

Discerning Fictions (New York, 20 Apr 13)

Studio-X New York (Columbia University), New York, Apr 20, 2013

Javier Antón, University of Navarre

INTERPRETATIONS: DISCERNING FICTIONS (New York, April 20, 2013)

Third edition of the symposium series organized by the graduate students of the Critical, Curatorial and Conceptual Practices in Architecture (CCCP) program at the COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP).

WHEN

April 20th, 2013

12:30–7:00PM

FREE and open to the public

WHERE

Studio-X New York. (Columbia University)

180 Varick Street, Suite 1610

New York, NY 10014

GSAPP (COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY) Events listing:

<http://events.gsapp.org/event/interpretations-discerning-fictions>

RSVP: archigonics@arch.columbia.edu

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/467542469961844/>

INTENTION

This symposium examines the intermediation of architecture and fiction. Architecture acts and re-enacts a continuous telling of stories. Fiction is used to establish contexts, outline narratives, describe logics, or frame polemics. Likewise, fiction can be instrumentalized to distort or deceive. Structures both built and unbuilt inflect and are informed by numerous other media such as literature, cinema, theatre, and so on. Despite its ubiquity, the fictive trope's function remains elusive. Utopias and dystopias, visionary drawings and experimental writings, exhibitions and installations, all require, utilize, or play off fiction in order to carve out a space to exist. What are the specificities and eccentricities of fiction's role in critical, curatorial, and conceptual practices of architecture?

Fiction allows us to imagine new possibilities, new politics, new modes for living, new ways of understanding the world. Indeed, fiction enables and encourages the elaboration or extrapolation of the present and proves history and memory are mutable and contingent. What para-fictional possibilities open up when architectural production purposely blurs truth and how might this problematize relationships to the real? What are the limits of fiction and its gestures of autonomy? Considering Felicity Scott's remarks, "Fiction is not just escape from reality but can produce an engaged withdrawal," is it possible to identify not only the mechanics but strategic moments of fiction? How does a fictive architecture prescribe experience or project models, and how do (counter-)narrative forms act as testing grounds for speculative ideas? The seminars' conversations will range from the technical to the nonsensical and hopefully help us begin to recognize the myths architecture continues to reproduce and understand the alchemical potential of fiction in the discipline.

This third annual Interpretations symposium and its live proceedings will form the basis of a forthcoming publication titled ARCHIGONICS. [The suffix -gonic implies "the work required to facilitate a reaction."] In conjunction with documentation of the event, the publication will include additional commissions in the form of contributions and commentary by artists, architects, and curators. It will also include selected writings/projects related to the topic through an open call for papers following the event.

DISCERNING FICTIONS CURATORIAL TEAM

Javier Antón, Greg Barton, Caitlin Blanchfield, Max Lauter, Elis Mendoza

FORMAT/SCHEDULE

The symposium will take the form of a series of roundtable seminars with invited guests from varied backgrounds. In each roundtable, speakers will briefly present a provocation, statement, or paragraph responding to the day's thematic concerns, oscillating between architecture, writing, and exhibition-making. The participants will discuss for one hour, followed by an open question-and-answer session. Everyone attending the event is invited to actively engage in the discussion. The coffee breaks between panels, demarcated by ellipses (...), hopefully are equally productive.

Program:

12:30–1:00PM PREFACE [INTRODUCTIONS]

1:00–2:30PM FICTIONAL ARCHITECTURE [DESIGN & EXHIBITIONS]

First Round Table Description

From premises for exhibitions (or the objects displayed) to individual projects, artists, architects and curators often utilize fiction as a tool or methodology to make claims, communicate stories, advance arguments, provoke questions, or rationalize schemes. Designers and writers routinely engage or rely on the fictive in order to elaborate ideas and construct the present or history. Mark Wigley observed of 1960s radical architecture: “The only difference between reading a science fiction story and an architect’s project was that the architect might use a few words to clarify the images while the storyteller might use a few images to clarify the words.” We are interested in fiction’s capacity as a critical device and hope to unravel the ways in which text and image operate on each other. Where does fiction intersect the material-spatial-temporal conditions of the built environment? Is it possible to locate the circuits between fiction and architecture, or, is the slippery nature of fiction’s role part of its magic?

PANELISTS

- Ricardo de Ostos_Unit Master, Architectural Association and the Bartlett School of Architecture and co-founder of NaJa & deOstos
- Jimenez Lai_Assistant Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago and Leader of Bureau Spectacular
- Chus Martinez_Chief Curator, El Museo del Barrio
- Mark Wasiuta (moderator) Co-Director of CCCP and Director of Exhibitions, Arthur Ross Gallery, GSAPP

2:30–2:45PM (...)

2:45–4:15PM ARCHITECTURAL FICTION [WRITING & CRITICISM]
Second Round Table Description

Dealing in currencies of the yet-to-be, architectural projects spin stories of the lives of their subjects, or the future cities they inhabit. While possibility is the lingua-franca of the field, such narratives are enraptured by a literary and cinematic sensibility. What then is the symbiosis between fictional traces and architecture’s unbuilt worlds? How can the departure from reality that fiction offers refocus our critical lens as we turn it toward inhabiting the city? And conversely, at what point are fictions the very constructions we require tools to recognize and call into question? When writers deploy architecture within their practices, they often open up space for unrecognizable events and existences, challenge existing narratives, offer alternative readings, and unveil the uncanny in what we accept as fact. How might we begin to understand the effect and impact of importing fiction into criticism, and what are the possible mutated forms of prose bred by such a cross contamination?

PANELISTS

- Keller Easterling_Associate Professor, Yale University School of Architecture
- Ingo Niermann_Novelist and editor of the book series 'Solution' (Sternberg Press)
- Mark Von Schlegell_Guest Professor, Staedelschule in Frankfurt and novelist (Semiotext(e))
- Mark Wigley (moderator) Dean of the GSAPP, Columbia University

4:15—4:30PM (...)

4:30—5:00PM CODA [A FICTIVE INDEX]

5:00—7:00PM POSTSCRIPT [RECEPTION]

Reference:

CONF: Discerning Fictions (New York, 20 Apr 13). In: Arthist.net, Apr 20, 2013 (accessed Apr 25, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/5138>>.