

The Degree Zero of Architecture

Seminar

10 July 2014

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When, in 1953, Roland Barthes wrote his first book *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (*Writing Degree Zero*), he intended to show that if writing were dispossessed of any meaning outside itself, it could become radical and revolutionary. As the expression gained currency, "degree zero" was employed in architectural criticism. Reyner Banham spoke of "degree zero" as the "null value" condition of architecture that he saw in the bare industrial buildings of Albert Kahn, while Ignasi de Sola-Morales spoke of the rarified minimalism of Mies' spaces as the "degree zero" of architectural form.

In *Landscape and the Zero Degree of Architectural Language* (1997) Bruno Zevi announced that a new "zero degree" in architectural language has arrived and was manifest in values of disorder and imperfection that had been constantly censured in design, ever since the edifices left by the Nuragic civilization in Sardinia three thousand years earlier. Those thousands truncated cones (nuraghi) dotting the land best exemplified an a-stylistic order, lacking refinement—a "degree zero" in landscape planning.

Investigating this immeasurable landscape and other spatial instances termed "degree zero," 2014 Visiting Scholar Tamar Zinguer seeks to explore the attraction that a quantitatively precise literary term—articulating a plurality of zeroes and different modalities of nothingness—holds for the architectural discipline.

Presented in English. The [Visiting Scholars Program](#) invites scholars at the post-doctoral level to undertake innovative research in the history, theory, and criticism of architecture during residencies of one to eight months at the Study Centre. Study Centre presentations are free and open to the public.

Event information:

10 July 2014, 6:00 pm

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Free Admission

Keywords:

[Tamar Zinguer](#), [Roland Barthes](#), [Bruno Zevi](#), [seminar](#), [Reyner Banham](#), [Albert Kahn](#)



Page 88-89 from Christian Zervos, *La civilisation de la Sardaigne du début de l'énéolithique à la fin de la période nuragique, Ile millénaire-Ve siècle avant notre ère*. Paris : Cahiers d'art, [1954]. CCA Collection. Photograph by David Weill. Drawings by Christian Zervos