



Written by Teresa Stoppani
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PUBLIC LECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

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**Ranulph Glanville
CYBERNETICS FOR ARCHITECTS**

There is a revival of interest in cybernetics, a subject many believed had become so dispersed in other subjects that it no longer exists in its own right. But during its earlier life, cybernetics was seen as a driver for both architecture, and for art. This can be seen in Jasia Reichart's legendary Cybernetic Serendipity Exhibition that has recently celebrated its 40th anniversary.

However, contrary to popular opinion, cybernetics did not become dispersed.

Something much more radical happened: beginning in 1968, cyberneticians began to take cybernetics as the subject of its own investigation. The result (clumsily called second order cybernetics) is a reflexive and rather philosophical consideration of systems in which the observer is understood to be present as an actor.

Why should this be of interest to architects? There are two reasons. One is that the sort of cybernetic systems that we explore in second order cybernetics are iterative, as the process of design is. The second is the reflective analogy: design, as an activity, is also based in a process in which designers consider not only what they are designing, but how to design the designing. This lecture will not attempt to draw these links. It will provide enough understanding so that you can do this. And it will provide an introduction to an extraordinary subject as it begins to reappear in the world of design, but an introduction which brings us up to date with the subject as it is now.

Speaker: Ranulph Glanville studied architecture at the AA (where he spent most of his time engaged in electronic music performance), and then for a PhD in cybernetics, followed by human learning, at Brunel University. In 2006 he was awarded a DSc in cybernetics and design. Upon leaving a secure post in the academic world, he became a peripatetic, vagrant professor of odd jobs around the world. He is now professor at UCL and the RCA in London, St Lucas in Brussels and Ghent, and RMIT in Melbourne. He has published too much, is on the editorial board of 7 journals, is President elect of the American Society for Cybernetics and founded the Cybernetic Coalition. He still constructs electronic and instrumental music.

<http://www.univie.ac.at/constructivism/people/glanville/>

University of Greenwich School of Architecture & Construction
Norbert Singer Lecture Theatre (M055)
Mansion Site, Avery Hill Campus
Bexley Road, Eltham, London SE9 2PQ
Tuesdays 17.30

Directions to Avery Hill Campus

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