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Jonas Runberger
Daniel Norell

Probing the Conjectural

Is it possible to imagine a space where the spectator is involved in a creative process? An oscillation between a systematic structure and a suggestive experience. An opposition between a dream-like, drug induced state and a controlled process; where illusions with a potential for endless development and feedback form an architecture beyond representation.

By using carefully worked out contexts in his work, the Belgian comic artist Francois Schuiten is pursuing a probing reasoning in which characters and society are forced to react to a variety of inputs. A complex process is deployed and unfolded, using the freedom embedded in comics

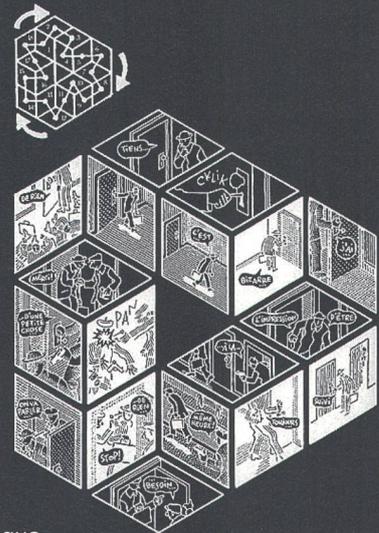
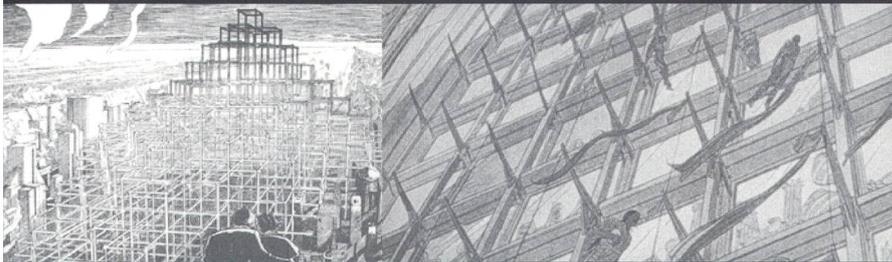
as a medium. This model for exploration is essential for all science fiction stories. A literary test platform is constructed in environments where a number of parameters

differ from the ones we are used to in our world. Telling the story means investigating the potential in the concept. The environment staged is usually founded on technical innovations that alter behaviours and concepts of living. The worlds of Schuiten are often built on the notion of a luring danger. The constructed platform is brittle and the scenario could end in a catastrophe (a result which is sometimes desired). The dream turns into nightmare. These dreams form an open-ended landscape of rational magic in which everything is possible.

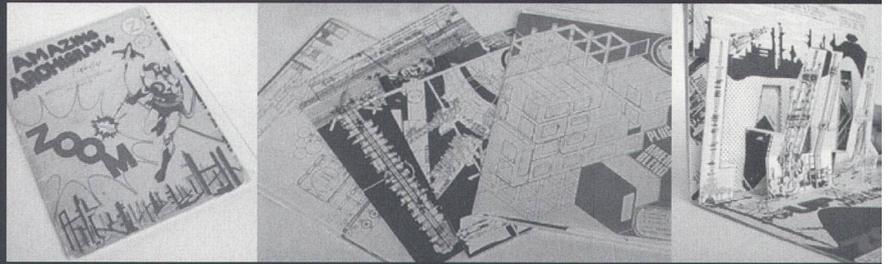
The term cartoon originates from the Italian „cartone“, a preparatory sketch or drawing, usually for a painting or fresco. It's a point of departure for further discussion and a platform for development of concepts. The one-page strip of French comic artist Patrice Killoffer provides a structure for the reader, as well as a framework for possible stories in his plot. This strip leaves the two-dimensional space, twisting into a topological narration where any chronology of reading is possible. Its context is on one hand limiting, but on another enabling, increasing the potential of the platform.

The test platform can be characterised by studying how structures in different media give rise to possibilities and limitations. In Archigram Magazine of the sixties, the concept of magazines and (to some extent) comics was used to set up a platform and starting point for the exploration of architecture and design.

The form and structure of each issue was freely adjusted to the qualities and diverse content: A collection of disparate ideas became unbound pages contained in a folder, ideas about commercial prototypes became a series of posters, and so on. Ideas were developed continuously, sur-



facing in several consecutive issues against an ever-changing backdrop. In this way, the concept



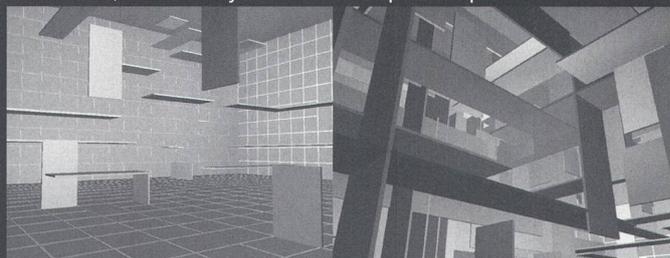
of magazine functioned as a context for development of scenarios and explorations, not a glossy surface on which formalised ideas were presented. The qualities of this platform controlled how experiments could be conducted, literally exemplified by architectural models turned into foldout spreads or drawings turned into cuttable patterns which the reader himself could assemble. Conventions of language and definitions were attacked in further substantiating the world of ideas put together for some issues of the magazine. Key words used in Archigram's reasoning was given a specific new meaning.

The establishment of a terminology creates a foundation for further development of concepts. The Unitary Urbanism of the Situationist International was the theory of the combined use of arts and techniques for the integral construction of a milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior. Psychogeography was the study of the specific effects of a geographical environment on feelings and behaviour of individuals.

„Homo Faber“, man the maker, would be replaced by „Homo Ludens“, man the player, in his quest for the transformation and recreation of his own environment. The survey and the construction of our surroundings would coincide, when „Homo Ludens“ would investigate the

products of his participation. An uninterrupted process of creation and recreation would be started, enforced by a general level of creativity manifested in all activity. The ultimate goal was to reconstruct the city from within, where the constructed situation could be thought of as a Gesamtkunstwerk.

The notion of détournement, the integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu, suggested new uses of existing art and architecture, but Constant Nieuwenhuis suggested in his work a virgin territory, a merging of architecture and culture, envisioned in the „New Babylon“ series. He defined the projects as something that would go beyond the realm of townplanning, becoming a creative game with an imaginary environment. Constant's expansive visualisations of Unitary Urbanism lacked detail, and were meant to inspire rather than prescribe. While related to other experimental projects during the 1950s and 1960s, New Babylon was set up as a platform for ideas, and left as an unfinished project. The voids



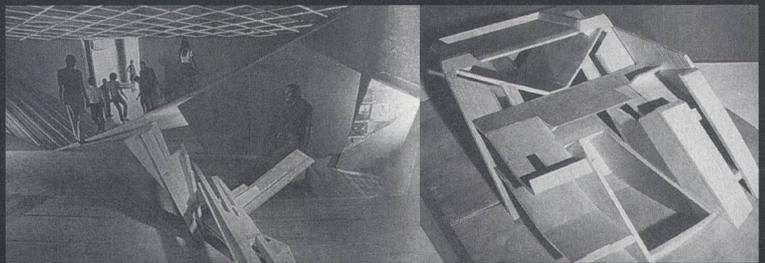
virtual building box
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Matilda Eriksson
Milo Lavén
Hjalmar Mann

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between the theory and his complex models were to be used by the imaginative reader. The different sectors in Constant's megastructure were abstractions of the 'unities of ambiances' that the psychogeographer would experience in his drifts through the existing cities. The concepts of Unitary Urbanism and „Homo Ludens“ were projected in the sublime vision of New Babylon, which suggested a cybernetic network where man truly could recreate his environment.

The individual's interaction with the immediate surrounding is a feedback loop. Claude Parent and Paul Virilio of the „Architecture Principe“ group investigated the effect of the inclined plane as a generator of activity creating a dynamic environment. The Oblique was developed as a new urban model breaking with the modernistic paradigm horizontal and vertical. The ideas were pursued through sketches and texts published in the nine issues of the Architecture Principe journal, as well as through the construction of prototypes.



Starting with the simple model of the inclined floor plane, a number of concepts were introduced. The oblique would force a conscious participation by extracting the potential charge within each individual.

An environment as a habitable circulation would act as a projector, where the static properties of the horizontal plan would be replaced by the vertigo of what

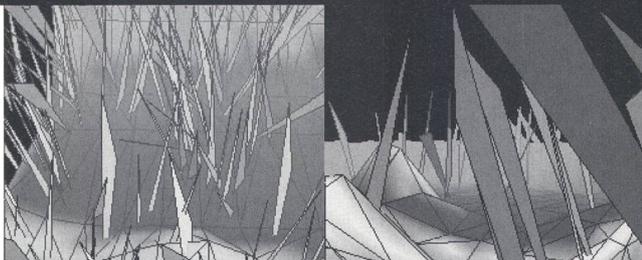
comes with the loss of references and activation through gain or loss of potential energy.

Paul Virilio predicted a transformation of our society, where common values and conventions would be lost, and all activities would be thrown into disarray. Urbanism would need new tools to handle the emerging situation, and deal with ballistics rather than the partition of territories. Architecture would be transformed into a physiological material, adapted to the needs of the individual. Traditional stability, habitable stasis, is replaced by Metastability, the habitable circulation of the body in motion. Full scale prototypes were planned to test the effect of the oblique, The Pendular Destabilizer was never built, but Claude Parent designed the French Pavilion at the 1970 Venice Biennale according to the manifesto of Architecture Principe.

zone
 student project NON course
 organisation track

Joel Hedgren

a digital meeting ground
 with ambient variations
 on-line at
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decode
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organisation/navigation

Linda Hedebrö
Kristina Knauff
Anna Zimdahl

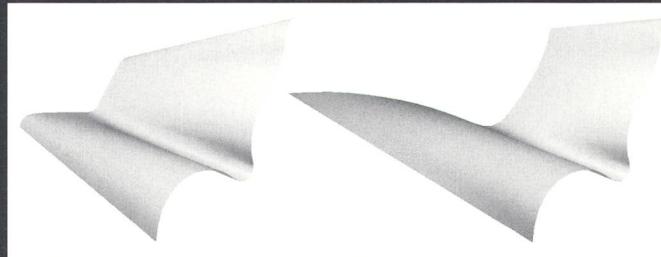
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Through the three linked concepts of Navigation, Organisation

and the Narrative, the six-week NON crash-course at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm looked at the development and formulation of ideas and concepts, the use and abuse of software and the development of new tools that address the architectural process. The course was part of the compulsory curriculum of the School of Architecture and aimed at creating an open-ended platform acting on the friction between concepts and technology, looking for new ways to develop ideas, new worlds to explore and new problems to solve. The organisation of the course itself had to incorporate text seminars, tutorials and a tight lecture schedule for the 70 4th year students. During the first half of the course a common task was used to investigate introduced concepts and references, and three seminar series were running parallel. The second half focused the individual attention on one of three tracks, Navigation, Organisation or the Narrative.

The Organisation track focused on the development of techniques and concepts on the borderline between tool and model. Primary concerns included the creation of platforms where rules had to be set, functioning as



product is process
student project NON course
organisation track

Andreas Martin-Löf

a digital sampler and
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artificial contexts for collaborative design processes. The track looked at how the isolated structure in different media carries information to be used as guidance, interaction and control. Systems that are constantly in flux, the formation of barriers, gates that open and close enable situations where the unexpected can happen, in which what is planned does not take place. The Model becomes the probing platform for the unknown, the simulation becomes a tool and the adaptive landscape is put to the test. The Virtools software package, an editor for interactive digital 3d worlds, was used as a potential tool to create functioning prototypes of collaborative environments. The software is set up in a non-linear fashion, and the technical aspects were used to provoke a new attitude towards the architectural design process.

The NON Crash Course was collaborative effort organised and executed by: Shaun Murray [navigation]; Jonas Runberger, Daniel Norell and Pablo Miranda [organisation]; and Malin Zimm and Minna Henttu [narrative]. Examiner: Peter Ullstad. The course was part of the curriculum at The School of Architecture, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden, initiating the academic year 2001-2002.

This text is based on the Probing the Conjectural lecture of the NON course 28.08.2001
More information on the course and excerpts of student work is available at: www.hypersketch.com/non

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