

Editorial

Helen Castle



This is an issue that is all about juncture at a watershed moment. In the past six months while we have been compiling the publication the world has endured: environmental catastrophe (the earthquake in China and hurricane in the US); continuing war in Afghanistan and Iraq; and the credit crunch, which has rocked the very foundation of the West's financial institutions and the global economy. There have been peaks, though, as well as troughs, with the 2008 Olympics and most notably the election of Barack Obama as US president. With increasing concern about climate change and the ability for natural resources to meet the growing world population's demand, the current period can best be characterised as one of intense uncertainty and flux. There is now very little left that we can be sure of in terms of the future. Whereas the 20th century was no less turbulent with two world wars, mass genocides and the stock market crash in the 1930s, these events tended to be met with ideological absolutism or at least

confidence in architecture as well as in politics; views often polarised, but in their sureness avant-garde architects and political leaders alike continued to issue manifestos. There was an enviable sense of progress and an unflinching feeling that things could only get better. The catalyst for this title of *AD* is the underlying precept that we are currently experiencing a 'theoretical meltdown' in architecture. With the loss of conviction in the wider world, architecture has lost its borders as a discipline and theory seems to have lost its pertinence for architecture, putting into question what Christopher Hight so aptly coins in his article of how to 'act architecturally'. What has been so artful about the skill with which Luigi Prestinzenza Puglisi has formulated and curated this issue is that he has invited contributions from both those who have sufficient experience to reflect on the current circumstances (it includes interviews with Bernard Tschumi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown and Liz Diller) and those who are able to signpost a way forward: 11 critics tip projects by architects who they regard as resonant of a future way forward. This approach avoids falling into that only too predictable pitfall of critiquing without actually coming up with any pointers or solutions. It also has a largely positive outcome. Much of the content implies that there is a new pragmatism in the making in design, which through its emphasis on performance, strategic thinking and problem solving is better equipped to tackle some of the most pressing and significant issues that the world is currently throwing up. **D**

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**Greg Lynn FORM, Duck Table and Eggplant Table,
Venice Architecture Biennale, 2008**

In this installation, Lynn literally melted down or recycled kids' toys. Laser-scanned and digitised, they are precision cut and welded with a tool used to repair car fenders. Thus Lynn employs transdisciplinary techniques to create objects that are 'beyond architecture' at the cusp of art and 3-D design.