as an extension of, political or philosophical concepts of freedom. Yet autonomy can also be seen as an impossible to achieve illusion, with the creative act always shaped to some degree by social, cultural or economic undercurrents. Indeed, it is through this process that creative disciplines might be considered as coming into existence, via the constraints of medium, function and intellectual frame of reference. For some practices, meanwhile, a complete lack of constraint – what could be thought of as complete creative freedom – can actually be a hindrance to creativity.

Amid the ever increasing commoditisation of creativity via the so-called 'creative industries', and the near complete pervasiveness of the digital sphere, with its new creative tools and platforms for dissemination and debate, now is the time to reassess our definitions and understandings of creative freedom and artistic autonomy. Critically, do new cultural understandings of freedom force us to reassess political ones? How are the answers to this question impacted by digital mass surveillance by governments and corporations?

We welcome submissions from a range of fields and disciplines that focus on contemporary practice or theory, as well as more historical perspectives. Possible topics include, though need not be confined to, the following:

- The origins of creativity, from a psychological and/or physiological perspective

- Freedom as ideal and reality across both individual and collective practice
- Disciplinarity, and the extent to which this might be understood as the construct of constraint and compromise upon creativity
- (Access to) cultural or artistic education in schools and/or universities
- Parameters of creativity – regulatory, material, economic, contextual, historic – and their implications
- The role of the market in determining the nature of creativity
- The function of creative freedom in (neoliberal) democracies
- Questions of ethics, especially in relation to patronage (e.g. for politically repressive regimes or ‘unethical’ corporations)
- Definitions of creative freedom in the (post)digital sphere, and the possibilities and limitations of ‘Virtual Resistance’
- Censorship, self-censorship and dissent in creative practice – and how it varies across disciplines and media

Please submit an abstract of 250 words (for a paper intended to be 20 minutes in length) plus a (max) one-page CV outlining any institutional affiliation by **24 August 2015**.

We welcome international submissions. Funds may be available to assist with travel and accommodation expenses, though it is expected that those submitting will apply to their own institutions for support in the first instance.

Chosen participants will be notified by **1 September 2015**

Please email your abstract and CV to **[architecture@royalacademy.org.uk](mailto:architecture@royalacademy.org.uk)** If you have any questions or queries concerning the call for papers and symposium, please direct them to the same address.