

Dr. David Leatherbarrow, Emeritus Professor of Architecture, University of Pennsylvania

David Leatherbarrow is Emeritus Professor of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Design, Philadelphia. Previously he taught architecture theory and design at Cambridge University and the University of Westminster. Two hermeneutical challenges orient his teaching and scholarship: first, how the architectural site (variously rural or urban, remote or familiar) can be interpreted and transformed in response to contemporary and local concerns, and second, how architectural construction can acknowledge both traditional practices and new opportunities for meaningful building. Why these two problems of interpretation in the art of building? In short, because architecture is a practice that results in designs that are *sited* and *built* for the enactment and expression of human purposes. He has addressed the first of these challenges in a few of his books, specifically *Uncommon Ground* (2000), *Topographical Stories* (2004) and *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (2009). The term topography figures prominently in these works, naming the spatial and material domain that endows experience with durable dimension. The matter of orientation is also key, for it raises an architectural equivalent to the philosophical problems of being situated and intersubjectivity. The second interpretative task his works address, translating inherited buildings practices into contemporary possibilities of construction, has been studied in: *Roots of Architectural Invention* (1993) and *Surface Architecture* (2002) especially. A third area of study he has pursued in his scholarly articles and books is the problem of architectural temporality. In *On Weathering: the life of building in time* (1993), a simple technical problem faced by all buildings was interpreted as a key to understanding the ways that buildings acknowledge and represent human finitude (an ethics and phenomenology of stains). His most recent book, *Building Time: architecture, event, and experience* (2020), presents hermeneutical readings of the time of the world, of the human body in movement, and of the architectural project--concurrent but non-synchronic times of all built works. And *Three Cultural Ecologies* (2018) examines how modern architects have explored intersections between a building's cultural content and representations of the natural world, as presented in the literature of the environmental sciences. These texts have been widely translated, various books and articles into 14 languages. The aim of all this writing has been to illuminate topics that remain central to architectural practice and experience, not despite but because of changing demands and expectations for their creative transformation and appropriation. Thus understood, writing is a form of service, through which *words* render *works* intelligible and transmissible.

Leatherbarrow has lectured at significant schools of architecture throughout the world, has given keynote lectures at approximately one hundred scholarly conferences, and has held guest professorships in Britain, Denmark, Brazil, and China. Among the professorships and book awards, the one he values most highly is 2020 Topaz Medallion, the highest award given by the

American Institute of Architects and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture for
excellence in architectural education.