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ASH AMIN

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In Conversation with Ash Amin

Thomas Aquilina

Edited by Eve Avdoulos

His work on the geographies of modern living and the ways in which he understands cities has cast Professor Ash Amin as a distinguished voice in the field of urban studies today. We were eager to explore this year's journal theme with him, discovering how he interprets duplicity as existing in cities and its effects on architecture, infrastructure, economy and political systems among others. These ideas served as the starting points of this conversation. Here, he talks with Thomas Aquilina, an editor of Scroope 25, about duplicity, dualism, and deceit in the city.

TA: We believe the ways in which you write space are important to urban design and architecture. What makes your work relevant to these disciplines?

AA: I think I'm fascinated,, philosophically and analytically, by the very close proximities between the human and the non-human within cities. I see cities as gigantic machines and overlapping socio-technical systems. Therefore I am keen on understanding human prospects in the city as closely tied to the built environment. I consider the built environment as an animated environment, as a lively environment, as full of intentionality and as full of directionality.

What I am really after is having a constructed dialogue between architecture, urban design and social theory, where one is always indexed by the other. So urban design and architecture need to really get a sense of the human and life outside of the world of signs and buildings, and in turn I think the social sciences and humanities need to develop a conversation with architecture and design. I guess its a sort of a post-discipline that I'm after here.
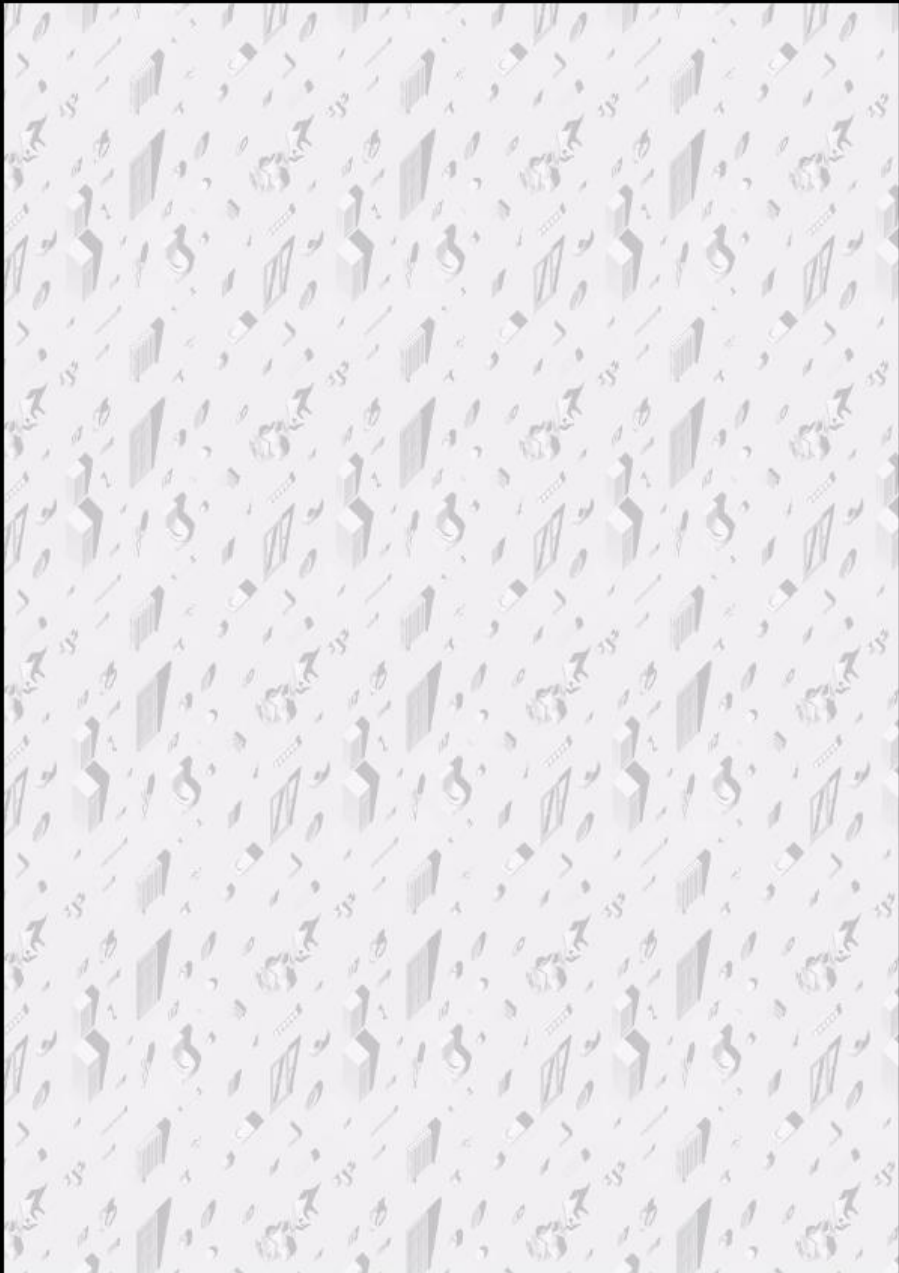
Wallflowers

Alex Bernetich, Jamie Piché Colburn
and Maria Sturchio

wall·flow·er: (noun)

1. a person who, because of shyness, unpopularity, or lack of a partner, remains at the side at a party or dance.

2. any person, organization, etc., that remains on or has been forced to the sidelines of any activity.

WALLFLOWERS examines the formal specificity, scalar opportunities, and spatial consequences of the everyday domestic wall object. Specifically, the project investigates how the additive elements typically tacked onto a house's interior – a telephone, a kitchen cabinet, a lighting fixture – relate to one another and have architectural influence on the spaces where they are used. As everyday *objects* are estranged, scaled, and inhabited, they surpass their original use-values and become *things* that define interior space.

Traditionally, an object 'is nothing more than its accessibility to humans'.[1] An object is anything an occupant has the tools to understand and utilise for a specific intended purpose. A faucet and its handle control the flow of water in a sink or shower; crown moulding conceals the transition between wall and ceiling; a smoke detector alarms in case of fire. These objects all fulfill utilitarian functions and purposes within an architectural work are universally recognised as vital accessories within the contemporary domestic interior. A thing, on the other hand, seeks attention through its tendency to remain ambiguous; it lacks codes through which one can understand a purpose, and it acknowledges an inhabitant of space as one who experiences rather than as one who uses.[2] WALLFLOWERS deploys an architectural process that defamiliarises objects until they take on a

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Doppelganger Town
Artificial Urban Conflict Zones for Military Training
Janina Schupp

A VISIT TO JEOFFRÉCOURT

The town of Jeoffrécourt in northeast France is located by a river, has one train station, a hospital, supermarkets, restaurants, a playground and can accommodate five-thousand inhabitants. Yet, this town -comparable in size to Barton-le-Clay in Central Bedfordshire[1]- is completely uninhabited. The sound of gunshots and the dense smoke engulfing the landscape soon reveal why: it is a simulated town entirely produced for the training of soldiers, where they participate in a seventy-two hour exercise made realistic through the artificial architectural authenticity.

The simulated doppelganger town of Jeoffrécourt, constructed as part of the French urban training facility Centre d'entraînement aux actions en zone urbaine (CENZUB) between 2008 and 2012, represents an optimised reality that targets the ideal training of visiting soldiers from France and various other countries.

The town can be considered an example of the 'absolutely fake cities', such as Disneyland, which Italian philosopher Umberto Eco describes in his writings on Travels in Hyperreality.[2] The soldier's imagination of a combat situation, in order to adequately train physical and mental performance and reaction -as Eco comparably explains in his analysis of hyperreality- 'demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake, where the boundaries between game and illusion are blurred, the art museum is contaminated by the freak show, and falsehood is enjoyed in a situation of "fullness"'.[3] Accordingly, the training centre reproduces every detail from the screams of children to grenades and smoke, creating an intersection between combat reality and multi-media illusions.

Contributors

Ash Amin
Professor Amin is the 1931 Chair in Geography at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Christ's College. He is known for his work on the geographies of modern living: cities and regions as relationally constituted; globalisation as everyday process; the economy as cultural entity; race and multiculture as a hybrid of biopolitics and vernacular practices. He has held Fellowships and Visiting Professorships at a number of European Universities. He has been founding co-editor of the Review of International Political Economy, and is currently associate editor of City, and on the advisory board of a number of international journals. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, Fellow of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Fellow of the British Academy.

Thomas Aquilina
Thomas is currently an MPhil student of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Cambridge. He has practiced and researched architecture for design studios in London, research centre LSE Cities, and at the United Nations agency UN-Habitat in Nairobi. Thomas' on going research explores the architectures of downtown African cities, particularly focusing o the emergent social implications of everyday spatial practices for design.

Eve Avdoulos
Eve is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Urban Conflicts Research in the Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge. Her current research focuses on the intersection of urban decline and regeneration, paying special attention to the city of Detroit. Eve holds a BA in Anthropology from Michigan State University, a MPhil in Archaeological Heritage and Museums, has worked in urban planning in Detroit and served as a guest curator at the Hellenic Museum of Michigan.

Yianna Barkouta
Yianna Barkouta is a PhD candidate at the Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly in Greece. She holds a MArch from the University of Thessaly and a post-graduate degree from the School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens.

Madalen Claire Benson
Madalen is a Canadian writer and artist from the West Coast currently based out of Toronto. She studied Art History and Philosophy and has a specific interest in Critical Theory and Aesthetics - two philosophies which she seeks to meld in her work.

Alex Bernetich
Alex earned her BS Arch with honors from the University of Virginia and her MArch with high distinction from the University of Michigan. She is currently working as a designer at HKS's Detroit office, where she leads all in-house model production, manages the firm's electronic healthcare publication, and participates in the architectural design of small and large scale healthcare environments.

Alice Bucknell
Alice is a visual artist and designer based in London. She works through and across mediums to probe questions of identity, branding, and desire in the wake of globalization and digital cultures. Central to her practice are the ideas of utopia, the hybrid, and the cyborg; nostalgia and retromania; global cities, virtual realities and the socio-cultural effects and affects of the Cloud. She earned BA degrees in Anthropology and Visual Art at the University of Chicago and was offered a DAAD fellowship for her research on the voids of Berlin. She has exhibited in multiple galleries in Chicago and Berlin as well as several pop-up installations in Detroit. Most recently she was awarded an International Scholarship to complete a Masters Degree in Research Architecture at Goldsmiths University.

Contributors

Konstantinos Chatzaras
Konstantinos is currently pursuing his MArch at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. He graduated from the University of Patras, Department of Architecture in December of 2015. While at University of Patras he completed a research thesis titled 'Architecture as the City' and a design thesis 'Section on the City 1_5' which concerned the insertion of five artifacts in the contemporary city of Athens.

Jamie Piché Colburn
Jaime holds both a BS in Architecture and a Masters in Architecture from the University of Michigan. She currently works as a designer at Mark Cavagnero Associates Architects in San Francisco. Jaime also runs a small freelance practice in northern Michigan focused on retrofitting interiors and salvaging materials.

Janina Schupp
Janina is a PhD candidate in Architecture at the University of Cambridge and is currently a British Research Council Fellow at the John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress. Her research focuses on simulations and cinematic representations of urban space and she works as a freelance producer for German television.

AbdouMaliq Simone
Professor AbdouMaliq Simone is an urbanist and research professor at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity and visiting professor of sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London, visiting professor at the African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town, research associate with the Rujak Center for Urban Studies in Jakarta, and research fellow at the University of Tarumanagara. His work focuses on various powers, cultural expressions, governance and planning discourses, and spaces and times in cities across the world.

Maria Sturchio
Maria holds a BS in Architecture from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and an MArch from the University of Michigan. She is currently a designer at Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture in Chicago where she works on both local and international projects across a variety of scales and markets.

Pawda Tjoa
Pawda is a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge. She is a member of the research group Cities South of Cancer where her work focuses on the intersections of political ideology and the urban public space in Jakarta.

Maria Vidali
Maria is an architect and PhD Candidate at the School of Architecture of the University of Thessaly in Greece. She also studied architecture at Portsmouth and Kingston University and History and Philosophy of Architecture (MPhil) at the University of Cambridge.