

## Laboratory Architecture and the Slippery Skin of Science

*Sandra Kaji-O'Grady and Chris L. Smith*

The word 'laboratory' derives from the Medieval Latin *laboratorium*, a place for labour or work. Work in the contemporary laboratory increasingly leaves the bench and occupies the café as research managers and their architects pursue mythologies of serendipitous discovery enabled by increased socialisation. The ensuing division between the laboratory proper and the spaces of chatter is mirrored in the bifurcations of architectural labour between laboratory experts and design architects. These divisions of scientific and architectural labour are spatially configured and coincident with the glass envelopes that secure biological contaminants. This paper investigates this complex division as it plays out in laboratory design, paying particular attention to the aesthetic and theoretical ramifications of the spatial bifurcation. The glazed envelope, belonging to both territories, and to neither, is investigated through the discourse of the membrane that departs from Gilbert Simondon's sense that 'the skin is what's deepest'.

### Biographies:

Sandra Kaji-O'Grady is Dean of Architecture at the University of Queensland. Chris L. Smith is Associate Professor in Architecture at the University of Sydney. Australian Research Council funding for their project 'Architecture and the Expression of Experimental Science' supports this publication and their recent essay on architecture and biology in *ARQ*.