

narrative / parable / fantasy

“At every moment in our lives we all have one foot in a fairytale and the other in the abyss.”

- the Mad Hatter, Alice in Wonderland

“The idea of applying a narrative filter – to both built and conceptual projects – became another way to look at and critique design ideas.”

- Alan Maskin

“Imagination is the means of deep insight and sympathy, the power to conceive and express images removed from normal objective reality.”

- William Wordsworth

“Architecture is the materialization of concepts.”

A Concept is something conceived of in the mind.

Fiction, similarly, is something invented in the imagination; in other words, it is conceived of in the mind.

It follows, then, that architecture is the materialization of fiction.

Support for this deduction can be found in contemporary discourse on architecture put forward by architects, theorist, and artists— from Tschumi and Koolhaas to Jimenez Lai and Filip Dujardin—in real or imagined forms that are written, representational, or built.

THE CALL ::

In light of the foregoing, we offer a provocation:

[Trans-] Journal 2020 proposes the examination of architecture across, beyond, and through FICTION. We broadly define architecture as creative production (drawing, film, form, painting, photography, poetry, multimedia informed by music or other creative practices, writing, etc.) engaged with the spatial realm and ask: how, what, where, and why typologies of fiction facilitate the ideation of the constructed environment, at all scales.

The types listed below are for your consideration and inspiration. Elastic interpretations of these types and what constitutes architecture, form, and space are welcome, as are alternative and cross-disciplinary approaches.

FICTION AS NARRATIVE: descriptions of events or sequences of occupation or action

What narrative devices are used in the ideation of architecture? Who are the protagonists in your spatial stories?

Bernard Tschumi's Manhattan Transcripts interpret reality by deploying fictional protagonists within the space of photographs and drawn abstractions that depict natural and constructed environments. The constructs offer a visual narrative and written discourse about the occupation of space and explore how events, program, and activity develop in time. Jimenez Lai's book Citizens of No Place is a more recent written and visual narrative that operates in a similar manner. Here, comic strip-style graphics, which comprise the volume's short-stories and illustrate its characters, grapple with contemporary issues, including the ubiquitous nature of architectural landscapes.

FICTION AS PARABLE: translations from metaphor and allegory to space and form

How does fiction present social, political, economic, or environmental critiques through the built environment?

New York City's Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building lie in bed together in Delirious New York, Rem Koolhaas's seminal book that employs metaphor and allegory. Koolhaas's drawn and written expressions convey critical perspectives on metropolitan life in Manhattan and the impact of cultural and technological shifts on the built environment. A perpetually evolving screw measuring 4.5 Km in diameter describes the form of the temporal Cochlea-city in Superstudio's "12 Cautionary Tales for Christmas," in which drawings and narratives about FUTURE-PERFECT conditions of urbanism are ironically presented.

FICTION AS FANTASY: speculation on places and environments

What new possibilities for architecture can be discovered through fantasy?

Normative spatial conditions are rendered absurd when Alice falls down the rabbit hole in the fantastical novel Alice and Wonderland. Fantasy reshapes the past and present, projecting new futures through speculative scenarios. Archigram's hypothetical project A Walking City envisaged the hybridization of insects and machines in a proposal that commented on a need to transcend the fixity of architecture to accommodate a dystopic future marked by a demand for escape and protection from nuclear wastelands. The subtly fantastic images of architecture constructed on the two-dimensional plane by photographer Filipe abstract reality to generate absurd tectonic configurations. Habitable or inhabitable, his structures arouse the imagination.

SUBMISSIONS::

We welcome original works in any form that can be reproduced in two-dimensions. Please limit written submissions to 1000 words. When applicable, include figure captions, endnotes for citations, and prepare all images as separate TIFF files (at least 300dpi). A brief abstract of the project is required (200 words or less), along with a biography of the author (100 words). Submit work via email by April 3, 2020. For questions, please contact us at submissions.transjournal@gmail.com.