

## Aarhus School of Architecture // Design School Kolding // Royal Danish Academy

### Block masonry and its architectural potential

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*Publication date:*  
2006

*Document Version:*  
Tidlig version også kaldet pre-print

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Leimand, N. (2006). *Block masonry and its architectural potential*. Abstract from The complexity of the ordinary - context as key to architectural strategies, København, Danmark.

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Abstract by architect and Industrial PhD Nini Leimand aimed at the conference:

**The complexity of the ordinary** - Context as key to architectural strategies  
October 5-6, 2006 - The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture

Exploring the unique context related to any architectonic project takes time and demands a critical digestion – good architecture takes time. To work consciously with the various issues related to the rise of a building is a way of doing research - and it should be reckoned as such. In general this process takes place within a group of people, contributing with different experiences. This often feels frightening and instead of benefiting from all these individual sensibilities and start working open-mindedly and thoroughly with the context in the broadest sense of the word, one experience a collective strive for a fast strategy that can bring clear rules into the process. This might feel good for some time but inertia inevitably emerges and formalistic applications are introduced in order to cover up for the superficial notion of the context.

According to the book *Architecture is not made with the brain – the labour of Alison and Peter Smithson*, context is described as “a complex set of organizational resistances and possibilities that the office seeks to find architectonic answers to”.

s.38 “We learned to look at things from a different angle: to give meaning to that which was not usually considered important or simply not noticed. We learned how to smile at ourselves and others – not to take ourselves too seriously, while at the same time being extremely focused and concerned about our actions and their consequences”. Connie Occhialini former employee at Smithsons office.

s.52 “He (P. Smithson) saw the act of building as an accumulative process in which mistakes are integrated into the final product in an organic way” Louisa Hutton former employee at Smithsons office.

s.27 “The Brutalists sought the magical within the ordinary, which might in turn stimulate and increased awareness of, and sympathy with, the physical environment: ‘a building today is only interesting if it is more than itself, if it charges the space around it with connective possibilities, especially if it does this by a quietness that until now our sensibilities could not recognise as architecture at all”, Peter Smithson. (...) s.28 “It is not about ideas. It merely represents the ‘correct’ degree of immersion in the situation.

“This thoughtful pragmatism is central to the Smithson’s approach. For the last two decades it has proved utterly alien to the abstractions and formalism which have prevailed in architecture. Today its emphasis on concrete experience and action seems refreshing and relevant.” Irénée Scalbert teacher at AA.

In my research project entitled *Blockmasonry and its architectural Potential*, I am focusing on an unpretentious and minimal way of building. The aim is not to erase/avoid complexity but just the opposite to give way for energy to an elaborated hierarchy of refinement.

Blockmasonry obviously has a strong appeal to do-it-yourself builders as well as architects seeking correspondence between ...

An important thesis in my project is that working with a straight-forward building technology as the main substance of the building, mobilise the ability to refine and strengthen the project in specially selected areas.

Maybe it is just a twist of words but from parts of the conference text arise a quest for architecture that “expound its correlation between formal idiom and context”, as being a parameter for quality. To me the notion of context should not be simplified and explicit in the realised building.