

Matrix City

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photo: Francesco Jodice, 'Citytellers Dubai'

The city's uncertain future

UTRECHT Experts have become increasingly uncertain about the lack of convincing models to handle the growth of cities. Less than two years ago, the instant collapse of the prestigious Dubai

the growth stability of the Chinese real estate market; a problem of a potentially much larger scope. Beginning of August, Chinese media spread the rumour that over a period of six months,

less government regulated parts of the world.

United Nations experts voice great concern about the explosive urban growth - which increasingly takes the shape of an uncontrollable virus infection, now that urban growth mainly takes place outside of the regulated real estate market. However, there are hardly any alternatives, or at least not any feasible ones, which also carries a great risk in view of the important choices and investments that must be made. One of the possible scenarios - albeit only available for a small elite -

Small-scale alternative economies and communities

relates to the design of so-called gated communities at sea. A few steps further even is the plan of a number of scientists to digitalize the urban experience, allowing a much larger number of citizens

on a smaller surface to have a 'urban' experience without the need of making high investments.

Autarkic experiments far from stabile

By now, after years of promoting, and in some cases, even forcing the free market, the World Bank increasingly pleads in favour of the opposite. Micro-credits and 'bottom-up development' are now regarded as a realistic and feasible alternative for stimulating the economy and wealth. Next to large controlled economies like China and the unmanageable utopia of the free market, small-scale alternative economies and communities have emerged worldwide, sometimes driven by poverty, and sometimes by dissatisfaction with current politics or consumer society. And although this development usually meets with a great deal of sympa-

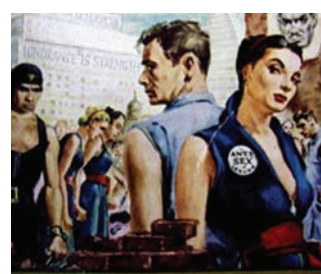
thy, experts also raise questions about this development. It is not uncommon for these new communities - whether it concerns gated communities for the super rich or 'back to nature' communities comprised of people disappointed in affluent society - to manifest themselves as true autarkies. The autarky, a combination of total self-sufficiency and economic, political and social isolation from the rest of the world, appears a stabile alternative, but recent history has shown that autarkic experiments like the one in Albania, are far from stabile. And what to think of the people who have retreated to the forests of the USA as fully self-sufficient communities, using the same arguments as the Californian hippies, yet heavily armed?

The urgency of this issue is of such nature that an expert group has hijacked the Utrecht-based Impakt Festival under the theme Matrix City. Under the relatively safe umbrella of a cultural festival, Matrix City offers a stage for taking stock of contemporary urban developments, and discuss these in an independent and open setting. ■



Deserted UFOs surface everywhere

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'I don't want to live in Utopia'

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Impakt Festival 2010 programme newspaper

All about the Impakt Festival: locations, times, screenings, exhibitions, performances - and more. As supplement with the newspaper > p9

project which was labelled as a development model for the free market, came as a major shock. Following suspension of payments and a near-bankruptcy, almost one quarter of all builder's cranes (30,000 out of approximately 125,000) are currently inactive. Due to financial and legal problems, the city is no longer able to contribute to accelerated global urban growth, which, consequently, poses the danger of a sudden boom of low-rise and on account of the resulting low density thereof, may entail a direct increase of the climate crisis. Recently, doubts have risen about

64,5 million electricity meters in Chinese cities have measured zero power consumption - a rumour which was instantly and expressly denied by the energy companies in question. After all, this number would imply that approximately 200 million newcomers in the rapidly growing cities have refused to move into the housing projects built for them, and abandoned the registered real estate market forced by its high costs, finding refuge in the unauthorised districts in and around the city. A scenario which is quite common in the great number of megacities in



Deserted communist congress centre 'Buzludja' in Kazanlak, Bulgaria (photo: Linda Ferrari and www.lostbulgaria.com)

Deserted UFOs surface everywhere

MUNSON, TEXAS At various isolated locations there have been recent observations of deserted UFOs. In Texas, a 'residential

UFO' with a diameter of 8 metres was seen which, upon closer inspection, had much in common with the prototype for future liv-

ing as designed by the Finnish designer Matti Suuronen in the 1960s. Experts say that there is no reason to panic and that there

are at least 100 of these Futuro houses around the world. The fact that the house looks remarkably similar to a so-called flying saucer or UFO is more the result of the futuristic visual language of the 1960s and 1970s than a pre-announcement of an outer space

East bloc. Here, many deserted 'objects' with a more than just coincidental UFO resemblance have recently turned up. The dimensions of these objects are absolutely heroic. Especially isolated mountain tops appear to be favourite locations for landing.

'The perfect design of the spaceships reflects the housing of the future. The plastic age is about to begin.'

(Avotakka Magazine 5/1968)

invasion. Whether this information reassures everybody is yet to be seen. Apparently, the UFO has also recently surfaced in a secret storage space of the Utrecht Central Museum. This brings the uncanny or *unheimische* very close. We, moreover, should ask ourselves why - if the Futuro house is really all that innocent - it is hidden so carefully. If it was a normal, yet small, house as experts tell us, then why not prepare this version stored in Utrecht for use by the Utrecht homeless or victims of the credit crunch? As for now, the city of Utrecht refuses any comment, and states that it wishes to refrain from any involvement in artistic affairs. However, these are mere modest observations compared to the reports arriving from the former

This cannot be a coincidence; indeed, landing objects like these in a valley is not exactly practical. A recent example of such an UFO sighting is the object observed at Stara Planina in Bulgaria. As a token of advanced technology these objects are usually made from heavy concrete. With our contemporary techniques, there is no way these objects can be kept up in the air. So, the question is how did they get there? Information services fail to provide an answer to this question. These objects must be regarded as relics of a past utopia, as monuments of former communism. For these relics, some countries did not use so-called socialist realist design, as was the case in Russia, but - also as a sign of a different, more liberated social-

ism like in Yugoslavia - a futuristic 'Sputnik style' as a symbol of belief in technology and progress. Experts say that these former communist monuments look so disturbing because they are no longer maintained.

This may be well and true, but it is nevertheless quite remarkable that these objects are detected at so many locations. So, vigilance seems in place. There also is a conspicuous link between both phenomena. It is general knowledge that the Soviet Union government has ordered a large number of Futuro houses. They could easily be placed on deserted mountaintops with helicopters. ■



Futuro house on mountain top (source: Mika Taanila)



Still from the film 'Crni Film' by Zelimir Zilnik

Moving homeless people around embarrasses the authorities

UTRECHT Where did the homeless go? Utrecht's main shopping centre Hoog Catharijne used to be one of the favourite hideouts of the Utrecht homeless. Their presence was tolerated for a long time but a couple of years ago the limit was reached and they were banned, at least at night, so that the phenomenon more or less disappeared from the city scene. Also in the socialist utopia of former Yugoslavia, everybody could expect a roof above their head. However, as it turns out, suitable shelter is not always available. In the beginning of the 1970s, the young film director Zelimir Zilnik invited six tramps to stay a few days in his small apartment

in Novi Sad. As his wife and son were already sleeping, Zilnik unexpectedly returned home with his boisterous guests. The homeless were allowed to stay in the living room while the director and his wife stayed in their son's sleeping room. Next morning, Zilnik went into town to ask passers-by for advice. Can somebody tell him where the homeless men can get help? Nobody is able to come up with a real solution while policemen and authorities complain about the absence of regulations for taking the tramps into custody. And the six tramps, most of them of considerable age, are eventually turned out onto the streets again... ■

Dogs, work, revenge and mystery

DELHI 30,000 stray dogs live in the city, is there enough employment for them all? Many are out of work. On Monday, a family of dogs in the South Ex area attempted to avenge the death of a friend. The dog was run over repeatedly until it was flat as a pancake on the cold concrete. For days after, the others went on an attack revenge rage, crazy spree attacking and teasing wheels of cars and bicycles. Running at them then running away.

People thought they had lost their senses, but the dogs knew exactly what they were doing. One night, G was walking home; a dog followed her and wouldn't go away, so she let it follow. She offered it chicken, but it wouldn't eat it, she offered it bread it but it didn't take it. It just followed her without wanting anything.

(source: *Nexes From The Animal Kingdom* - Issue#01, Kayle Brandon and Heath Bunting) ■

City food in the concrete garden becomes easier to find



Bristol Food for Free (photos: Kayle Brandon and Heath Bunting)

DELFT In Delft, the FoAM network searches for pioneering plants: the most persistent weeds. What can we learn from these opportunistic plants that are able to withstand sun and wind, create micro-climates for other plants and are sometimes useful or even edible? Do these plants have characteristics that we can also apply in pioneering architecture? In order to map these pioneering plants, FoAM developed Boskoi; an application for mobile phones. With this application, you can scan your environment for edible plants. Boskoi indicates where the plants are growing and provides information about the harvest time, the edible parts and the medicinal effects.

According to the artists Kayle Brandon and Heath Bunting of Irational.org, the public space of the city of Bristol in the UK also harbours a great deal of edible plants. Their list includes dandelions, lime blossom, elderberry, nettles, chives, wild strawberries, cherries, apples, quinces, wall nuts, birch elixir, plums, berries, rose hips and blackberries. At the most unexpected locations, city flora and fauna emerges, desired or undesired. According to Brandon and Bunting, 'spaces of forgotten, abandoned or ambiguous ownership could be seen as the remaining cracks that reveal the body behind the city's concrete garment.' ■

Housing bubble colours New York pink



Red Lines Housing Crisis Learning Center (source: Queens Museum of Art)

NEW YORK What is the effect of the credit crisis on a city like New York? In 2009, architect and artist Damon Rich visualized this by placing neon pink triangles across the 850 square metres model of the NYC panorama (made for the World Exhibition of 1964). Each triangle symbolizes a housing block with three of more house owners who were no longer able to pay their mortgage and were disowned. In 2008, their number

amounted to more than 13,000, colouring large parts of the panorama pink.

The pink panorama is part of Rich' project *Red Lines Housing Crisis Learning Center*, a project to visualize and materialize how the abstract hocus-pocus with financial risks influences spatial planning. Whereas in the past a concrete objective or vision was the basis for a building project, financial risk management nowa-

days seems to be the most important stimulus, signals Rich. Mortgage speculation in the USA is one of the main causes of the current worldwide financial crisis, which is for this reason also called the credit crisis. In order to realize the ideal of 'each American his own house', people were palmed off with overly high mortgages. And, in order to encourage them to increase consumption (as the booster of a flourishing

economy), taking out a second mortgage was stimulated. Interest rates were low so the mortgages were affordable. However, as from 2007 interest rates started climbing which caused an increase of the monthly expenses and got house owners into trouble; many of them simply were no longer able to pay their mortgage. ■

Tram recognizes troublemakers

ROTTERDAM This autumn the city of Rotterdam will start with a face recognition trial on the tram. ‘Troublemaker line’ number 2 will be equipped with cameras that scan the biometric characteristics of the faces of boarding passengers. If the camera recognizes notorious troublemakers who have been banned from public transport for repeated misconduct, it will send a signal to the ticket conductor who has authority to remove the unwanted passenger from the tram. There are still some ifs, buts and maybes; the camera is unable to recognize people getting in right behind someone else and hats and sunglasses also hamper identification. The Rotterdam transportation company RET acknowledges that the system is not yet waterproof: ‘That would only be the case if we are allowed to work with fingerprints.’



Tomorrowland (illustration: Information Technology and Innovation Foundation)

Rotterdam seems determined to deploy this Big Brother-like application, also for the mere reason that cameras are said to have ‘a preventive effect as well’. The fact that everybody – without distinction – will be scanned, apparently does not raise any eyebrows. New techniques are increasingly used to monitor our environment. For our safety, but also to make more profit or to increase mobility. For instance, this year the city of San Francisco will start checking on the occupation percentage of approximately 20,000 parking spaces by means of wireless registration and inform motorists with text messages about the closest available parking spot, whereas in Tokyo, motorists are informed by means of a wireless system about approaching dangerous road sections on one of the main roads, the Metropolitan Expressway. ■

Hope for Palm island

DUBAI Palm Jumeirah, also known as Palm Dubai, is one of the most spectacular projects in this desert boomtown. The reclaimed island shaped as a palm tree functions as a safe haven for economic refugees from the top segment. Although by now there are two new and much larger artificial islands, including The Worlds Islands which allow buyers to purchase the insular image of a country of their choice on the islands shaped as a world map, Palm Jumeirah still is the symbol of the hallucinogenic development of the Arab Emirates. The islands exemplify the crazed

Credit crisis

out real estate economy; even before the first stone was laid, some villas on Palm island were already resold more than ten times. However, ever since the credit crisis, the economic stability of the islands has become pressurized. And the islands’ ecological durability already was a problem to begin with. The Berlin agency SMAQ has prepared a number of scenarios for the required further development of Dubai. SMAQ was confronted with the question of how they are planning to give the Palm an ecological future with the ‘Re:Cover’ project: “The media always had mocked



Palm Dubai (scenario illustration: SMAQ)

the problem of stagnant water. The Palm’s ‘calm lagoons’ were growing algae! Evidently, this is an indication of rigid shielding – half necessary, half standing in

the face of coastal water dynamics. To solve the symptom and rescue reputation, the circular breakwater had to be modified with gaps to allow for the oxy-

genation of water by the tides. We take this as a hint that the remedial measure should be carried further as a proactive strategy: that the concealing concept

Oxygenation by the tides

should finally be exchanged for a more porous one. The task at hand: Detecting the points at which the play-hard defense can be turned into a permeable structure funneling the hydrological vectors of the sea (image 4). The slim architecture of the Palm makes it easy. By breaking the structure at its narrowest points - the stem - thickening the foundations at its windward side and giving over to the processes of erosion offside, the structure is both protected from and permeable to the streams of water. The by-product of adapting to the natural currents is a setting enriched with different degrees of urbanity: harbor fortifications take turns with gentle housing canals that dissolve into a play of eddies, drifts and wildlife. Yes. With little effort, the symmetrical stand-alone figure can be turned into a field responsive to the directionality of flows. The future comes closer as the city is understood as a component of a larger system of environmental forces.” ■

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RETURNS IN US DOLLARS VS. TOPIC INDEX

Period	Class I	Class A	Class B	Index
One month	(7.26)	(7.31)	(7.35)	(6.46)
Last three months	(8.08)	(8.22)	(8.36)	(6.75)
YTD	(7.26)	(7.31)	(7.35)	(6.46)
One year	(53.84)	(54.10)	(54.50)	(50.12)
Three years *	(12.00)	(12.43)	(13.32)	(10.23)
Five years *	4.13	3.59	2.61	5.50
Ten years *	7.55	6.96	6.06	8.50
Since inception *	4.52	-	--	4.68

* Annualised

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION %

a/ Antarctica	18.82
b/ Africa	13.03
c/ Mongolia	10.68
d/ Australia	9.82
e/ Argentina	8.24
f/ United Arab Emirates	7.20
g/ Botswana	5.90
h/ Namibia	4.68
i/ North America	4.41
j/ Other	14.46
k/ Cash & Equivalents	2.71
Total	100%

PORTFOLIO VALUATIONS

	CLASS I	INDEX
Turnover	125%	n/a
Yield	3.92	4.25
Number of Holdings	152	737

CLASS I SHARES VS. TOPIC INDEX

Performance of 100 Japanese yen invested since inception

Past performance is no indication of current or future performance. These performance data do not take account of commissions and costs incurred on the issue and redemption of units.

TOP 12 HOLDINGS

	%
Antarctic Desert	14
Sahara (Africa)	9.5
Arabian Desert	5.3
Gobi desert (Asia)	5.1
Kalahari Desert (Africa)	3.58
Patagonian Desert (South America)	3.25
Great Victoria Desert (Australia)	3.20
Karakum (Asia)	3.13
Syrian Desert (Middle East)	2.89
Taklamakan desert (Asia)	2.34
Great Basin Desert (North America)	1.35

TOTAL DESERT FUND

MS MEELLER SISTERS LOYALTY GROUP

Niidegree Natural Investment Life – www.tadar.net/projects/niidegree/



(photo: Victor Borisov)

Man digs his own underground

LEBEDYAN, RUSSIA Whereas construction of the Amsterdam North-South underground railway line causes ancient houses to subside, entails towering costs and brings half of the city to a standstill, the Russian Leonid Mulyarchik has single-handedly been building on an underground for his city since 1984. He uses his pension to pay for the required and very simple tools: a spade and pick, stones, a bit of concrete and a cart to wheel the rubble away. To dig a one metre of tunnel takes him almost a day, and finishing the ceilings and walls another three. Mulyarchik has all documents and licenses in tip-top order and the underground meets all safety requirements. Eventually, fully automatic wagons for three or four persons will constitute the underground railway. All the while, the city of Amsterdam will study the used ‘fail-proof’ techniques with growing interest. ■

Matrix culture

Konrad Becker

Applied psychology became an instrument for bureaucratic institutions to efficiently match individuals to the social roles of mass society. Psychotechnicians in an emergent modernity were dedicated to objectifying the study of human subjectivity. Sociometric psychology tries to pin down the individualizing features of persons within an environment of anxieties and urban angst related to the effects of depersonalization in mass production. Not yet too far removed from animal magnetism and mesmerism, a new science of

measuring the self, of mapping the individual character, emerged into a range of applications. Psychometric research to objectify subjective psychological parameters for an emergent technological society remains ambiguous and conflicting in its definitions. Emerging sciences like graphology are still embedded in occult character schemes, dowsing or wielding the pendulum. Today’s surveillance technologies like biometric scanning, fingerprint identification or iris-recognition are the heritage of late nineteenth-century theories

of race and anthropometrics. Mediums and spiritualists have left their mark in many fields beyond psychology, including forensic science and criminology. In the no-go zone between cultural history and the history of science, the nineteenth-century spiritualist pseudoscience of a world of ghosts and its occult beliefs in spirits, a complex adaptation to modernity, has morphed into the twentieth-century applied social sciences of cybernetic operations research and applied psychology. A field like psychoanalysis, which helped

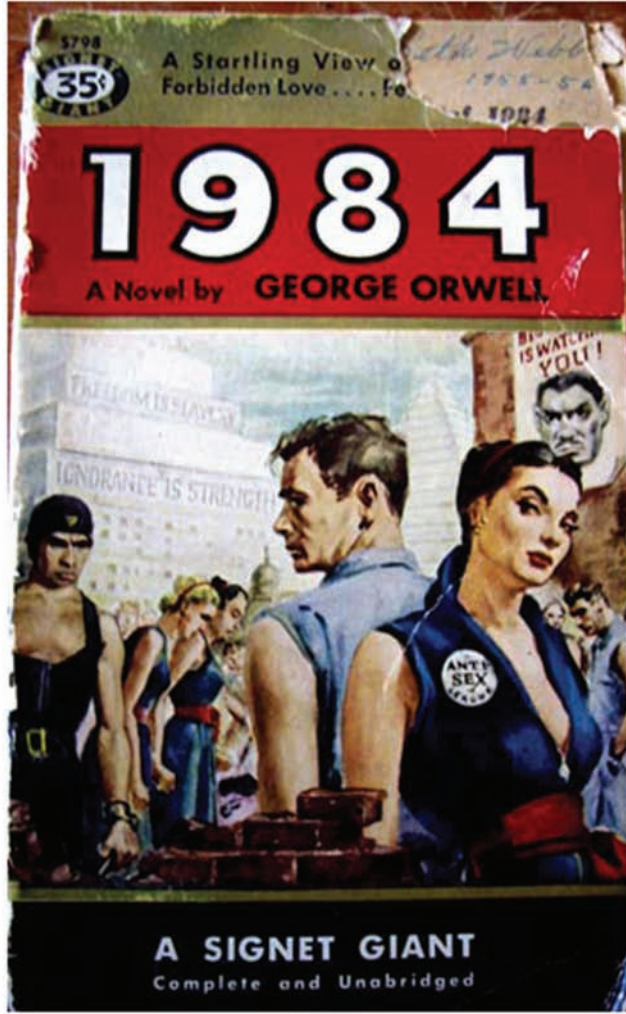
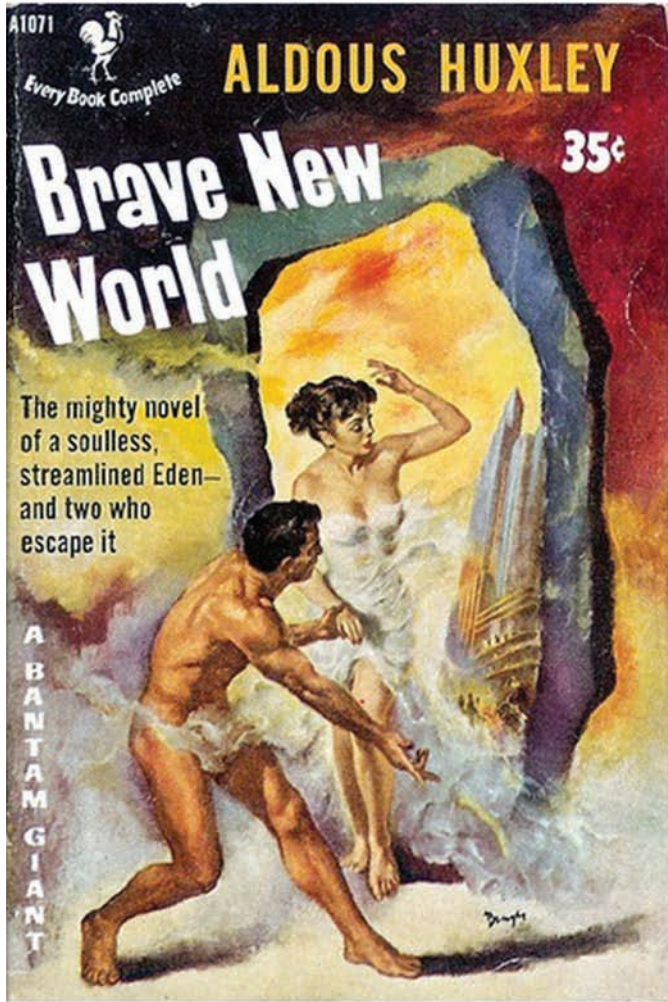
to spawn psychological methods for professional public relations as in the work of Edward Bernays, nephew and promoter of Sigmund Freud in the U.S., still struggles for its scientific status. Capitalism and the neo-classical belief system of psychoanalysis paired well in the business of capitalizing on individual dreams. Myths as the dreams of mankind are the commons of the phantasmal, while the dream of subjective representation is like private property and individual possession that can be capitalized. Clandestine services

that practice the art of assessing and exploiting human personality and motivations for concealed purposes introduced Personality Assessment Systems (based on Dr. John Gittinger’s work with Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, the head of the CIA’s MK-ULTRA mind-control projects), that became standard operating procedure in business and intelligence since the 60s. From psychocybernetic social theories and “optimization” of the workplace to scientific communication and mass psychology, many genres of academia and the influ-

ence business are rooted in the murky waters of occult beliefs, a shadow land of death and dreams. Deep psychological operations research is not founded on a projection of “omnipotence of thought,” but on pragmatic action in a world where thought and reality are not radically distinguished. “What is the release of the Matrix?” asks Chinese philosopher Li Qing-an, and he answers: “Having a body outside the body.” ■
From: Konrad Becker, *Strategic Reality Dictionary. Autonomedia 2009.*

‘I don’t want to live in Utopia’

Philosopher Hans Achterhuis pleads for a systematic distrust of utopia



Piet Vollaard

UTOPIA “Behind the reality of each utopia, no matter how ‘ideal’ and peaceful this imaginary society may seem, eventually lays an imperative, authoritarian dystopia in which hidden or open violence is used to maintain this ideal’s necessary status quo.” Philosopher Hans Achterhuis has been propagating this disquieting statement with growing conviction for quite some time now. A recent lecture at a seminar of the faculty of Philosophy was one of the places where he expressed this view, but the issue of utopia has been one of his topics as early as the 1990s.

At the above-mentioned seminar, Achterhuis explained how it all began. On his way back from a congress about shortage and ecology, he started reading the book *Ecotopia* by Ernest Callenbach. In this book which was published in 1975, we look through the eyes of an ‘American star reporter’ at a fictitious community in the future year of 1999. In *Ecotopia*, people live in harmony with nature according to strict rules of sustainability. As is the case with most utopias, the main character/guide takes us along on a trip through this land of the future and tells us about its constitution, education, production, economy, and other matters; in the case of *Ecotopia* all with a strong emphasis on ecological principles. Achterhuis becomes fascinated with the substance of this utopia which in many respects matches his personal convictions of social criticism and those of his contacts from the environmental movement. Nevertheless, he comes to the conclusion that he does not want to live in this future paradise. Why not, and what was bugging him exactly? For Achterhuis, this question was the main reason to commence his study into the phenomenon of utopia. In 1998, this resulted in publication of ‘Utopia’s Heritage’, in which Achterhuis concludes that each utopia bears traces of a dystopia (the opposite of a utopia).

In *Ecotopia*, for example, the isolated community in the American Northwest is protected against outside interference by means of exactly the kind of modern technology the community detests. And not protected lightly, one may add! Throughout the United States, the community hid nuclear bombs to protect it against invasion. The more utopias Achterhuis read – the utopia originally is a literary genre which always relates to a description of the ideal state –, the more convinced he became of his conclusion: I absolutely do not want to live there.

The word utopia has been derived from the book *Utopia* which was published in 1516. In the book

just one less utopian matter, there is slavery so that the utopians themselves do not have to work. There is no need to travel; after all, ‘Why travel if everything here has been arranged so perfectly?’ according to the utopians. If you wish to take look beyond the borders of the ideal city anyway, and you do this without obtaining hard-to-get permission, you run the risk of being banned or condemned to slavery. Social monitoring is enormous (on voluntary basis, of course). The position of women is subordinate to that of men. The architecture is hopelessly dull: straight, identical streets with identical houses and interiors (because everything is ideal, it must be the same).

“All hell will break loose on earth and human beings will one day remember the good old days, when they still listened to us – and probably they won’t even do that anymore. It won’t even be tragic anymore, just wretched. It’s hopeless. Forget it.”

(the angels in: Harry Mulisch – *The Discovery of Heaven*)

with this title (although the actual title is *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia*), the English humanist Thomas More, through the eyes of the fictitious traveller Raphaël Hythlodæus, describes an ideal state located on a distant island. Utopia has been synonymous with the ideal community ever since and the book is the prelude to a large body of utopian descriptions which continue to be written up to this very day. Almost everybody agrees that matters in Utopia have been adequately arranged. According to Achterhuis, the reason for this is that nobody actually reads the book itself anymore. If you do, you will quickly find out that not all things are as ‘utopian’ as people tend to think. Everybody living in Utopia states that they are happy, but, to name

Compared to this, our detested post-war residential areas such as the *Kanaleniland* district in Utrecht are miracles of varied urban architecture. And this only is the tip of the iceberg of counter-arguments.

So, on second thought, maybe utopia is not the right place for convenient living after all. And, according to Achterhuis, Thomas More himself may also have been quite aware of this ambiguity. In the preface, More introduces himself as a character and states that “this Utopia is probably too good to even be true.” He more or less wrote the book as a jocular gesture for his ‘pen pal’ Erasmus. But More’s story started to live a life of its own. The jokes and the slightly ironic undertones have become lost to later readers, who are blinded by

their fascination for the elaborate description of the ideal community, which, of course, at the same time also constituted criticism on the society of that time. The name Utopia as conceived by More himself, for instance, is a combination of *eu*-topos (good/happy place) and *u*-topos (non-existent place). In addition to this criticism on the society of his day, More may have wanted to express that ‘fortunately’ Utopia does not exist – or at least give readers reason to consider this possibility.

As the first described utopia, the book *Utopia* generally receives a ‘favourable press’ in this day and age. This is not the same for the second source of many utopias to follow: *The New Atlantis* (Nova Atlantis) by Francis Bacon (indeed a far forefather of the British painter by the same name). This book appeared in 1616, some years after his death, and also describes – as seen through the eyes of seafarers shipwrecked on a deserted island – an ideal community. But whereas More’s Utopia predominantly describes a political/social ideal state, Bacon emphasizes science and technique as the highest good. In the New Atlantis one can marvel at many inventions and technologies, of which many, but not yet all, have now been realized. In a sense, the New Atlantis can be seen as the beginning of modern science. The establishment of the Royal Society (in full: The Royal Society of London for the improvement of Natural Knowledge), including early members such as Boyle, Wren, Hooke and Newton, in any case was co-inspired by Bacon’s ideas. This remarkable company of people (at the time still named Natural Philosophers), who gathered regularly and conducted a correspondence with like-minded people abroad, discussed and mutually criticized the most recent discoveries and inventions. Although Bacon’s ideas are initially followed in comparable techno-utopias, appreciation

begins to fade at the start of the 19th century. Along with the increasingly domineering rise of new technology and the related industrialization, the negative sides of technology also became visible. Many 20th century critics even hold that Bacon can be retroactively blamed for mod-

ling than the New Atlantis. In the New Atlantis, a Jew is one of the central characters. Bacon chose a Jew to criticize the expulsion of the Jews in the Europe of his time whereas in More’s work, all characters are well-behaved, white Englishmen.

Add to this that an overly rigid

Love is the ultimate resistance against the dictatorship of both utopia and dystopia

ern technological disasters such as the Holocaust and the atom bomb. This accusation is the most eloquently and literary expressed by the angels in *The discovery of heaven* by Harry Mulisch, who announce the apocalypse at the end of the book. “*To the old global disasters are now added the ravaging tidal waves of the new: with their Baconian control of nature, people will finally consume themselves with nuclear power, burn themselves up through the hole they have made in the ozone layer, dissolve in acid rain, roast in the greenhouse effect, crush each other to death because of their numbers, hang themselves on the double helix of DNA, choke in their own Satan’s shit, because that swine didn’t conclude his pact out of love of humankind, only out of hatred for us. All hell will break loose on earth and human beings will one day remember the good old days, when they still listened to us – and probably they won’t even do that anymore. It won’t even be tragic anymore, just wretched. It’s hopeless. Forget it.*”

There is hardly any criticism on the book Utopia because nobody reads it nowa-days

It is not the wars, “*that is all still the old, politics, that doesn’t mean a thing.*” No, the world’s downfall is caused by the utopian new, the technique, is Achterhuis’ summary of the angels’ conclusion.

Mulisch’ angels voice a sentiment which by now has become almost common among politicians, philosophers and even among some scientists. It cannot be denied that next to progress, comfort and wealth, technology has also brought us many bad things. However, to blame Bacon, or technology and science in general, and to exclude accomplices from other disciplines from any blame, that is taking things much too far. According to Achterhuis, this can partly be attributed to failure to read the source text at all, or at least to a misinterpretation thereof. So, whereas Achterhuis emphasizes the darker edges of Utopia, he still feels obliged to defend the New Atlantis against criticism, or at least to put any overly harsh criticism into perspective. Bacon was well aware of the potential detrimental consequences of his utopia. In fact, there should be less reason to criticize the New Atlantis when compared to Utopia. For instance, contrary to More in his social utopia, Bacon in his techno-utopia leaves more room for human freedom and the arts. In More’s social utopia, this is not necessary, because people are happy as it is. Utopia is much less open, and far more compel-

distinction between Utopia and New Atlantis, as reflected in the two domains of alpha and beta science, of feeling versus ratio, is factually incorrect. In arguing this, Achterhuis refers to Bruno Latour who states that this distinction, and, in fact, the whole concept of this break with tradition as allegedly caused by modernity, is an incorrect assumption and that instead both domains have always been intertwined, and are increasingly becoming entangled in steadily growing networks. Achterhuis also believes in this strong mutual network entanglement. And he criticizes the idea that an emphasis on technique automatically implies less attention for non-technique. However, Achterhuis does not go so far as to concur with Latour in his view that there is no such thing as (the break to) modernity.

The question ‘Do I want to live in Utopia?’ automatically leads to the derivative question as to whether this situation is not reality already, and as to whether we are not already living in Utopia or Dystopia. In order to answer this question, we need to bear in mind three general ‘family characteristics’ of the utopia (Achterhuis lists more but these are the most important ones). First of all, Utopia is makeable and precisely this is exemplified in the described utopias. There are no goals that cannot be reached. So, when referring to a utopia as a way of indicating that an ideal cannot, or should not be reached, is contradictory to the above-mentioned characteristic. Secondly, the utopia can only exist through separation in time and place, by breaking with the past, and the non-utopian environment in a radical manner. This is beautifully pictured in Utopia, where the island which originally was a peninsula, is literally dug off from the mainland, its history and the criticized ‘others.’ So, in this day and age, a realized utopia must

A realized utopia means the end on imagination

be total, or else there will still be need for separation.

Thirdly, utopia always relates to a community, a collective. A personal ideal, fulfillment of personal desires or mutual one-on-one relations between people are not utopian if this ideal or this desire does not relate to living together in a group and the group’s mutual relations. In many utopias, the individual is even completely banned. So, love, by nature a personal one-on-one relation, can never be utopian. As a matter of fact, love does not exist in Utopia, whereas - often - free sexual contacts with several fellow utopians do exist. What is more: Achterhuis concludes that love constitutes the ultimate re-

sistance against both dystopia and utopia. In addition to love, keeping a diary, for instance, also is an act of individual resistance against the dictatorship of the collective. Place an individual in a utopia, and what you get is the immediate unmasking of the utopia, according to Achterhuis. On account of this latter argument alone, we should be distrustful of every utopia and interpret it as a dystopia. For who would want to expel love, or the right to act or even think as an individual? This resistance of the individual is described particularly vigorously in the two famous dystopias of the 20th century: *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley (1932) and *1984* by George Orwell (1949). Just like every utopia evokes its subsequent dystopia, both books can be seen as a criticism of Bacon's New Atlantis, or of techno-utopia in general. This certainly is the case for *Brave New World*. In many respects the predictions of Huxley are even awkwardly close to actual reality. The human breeding machines

Huxley felt that Brave New World had become a reality in the 1950s already

and the normalized education may not be reality yet, but Huxley himself felt that Brave New World had turned into a reality as early as the 1950s already. Achterhuis argues that this is not true. Read the book and compare it to reality and you will find just as many differences as similarities. The assertion that modern-day society is fully under the spell of drugs (in *Brave New World* the drug soma is constantly used), is true only for the most pessimistic of social critics. Huxley, as a matter of fact, did not regard drug use as a problem, and even demonstrated to be an advocate of the use of hallucinogenic drugs in his book *The Doors of Perception*. No wonder this book became a kind of bible for the hippies of the 1960s. Save perhaps for the plus of recreational drug use, there will not be many people who would want to live in Brave New World, although Achterhuis states that there are still certain groups in California who are trying to reach this exact ideal of Brave New World.

However, this will not apply to the society described by Orwell in his dystopia *1984*. This book mainly deals with a criticism on the big utopia of communism, which according to its supporters had in fact been realized in Orwell's time. Save for a few corners of the world like North Korea, this belief has disappeared completely ever since the 1990s. But certain aspects of *1984* are still quite recognizable. Big Brother has become synonymous with all intrusions of our privacy which we nowadays wilfully tolerate. Cameras on the street (in the near future, also at home?), person registration; it is all Big Brother, at least when you look at it from the surface. Fortunately, there are also many differences to oppose this spectre. The world is not (no longer?) divided into three large continental states - Oceania, Eurasia and the rest - which are constantly in state of war with each other (if this had been the case in *1984* at all, then this would have been deliberate propaganda to keep the people in permanent state of fear and aggression). In any case, our present world including even the southern hemisphere is far less aggressive and far more prosperous than the society described in *1984*. Newspeak has not yet been admitted to the educational system, but Achterhuis delicately concludes that the intentions of Wittgenstein and the logical positivists are very close to the basic principles of Newspeak.

Both in *Brave New World* and in *1984*, love undermines the dominant powers. But Winston and

Newspeak has not yet been admitted to education

Julia from *1984* are eventually caught and Winston is returned to the social harness by means of physical and psychological torture. In *Brave New World* the returned 'savage' invokes, next to his right - or more accurately: his freedom - to have a love relationship, the right of being unhappy, sick, old and insecure. He ends up as a kind of tourist attraction in the 'savages reservation' and indulges in self-chastisement to expel his passion for Lenina. Eventually, he kills her and commits suicide, the only freedom he had left.

Do I want to live in Utopia?

No, it is not particularly nice to live in a dystopia. And in view of Achterhuis' assertion that each utopia foreshadows its dystopian opposite, it is also no fun to live in a utopia. This may be difficult to bear for some people, but it is a reality. In this respect it must be noted that we are referring to total utopia. Of course, segments of small utopian projects have in fact been realized. Successful improvements to our collective prosperity and well-being are in fact feasible, and desirable also. But the actual, total utopia is not. There is nothing wrong with idealism, but there is quite a lot wrong with realizing *The Ideal*. If it were possible to realize this at all, then it would end with drastic control and eventually dictatorship of the controllers over the controlled. And another thing: a realized utopia means the end of the imagination, of literature, and the arts in general; and - one may add - also the end of a festival like Impakt. So, it is wise to distrust the utopia. Visitors of Matrix City are well advised to ask themselves upon every encounter with any featured manifestations of dystopia and utopia: Do I want to live there?■

Hans Achterhuis, *'The Legacy of the Utopia'*, Baarn: Ambo, 1998

The Venus project, a society 'beyond politics, poverty & war'

VENUS, FLORIDA *'The Venus Project presents a bold, new direction for humanity that entails nothing less than the total redesign of our culture. There are many people today who are concerned with the serious problems that face our modern society: unemployment, violent crime, replacement of humans by technology, over-population and a decline in the Earth's ecosystems. The Venus Project is dedicated to confronting all of these problems by actively engaging in the research, development, and application of workable solutions. Through the use of innovative approaches to social awareness, educational incentives, and the consistent application of the best that science and technology can offer directly to the social system, The Venus Project offers a comprehensive plan for social reclamation in which human beings, technology, and nature will be able to coexist in a long-term,*



Masdar City (source: Deutsches Zentrum für Luft und Raumfahrt, DLR)

Sustainable desert city under construction

ABU DHABI As the towers of Dubai waver, huge projects are still underway in neighbouring Abu Dhabi - a state unaffected by economic turbulence, due to its enormous oil resources. One of the most appealing of the projects currently being undertaken in Abu Dhabi is Masdar, an eco-city designed by Britain's foremost hi-tech designer, Sir Norman Foster. The city is being constructed just south-east of the city of Abu Dhabi, near Abu Dhabi International Airport. The city is projected to cover six square kilometres, and will consist of a maze of streets, intersected by two green zones following the original flow of small streams. The city will be home to approximately 50,000 people, as well as offices and cultural facilities. The design employs a variety of renewable energy sources. Automobiles will be banned within the city, calling for a system called personal rapid transit. Oil-dependent means of transport will not be completely done away with, but they will have to be parked outside the perimeter walls of the city. Masdar's architectural and planological design, though modern, is based on that

of traditional desert cities. This means that structures will be built close to each other, resulting in streets that are almost permanently shaded. This allows for taking walks outside, an activity that has been rendered virtually impossible as a result of high-rise building in other modern Gulf cities. The street plan has been laid out in such a manner that cool morning and evening breezes will be utilized to their fullest extent. Having as much water as possible run through the city will improve its living environment and will lower the temperatures at street level even further.

Energy will be produced by a sprawling solar power plant outside the city. There are also plans for a 'wind farm'. Drinking water will also be provided using solar energy - all Gulf States employ a considerable portion of their energy to desalinate sea water. Furthermore, approximately 80 percent of wastewater will be recycled into drinking water, or be used as a means of irrigation. Biological waste will be used for improving soil conditions and fertilization. Whatever waste remains will then be recycled by a recycling plant, also outside the city.■

center in Florida, Fresco has in fact started putting his principles into practice. Some futuristic homes have already been built. And while the planned metropolis may still be some years in the making, the already existing small park of villas actually looks very attractive.■



illustration: The Venus Project

Underground garden city to fill Siberian crater

MIR, SIBERIA Far away in Eastern Siberia's permafrost desert, the enormous crater of disused diamond mine Mir awaits its new destiny. Mining was discontinued here in 2001, but Mir's crater, approximately one thousand metres wide at the surface and 550 metres deep, cannot just be abandoned. Should the mine fall into a state of disrepair, its stepped-in walls, still supporting the tracks that were once used by ore-trams, would collapse, which in its turn could cause landslides. Moreover, the crater would soon fill up with water, creating all sorts of complications.

Russian architectural firm Ab Alice has come up with the plan to reclaim the crater by building an eco-city, housing some ten thousand people. According to Alice, their city's solid concrete structure will not only stabilize the crater, its immense depth will also give direct access to geothermal energy - in an area that is otherwise permanently frosty, at temperatures that will often plummet down to minus sixty de-

grees centigrade. The projected city will be covered with a glass dome, consisting of solar panels, providing the city with some 200 megawatts, while at the same time keeping out the cold.

The city will be made up of three 'layers': an under layer for agriculture; a middle layer for foresting, keeping the city's air fresh and clean; and a top layer, consisting of homes, offices and social and cultural facilities. The city Mirny is hopeful this project, dubbed Eco-City 2020, will put the remote region of Yakutia on the map, both as an attractive place for people to settle, and as a tourist destination.■



Mir krater (source: www.telesys.ru)

Launch of a floating free state

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA April 15th, 2008 - *"The Seasteading Institute today announced that it has been established in order to establish permanent, autonomous ocean communities to enable experimentation and innovation with diverse social, political, and legal systems."*

With this press release, a group of Silicon Valley millionaires, including PayPal founder Peter Thiel who contributed \$ 500,000 to the institute, announced the establishment of new communities, free of legal, political and social ties. The institute's philosophy is partly based on the pamphlet *SeaStead - Homesteading on the High Seas* by Wayne Gramlich, who received direct support from Patri Friedman, grandson of the disputed economist Milton Friedman. The basic principles entail a mix of libertarianism, cyberpunk, ecotopianism, techno-futurism and a fair dash of free market ideology. The first Seasteads will consist of free states floating around on the oceans. "If Seasteading becomes a feasible option, changing of government will be a matter of setting sail to another country without the need to leave your house," according to Friedman. With this, the Seasteaders connect with the oldest traditions of utopia: the deserted island where the ideal community of enlightened spirits chose to live in isolation from the criticized world, and where the social, scientific and political-legal experiment can be transformed into a 'genuinely existing reality', although a certain tie with existing states is still assumed to be present. Seastead is not the only one to propagate the floating free state: in an article in *Wired* (19 May 2008) a true 'Pantheon of would-be utopian communities' floating on the world seas is listed, like the Aquarius Project, which aims at nothing less than hegemony over the universe, The Republic of Minerva of Las Vegas millionaire Michael Oliver, which was already announced in the 1970s

but has not yet materialized, or the more realistic Freedom Ship, a large passenger ship which as a free state, offers "an ideal place to live or run a business, a friendly, safe and secure community with large areas of open space and extensive entertainment and recreational facilities."

As for now, however, Seastead seems to be the most feasible option for potential 'refugees.' Political autonomy is reached by the



illustration: www.seasteading.org

Seasteaders by using so-called 'flags of convenience'; a practice by which ships carry the flag of the state which is economically the most practical, the cheapest or the least compelling legally. The fact that the ideology is firmly rooted in the economic-libertarian free market 'utopia', and the fact that ever since the credit crisis, this utopia is built on an unstable basis, does not seem to bother the initiators yet. By now, the start-up capital has grown to \$ 1,000,000, which is still not enough to build a prototype. But more money will be raised shortly, according to the initiators. In 2009, The Poseidon Project was announced, a first trial of Seasteading, which will consist of a community of at least 50 residents living in an oil platform-like setting: "economically fully self-sufficient, technologically safe and de facto full political autonomy." The estimated costs amount to approximately 20 million dollar, an amount the initiators expect to raise in the next five years.■

Wild Gardener looks 1000 years ahead

Piet Vollaard

MILDAM, FRIESLAND For more than thirty years, Louis Le Roy single-handedly and with his bare hands piled up discarded bricks, paving stones and kerbstones and let nature run its course. As a result, he changed a barren Frisian meadow into a fascinating jungle where qualifications such as beautiful or ugly no longer have any meaning. Le Roy refers to this project as the Eco-cathedral. The project was taken over by a small group of volunteers a couple of years ago because health problems prevented Le Roy from continuing it. This transition marks the beginning of a thousand year shift of continually new builders. Meanwhile, hundreds of truck loads of street rubble have already been processed into piled up constructions, the oldest of which are already in part overgrown by nature. People visiting the project get the feeling they are walking among the ruins of

Switch Off Nature – Switch On Nature

an ancient and forgotten Maya culture. Louis Le Roy became known for his creation of the nature garden or 'wild garden', measuring one and a half kilometre and laid out along the *Kennedylaan* of the city of Heerenveen together with the residents of the bordering housing district in the beginning of the 1970s. In 1973, he published *Natuur Uitschakelen – Natuur Inschakelen* [Switch Off Nature – Switch On Nature], which gave him international esteem as an advocate and theoretician of the 'wild garden.' The basic idea behind this was: do nothing, or as

less possible, let nature run its course, and you will wind up with a complex eco system which by far surpasses cultivated gardens in terms of richness and 'beauty.' For the *Kennedylaan* project, he encouraged residents to participate in the project. Not by planting flowers, but by erecting constructions out of dump materials amidst the wild garden structures.

However, his most ambitious project is the Eco-cathedral. The biggest misconception about Le Roy's Eco-cathedral is that it mainly is a pilot project for the 'wild garden' concept. And although the project does in fact reveal what a meadow looks like after letting nature run its course for more than thirty years (fantastic), this is not what the project is about. The Eco-cathedral is mainly a project, or more accurately, an exploration in which time, nature and human construction are the variables. As an answer to the question what a single human being would be able of establishing, he started piling up bricks in his meadow. In doing so, it was important that he did all work by himself and with his bare hands whereby his main interest was not the ecological or constructional aspect. Le Roy especially regarded the Eco-cathedral as a cultural project in time. In this context, 'cathedral' refers to the cathedrals of the middle ages which were projects involving several generations of builders over various periods of time.

Continuing process

Unlike many other 'green prophets', Le Roy does not regard mankind as nature's enemy. Le Roy time and again emphasizes that man is part of nature and that his interventions are just as 'ecologi-



Still from the film 'Louis Le Roy, life and work in time and space' by Beate Lendt

cal' as those of flora and fauna. For this reason, his project is often characterized as an equivalent fusion of culture and nature. It would also be a misconception to see Le Roy as a garden architect. Of all things it may be, the Eco-cathedral is not a planned garden in the making. Le Roy fits a lot better in the tradition of visual artists who consciously limit themselves to one continuing process. The constructions he produced by means of piling up stones have not been planned beforehand, but emerge during the process - in real time as it were -. They are not chaotic mountains, but meticulously levelled towers, walls and terraces, with layers arranged according to colour. More fascinating and poetic than wild

nature is the idea of one individual cleaning truckloads of stones and - sometimes extremely heavy - kerbstones and concrete wells with his bare hands, rolling them over his territory and piling them up in precise stacks of several feet high; the concept of one man who puts so much energy in arranging dump materials, while allowing nature to overgrow his work in the course of a couple of seasons, and the concept of one man who keeps on building regardless.

With his piling, Le Roy barely managed to keep ahead of nature. Each season his constructions of the preceding year were conquered by plants and trees. Year in, year out, he continued his piling work tirelessly and provided

nature with the opportunity to overgrow and conquer his new constructions. The project is not growing in the conventional sense of the word. It is never finished. Ten years ago, the project was in the same state of (non-)completion as it will be in twenty years. It has no real beginning and no real end; it simply is.

The lessons of Louis Le Roy

At the turn of this century, *Stichting Tijd* [Foundation Time] was established having as its main objective to preserve the continuing process. Meanwhile, volunteers have taken over the building from Le Roy who is no longer capable to build himself after an accident. The foundation's regulations have been prepared in such

a way that - should the project ever be in danger of coming to a standstill - regular attempts will be made to attract new builders who will continue working on the project. Such for a period of a thousand years. On a time scale of this magnitude, the current state of affairs of the project compares to nothing more than putting up a few pickets. In respect of the *Kennedylaan*, the foundation concluded a contract with the city of Heerenveen having a duration of 100 years, thus guaranteeing continued building by residents and students.

In this way, his projects have been transferred to the community. The art of patiently arranging, allowing coincidence and the unexpected, is the lesson architects, urban developers and planners can learn from Le Roy. If the architects, urban developers and authorities are really serious about allowing more freedom, they will have to learn that there is no end to building, that a dynamic process does not have an end, that predicting and working towards an ideal state (which every plan in fact is) is useless and that planning needs to be replaced by a way of accompanying processes which is as careful as it is laid-back.

Another lesson is that nature is capable of handling much more trash than we think. If we let nature run its course, it will be strong enough to leave humans a great deal of freedom. The problem in the way we deal with nature is that we think we need to protect it against ourselves, that we need to restrain it, fence it off and re-arrange it for its own good. That is all rubbish, we should simply leave it alone so we can play around it as much as we want. ■



Still from the film 'Whose Utopia' by Cao Fei

The cost of an iPhone

SHENZHEN, CHINA Earlier this year a wave of attempted suicides came to light at Foxconn Ltd., one of China's largest contract manufacturers for consumer electronics, producer of end goods for Apple, Dell and Hewlett Packard. No fewer than ten young assembly workers at the Shenzhen-based factory - employing some 400,000 - did in fact take their own lives. Most of the suicides had an alarmingly similar profile: they were all in their late teens or early twenties, and had only recently started work at Fox-

conn. The wave of suicides once again raised questions about the circumstances under which Chinese workers put together our products. The fact that work in factories such as Foxconn's may not be all it was once made out to be was made abundantly clear. *Whose Utopia*, by Chinese filmmaker Cao Fei, shows the huge factory halls of OSRAM China Lighting Ltd., with its machinery placed in a tightly ordered arrangement. Between the machines, dancers move. Among them, a winged ballerina in white

tutu and pointe shoes, and an elderly gentleman dressed in black. The dancers' silent, dreamy expressions make for a sharp contrast with the factory workers' endlessly repetitive motions. The film is Cao Fei's response to the reality of her fellow Chinese, moving to cities in large numbers to find work in factories there. In China, progress means a lot of hard work for a lot of people. Subjecting themselves to the mind-numbing reality of the assembly line, they dream of a brighter future. ■

Australian hippie communes threatened by ageing

AQUARIUS, AUSTRALIA In the early seventies, the Aquarius Festival was held in Australia. For many young Australians it was the impetus to rediscover nature and start their own communes. In doing so, they became part of a counterculture that originated in the late sixties, in response to rapidly increasing urbanization and a growing unease about progress' less palatable aspects - there were concerns about the environment, about oil dependency, etcetera. The desire to experiment with new ways of living in a closer relationship to nature inspired young people worldwide to start small living communities outside cities. Thirty years on, most of the experiments have been abandoned, but a number of communes still exist in Australia.

The success of a commune depends on the participants' willingness to make a joint effort. It means its members need to share a common goal. It takes a lot of deliberation and striving for consensus, based on shared values and ideals. This in turn leads to a set of rules, to be endorsed by all members. At least, this is the picture that emerges from *The Making Of Utopia*, a documentary shot in Australia, by Finnish filmmakers Tellervo Kalleinen and Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen. Three of the communes they filmed originated in the seventies as an off-shoot of the Australian hippie movement.



'The Making of Utopia' (photo: Tellervo Kalleinen and Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen)

So how come they've been so successful? One of the founders of the Dharmananda commune (fifteen people, thirty cows) thinks it's because they managed to somewhat curb the onbridled lifestyle that characterizes so many hippies. They just set to work, without much theorizing. The filmmakers asked each commune to come up with a fictitious story, dealing with both the success of their community and with the dangers that threaten its existence. The results are some very amusing scenes of commune members feigning a desire to get rich by cultivating genetically enhanced truffles - a mortal sin for

sure, to these lovers of 'real food' - and a song about the luxury that would result from building an eco-resort. It soon becomes apparent that their greatest strength lies in their tenacity and in a sense of solidarity, the result of years of living together. No one doubts the ideals or principles of their commune. The greatest threat to their way of life turns out to be old age. The founders of the communes will not be able to make the required physical effort for very much longer. Young people are still joining their communities, but it remains to be seen whether they will be as steadfast as their elders. ■



Still from the film 'Facts on the Ground' by Bik Van der Pol

More land for more containers

ROTTERDAM Off the coast of South Holland, where the river Maas flows into the North Sea, new land has been in the making since 2008. Located next to the first Maasvlakte, a second stretch of reclamation land is being created. Both Maasvlaktes are part of the Port of Rotterdam, one of the largest container ports in the world. In fact, from 1962 to 2003 Rotterdam Port was the world's busiest port, until it was superseded by the ports of Shanghai and Singapore. The Port of Rotterdam is instrumental as a port of transshipment for containers and bulk cargo, such as crude oil, coal and ore. The cargo tonnage

handled annually by Rotterdam Port is 420 million tons. Through Rotterdam, 150 million consumers are reached within a radius of 500 kilometres and a time span of 24 hours. These consumers are reached by trucks, trains, riverboats, coasters and pipelines. Since the port is currently working at maximum capacity, growth is limited. To maintain its leading position, the docklands are being expanded through land reclamation, covering some 5000 acres (2000 hectares). This is roughly the same size as Rotterdam's city centre. The second Maasvlakte will be twenty metres deep, meaning it will be accessible to

even the latest container ship designs. Land will be reclaimed using a sea wall consisting of both hard and soft components. Beaches and dunes will make up the softer parts of this sea wall, while gravel, stone and concrete will form its harder components. Land will be filled behind this sea wall. The artist couple Bik Van der Pol have filmed the contours of the future second Maasvlakte from a helicopter, resulting in impressive images of a sea slowly filling up with sand. An environment of enchanting purity, yet frightening in its scale. ■

Biker babe does Chernobyl

CHERNOBYL, UKRAINE Now and then the effects of the Chernobyl disaster still surface in Western Europe. Authorities in Bavaria, for instance, claim that wild hogs shot by hunters in their state are often radioactive. This is said to be a result of radioactive fallout, which sank into the earth after the disaster and affected truffles. Hogs eat truffles, as well as other kinds of mushrooms that easily absorb radiation. In Russia, in the area surrounding Chernobyl's ill-fated nuclear plant, high concentrations of radiation will remain for centuries to come, making the area unfit for human habitation. It is therefore a restricted area, inaccessible without an official escort. Elena Filatova, a young woman from Kiev, has, through her connections, managed to find a way around this requirement, and has obtained a permit to cruise the area on her motorcycle. Her websites www.kiddofspeed.com and www.elenafilatova.com, show photographs she has taken during her trips through the *dead zone*. The images are of rampant nature, abandoned farms and a completely deserted city. The citizens of Chernobyl had no choice but to leave everything behind, since everything had been contaminated. Filatova's photographs sometimes show glimpses of Elena herself, wearing a motor jacket and holding a small geiger counter. In texts accompanying the images, Elena tells us about the effects of the nuclear disaster, and about her crossing the area in relative safety by not straying from the asphalted roads. The image of this attractive



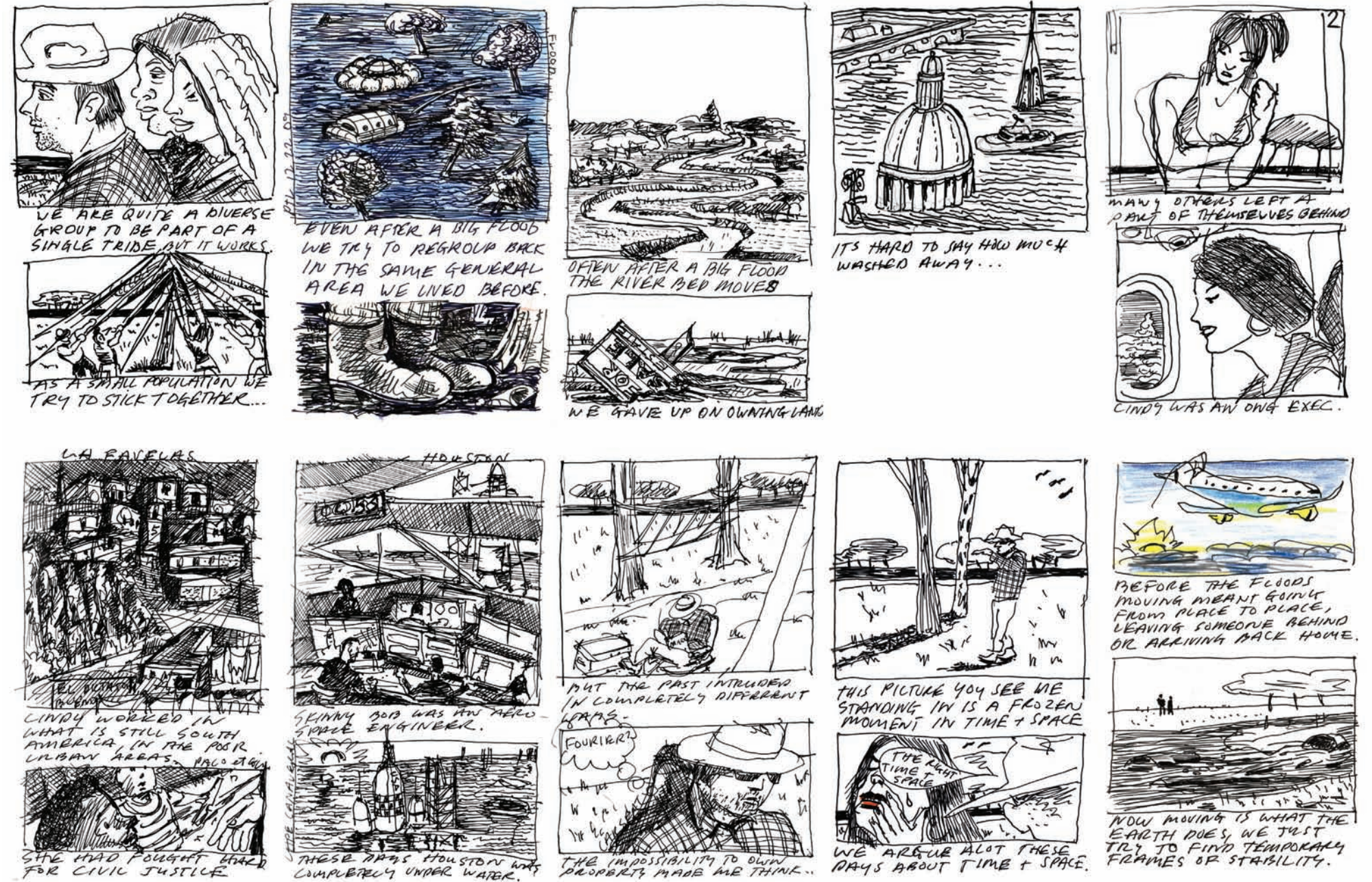
Ghost Town (photo: Elena Filatova, www.elenafilatova.com)

young woman, crossing the contaminated stretch of land on a fast motor bike – a Kawasaki Big Ninja ZZR1100, as her website proudly proclaims – obviously seems to good to be true. And rumour, as circulated on the internet, has it that a young woman in a motor jacket was spotted as a member of a group of tourist visiting exactly those locations that

are documented on Elena's blog. Not singlehandedly crossing the dead zone on her motorcycle, but being safely led around by a tour guide in a tour-coach! Whatever the truth, there can be no doubt about the reality of Chernobyl and the desolate images of the deserted landscape and the abandoned city.. ■

Post Home the Aftertime

Peter T. Lang



Unveiling the city

UTRECHT With the exhibition at Hoog Catharijne, screenings, a conference and a talk show, the Matrix City programme features a large variety of big and small interventions in the urban environment. The editorial staff of this Matrix City newspaper asked co-curators Ana Dzokic and Marc Neelen (STEALTH.unlimited) about the principles underlying the programme.

“The objective of the Impakt Festival as a whole is to present audiovisual arts in an interdisciplinary context. It is probably no coincidence that the festival was conceived in a period when media art (the ‘new media’) slowly started entering the scene. Nowadays, the novelty has more or less

We mainly focus on the question of how the city and urban culture can develop

worn off, and the festival therefore strives to offer a cross-cut of experimental audiovisual arts and to link these arts to developments in society. We have been operating as architects/curators in an international field of artists and architects, and in the segment of what one may refer to as cultural activism for quite some years now. In doing so, we mainly focus on the question of how the city and urban culture can develop – what it is exactly, who should be concerned about it and how we can design a future with a larger group of people. This means that we often meet all sorts of people to relate very directly about the ways in which the urban environment can be developed – something that can be done by means of discussions or workshops, but also by means of designing a trial environment. Kristian Lukic, co-organizer of the Matrix City part of the Impakt Festival, has stronger background knowledge about media culture and an interest in the effects of new developments in communication and information technology. The combination of both perspectives makes it more interesting for us. For the three of us a festival like Impakt is fertile soil and an important stage offering us the chance to reach a much broader audience than we are used to, with a subject that is relevant for everybody.”

You are responsible for the part of the festival by the name of Matrix City. What is the idea behind the exhibition, screenings, debate and talk show which together are referred to as Matrix City?

“The Impakt organization had already thought up the name Matrix City for the 2010 programme before we became involved. It obviously – whether you want or not – also refers to the film *The Matrix*, and to the idea that there may be an alternative ‘real’ reality hidden behind the reality we experience. Progressing from this concept, we decided to take a somewhat different approach than the usual fascination for the amalgamation of a digital interaction layer into the urban environment as is commonly featured at cultural events and design meetings. After all, is the city itself not a matrix, an omnipotent system which entices and seduces us while creeping under our skin

and keeping us prisoner? Of course, the reference to *The Matrix* cannot be overlooked by the civilized festival goer. However, we see the city in terms of ‘war against the controllers’ not as the festival’s main focus – you don’t wage war at a festival. We are more concerned with the question as to who these controllers are and what they are monitoring exactly. And further to this, the question as to whether we can afford to keep living in the city the way we always have; what is the price of urbanization and how long can we afford to ‘pay’ this price?”

Is there a particular scene from The Matrix referring to this idea?

“There are two relevant scenes. The first one is the scene in which the hero Neo (The One) is forced to choose between a red or blue pill, between the consciousness of ‘imprisonment’ and slavery, or a return to the comfortable world, the ‘reality’ as we know it. But what is reality? “*If real is what you can feel, smell, taste and see, then ‘real’ is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain*”, explains the ‘guide’ Morpheus. And those electrical signals can be manipulated. It is a choice related to conflict and justice, but also related to comfort and safety; matters that keep us engaged in many different

Is the city itself not a matrix, an omnipotent system which entices and seduces us while creeping under our skin and keeping us prisoner?

ways, and that are also reflected in the urban environment. In the second relevant scene, the controller (the ‘architect’, not exactly promotion for our profession) shows the belly of the ‘machine.’ How everything ‘they’ make us believe is no more than a thin layer obstructing the view on the ‘real’, totally different machination. With the Matrix City programme we are more or less trying to brush away parts this obstructing layer. However, we regard the idea behind this film mainly as an adequate and recognizable starting point from which we can explore various paths to more contemporary developments. Such as

You may actually be led to believe that in a not so very distant future, at a not so distant location, people are in fact working on a ‘matrix plot’

the consequences of the recent credit crisis versus the million dollar city of Dubai which is being erected at a terrific speed; the flight into smart phones and web2.0 communities and what that means for our understanding of reality; the alternative communities making their retreat from the real world trying to build a sustainable living; the large number of ‘refuge’ islands, bomb shelters and luxurious passenger ships ready to be inhabit-

ed by the super rich when ‘things go wrong’; the consequences that mortgage debts from the ‘big world’ have for the small world of local communities; the totally alienating industrial landscapes which have arisen world-wide, and also have been deserted again in many cases... etc. One of the good things about *The Matrix* is that the film in some cases comes remarkably close to our ‘normal’ reality. It is not until you ‘reverse’ this world or when you take a look ‘behind the scenes’ that its science fiction character becomes visible. You may actually be led to believe that in a not so very distant future, at a not so distant location, people are in fact working on a ‘matrix plot.’ This is quite credible as it is and the works featured at Impakt may even increase this feeling. Although there is just as much counterevidence contradicting these conspiracy theories.”

Can you give us a few examples of the things to go see?

“We try to look at matters from as many different perspectives as possible. It is all about a variety of realities and dreams, about urban practices and ‘escapist back to nature movements’, about small projects as well as magnanimous and poignant projects, and about disillusion. The most recent disillusion, of course, is the collapse of the des-

ert city for the super rich, Dubai. Smaq, for instance, presents a number of future scenarios for Dubai according to which this capital-based mirage is transformed into a ‘real city.’ At a much more personal scale, Damon Rich shows us the impact of mortgage debts on the map of New York. More or less connected to this is the gameboy series *Game Broker* by Derivat which features the financial crisis of the 1980s and 1990s – and the dot-com crisis of 2000 – with a sort of classical 8 bit ‘feel’, whereas the computer game *Nildegree* (by Vladimir Todorovic and Justin Tan) shows the impossibility of a sustainable future built on exponential speculation. The film *Manhattan* by Paul Strand reveals the promises of New York in the 1920s in an old documentary (1921) which has now become part of the American cultural heritage and of the American Dream, which, in turn, formed the basis for the development of Dubai almost one hundred years later. The ambiguity of the makeability doctrine is not only prominently present in the large variety of urban environments we create, but also in the production landscapes often located on the borders of the city, an industry we need to keep our cities supplied and going. A number of festival contributions reveal the enormous scale, the terrifying beauty and the tremendous impact these production cities have on the landscape. Bik Van der Pol filmed the construction of the *Nieuwe Maasvlakte*, and Cao Fei shows the duality of imagination versus the drudgery of the working environment of endless Chinese production floors where the



products manufactured are eventually shipped in containers to that same *Maasvlakte*. The Chinese conveyor belt workers have the same dreams as we have, but we all know very well that these dreams will be smothered by the desire for wealth and our lust after ipods, ipads, and iphones – a

degenerated into virtual gambling houses or market floors. A development which is far removed from the liberating counterculture propagated by Constant. However, we also show alternatives and ask ourselves who is best prepared for the future: the people who retreat to the un-

Pop culture has paved the way for a total aesthetization of our urban environment, including the aesthetization of discontentment and resistance against this development

dangerous combination as also suggested by the recent boom of suicides in the factories of Shenzhen.

But we also offer vistas into another world. The New Babylon project of the recently deceased artist Constant (featured in the short documentaries *Met Simon Vinkenoog naar het New Babylon* by Constant and *New Babylon de Constant*) shows the energy and conviction of the 1950s and 1960s in respect of the scenario of feasibility and makeability leading to a breakthrough into a new society and urban environment where there is no longer any need for man to work and the *homo ludens* can fully dedicate all efforts to creative development. However, in the end we got stuck with ‘alternative cities’ like *Hoog Catharijne*, which seem to refer to the large spatial structures of New Babylon in terms of form, but where ‘fun’ has become the equivalent of ‘shopping’, and self-development mainly equals consumption. Today, gaming has turned into an economy of its own, as is demonstrated by many of the Internet games which have

derground atom and apocalypse proof private shelters of Vivos in the Mojave desert, the people involved in modest, step-by-step development of a more sustainable future such as 2012 Architecten which base their constructions almost entirely on recycled materials, or the far-reaching proposals of Seasteading, Venus and similar organizations – anticipating an entirely re-arranged society which bids farewell to our current urban environment in a radical way?”

Is there, in addition to the myriad of media arts featured, also a message you wish to communicate to the public?

“Very summarily put: pop culture has paved the way for a total aesthetization of our urban environment, including the aesthetization of discontentment and resistance against this development. Mediatization and technology have reached such levels of pervasiveness that they directly interfere with our daily lives in a sublime manner. It is virtually impossible to escape this. And the amount of money involved

has taken on astronomic proportions.

At the same time, it is not clear who has asked for this, who wants it, and who ‘designed’ it that way. We want to make clear that our current way of handling and associating with the city may be a lot less durable than we think: our urban future is built on quicksand. The city deserves a much smarter, more durable, liberating and open approach. It is remarkable that it seems difficult at the moment to come up with attractive and daring alternatives, whereas the more modest approach fails to convince when considering the current and pressing issues at hand (population growth, peak resources, climate change). This represents a major part of the city’s dilemma.” ■

Colophon

This is a supplement to the Impakt Festival Utrecht, 2010.

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Matrix City

IMPAKT FESTIVAL UTRECHT « **FESTIVAL GUIDE** » 13 - 17 OCTOBER 2010



OPENING NIGHT

An evening in 3 parts

PART 1: OPPORTUNITIES OF ENTANGLEMENT

WED. 13 OCT. 17:00-18:30, HOOG CATHARIJNE (ABOVE VREDENBURG), FREE

What for one is the ideal destination for a day full of shopping and going out, is for others an example of failed city planning. Where can we start a festival about urban dilemmas better than in Hoog Catharijne, shopping heart of the Netherlands?

The exhibition Opportunities of Entanglement doesn't judge, but offers the visitor a grand overview of visions on our urban future.

PART 2: WELCOME TO METROPOLIS

WED. 13 OCT. 19:00, THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL

In a varied programme all the main lines of the festival pass by. The curators and artists who are featured at the festival, give a short presentation on this opening night. Films, fragments and presentations from the festival are featured in a nutshell.

PART 3: THE THIRD MAN / ERIK BÜNGER (SWEDEN)

WED. 13 OCT. 21:00, THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL

The Third Man is a project in the form of a performance lecture and a film and was made during a residency at Impakt. It tries to trace the footprints of an elusive entity called 'the Third Man'. It is this entity that takes up residence in the ecstatic body of Julie Andrews, turning seven innocent children into musical puppets, each one reduced to a note in the diatonic scale and it is him that lures the children of Hamelen along with his music. He is in the voice of every pregnant mother, bathing her defenceless foetus in song, and it is him that Kylie Minogue refers to when she sings: "I just can't get you out of my head."

In the performance, Büniger integrates scientific theories, philosophy and religion together with video footage and musical elements like vocals and inventive music boxes. In the footsteps of 'The Third Man' Büniger takes us along on a quest for the true meaning of music.

ERIK BÜNGER

Erik Büniger is a Swedish artist, composer and writer who lives and work in Berlin. His work explores the irrationality of contemporary media and focuses on music as a manipulative force. In his work, music is never seen as something pure, absolute or abstract; on the contrary, music is regarded as a parasite living off our collective, cultural consciousness.

The Third Man is an Impakt production.

by a technological superstructure? Can we really be closer to a utopian scenario where people in cities can afford maximum active leisure, play and minimal necessity for work, as proposed in some of the earlier radical new worlds? Do we encounter new communities that challenge these superstructures - or are we closer to darker scenarios where we will be controlled by a networked intelligence and remain vulnerable without the possibility of a 'rural backup'?

IMPAKT FESTIVAL 2010

The 21st edition of the Impakt Festival will take place from 13 through to 17 October. In a city like Utrecht with a station area that is under firm reconstruction, we focus on the various different perceptions of what elements constitute a city and what a city should look like. With an exhibition in two shop premises in the Hoog Catharijne shopping centre, screenings of short films on a big Urban Screen at the Neude

square and an audio walk exposing the hidden undercurrent of the city's electromagnetic radiation, Impakt directly ventures out into the heart of the city. The film programme in 't Hooft, the conference in Studio T and the large variety of activities in Theater Kikker all show the urbanization process in all its aspects and extremes. So, put on your big-city face and submerge in the dilemma of the city.

MATRIX CITY

Impakt Festival 2010 installs a temporary platform to meet the future perspectives of cities. Within *Matrix City*, Impakt's thematic scope for 2010, the curators STEALTH.unlimited (Ana Dzokic and Marc Neelen, Rotterdam / Belgrade) and Kristian Lukic (Novi Sad) have chosen to depart from celebrating the technological or informational advancements of cities and instead through film, video and media art

productions, performances, presentations and discussions focus on the growing urban entanglement.

In the radical new worlds envisioned in the 1960's and 1970's, for the first time a 'modern' engulfing urban matrix was projected. This came at a point when industrialization, space age, computing and the emergence of digital media converged with the perceived possibility of a fundamental and liberating 'makeover' of our environment. Nowadays, while newly arriving citizens cut the ties with their rural background and become reliant on resources provided third hand, those that are already part of the

urban system have little option to step out. Urbanization - with its massive and centripetal, gravitational power of growth - increasingly seems to act like a self-propelling machine.

On the other side, mass popular culture and the climate change agenda in combination with, for instance, eschatological conspiracy cultures construct elements of an 'end of times' zeitgeist that has the potential to amplify social or economic crisis beyond rational proportions.

How are these probabilities interwoven with a view of the city as the generator of economic development, social welfare and individual satisfaction - supported

EXHIBITION - OPPORTUNITIES OF ENTANGLEMENT

OPENING: WED. 13 OCT. 17:00-18:30,
THU. 14 OCT. TO SUN. 17 OCT. 11:00-18:00
(THU. 14 OCT. OPEN UNTIL 21:00),
HOOG CATHARIJNE (1ST LEVEL HALL ABOVE
VREDENBURG, BEHIND PEEK & CLOPPENBURG)
FREE

By bringing together artworks and practices that point to overlapping trajectories within the contemporary urban landscape, the exhibition *Opportunities of Entanglement* speaks about ambivalences between entanglement (or even enslavement) and the next playful 'liberation of mankind'. The exhibition touches upon the shelf life or expiration date of contemporary concepts of the city; something hard to comprehend in the current boom of urban and metropolitan territories, but with a long and recurrent base in history. For this occasion Matrix City appropriates part of Hoog Catharijne, Utrecht's 1970s avant-garde shopping center, which is today regarded outdated and finds itself on the verge of a major reconstruction. This site in some way reminds of parts of Constant Nieuwenhuys' *New Babylon*, a superstructure meant to liberate humans of physical work - only in Hoog Catharijne, one was to find satisfaction in shopping, not in play.

CHARTER OF DUBAI, X-PALM

SMAQ - SABINE MÜLLER ANDREAS QUEDNAU (GERMANY)

Book and digital drawing print, 2009
Palm Jumeirah is the grand icon of Dubai's look-at-me-urbanism. Behind the show, the man-made island performs as a luxury refuge, retreating from its wider context, facilitating individualism, exclusion and perceived independency. *The Charter of Dubai* takes the Palm as a challenging testing ground to imagine a socially and environmentally integrated urbanity. It does so by rereading and readjusting the Palm's geometry, thus investigating its immanent formal opportunities. If the question is whether social cultures can be patterned through formal configurations of space, the Palm's straight answer is: yes. SMAQ however take this as a tool to imagine a different urban future.

CITYTELLERS_DUBAI

FRANCESCO JODICE (ITALY)

Film, 48:00, HD, 2009
Citytellers Dubai takes as its subject the most famous contemporary case of neo-urbanism. A city built and designed like a white elephant, that for a few years lived an unsustainable economic expansion resulting in its recent crisis. The images depict the ambiguities of such an atmosphere: the camel races that exploited and tortured thousands of kidnapped child jock-

eys (now replaced by humanoid robots) or the condition of slavery which subjects thousands of workers from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The film frames the constant paradox of the parallel dimension where the propaganda of a paradise of luxury and wealth approaches a dark side of poverty and misery on the limits of human dignity.

DAILY NEWS

KAYLE BRANDON IN COLLABORATION WITH HEATH BUNTING (UK)

photos and leaflets, 2007 - ongoing
Launched in 2007, *Daily News* is a paper about the lives and loves of the non-human inhabitants of global cities. Issue 01: "WITH YOU FOR YOU ALWAYS", is printed, published and distributed in New Delhi, India - and distributed at traffic lights, shopping centers, traffic jams, queues, waiting rooms, on billboards... It is news from the animal kingdom; straight from the horse's mouth. We don't just hear these stories - we relive them.

DISAFFECTED! PERSUASIVE GAMES (USA),

Videogame, 2006

Disaffected! is a videogame parody of the Kinko's copy store, a source of frustration from its patrons. Disaffected! gives the player the chance to step into the demotivated position of FedEx Kinko's employees. While examples of branded games go as far back as the Atari 2600, "advergaming" have become very popular in the last ten years, first as web-based games and now both as casual games and as product/ad placement in commercial games. Anti-advergaming (like Disaffected!) are to detract from or call into question a set of products or services for expressive, cathartic, social or political purposes.

ELECTRO-MAGNETIC PROPAGANDA BUREAU D'ETUDES (FRANCE)

stickers, 2006

Art collective Bureau d'Etudes has created an enigmatic map of the influence of electromagnetic waves on the biological body. In the course of the 19th century, the development of the chemical industry and agrochemistry led to the understanding of living organisms as chemical machines. In the 20th century, the development of the electrical industry, then of electronics and cybernetics, compelled us to understand the organism as a self-regulating system of electronic control. Industry, with its technoscientific basis, appears as the legitimate expression of the way that humanity comprehends itself, and must comprehend itself - producing the cosmology that justifies its universal diffusion.

GAME BROKER DERIVART (SPAIN)

Games for Nintendo Game Boy, 2009



Game Broker / Derivart

Game Broker reflects upon the nature of financial crises with three retro games for the original Nintendo Game Boy. The three games bring the player back to the crises of the 1980's, 90's and the dotcom years. The game allows the player to learn about the reasons for each crisis, engage with economic bubbles, and learn key information about them. Game Broker invites the player to rethink the nature of financial crises as a recurring phenomenon during the last decades. Developed by Derivart, in collaboration with game developer David Pello.

THE MANNAHATTA PROJECT THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY - DR. ERIC SANDERSON, KIM FISHER, MARKLEY BOYER, DANIELLE LABRUNA AND HUMAN NATURE PROJECTS - PHILLIP POND (USA)

Web online map application using Google Maps, 2007 - ongoing

Ever wondered what New York looked like before it was a city? After nearly a decade of research, the *Mannahatta* Project has uncovered the original ecology of Manhattan. The centre of one of the world's largest and most built-up cities was once a natural landscape, supporting a rich and abundant community of wildlife and sustaining people for perhaps 5000 years before Europeans arrived on the scene in 1609. It turns out that the concrete jungle of New York City was once a vast deciduous forest, home to bears, wolves, songbirds, salamanders... with over 55 different ecological communities.

THE MOST UNUSUAL METRO IN THE WORLD

BY LEONID MULYARCHIK

photos by Victor Borisov (Russia)

Since 1984, in Lebedyan (320 km south from Moscow), Leonid Murlyanchik has been persistently building a metro line - alone. At first Leonid created a cooperative for this enterprise, with 166

people signing up, but knowing that the payment for the work is expected only after the subway will be built, all abandoned the work. The tunnel construction takes one day for 1 meter, three more days for the concrete casting of the walls and the arches. All the materials are bought from Leonid's pension. He has all necessary documents and permits for the metro, built according to safety regulations.

NILDEGREE VLADIMIR TODOROVIC AND JUSTIN TAN (SINGAPORE/SERBIA)

Computer game and brochures, 2009

Nildegree is a computer game and financial simulation that teaches players how to invest in various ecosystems and biomes. Throughout 30 years of investment in nature, players can build their own portfolios by choosing amongst the following funds: Global Coral Reef Fund, Emerging Rainforest Fund, Taiga Equity Classic and a selection of many others, that one can discover by playing the game. Each of the biomes has its initial offering value and it changes through out one's lifetime. In this financial solution, the scarcity that works as a contemporary financial method to accumulate profit is not manufactured, but it is almost completely natural.

OILIGARCHY MOLLEINDUSTRIA (ITALY)

Online game, 2008



Oiligarchy is a playable commentary on the oil industry. The player takes the role of an "oilgarch" managing the extraction business in the homeland and overseas, and lobbies the government to keep the carbon-fossil based economy as profitable as possible. Purely economical activities range from finding new oil fields to building extraction plants and managing resources. *Oiligarchy* can be considered an extended business sim/tycoon game since the player makes decisions and performs actions that are not always in the domain of business. This mixed gameplay is meant to highlight the intricate relations between war, politics and energy corporations.

RED LINES HOUSING CRISIS LEARNING CENTER DAMON RICH (USA)

Multimedia, 2006-present

Red Lines Housing Crisis Learning Center is a mobile exhibition kit designed to immerse visitors in the financial landscape of architecture. Who supplies the money to construct and buy buildings? What are the historical relationships between lenders and borrowers? How are ownership claims produced and circulated? As what has become known in United States as the *Subprime Meltdown* continues to spread - pushing people out of homes, wasting neighbourhoods, bankrupting institutions and threatening global economic crisis - Red Lines aims to broaden and enrich the urgent conversation about how our society finances its living environments.

TOMORROWLAND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOUNDATION - DANIEL CASTRO AND ROBERT ATKINSON (USA)

Map - digital print, 2010

Technology, including low-cost sensors, energy-efficient processors, and advanced wireless networking is leading to the creation of a world alive with information. Examples abound: biochemical detectors in subways and



airports; undersea microphones that warn about offshore hurricanes; and smoke sensors give fire fighters real-time information on the location and path of wildfires. Combined, these tools could monitor environmental conditions. To handle the huge flow of information, computer scientists are developing complex algorithms and innovative programs to analyze and manipulate large data sets and give us a better understanding and more control of the world around us.

UPGRADE CITIES: SAMPLES IN COLLABORATION WITH DUBRAVKA SEKULIC

Multimedia samples, 2010

This selection of proposals for boldly different forms of urbanisation shows a range of possible futures ahead, made on previously unimaginable locations. From Almaznaya Utopia (project and image by Ab Elis, Russia), a domed garden city in a permafrost mine crater in Siberia, the underground refuge of Vivos in the Mojave desert, the construction of the eco-city Masdar in the desert of the United Arab Emirates, up to plans for radically rethought societies like Seasteading or the Venus Project, or the possibility of Recycled Island to base a city literally on the plastic waste produced by current society. Set next to each other, these

examples trigger thoughts on what could be desired or possibly contested urban horizons.

WEB 2.0 SUICIDE MACHINE / MODDR /WORM (DANJA VASILIEV, GORDAN SAVICIC, WALTER LANGELAAR) (NETHERLANDS)

Website and instructions video, 2009

Need to disappear from Facebook or Twitter? Now you can scrub yourself from the Internet. *The Web 2.0 Suicide Machine* is a nifty service that purges your online presence from these all-consuming social networks. Since its December 19 launch, Suicide Machine has assisted more than 5,800 virtual deaths, severing more than 600,500 friendships on Facebook and removing some 1,276,000 tweets from Twitter. Once you hand over your log-in details and click *Commit*, the program will methodically delete your info — Twitter tweets, MySpace contacts, Facebook friends and LinkedIn connections.

HKU TIME-BASED CONTRIBUTIONS

In response to Matrix City, a number of time based works by students of the HKU BKV Fine Art - Githa Hermans, Anne Sallet, Joyce Overheul and Daan Lievense - will be performed in and around Hoog Catharijne during the Impakt Festival.

PARTNER EVENTS

Casco

SAT. 16 OCT. 17:00, CASCO, FREE

Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory is a public art and design institute which focuses on research-based and interdisciplinary practice. For the Impakt Festival Casco hosts the opening of *Reproduction Direct From Nature*, a project of Zachary Formwalt, and the second part of Casco's *Future Park* programme.

FUTURE PARK II - REPRODUCTION DIRECT FROM NATURE A PROJECT BY ZACHARY FORMWALT

This new film of Formwalt is the project's centre piece. The film manages to connect various historical events in a surprising manner; the rise of a new reproduction technology, the first credit panic in Great Britain in the late 19th century, the development of Central Park, the NY housing crisis, Karl Marx' notes on the British weekly the Economist from 1868. These stories are linked by the complex relations between historical and day-to-day issues in order to create an alternative vision on our current '(un)natural' environment. At the opening, the artist will be interviewed.

THE EXHIBITION CAN BE SEEN TO 21 NOVEMBER 2010. FOR MORE INFORMATION: WWW.CASCOPROJECTS.ORG

Expodium

SUN. 17 OCT. 17:00, BUS LEAVES AT THEATER KIKKER, 5,- EURO (NOTE: THERE IS ONLY LIMITED SPACE, BUY YOUR TICKETS IN ADVANCE AT KIKKER)

Expodium is a platform for new art that wants to break open the thoughts about urban development with its programming. Expodium's participation in the Impakt Festival is a bus travel that is part of the project *Visual translation: Archive of Impressions*.

VISUAL TRANSLATION: ARCHIVE OF IMPRESSIONS / NIKOS DOULOS EN JOAO EVANGELISTA

This project is the result of the research that the two artists did on 'shrinking cities and upcoming strategies'. The situation of Detroit may be interpreted as a visual manifestation of the new, post-industrial city, a hybrid of the paradoxical merging of the urban and rural environment taking place in one single geographic frame. Wrapped up in a mediating representation, caught between disillusion and illusion, between 'ruin porn' photography and the idea of a safe haven for artists. During the bus travel and it's two stops, spectators are encouraged to envision the urban landscape in a process of arrival and departure, an archive of impressions and stories.

'VISUAL TRANSLATION: ARCHIVE OF IMPRESSIONS' CAN BE SEEN TO 29 OCTOBER. FOR MORE INFORMATION: WWW.EXPODIUM.NL

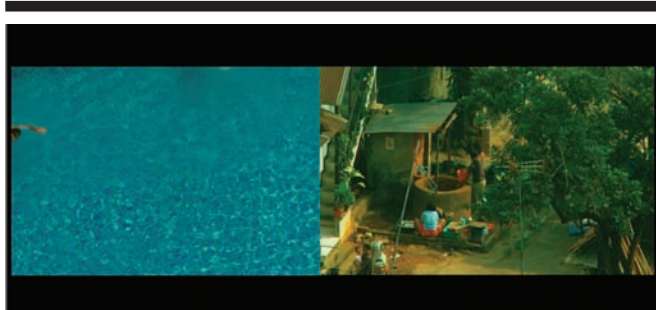


Red Lines Housing Crisis Learning Center / Damon Rich

FILM SCREENINGS

Through 7 thematic lines, the screenings explore how different aspects of Matrix City are brought forward in the work of artists, filmmakers – but also TV-productions and promotional films. They span from 1920's pioneer recordings of the city to 1960's avant-garde films, digital animations, contemporary community films, Youtube formats, art videos and beyond.

The screening program has been complemented with generous contributions and suggestions from a/o: Cecilia Andersson, Francisca Benitez, Arjon Dunneswind, Sara Hammond, Elisa Harkins, Ana Janevski, Peter T. Lang, Christel Leenen, Susanne Kole, Ica Mechunova, Nat Muller, Sabine Niederer, Bik van der Pol, Miguel Robles-Duran, Dubravka Sekulic, Anja Steidinger, Saskia van Stein, John Thackara, Ivo Verburg, Piet Vollaard, Dragan Zivancevic. Thanks!



Endless Cities_Redux / D-Fuse

Matrix City Screening #1: Promise of the City

THU. 14 OCT. 19:00,
FILMTHEATER 'T HOOGT 2

For many, the city encompasses prosperity, opportunities and independence – the expectation of a better future. Real-estate advertisements show meticulously perfected images of enlightened families arriving at their new homes. Cities promise progress, luxury, safety and ever-taller skyscrapers. This program takes us into both the construction and deconstruction of this promise. It explores the city as a centrifugal power that continuously attracts population. It also shows how this same city entangles its population in a carefully spun web of structural dependencies – struggling for basic existential survival, keeping up with mortgage, subjecting to the urban labour market. Cities thus become territories of major (civic) conflicts related to the availability and management of the surplus value they produce.

CITIZEN: THE WOLF AND NANNY /
Cliff Evans

USA, 2009, 06:00 min.

CRNI FILM / Zelimir Zilnik

Yugoslavia, 1971, 15:00 min.

ENDLESS CITIES_REDUX / D-Fuse

UK, 2009, 04:30 min.

HOOG CATHARIJNE /

Henk W. Gomersbach

The Netherlands, 1970, 13:00 min.

MANHATTA /

Charles Sheeler en Paul Strand

USA, 1921, 10:00 min.

RUINS OF PRIVATE PROPERTY /
Vahram Aghasyan

Armenia, 2007, 06:00 min.

SITE SPECIFIC_LAS VEGAS 05 /
Olivo Barbieri

Italy, 2005, 12:30 min.

WE ARE THE BEST / Sigvaldi J. Kárasón

Iceland, 2010, 04:30 min.



Pig City / MVRDV

Matrix City Screening #2: Landscapes of Production

THU. 14 OCT. 21:00,
FILMTHEATER 'T HOOGT 1

Accelerated urbanization, massive scale of consumption and the disconnection of citizens from the availability of primary resources (food, water, energy, etc.) lead to the creation of vast landscapes geared to sustaining an urbanized living. Often at the same time grim and stunningly beautiful, these landscapes show the monumental scale of the logistic operation necessary to feed (oilfields, harbors, gas pipes, greenhouse valleys, shopping landscapes, factories) and dispose of an expanding urban lifestyle. It explores how urbanization is paralleled with a systematic reorganization of the areas mainly outside of the city to make its perpetual urban growth possible.

BLACK SEA FILES (FRAGMENT) /
Ursula Biemann

Switzerland, 2005, 12:00 min.

BRILLIANT CITY / D-Fuse

UK/China, 2004, 14:30 min.

FACTS ON THE GROUND (FRAGMENT) /
Bik Van der Pol

The Netherlands, 2010, 10:00 min.

KAPITAAL / StudioSmack

The Netherlands, 2005, 06:00 min.

PETROLIA / Emily Richardson

UK, 2005, 20:00 min.

PIG CITY / MVRDV

The Netherlands, 2001, 13:00 min.

WHOSE UTOPIA / Cao Fei

China, 2006, 20:00 min.

Matrix City Screening #3: Out of the Machine

FRI. 15 OCT. 17:00,
FILMTHEATER 'T HOOGT 1

The mounting pressure of an urban living has an impact on those who fall out of the urban machine – or consciously decide to depart from it. In some speculations, areas of Europe and North-America which cannot contribute to the ongoing production of urbanization (shrinking cities, imploding communities) will soon find themselves off the map and on their own. On the other side, the pervasiveness of technology recreates Rousseauian dreams of an innocent nature and spiritual living. This program presents the positions, practices and imaginations about non-urbanity and

urban voids, exploring the supposed opposition between nature and city.

CEREMONIA / Superstudio

Italy, 1973, 14:00 min.

GLENN BECK TALKS TO JOE LONSDALE ABOUT
SEASTEADING / CNN

USA, 2008, 05:30 min.

THE MAKING OF UTOPIA / Tellervo
Kalleinen en Oliver Kochta-

Kalleinen

Finland, 2006, 60:00 min.

PATRI FRIEDMAN ON SEASTEADING /
Seasteading Institute

USA, 2009, 01:30 min.

Matrix City Screening #4: Impossible Possibilities



Supersurface: An Alternative Model for Life on Earth / Superstudio

SAT. 16 OCT. 15:00,
FILMTHEATER 'T HOOGT 1

Where 'ideal' city concepts have been an important aspect of the creation of a modern(ist) society, in recent years new call is being made to create breakthrough visions for future societies. This goes hand in hand with the perception that innovation needs to be steered by bold moves that go beyond the current systems, and can rather be found by unconventional players – alike the X-Prize initiative. This program (re)visits a number of compelling

past, current and future projections of urban society to explore how they work as tools to prepare, construct and implant a new society and investigates the thin line between imagination and disenchanting future in some of the current ideal cities.

DESIGNING THE FUTURE /
The Venus Project

USA, 2009, 13:00 min.

FUTURO, A NEW STANCE FOR TOMORROW /
Mika Taanila

Finland, 1998, 29:00 min.

MET SIMON VINKENOOG NAAR HET NEW BABY-
LON VAN CONSTANT / Lies Westenburg,
VPRO

The Netherlands, 1962, 15:00 min.

OTTICA ZERO / Maja Borg

UK, 2007, 13:00 min.

SUPERSURFACE: AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL FOR
LIFE ON EARTH / Superstudio

Italy, 1972, 10:00 min.

Matrix City Screening #5: Adaptive Survival

SAT. 16 OCT. 17:00,
FILMTHEATER 'T HOOGT 2

In response to the dramatic changes that urbanization brings about – from its environmental impact to the social issues related – an armada of artists, activists, environmentalists and architects dedicate an impressive energy to initiate a change of course. The logic is clear: the ideas, means and possibilities to make a change to our lives, lifestyles and environment are at hand – we just have to set things in motion to make the world a better place. This program showcases inspiring initiatives that intervene in and tactically reposition within the contemporary urban logic. This equally poses the question of the competence of such an evolutionary approach to truly reshape our course.

LOUIS LEROY, ENDLESS WORK IN TIME AND
SPACE / Beate Lendt

The Netherlands, 2009, 15:00 min.

NEW URBANISM: ROOFTOP FARMING /
Babelgum/Kelly Loudenberg

USA, 2009, 04:00 min.

NEW URBANISM: DUMPSTER POOLS /
Babelgum/Kelly Loudenberg

USA, 2009, 05:00 min.

PICTURE THE HOMELESS TENT CITY (PART 1) /
Not An Alternative

USA, 2009, 09:00 min.

SAVORENGO KER, THE HOUSE FOR EVERYONE/
Fabrizio Boni

Italy, 2009, 06:30

SUPERUSE (e?) / PBS

USA, 2008, 26:30 min.

VOICES OF THE TRANSITION (TRAILER) /
Nils Aguilar

France, 2010, 05:00 min.



Voices of the Transition (trailer) / Nils Aguilar



Gold Farmers / Ge Jin

Matrix City Screening #6: Labour of Play

SUN. 17 OCT. 15:00,
FILMTHEATER 'T HOOGT 1

Less than 50 years ago, Constant Nieuwenhuis projected a world in which play would replace work and become our main activity. Now, for an increasing group of citizens, the border between work and play has blurred to such an extent that they have become this contemporary version of *homo ludens* – be it in a rather perverted way. Citizens participate in social performances and interactive play in order to get rewarded and proceed through micro and macro-hierarchies to the next level of 'play' while accumulating value for the leisure industry. Concepts like play have become commodified activities. This program explores how today's technology has started providing the structural logistics for a never ending labour that combines communication, play, sophisticated time organization and active utility leisure.

ATENTADO / Fernando Huck en
Eduardo Srur

Brazil, 2004, 01:00 min.

GOLD FARMERS / Ge Jin

China, 2007, 15:00 min.

HIKIKOMORI / Francesco Jodice en
Karl Karman

Japan, 2004, 22:00 min.

LE ROI DES AULNES (NY) / AES+F

Russia, 2003, 10:30 min.

LEAP / Egle Budvytyte

The Netherlands, 2009, 05:00 min.

NEW BABYLON DE CONSTANT /

Victor Nieuwenhuijs en Maartje
Seyferth

The Netherlands, 2005, 13:30 min.

RÖYSOPP - REMIND ME / Ludovic Hou-
plan and Hervé de Crécy

France, 2002, 04:00 min.

SUB-OPTIMAL / John Butler

UK, 2007, 03:30 min.

WEB2.0 SUICIDE MACHINE MEETING THE
LAWYER /
moddr_/WORM (Danja Vasiliev,
Gordan Savicic, Walter Lange-
laar)

The Netherlands, 2010, 04:20 min.



7Athens24 / IntothePill (Yiannis Grigoriadis, Yiannis Isidorou, Lina Theodorou)

Matrix City Screening #7: Rational Irrational

SUN. 17 OCT. 19:00,
FILMTHEATER 'T HOOGT 2

An important part of communal life is the maintaining and exchange of common information. The apocalyptic tone in some of the contemporary analyses of power structures (dominantly distributed via the internet) often mystifies and transcends this power, even if those power structures – governments, foreign forces, terrorists - are deeply bound to earthly laws and systems. This program shows 'end of times' scenarios, apocalyptic forecasts, rumors of massive implantation of RFID-chips, ironic approaches to all of these that whether true or not, whether believe or make-believe, play an important role in the current bio-political civil war – be it in Detroit, the desert of Arizona, or in Athens.

7ATHENS24 / IntothePill (Yiannis
Grigoriadis, Yiannis Isidorou,
Lina Theodorou)

Greece, 2009, 22:00 min.

CYBORG LIFE - TALKING TO KEVIN WARWICK /
Infonomia (Doris Obermair)

Spain, 2008, 08:00 min.

DAVID ICKE REVEALS THE NEW WORLD ORDER
RFID MICROCHIPPING AGENDA /
setokaiba22

Canada, 2010, 10:00 min.

DETROIT - MAKING IT BETTER FOR YOU /
Kyong Park

USA, 2001, 10:00 min.

LONELY RECORD SESSIONS, IN THE NAME OF
KERNEL! SERIES / Joan Leandre

Spain, 2008, 23:00 min.

VIVOS UNDERGROUND SHELTER NETWORK /
TerraVivos

USA, 2010, 03:30 min.

MUZIEK



Toro Y Moi

Out into the woods

THU. 14 OCT. 21:00, THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL, 10,- / 9,- EURO

Now that the majority of the world population are living in an urban environment and have lost touch with their rural hinterland for good, the city walls appear to present an increasingly compelling reality which screams for escape routes from this urbanity. This escape may take the shape of a flight into rural areas, but in a broader sense, also be an escape from the reality of the here and now. New developments in popular music reveal movements addressing this, with musicians consciously exchanging the contemporary for hazy, second-hand memories from a not so distant past. In addition, there is a strong interest in the sounds of the supernatural. Movements like 'Chillwave' and 'Hypnagogic Pop' resonate their fascination with memories of 1980s chartbusters in an almost ghost-like manner. *Out Into the Woods* focuses on these uncanny, soft-focus coloured memories.

Oneohtrix Point Never (US)

In this one-man project, Daniel Lopatin only uses synthesizers for his psychonautic self-investigation which echoes the rhythmless Krautrock sounds of Klaus Schulze and Tangerine Dream. The pop compositions arising from these synth melodies evoke memories of a lost science fiction future that used to be.

Toro Y Moi (USA)

With his debut record *Causers of This*, Chaz Bundick, the person hiding behind the aka Toro Y Moi, managed to elaborate musically on the *glo-fi summer*. His music has elements of hit parade classics from the 1980s and 1990s, which, considering the man's age, cannot be anything but personal memories from his childhood. The result is an elusive, almost ghost-like memory of an era disrupted by filters, lo-fi media like cassettes and contemporary influences. Because next to a love for pop aestheticism, the influence of beatmakers like J Dilla and Flying Lotus is also clearly present.

Skweee Analysis

SAT. 16 OCT. 23:00 (UNTIL LATE), THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL, 10,- / 9,- EURO

Musical subcultures sometimes produce movements that have a completely distinct sound retraceable to specific countries, cities or even districts. The originally Scandinavian movement Skweee is an interesting specimen of this. Skweee? Skweee is dubstep-like funk, balancing between space and 90s R&B, Rick James and rave. The first Skweee releases date back to early 2006 and both initiators (label-wise) Flogsta Danshall (Sweden) and Harmönia (Finland) started off with a release by Randy Barracuda. By now, the virus has spread internationally and Skweee can be heard in all corners of the world. There are Spanish, Canadian and British labels and artists, and even The Netherlands is represented with its own distinct variety in the form of Coco Bryce. During the Skweee analysis night, Impakt presents the international figureheads of Skweee in all its mutations.



Skweee

BMMB

(A.K.A. BARRACUDA, MESAK, MICHAEL BLACK) (SWEDEN)

This is a super group consisting of Harmönia label owner Mesak, Randy Barracuda and Michael Black Electro who arouses passion with his sweet R&B vocals. *Spin Magazine* wrote: "Think *The Chronic* dubbed onto a cassette with R2-D2 improvising Arabic melodies on top". Exclusive Dutch premiere. Later this night Mesak will do a live solo set and Randy Barracuda will do a dj set.

Coco Bryce (NETHERLANDS)

The Breda-based Coco Bryce of the Dutch Lowriders collective is the man who brought Skweee to the Netherlands. He combines the synthetic and clean sounds which are so typical for Skweee, with a deeper, rough hip-hop sound.

Niño (SPAIN)

Niño is here to show us that the Spanish town of Valladolid also produces fresh Skweee beats.

Electrical Walk through Utrecht

WED. 13 - SUN. 17 OCT., INNER CITY OF UTRECHT (HEADPHONES AVAILABLE AT THEATER KIKKER) 7,- / 6,- EURO

Electrical Walks is an extensive project initiated by the German sound artist Christina Kubisch in 2003. These walks are walking explorations of the electromagnetic

layers in our living environment. For these walks, she uses special headphones that receive electromagnetic signals and transform these into sound. Kubisch also developed walks in Japan, the United States and Slovakia. Now it is Utrecht's turn.

On a demarcated area in Utrecht, Kubisch mapped the locations of electromagnetic 'hotspots'. Examples include cash machines and underground railways, but also visible and invisible security systems. This invisible layer – which is around us permanently – is made visible by Kubisch through these walks. The result is a magnificent collage of sound comprised of rhythms and drones.

The walks also have an ecological aspect. Electromagnetic radiation is everywhere despite the potential perils, which demonstrates our inability to anticipate the side-effects of social growth.

During the festival from 13 through to 17 October, everybody can experience this magical walking route which leads both through the historical inner city and the vaults of Utrecht's shopping heart Hoog Catharijne.

At the Impakt festival counter in Theater Kikker, headphones are available for individual walks.



Electrical Walk

THINGS TO COME: SONIC RESISTANCE

SAT. 16 OCT. 19:00, THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL (PANEL AND PRESENTATIONS) 7,- / 6,- EURO

Things To Come is Impakt's series about the social, ethical, artistic and philosophical dimensions of upcoming techno-social developments.

The question as to who owns and configures the space in which our urban activities take place, plays an important – but often underrated – role in the interaction with our environment. It determines to a considerable extent who has access to the urban, but also to our personal space. Sound is increasingly used as a political means to fence off both the urban and the personal space. The 'Mosquito' expels youth causing nuisance from their favourite hang-outs while prisoners at Guantanamo Bay are tortured with heavy metal music.

These developments demand a counter-reaction. At Sonic Resistance, artists and scientist shed a light on sound in its most polluting, militant and viral form. Sound is not only something that happens to us, it can also be deployed as a tactical means of cultural of political resistance. Klaas Kuitenbrouwer will host the evening.

SARAH VAN SONSBBECK (Netherlands)

As an autonomous artist, Sarah van Sonsbeeck researches the absence or presence of sound. In doing so, she focuses on the interaction between sound and the living environment of people. She created the "Machine for my neighbours", a machine which records the neighbours' sounds and sends them back amplified through a speaker directed at the wall.

CHRISTINA KUBISCH (Germany)

Christina Kubisch belongs to the first generation of sound artists. She has been educated as a composer, but during her career, managed to give artistic content to techniques like magnetic induction. During the festival, she makes electromagnetic pollution audible by means of audio walks through the vaults of Hoog Catharijne.

ERIK BÜNGER (Sweden)

Erik Büniger is a Swedish composer, writer and visual artist. His work reflects on irrationality in contemporary media, with a focus on music as a manipulative force that lives off our collective memory like a parasite.

MARC SCHUILENBURG (Netherlands)

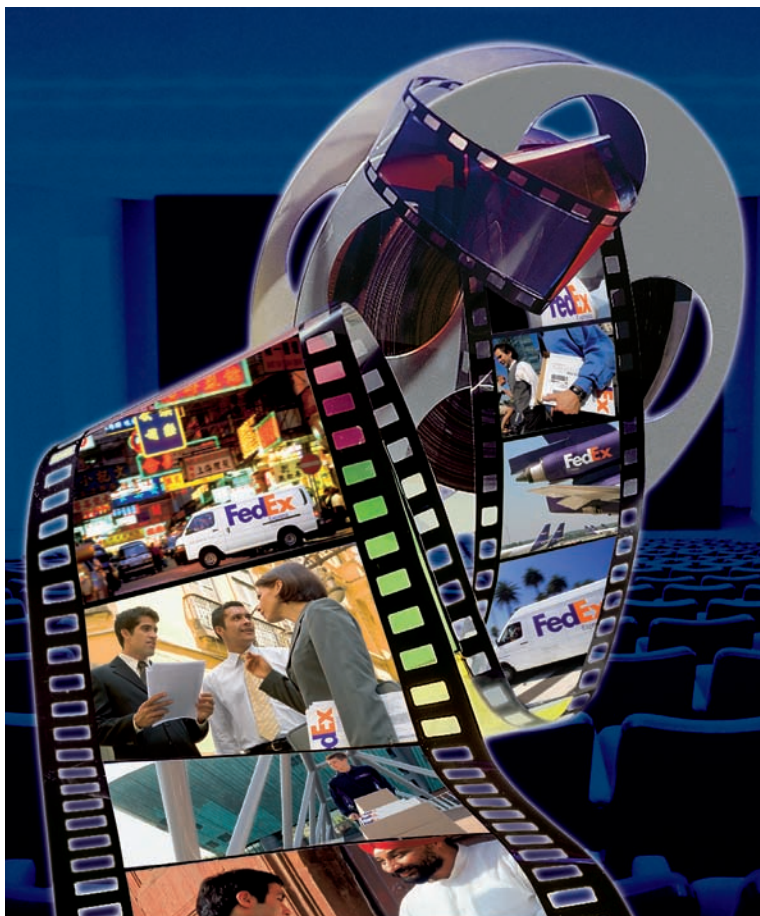
Marc Schuilenburg (Free University of Amsterdam) published the book 'Mediapolis' together with Alex de Jong. In his essay 'Sonic escape routes' he discusses the unique relation between the Black Panthers and Free Jazz in the 1960s. Both movements share the attitude of finding a way from social reality. Both movements come up with concrete escape routes for suppressed communities. And sound turns out to play a significant political role in constructing alternatives to reality.

MARK BAIN (United States)

In his work, artist Mark Bain investigates the interaction between sound, architecture and the mental or physical response to sound vibrations. His sound works explore the subversive potential of sonic vibrations – sometimes by literally making buildings vibrate – and the possibility of influencing the perception of space by means of resonance. Mark Bain studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the State Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam.

SONIC RESISTANCE EXHIBITION

THU. 14 – SUN. 17 OCT. 9:00-17:00 (ON THU. 14 OCT. OPEN 'TIL 21:00, ON SAT. 16 OCT. AND SUN. 17 OCT. OPEN FROM 13:00), CBKU, FREE
The 'Sonic Resistance' exhibition in CBKU comprises works by Christina Kubisch, Sarah van Sonsbeeck, Erik Büniger and Gordan Savicic.



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CONFERENCE: SUPERSTRUCTURAL DEPENDENCIES

FRI. 15 OCT. 11:00 – 17:00, STUDIO T FREE

The conference brings together international practitioners and thinkers to discuss both the growing dependency of urban societies on their technological superstructures, as well as the phenomena of massive online virtual environments with their unstable population and continuous reformulation of their own raison d'être. This connects to the physicality of real-urbanism that loses its own purpose and function without networked technology, and to virtual environments that are losing their purpose without the physicality of human presence.

PANEL 1 – SUPERSTRUCTURAL DEPENDENCIES

Through the technological superstructure of cities, the fast development of mobile devices and the automation of services, the urban environment is undergoing rapid changes. With Superstructural Dependencies, a discussion opens on the effect of a state of complete dependency on such an artificial technical (urban) superstructure – not only regarding for instance resources like food, water or energy, but as well other key activities like communication. With Konrad Becker, Eric Kluitenberg and Michiel de Lange

PANEL 2 – VIRTUAL FLIGHT

Virtual flight depicts the slow movement from the autonomous exclusive realm of virtual worlds, toward something that is more connected to real world physicality. Stagnation in MMO worlds shows how technological, virtual platforms are dependent on a meaningful raison d'être for individual participation, and that the massive euphoria around virtual online worlds from the mid 2000s ended in ontological dead-end, mostly because it didn't take into account the complexities of social laws.

With Esther MacCallum-Stewart, Ilias Marmaras, Jaakko Stenros

The conference is made in collaboration with the Department of Media and Culture Studies of Utrecht University. Moderation: Matteo Pasquinelli and Kristian Lukic.

KONRAD BECKER (AUSTRIA) is an author, artist and producer in the field of culture and technology. He is director and co-founder of the Institute for New Culture Technologies/t0, and of Public Netbase during 1994 to 2006. He started World-Information.Org, a cultural intelligence agency and runs Global Security Alliance, a cultural peacekeeping agency. Publications include: *Strategic Reality Dictionary* (2009), *Tactical Reality Dictionary* (2002), www.t0.org, world-information.org, global-security-alliance.com

ERIC KLUITENBERG (THE NETHERLANDS) is an independent theorist, writer and curator on culture, media and technology. Since the late 1980s he has been involved in numerous principal media art and culture events. Currently he is head of the media and technology program of De Balie, centre for culture and politics in Amsterdam. He taught at various art colleges and universities, and lectures regularly throughout Europe and beyond. Recent publications include the thematic issue *Hybrid Space*, *OPEN 11, journal for art and the public domain* (2006), the *Book of Imaginary Media* (2006) and *Delusive Spaces* (essays, 2008).

MICHEL DE LANGE (THE NETHERLANDS) is finishing his PhD on mobile media technologies, urban life and identity (Erasmus University Rotterdam). He is co-founder of The Mobile City, a knowledge network about new media technologies and urban culture (<http://www.themobilecity.nl>). He collaborates

in a locative media art and science project in Nigeria. Previously, he worked for Kennisland/KnowledgeLand, a Dutch think-tank that aims to strengthen a knowledge-based society, and Cybersoek, a computer neighbourhood center in Amsterdam-East. He blogs at <http://blog.bijt.org>.

DR. ESTHER MACCALLUM-STEWART (UK) is a lecturer at the University of Chichester and a Research Fellow at SMARTlab, UK. Her work investigates the ways in which communities and players understand their worlds in online spaces, in particular in online games. She has written widely on this subject in relation to gender relations, roleplaying, protesting and 'griefing' in online worlds. She is currently writing a book; *Social Narratives in Online Games*, due to be published in 2011.

ILIAS MARMARAS (GREECE) is a media artist. He studied plastic arts, urbanism and philosophy at the university Paris VIII. He is a co-founder of the new media arts collective Personal Cinema. He writes articles regarding media arts and activism for newspapers and magazines, and he directs projects mostly concerned with game art and political criticism like *The making of Balkan Wars: the game* (2004) and *Folded-in* (2008).

JAAKKO STENROS (FINLAND) is a researcher working at Game Research Lab at the University of Tampere. He has studied pervasive games, role-playing games and play on social networking sites, and is writing his dissertation on games as activities. He has co-written *Pervasive Games: Theory and Design* (2009) and co-edited *Playground Worlds* (2008) and *Beyond Role and Play* (2004). Later this year he will publish a book on Nordic live-action role-playing games. Currently he lives in Helsinki.

TALKSHOW: MATRIX-VILLE: WHAT IS REAL/VIRTUAL?

FRI. 15 OCT. 21:00, THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL, 7,- / 6,- EURO

A continuous live conversation – with multi-medial screenings, and special guests
Host: Peter Lang. With a/o: Lucia Babina (cultural producer, Rotterdam), Gian Piero Frassinelli (Superstudio, Florence, Italy), Saskia van Stein (curator, Rotterdam), Tjebbe van Tijen (Imaginary Museum, Amsterdam), Piet Vollaard (architect and publicist, Delft).

The forecast forty years ago was uncannily accurate: high-tech, space-age, light-speed technologies would alter forever the way humans interact with their environment. What no one then could know was just how deeply technology would penetrate our conscious perception of the world around us: we don't have to think about what is real and what is virtual, we have already gone well beyond these simplistic limits. We live the network, we work the global, we dream the electric.

Yet part of what made the predictions of the 1960s so significant was their built-in criticality: a comical, cynical if not diabolical irony that made the future accessible and irrelevant at the same time. Today it is difficult to understand what effect this hybridized real-virtual environment is actually having on the human experience. Where does it begin and end? Or have we become the binary elements that switch on and off? What point is there to distinguishing authentic from artificial?

Come join *Matrix-Ville: What is Real/Virtual?* with our special guests, including some of the original 1960 protagonists, this year's contributors and invited critics. The discussion should get everyone thinking about how Radicals like Ugo La Pietra and Superstudio turned their contemporary realities into oddly wonderful visions on the future, or how today's media artists twist

the familiar world around yet again.

PETER LANG has a special interest in radical movements in architecture and arts. He recently co-curated *Environments and Counter Environments: Experimental Media in Italy: the new domestic landscape*, MOMA 1972, in which he focused on the experimental video and film works by the radical futurist movement in Italy during the 1960's and 1970's. Lang also co-curated *Superstudio: Life Without Objects* for the London Design Museum (2003). Peter Lang holds a bachelor in architecture from Syracuse University (USA) and a PhD. in history and urbanism from the New York University. Lang is associate professor with the Department of Architecture at Texas A&M University in College Station, USA.

IMPAKT ONLINE: THE CITY AS INTERFACE

FRI. 15 OCT. 19:00, THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL, 7,- / 6,- EURO

In his famous article *Walking in the City* the French philosopher Michel de Certeau described the city as a social construct by the people living in it. He stated that "Pedestrian movements form one of these real systems whose existence in fact make up the city" (de Certeau 1999).

The urbanites' everyday interactions with the city define the way it is experienced and lived and thus exists. Layers of information and interactivity extend the city's character, and connect urbanites in novel ways.

For this year's programme, Impakt Online invited artists, architects, urban planners, researchers, programmers and the like to submit their proposals for online projects that consider the city as interface, buildings as responsive surfaces, mobile phones as tools for playing and mapping, and technological traces as data for art and research.

This evening programme includes a lecture by **MARC TUTERS** (who invented the term 'locative media') and the launch of the three Impakt Online 2010 projects, with a presentation by **CLAUDIA BERNETT** on her work *Tall Tales* and the premiere of *Elsewhere/ness Utrecht*. The audience will be the first to participate in **CHRISTIAN NOLD'S** mapping project *Control*.

The projects are available on www.impact.nl/online, accompanied by interviews with the artists. *Impakt Online: The City as Interface* is curated by Sabine Niederer.

CLAUDIA BERNETT (USA) *Tall Tales* is based on the notion that cities are multi-layered, dynamic, living things in which stories are told everyday, literally and metaphorically through the daily interactions of the people living in them. Bennett extended the Surrealists' Exquisite Corpse game model into a collaborative cross-platform, cross-media storytelling experience. "Tall Tales" merges people, locations, and technology to create a multi-faceted experience that adds a virtual layer of stories that live and breathe with

the city itself. By submitting short text messages, city residents and visitors compose an online story, which is a continuously evolving reflection of the tone and times that we live in.

Another work that explores the city as an accumulation of experiences is *Control* by **CHRISTIAN NOLD (UK)**. He sees control as an ambiguous concept that describes both a sense of empowerment (being in control) while, on the other side it refers to oppression (being controlled). Control can be just a personal experience or it can describe people's relationship to others or towards the city. It can be a physical experience or an amorphous sensation. By letting people mark specific locations on Utrecht's city map where they "Feel in Control", "Feel out of control" or "Feel controlled" and assembling the data in an online database, Nold allows people to reflect and respond on

the way they and others relate to the world and the build environment.

ANDERS WEBERG & ROBERT WILLIM (SWEDEN) on the other hand take the possibilities of experiencing the city through digital media to an extreme level. Instead of focusing on the physical experience of the city, they focus the experience of the ephemeral, the urban alienation and non-presence. Their project *Elsewhere/ness* is made solely from audio and video materials found on the Web. The audiovisual pieces are manipulated and composed into a surreal journey through an estranged landscape, based entirely on the culturally bound and stereotypical preconceptions of the artists about the actual location. After the cities Yokohama, Cape Town and Manchester, Utrecht will be the next to join Weberg and Willim's collection of digital urban impressions.

advertisement

CITYTELLERS / FRANCESCO JODICE



Citytellers_Dubai / Francesco Jodice

SAT. 16 OCT. 21:00, THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL, 7,- / 6,- EURO

Although Francesco Jodice (Italy) graduated in architecture and developed as one of Italy's most re-known contemporary photographers, filmmaking is an essential part of his oeuvre. His work investigates the shifts in social landscapes, through the comparison of similar phenomena in different parts of the world.

Citytellers is a docu-fiction series on self-organization phenomena in the hyper-cities Sao Paulo (Brazil, 2006), Aral (Kazakhstan, 2008) and Dubai (United Arab

Emirates. 2009). The Citytellers cycle enables viewers to grasp a critically distant, and often unknown, reality. The camera's objective gaze penetrates every interstice in the urban, natural and human landscape, adopting a strongly descriptive accent – from the phenomenon of self-organization in Sao Paulo, the collapsing eco-systems around the Aral lake to the constant paradox of Dubai where a paradise of luxury and wealth hides a dark side of inhuman poverty and exploitation.

FRANCESCO JODICE lives and works in Milan, Italy. He contributed

to: Documenta, Kassel; Venice Biennial; Bienal de São Paulo; Liverpool Biennial; ICP Triennial of Photography and Video New York. His work has been exhibited at: Tate Modern, London; Reina Sofia, Madrid; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; Bard College, New York. Francesco Jodice is a professor of Theory and Practice of the Technological Image at the Arts and Design School of the University of Bolzano and professor of Visual Urban Anthropology at Naba (Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti), in Milan.



PARTNER EVENTS

Videowall

WED. 13 TO SUN. 17 OCT., SUNSET TO NOON, STADSSCHOUWBURG, LUCASBOLWERK 24

COVET THE INTANGIBLE / JERKE VAN DEN BRAAK, KRISTA BURGER AND TIJTSKE HEMKES, (2010)
Covet the intangible. The stage curtain, the archetypical veil of the performance. The desire to find out what goes on behind the curtain is growing as the heavy cloth opens. There seems to be no end to it. How much longer will opening this curtain take?! Do we ever get to see what we are waiting for? As long as the desire is intangible, it is perfect.

Covet the Intangible has been realized within the framework of Videowall 2010, a *Cultuur & Ondernemen* project (formerly *Kunstenaars&CO*) and Utrecht City Theatre. The work can be seen on a daily basis, from sunset to noon.

More information:
WWW.CULTUURENONDERNEMEN.NL
WWW.STADSSCHOUWBURGUTRECHT.NL

Instituto Cervantes

FRI. 15 OCT. 17:00, INSTITUTO CERVANTES
Instituto Cervantes is a Utrecht-based institute with the objective of spreading of the language and culture of Spain and the Spanish speaking countries worldwide. At the Impakt Festival, the Instituto Cervantes collaborates with the LOOP festival of Barcelona on the screening of the video programme *Visión:desafíos*.

Visión:desafíos is a polyphonic programme featuring work of talented Latin American artists from Spain, Portugal, Argentina and Cuba. The first part of the programme consists of presentations by Vasco Araújo, Joana Vasconcelos and Kaoru Katayama who are inspired for their subject matter by culture, history and ethnography. Rubén Santiago and Carla Zaccagnini use humour and satire as the basis for their work in order to reflect the absurdity of our current day and age. Amparo Sard, Luis Gárciga and Javier Castro conclude the programme with works that are dedicated to the individual and collective consciousness of the individual, showing the mentality and shadow side required for a preparedness to change and survive. ‘Visión:desafíos’ offers a bold and inspiring view on a large number of details that influence day-to-day life of mankind today.

DROPSTUFF

FRI. 8 - SUN. 17 OCT., DROPSTUFF SCREEN, DE NEUDE SQUARE
On the 3 by 9 metres daylight screen of DROPSTUFF.nl, there are daily screenings of films from the Matrix City and Panorama programme.

Including:
METROPOLIS - ROB CARTER
(US 2008, 9:30 min)

LOGORAMA - FRANÇOIS ALAUX
(France 2009, 16:05 min)

THE ORIGIN OF CREATURES - FLORIS KAAVK
(Netherlands 2010, 11:45 min)

UNRENDERED, MEDIA OFFLINE - SEOUNGHO CHO
(US 2009, 07:40 min)

CHILDREN OF THE NULL - JOHN BUTLER
(UK 2010, 10:00 min)

MORGENROT - JEFF DESOM
(Luxembourg 2009, 03:35 min)

STAGING SILENCE - HANS OP DE BEECK
(Belgium 2009, 22:00 min)

SEER'S CATALOGUE - DAVE GRIFFITHS
(UK 2009, 07:40 min)

SYNCHRONISATION - RIMAS SAKALAUSKAS
(Lithuania 2009, 08:04 min)

THE LABYRINTH RUNNER - ROBBIE CORNELISSEN
(Netherlands 2009, 10:38 min)

PSYCHO - ANALIZA - BARBORA CVARCOVÁ
(Czech republic 2009, 02:58 min)

PULPIT PALACE - SIGGA BJÖRG SIGURDARDOTTIR
(Iceland 2008, 03:43 min)

TRAFFIC PATTERNS - GREGG BIERMANN
(US 2009, 09:15 min)

TRAVELLING FIELDS - INGER LISE HANSEN
(Norway 2009, 09:00 min)

FLASHINGS IN THE MIRROR - JASPER ELINGS
(Netherlands 2009, 01:16 min)

BANG OUT - BARIS HASSELBACH
(Germany 2009, 02:39 min)

VERGENCE - TINA FRANK
(Austria 2010, 06:30 min)

HYBOLT - CHRISTOPHER MARQUEZ
(Germany 2009, 05:44 min)

UP AND ABOUT AGAIN - MAARIT SUOMI-VÄÄNÄNEN
(Finland 2009, 9:49 min)

NAUFRAGE - CLORINDE DURAND
(France, 2008, video, 7:00 min)

SUB-OPTIMAL - JOHN BUTLER
(UK, 2007)

LINE - JOHANNA REICH
(Germany, 2008)

DAS MODELL, FLORIAN GWINNER
(Germany 2006, video, 06:14 min)

See WWW.IMPAKT.NL/INDEX.PHP/FESTIVAL/DROPSTUFF for detailed screening info.

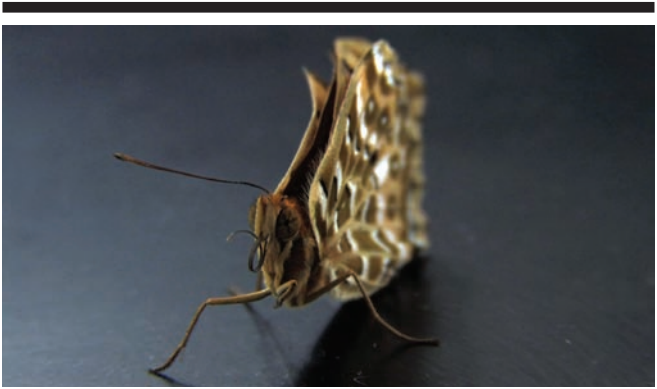


PANORAMA

In the Panorama programme, the Impakt Festival shows a selection of recent film and video art. The films in the Panorama programmes have been selected during various international festivals, manifestations and exhibitions. In 't Hoogt the films will be shown continuously, with interviews with the present makers after each screening. The Panorama Event Nights in Theater Kikker offer a varied programme with films, performances and short presentations.

Panorama Event Nights

After this summer's successful Impakt Open Air Events, we decided to transpose this formula into the festival. The Panorama Event Nights in Theater Kikker are varied and informal programmes consisting of short films, art project presentations, live interviews with artists, DJs, cocktails and maybe even a barbecue. The programme is a cheerful mash-up of animation, web projects, cult films, overwhelming images and refreshing madness. Imagine: a pinch of Pecha Kucha, a shot of The Night of Bad Taste, a handful of performances, remarkable Urban Art and the most interesting artists of the moment!



Takeoff / Sara Bjarland

Panorama Event Night #1: Slightly Disrupted

THUR. 14 OCT. 19:00, THEATER KIKKER, MAIN HALL
In this Panorama Event Night **ROGIER VAN DER ZWAAG**, clip maker and 1/3 of Nobody Beats the Drum, reveals the pains of attempting to create an overly ambitious video clip. He also gives away some top secret tips on how to have your video go all 'viral' on the Internet.

TIM LEYENDEKKER presents his triptych *The Healers*, a disenchanting look into the buildings accommodating the gay nightlife outside opening hours and with the strip lights on.

Aa a true body architect artist **LUCY MCRAE** combines her fascination for technology, fashion and the human body, in silhouette extensions consisting of highly remarkable materials affixed to her models. The result is gorgeous and provocative photography. One of her admirers is the one and only electro pop icon **ROBYN** who wears McRae's 'body architecture' on the sleeve of her new album.

The duo **LERNERT ENGELBERTS & SANDER PLUG** talk about their project *How to explain it to my parents*, a confronting documentary in which artist Martin C. de Waal explains his parents what his art is about. Lernert and Sander's Youtube hit film *Chocolate Bunny* will also be screened.

The collective **ALSO STARRING** gives a presentation of their interventions in public space, which hold the middle between street art and land art.

The Finnish artist **SARA BJARLAND** shows in close-up the trials and tribulations of a butterfly trying to fly for the very last time.

Visual artist **OLA VASILJEVA** just finished the video clip for the American glo-fi hit **NITE JEWEL**. This dreamy gem shot in late summer in Rhode Island is premiered at this Panorama Event Night.

Also featuring: Inappropriate behaviour of rich girls (*Dressage* by **JULIKA RUDELIUS**), Walt Disney held accountable for his deeds (*Suspended Animation* by **BILLY LUMBY**) and Gilbert & George having a disenchanting experience on the British countryside (*Arts + Crafts Spectacular* by **WOLF & RITTERSKAMP**)

OJA VASILJEVA will also show her surprising skills as a DJ and shower us with her love for hazy superstars and undiscovered legends.

Panorama Event Night #2: Brain Tuners



Paikallaan / Mika J. Ripatti

FRI. 15 OCT. 23:00, THEATER KIKKER, LARGE HALL
As a 'visualist' **ROSA MENKMAN** is looking for the artefacts of accidents in digital media. Both in arts and scientific work, she ventures out into the field of 'glitch studies': the art of artefacts. She was the first Dutch artist to be selected for a residency in Sao Paulo within the framework of the collaboration between the Brazilian Museum for Image & Sound and Impakt.

WILLEHAD EILERS, who is also known as **WAYNE HORSE**, presents a 'work in progress' version of his film project *Teddy milks: The Illmannered Milkman*. For this film, Willehad managed to win the confidence of the famous American wrestler Kent Hensley and crooner Adrian Falk and make them act. The result is as beautiful as it is painful.

During a residency in Istanbul at Platform Garanti, **SANDER BREURE & WITTE VAN HULZEN** worked together with several Turkish stars to film the video *Ebedi Dönüş* in which soap is combined with poetry and opera. Melodrama, violent love and interference from the hereafter.

After Esmée Denters, The Netherlands have a new international Youtube hit: **TIM SMIT**. This uncrowned king of special effects has made the astonishing short film *What's in the Box?* with very limited supplies: if we are to believe the legend, just 3 days, 150 euro and a pizza. Hij will present his new video during this PEN.

GIJS GIESKES increases the geek level of this night by means of a performance with his self-designed instruments consisting of *circuit-bends* of DJ gear, acid modules and synths. In his world, even modified whisks are turned into synthesizers.

Also featuring: Quick edits of ultra-violence (*Bande Annonce* by **SABINE MASSENET**), la vie miserable mit angst **KABOOM!** (*Paikallaan* by **MIKA J. RIPATTI**) and a hard-core wake-up call (*Rotten Sound* by **FRANÇOIS RABET**)

DJ WILLIAM HEAD, the DJ alter ego of Willehad Eilers, adorns the night with a decent portion of musical filth.

Panorama Event Night #3: On the Edge

SUN. 17 OCT. 19:00, THEATER KIKKER, LARGE HALL
EUN HYUNG KIM from South Korea made a strange animation about the relation between China, North Korea and her homeland. She based her animation on videos she received from South Korean men and a Chinese Korean woman.

CORE VAN DER HOEVEN is the editor of much of Erik van Lieshout's work. On 1 May 2009, he was suddenly no longer able to speak and he found his right arm and leg paralyzed. In the hospital, they pierced his skull in search for the brain infection. *Sick* shows us his troublesome recovery with a good deal of self-irony.

For anyone wondering lately who is responsible for the gigantic vertical tent constructions set up against canal-side houses in Amsterdam and Utrecht: meet **LEONARD VAN MUNSTER** and his project *Camping Vertical*.

The work of photographer **WILLEM POPELIER** centres on photographic representations of identity.

ERIC VAN DER WOUDE, a complete VHS fetishist, presents a glance into his bizarre collection of VHS trash and exploitation film rarities.

HESTER SCHEURWATER was removed from Facebook five times. The photographs she placed on her account of herself were considered offensive. Hester Scheurwater is here to tell us about her

struggle with Facebook and about her forthcoming book published in collaboration with Walter Keller (Parkett Art Magazine).

Also featuring: Sexism on Spanish Television (*Ya Basta* by **RUBEN AUBRECHT**), Inception in Legoland (*Rubika* by **CLAIRE BAUDEAN**) and first-person shooter art (*Douchebag City* by **FEDERICO SOLMI**)

New kids on the block **ZICK ZACK SOUNDSYSTEM** will spin a mix of mix van heavy bass funk, Caribbean tunes and the newest electronic vibes from London.



Ziek / Core van der Hoeven

Closing Party: YouTube Battle / Fritsch vs. The TechnoViking

SUN. 17 OCT. 21:00, THEATER KIKKER, LARGE HALL
In 2000, the German artist **MATTHIAS FRITSCH** filmed a ferociously dancing body builder in *Lederhosen* during a street rave. The film was screened at Impakt and a number of other festivals, but apart from that, led a quiet life until it landed on YouTube. Instantly, an Internet legend was born: **THE TECHNOVIKING!** This self-appointed crowd controller now appeals to people worldwide and is being imitated on countless occasions. Homage or parody, it is impossible to make the distinction. The varieties with animation and alternative soundtracks are infinite. The TechnoViking is a real viral!

At the Impakt Closing Party, Matthias Fritsch will show the original version of the TechnoViking 'Kneecam', present an anthology of follow-up videos and screen his latest video 'We, TechnoViking'.

After this, the YouTube Battle will break loose. A selected number of specialists will enter the battlefield. Who will show us the most bizarre, fantastic or touching YouTube film clip? Participants are a/o Dagan Cohen (famous from De Wereld Draait Door and Upload Cinema), Eric van der Woude (VHS Trash connaisseur), Kristian Lukic (Straight from the Balkan), Matthias Fritsch and Hester Scheurwater.

Visitors can also participate. Register as a participant at www.impact.nl. Eventually, the audience will nominate the winner by means of their mobile phones.



TechnoViking

PANORAMA SCREENINGS

Panorama 1: Beyond Architecture



City of Progress / Justin Bennett

FRI. 15 OCT. 19:00, 'T HOOGT 2

Good architecture is a visual adventure, a sculpture allowing you to submerge in. Our urban and industrial landscapes reflect history and their public spaces are arenas which harbour unexpected forms of interaction.

MURALLA ROJA - MILENA GIERKE

(Germany 2008, 35mm/DVD, 09:00 min.) Milena Gierke's tribute to a house designed by Ricardo Bofill which she visited frequently over the past forty years. A spectacular building without ending where every step offers new perspectives and vistas. An eye-opener revealing the potential beauty of architecture.

GUNKANJIMA - LOUIDGI BELTRAME

(Japan 2010, video, 33:00 min.) Due to being covered with buildings all over, the mini-island Gunkanjima off the coast of Nagasaki has taken the shape of a battle ship. It symbolizes Japan's rush into modernity and its carefully planned entry into the industrial age. Beltrame dives into the history of this factory island, that was a habitat of his own.

CITY OF PROGRESS - JUSTIN BENNETT

(Netherlands 2009, video, 11:00 min.) In this animation, Justin Bennett who recently won the Ouborg

price of the City of The Hague, shows how a city grows organically from a small dot to a complicated system of lines and forms in which our desire for utopia is embedded.

11 FRAGMENTS OF JAPAN - PAULIEN OLTHETEN

(Japan 2009, video, 20:28 min.) The interest of Dutch photographer and artist Oltheten goes out to the city as a public domain and the behaviour of people in public space. As a researcher, she is looking to detect peculiar moments, small gestures and unintended performances of people in public space. Whereas in her previous work, she took the position of passive observer, this video shows her as an active participant with entertaining and at times absurd results.

FUTURE PAST PERFECT PT. 3 (U_08-1) - CARSTEN NICOLAI

(Germany 2009, video, 03:43 min) On a quiet autumn evening in Tokyo, a man is trying to get a small bottle of tea from a machine, but instead he is treated to a small performance. For this work, which echoes Doug Aitken's 'Electric Earth', Carsten Nicolai, who is also known as Alva Noto, used a track of his album 'Unitxt' from 2008.

JEWISH REVENGE - AMIT EPSTEIN

(Germany 2010, video, 46:44 min.) Jewish Revenge is the third and most important part of the Stockholm Syndrome, a trilogy about the return of Jews to Europe. Many young Israelis feel connected with a home country in which they were not born and are very conscious about the role the victim-offender relation plays in the origins of 'Israelism' and their attitude towards Europe. And although this theme harbours all ingredients for a very ponderous film, the contrary is the case. In a - sometimes brazen - manner, Epstein mixes 1980s disco hits, nazi architecture and sing & dance intermezzos to form a highly amusing film.



Jewish Revenge / Amit Epstein

Panorama 2: A Few Notes on Life

FRI. 15 OCT. 21:00, 'T HOOGT 1

IRONIC AND ABUNDANT REFLECTIONS ON OUR CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE. WHAT IS AUTHENTIC AND WHY ARE WE ON THIS EARTH? A FAIR DOSE OF UNLICENSED PHILOSOPHIC THOUGHT CONCLUDED WITH SOME WISDOM FOR THE MASSES.

PORTRAIT OF KARL MARX AS A YOUNG GOD - GERNOT WIELAND

(Courtesy of Galerie Andreas Huber) (Germany 2009, video, 00:59 min.) Documentary and fiction in one. About the desire for utopia, Marxism, and a different society.

FOR CULTURAL PURPOSES ONLY - SARAH WOOD

(UK 2009, video, 08:25 min.) How does it feel to be unable to see images of the place you come from in this media-saturated society of ours?

GREAT MAN AND CINEMA - JIM FINN

(US 2009, video, 03:55 min.) The text for this film is from a propaganda booklet about the contribution to cinematic history by North Korean leader Kim Jung Il. Also with much bizarre film and television footage from North Korea and Nueng Phak's cult single "Fucking USA"

BEAVER SKULL MAGICK - STEVE REINKE

(Netherlands 2010, video, 05:54 min.) The relation between man and nature. A bear in an infamous Internet clipping and an 'native Canadian' in an old Canadian television series. Where two worlds collide.

BEAUTY PLUS PITY - EMILY VEY DUKE

(Canada 2009, video, 14:00 min.) This contemporary fable sheds light on our existence as a messy and abject farce. Stuffed animals, a hunter in reverie and God forgetting to take His medication.

TIME'S UP - MARIE-CATHERINE THEILER & JAN PETERS

(Germany 2009, 35mm, 15:00 min.) While the makers are expecting a baby, they get into a car crash. This confronts them with the finiteness of their existence and makes them realize that their life is much too hectic. What follows is a humoristic quest for the meaning of time and ways to manage it most efficiently.

CARTOON FOR THOSE WHO HAVE A CERTAIN FONDNESS FOR IDEAS BUT ARE TIRED OF THINKING - STEVE REINKE

(Netherlands 2010, video, 02:14 min.) A cartoon for those who have a certain fondness for ideas but are tired of thinking.

EXTENSIONS - HANS OP DE BEECK

(Belgium 2009, video, 10:58 min.) Our technology driven society as a dark dream, as an obscure and impenetrable labyrinth in which the individual tries to survive with rituals and habits.

NE VOUS LAISSEZ PAS CONSOLER - DEMOCRACIA

(Spain 2009, video, 17:00 min.) A philosophical intervention in a football stadium. Brecht, Camus and Rimbaud are guests of football club Girondins Bordeaux.



Ne vous laissez / Democracia

Panorama 6: Anticipating Eternity

SUN. 17 OCT. 17:00, 'T HOOGT 1

There are not many things appealing to the imagination as much as the hereafter. Fear for what follows after we die is the pillar of most religions and also the key factor for many decisions taken by people in their lifetime. Fortunately, the hereafter also inspires filmmakers to make beautiful films with hysterical special effects.

4 - EDOUARD SALIER

(France 2009, video, 16:40 min.) Four letters, 400,000 possibilities. Only one of them is real. Edouard Salier is one of France's best animation filmmakers. Next to short films like Empire (Impakt 2005), Salier also makes commercials and music videos (for instance, for Nike and Massive Attack). For his latest amazing animation he takes four letter words as his starting point. 'Love' is a four letter word, and so is 'Hell'. A hallucinogenic trip.

BEARING WITNESS - JESSE MCLEAN

(US 2009, video, 23:30 min.) How do we see ourselves, in terms of culture, in moments of great emotional significance. Using footage from mainstream television, Bearing Witness distils moments of sincerity from potentially insincere sources: television evangelists, reality show participants, screensavers, B-movies. This film dissects the media which distribute these images, thus publicly disclosing emotions and experiences which are normally private in order to meet the demand for sensation and entertainment. Bearing Witness is a trilogy consisting of the parts *The Eternal Quarter Inch*, *Somewhere Only We Know* and *The Burning Blue*

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY - OLIVER PIETSCH

(Germany 2010, video, 42:00 min.) A found-footage film about the representation of death and the hereafter in cinema.

Panorama 3: It Comes With Horror, Romance and Nostalgia

SAT. 16 OCT. 17:00, 'T HOOGT 1

Homemade Horror and Kitchen Sink Dramas mixed with surrealist scenes and a touch of nostalgia. In the background, echoes of youth memories and family matters are resounding. Towards the end of the programme, it will be hard to distinguish between art and camp.

JONAS MEKAS IN KODACHROME DAYS - KEN JACOBS

(US 2009, video, 03:22 min.) Ken Jacobs films Jonas Mekas, a fellow icon from the history of experimental film, at an apparently everyday and homely moment. But precisely these moments tend to be most meaningful.

KURASHI ATO - MAKI SATAKE

(Japan 2009, video, 11:40 min.) A late night visit to the empty house where her grandparents have lived for years. In her editing, Satake beautifully integrates this footage with old photographs and film fragments of family gatherings and visits to her grandparents.

CI SONO GLI SPIRITI - ALVISE RENZINI

(Italy 2009, video, 06:20 min.) This animation film by Alvis Renzini shows the phenomenon

'house' as an arena for psychological interpretations, based on Carl Gustav Jung.

IN A PIG'S EYE - ATSUSHI WADA

(Japan 2010, video, 10:10 min.) Wada burdens a Japanese family with a Freudian pig.

MORTALE - PAOLO BONFIGLIO

(Italy 2009, video, 06:48 min.) This solitary hike also is an existentialist confrontation.

BEINE BRECHEN - FLORIAN KRAUTKRÄMER

(Germany 2010, video, 14:41 min.) The hallucinations of a man accused by the secret service. A beautiful hybrid of film and animation.

FOUR SEASONS - KEREN CYTTER

(Denmark 2009, video, 12:15 min.) 'Four Seasons' by Karen Cytter has no restraints. Soft porn, Neo Noir and soap in the mix.

TIME TRAVEL BOYFRIENDS - JOSEPHINE HALBERT

(UK 2009, 35mm/file, 09:58 min.) A love letter to Halbert's favourite men from world history: Orson Welles, Marlon Brando, Jim Morrison. Fantasy knows no borders.

Panorama 5: An Exchange of Gestures and Emotions

ZAT. 16 OKT. 21:00, 'T HOOGT 1

Our society as a circus of gestures and emotions. With a broad range of physical and verbal forms of interaction, lovers, family members and complete strangers define their mutual relationships.

FIGHT - MELANIE MANCHOT

(UK, 2009, 16mm/file, 05:00 min.) A physical exchange between a young bike courier and an old-aged Hells Angel. Although their appearance is totally different, both men are evenly matched when it comes to strength and aggression.

DISSONANT - MANON DE BOER

(Belgium, 2010, video, 11:00 min.) Without actually hearing the music, a female dancer improvises for about ten minutes on Eugène Ysaÿe's 3 sonatas for violin solo, a piece imprinted in her mind. When the screen goes black, it is the spectators turn to delve into their memory.

SLABY ROT FRONT - VICTOR ALIMPIEV

(Russia, 2010, 35mm/file, 11:47 min.) A dozen bodies in an undefined space move according to a collective logic. They seem to be measuring something, testing it. Like in a relay race, one body

proceeds from where the other stops. An unfinished fist. What a weak Rot Front salute!

SPAT - MELANIE MANCHOT

(UK, 2010, 16mm/file, 08:00 min.) On a railway platform, a couple is arguing. Gradually, it becomes clear that they are arguing in sign language. Only by permanently facing each other can they continue fighting.

DADDY'S LITTLE HELPER - CECILIA LUNDQVIST

(Sweden, 2010, video, 06:18 min.) A story about indifference and moral decay. The woman in the video tries to justify her behaviour. Although guilt forces itself upon her, it is not enough to change her behaviour.

SEVEN SONGS ABOUT THUNDER - JENNIFER REEDER

(US, 2010, video, 20:13 min.) A woman with a remarkably amusing way of mentally dealing with things finds the dead body of a teenager in a wood. A dark comedy about a mother, a daughter, a liar and her therapist.

1987-1993 - MARIUS DYBWAD BRANDRUD

(Sweden, 2010, video, 11:00 min.) "It took us 7 years. My mother and me. We were trying to make the perfect photo of me."



1987-1993 / Marius Dybwad Brandrud

kfHein, fonds
VSBfonds

FILMTHEATER 'T HOOGT
E-ticket: Purchase your ticket online at www.hoogt.nl.
At the box office: Buy your ticket at the box office of Filmtheater 't Hoogt. Opened 30 minutes before start of the programme. For other opening times, check www.hoogt.nl.

The dilemma of El Morro

Ana Dzokic and Marc Neelen, STEALTH.unlimited



A few days ago we arrived in Medellín, Colombia. It is our first time in *América del Sur* and we still feel a bit uncanny going around the city. Our Spanish is non-existent, and we're about a head-and-a-half taller than the average. We're sticking out – literally.



We have been invited to work on for us the most contradictory projects so far – to build a large wall around a neighbourhood close to the center of the city. Only a few days before we left for Medellín, the details of this strange project emerged.



The neighbourhood to be fenced is a part of Moravia, a district that was known as one of the most violent neighbourhoods of the city. Moravia is *alto voltaje* – high voltage – even according to its own residents.



The most notorious part of Moravia, it's epicenter, is *El Morro*, or The Nose. It is the highest point of the neighbourhood, and stands out against the sky with the kites flying above it.



A few years ago, around 15.000 people were living on this hill. Most of the inhabitants that came to El Morro originated from poorer regions of the country. It was one of the largest informal settlements of the city.



They settled here to escape the drugs war between guerrilla, militias and the army. Many of them are farmers, forced away from their land. El Morro became their hope – a hope built on a grim, stinky and toxic reality.



The hill, once over 45 meters high, has been growing here between 1972 and 1984, when a large pit was gradually and 'temporally' filled with the excrement of the city: industrial, hospital and domestic waste.



After the dump was closed, people inhabited this 'urban mine' and continued their recycling industry – either taking the material out from the hill, or collecting it throughout the city.



The waste provided a welcome source of income for those without work, as El Morro's inwards revealed all sorts of materials. And the area developed its own specialism – recycling. Like light-switches made from hospital syringes reclaimed from the waste.



During our three weeks stay in Moravia, we visited 'eco facilities' where for instance plastic crates are chopped by hand and ground to granules for the plastic industry. In hot and damp workshops, they clean the plastic with caustic soda and sulphuric acid, which keeps the sewers here in a spic-and-span condition.



Meanwhile, El Morro started to sink. The organic material slowly composted, giving the inhabitants their own source of gas for cooking (!), while at the foot of the hill toxics started to seep into the surrounding areas. Apart for waste, the hill also gave a safe shelter to many of the drugs related gangs that make the city unsafe.



And now... a 1.7 kilometres long wall is to change this for good?



In recent years, the city decided to take action – by investing in amazing public facilities in these difficult areas of the city. As a part of 'social urbanism' policy Moravia got a *Cultural Development Center* built by one of Colombia's most renowned architects. It's always bursting with activities.



The city also started relocating the inhabitants from this toxic dump to new housing blocks. The inhabitants become owners of their new apartments. Slowly the population is thus removed from El Morro.



Soon, also the neighbourhood kitchen will need to move. It has been here already for 17 years, run by volunteers to feed 200 children every Saturday. Even former inhabitants of El Morro who moved few kilometres away keep coming back for this moment!



The dump now needs to be sealed to collect the toxic water leaking from its edges and divert it to facilities where plants digest the toxics and remove the heavy metals that would otherwise flow into the surrounding neighbourhood. The first prototype facility is already up.



To seal – ok, but a wall? Not only to us, but also to the inhabitants of El Morro this comes as a threat – and worse ... will they get locked inside?! Years of community work ... suddenly reveal a resistant and decisive community. Did the authorities through this participatory process create their own most articulate opponent?



In the heated days to follow, together with the community leaders and a team of designers we set out to imagine how this 'enclosing' can be transformed from a threat into an opportunity, and actually provide the space for new community activities and give them back an economy after El Morro will be closed.



Still a bit uneasy about the acceptance of the final *compromiso* by the community, the plan is finally presented on top of the hill. We decide to make sure it is a deal – and meet separately with some of the community leaders, to explain the details of the plan.



Soon we hope to be back – not only to continue the project, but also to meet again with the great people we've met on this captivating spot. *Hasta Luego!*

The metropolitan dreams of Ugo La Pietra

Peter T. Lang

MILAN In one of Ugo La Pietra's most memorable performance projects, staged in Milan in 1979, the architect-designer used half a dozen concrete moveable street bollards strung together with a loose chain, to cordon off an area on a busy city street where he arranged a bed for him to sleep in. La Pietra's intent was to toy with simple everyday street furniture in an attempt to confuse the public's perceptions on domesticity and civic space. As La Pietra observed in a recent interview, he wanted to construct new social-urban relationships "without any conditioning" making direct connections between an individual and the city and the city and the individual.

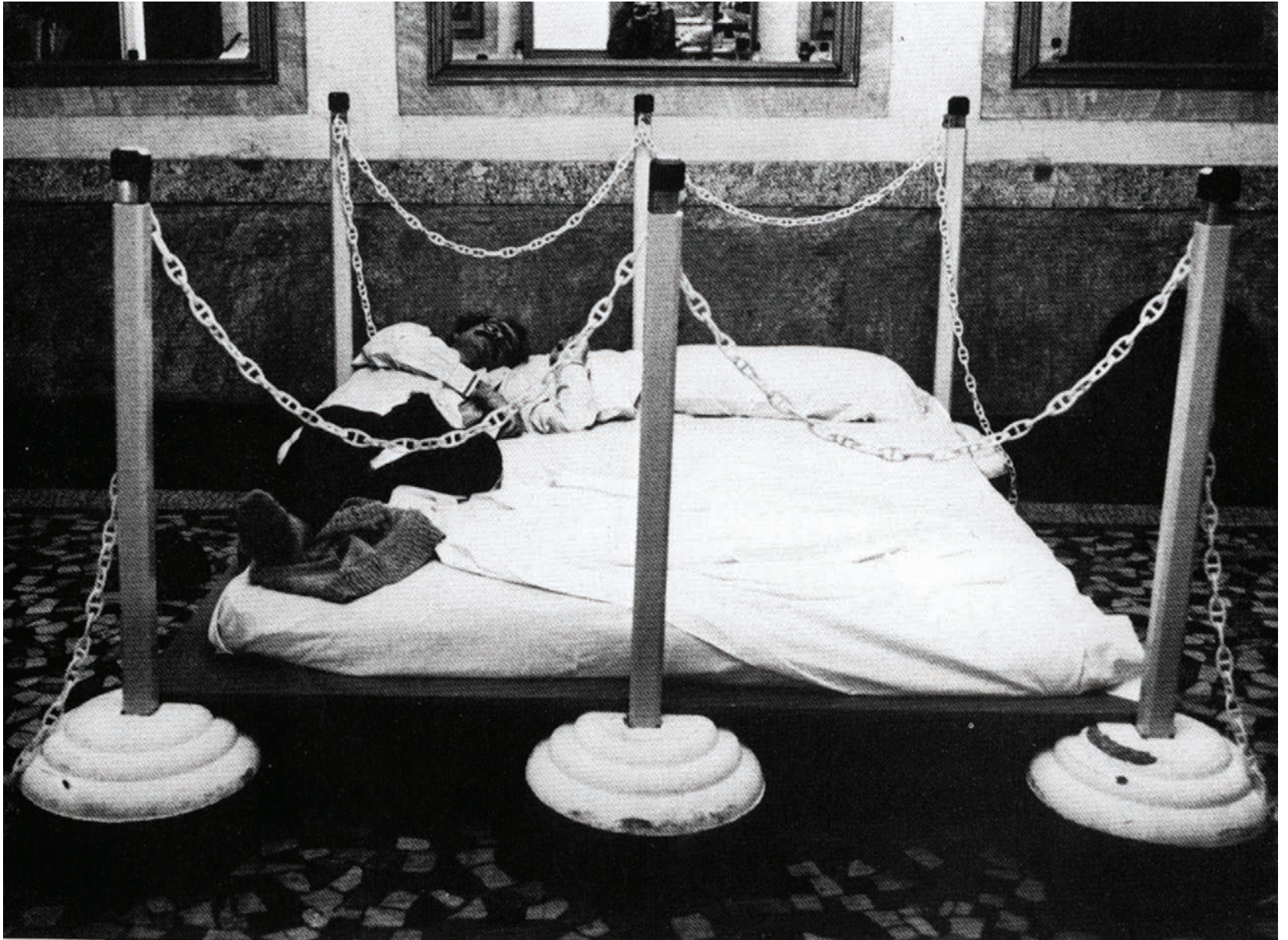
Though he acted for the most part on his own, he often collaborated with a broad community of critics, artists, designers, architects and urban designers. Part of the generation born in 1938, Ugo La Pietra finished his studies in 1964 at the Milan *Politecnico*, together with a number of notable classmates, including Renzo Piano. Like many in this period, he pursued his hand in painting, becoming in 1962 one of the founding members of "*Gruppo del Cenobio*" a short-lived artist collective named after the gallery where they collectively exhibited their work. They considered themselves part of Lucio Fontana's circle, the Italian minimalist known for his provocative acts of canvas slicing.

By the time of the late sixties, however, Ugo La Pietra had become a prominent exponent in the Italian Radical design movement. And the most consistent expressive medium underlying Ugo La Pietra's work was his use of multi-media documentation to develop his urban research and experimental postulations. Using photography, film, and later video, La Pietra explored Milan's peripheries and quotidian street settings carefully registering common everyday uses,

Virtual space and physical city

taking specific note of the most minor transformations made by the city's anonymous designers. Then La Pietra would set out to disentangle them, through a careful process of analysis and de-codification. The Milanese architect-designer sought out rather unusual means to "re-appropriate" the city that he hoped would build, little by little, a virtual environment linked to the city's active street life. A world that would be totally re-wired, an urban communications network that might well have anticipated today's all pervasive internet.

Complimenting his urban research, Ugo La Pietra's constructed an impressive network of contacts through his prodigious work as editor and publisher. In particular, he edited during the early seventies the magazine "In" which has since acquired almost cult status among those seeking out rare essays and projects by some of the most noted cutting-edge critics and designers from around the world. He also has a knack for curating, pulling together complexly structured exhibitions like *Spazio Reale-Spazio*



Still from the film 'Spazio reale / Spazio virtuale' by Ugo La Pietra

Virtuale: lo spazio audiovisivo (Real Space-Virtual Space: the audiovisual space). Ugo La Pietra was involved in the Milan based collective *Fabrica di Comunicazioni* (Communications Factory) and helped pull together, in 1973, one of the most spectacular short-lived collectives that immediately represented the who's who of the Italian design scene – 'Global Tools.' Oddly this assembly of later day Italian Radicals, that included the likes of Sotsass, Superstudio, Archizoom, 9999, UFO, Gianni Pettena, and other giants of the day, played a decisive role in auspicing the coming of the eighties Italian post-modernism.

Conceived as a sort of anti-school of Radical design, the Global Tools encounters took place just about the time when experimentation in conceptual design had passed its peak. By 1973, the architectural design world would begin to rediscover the more reputedly coherent values of strictly regulated formalist ideology, in what would be the equivalent of a return of the *ancien régime*. In fact many of the former "Radical" practitioners traversed this moment of crisis by adapting their skills to this new retro-trend, taking their designs into more stylistically mannerist frontiers. Ugo La Pietra, however, continued to keep to his urban conceptual practice, though the crafts undercurrent guiding the Global Tools school would certainly mark La Pietra's later work.

It could be argued that La Pietra bridged the transitional seventies with his filmmaking. He made a number of films, from 35 mm shorts to documentary features. "*La Grande occasione*," (The Great occasion) his earliest (15' 35 mm BW film, produced by Abet Print-1972), was awarded

the First Prize at the International Festival at Nancy in 1975. The film played on the untapped potential within the Milan Triennale building's sprawling empty spaces. La Pietra also produced in 1979 *Spazio Reale o Spazio Virtuale?* (Real Space or Virtual Space?) (20', 16 mm color film, production Milan Triennale). Rendered in documentary format, this film is a treatise on Milan's deep urban culture teeming with local creative inventions.

Ugo La Pietra's 1979 feature length documentary was tied to a much larger project connected to the XVI edition of the Milan Triennale, where he was brought in to develop one of the five themed sections in the exhibition. La Pietra had been appointed curator of this section by a distinguished commission, whose members included Gillo Dorfles and Umberto Eco. For "*Lo spazio audiovisivo*," (Audiovisual space) the commissioners' goal was to understand the multiple aspects of "the 'space' produced by the television screen, (space) 'inside' the television screen, as well as the 'space' promoted, solicited and conditioned outside of the screen itself." (*Virtuale Reale* 5). La Pietra exploited this opportunity to tie together a number of open projects he had been working on over the decade, mostly exploring the dialectical relationship between the very real contexts of the city, and what lurked in the virtual world beyond.

While groups like Superstudio and Archizoom were formulating ways to derail contemporary society, through explicit attacks on the growing culture of conformism and consumption, La Pietra kept his focus glued to the local phenomenon of a rapidly expanding Milan. La Pietra gravitated around Milan's extensive and un-

regulated un-planned, urban periphery, where he observed and photographed and later filmed small-scale individual interventions he found emerging in these areas. These became part of his broader survey on "minor" urban interventions, actions he would refer to as "*Gradi della libertà*" (Degrees of freedom). La Pietra suggested that through these contexts one could find the codes to unlock the repression around us.

"The places where we live are continuously imposed on us. In reality the space in which we operate can only exist as a men-

The 'relocation' of the city

tal model that is continuously modified through experience. It is necessary to find the form that is born out of our experiences instead of by imposed schemes." (Ugo La Pietra "Instructions for the use of the city" Edizioni Associazione Culturale Plana, 1978, republished in XVI Triennale di Milano, "Spazio Reale-Spazio Virtuale: lo spazio audiovisivo" Catalogue, Milan, Marsilio, 1979) 68

But La Pietra also sought out other urban contexts that might further his quest for "un-balancing" the living environment. He investigated the city centers, where he pointed his camera on very local manifestations of urban creativity, made largely by anonymous authors. Here his focus was primarily on storefronts, and much of what takes place at street level and on the sidewalks. These studies would also fuel alternative creative processes,

which La Pietra split into different didactic themes: "*Abitare è essere ovunque a casa propria*" (living is being everywhere in one's own home), *Attrezzature per la collettività*, (Equipment for the collective), *Istruzioni per l'uso della città* (instructions for using the city), *Come disegnare la pianta della tua città* (how to draw a plan of your city).

Each of these tactics represent steps towards what La Pietra identifies as the "re-appropriation" of the city, something he sees as similar to what native American Indians do when they

Clements Klopfenstein. *The re-appropriation of the city*, 35mm BW 1977-78 produced for the George Pompidou Center, gives, according to Ugo La Pietra, "the poor results of an analysis for the discovery of the degrees of freedom that still exist on the inside of the urban system; they are the desperate and dis-organic attempts of a society that no longer can find reasons for what it does, for why it does what it does, or where it does it." (*Virtuale-Reale* 68).

The significance of Ugo La Pietra's work lies precisely in his capacity to seek out and document the kind of urban contexts in transition that suggest to him new strategies for creative urban intervention. La Pietra's documentation serves to delineate an operative urban dimension where he can critically develop radically new experimental tactics... that back in the late sixties were explicit challenges to the existential condition of the modern city. But despite all the promises technology has offered in these last decades, Ugo La Pietra has not become that much more optimistic about the state of contemporary society. As La Pietra recently remarked: "*Today with the increase in technological tools it cannot be said that there is a major exchange between public and private spaces even if the marketplace of leisure time (like happy hour) encourages an even greater presence of people in urban spaces. The culture of today moves only great masses of people: concerts, blockbuster exhibitions... There still lacks, just like back in the seventies, places to make culture.*" (interview with PTL). A meaningful call to get back to the basics, to get back out on the street and go for a spin. ■

As curator of "*Lo Spazio Audiovisivo*," La Pietra asked Alberto Farassino to edit a section on international film, which included numerous Lumière brothers turn of the century BW shorts, in a tribute to cinema's conquest of urban space, as well as films by Michael Snow, Chris Welsby, and

Golden Billion

Kristian Lukic

There are rumours that cities are built to gather the population in one place, and by that, to significantly reduce its number in an easier and more efficient way.

The spectre of the theory of Golden Billion is haunting again. Known mostly in the Russian speaking world (Russian: золотой миллиард / zolotoy milliard), the term was coined by A.Kuzmich (Anatoly Tsikunov) in his book *The Plot of World Government: Russia and the Golden Billion*, to describe the developed West. These days, Golden Billion in networked conspiracy theories usually refers to a post-apocalyptic New World Order with a world population of less than one billion. Crucial point in this decimation of the population (current number of population is almost 7 billion) is global urbanization as a means to group people in the specified area, and thus easily control and potentially decimate the population.

The fact is that the population in cities, without a link to countryside production, is fully dependent on the organized distribution of resources (food, water...), thus enhancing the possibility of catastrophic scenarios in times of social instability. The land of those who cultivated it, now belongs to global investment funds from Gibraltar, Bermuda and the Virgin Islands, so new citizens

cannot “go back” to their former homeland.

According to some modern prophecies, the goal also is to microchip (or nanochip) the population, and thus mentally and physically control humanity and literally create a new class (or species) of cyborgs. Without a chip, it will be impossible to buy

tually they were to consider acquiring goods from the places of primary production outside of urban zones, the cost of transport and the lack of time would create a significant obstacle to do so. In that case, the only option is to revert to supplies from third-hand distribution. And in a potential cashless society, func-

‘Cities are the abyss of the human species.’

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Émile

and sell goods, food, and impossible to survive. Some describe this as one of the signs of the End Times, connecting it with the prophecy from the Apocalypse when humans wouldn’t be able to buy or sell anything without the so-called Mark of the Beast in their forehead or hand.

How to force someone to implant such inhuman thing? First thing is to concentrate the population in urban areas, disconnect them from food production and water collection and distribution. The more distant they are from the processes of production, the more dependent they will be on third-hand distribution. If even-

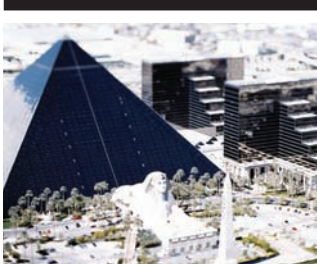
tioning in the beginning with credit card system (today only 3% of the whole money sum is cash), but relatively soon to be replaced by sophisticated credit chip implants, it will be the only way to survive. Thus, the “conspiracy theory” of microchipping (or nanochipping...) is playing the role of an agent of awareness, an alarm trigger that can potentially raise questions and form critical attitudes toward such a step that is surely questioning the concept of humanity more than ever before. On the other side, spreading the information, and “normalization” of the microchipping idea,

before any official claim of such intention, when this idea is still a purely speculative operation, might pave the way for benevolent use of human chips (safety, fear of kidnapping, marking criminals and children). Then, it would slowly become mandatory by legislation.

This would surely be the fulfilment of some artists’ dreams that are familiar with persuasive technologies, ubiquitous media, mobile platforms, bioart and locative devices. These artists probably dream about sustainable urban environments and eco-awareness. So, in this dreamed utopia, everyone will drive an electric car, eat organic vegetables made by electric robots and pay the vegetables with subcutaneous electric microchips. Of course, this utopia will come after decimation of mankind as prophesied in the “Georgian tablets” that reads as one of its 10 commandments: “Maintain humanity under 500,000,000 in perpetual balance with nature and guide reproduction wisely - improving fitness and diversity”.

So, cities are centripetal machines that suck population into them, acting as efficient dehumanization agents. Cities as aggregators of sin and immorality play a significant part in biblical stories, especially with Sodom and Gomorrah. During the Ro-

manticism period in the 19th century, especially in Germany, prominent figures of the Völkisch movement were criticizing the rapid urbanization of Europe and Germany, thus disconnecting the Volk from Nature, its spiritual and physical habitat. They were against urbanization, multiculturalism in the cities, mixing of nations and races. In a certain way, their environmentalist ideas set some basic principles for contemporary ecology. One of the principles was a strong spiritual focus on the power and laws of natural forces, leading often to anti-humanistic attitudes, which regarded humans as agents of pollution and considered the deployment of any means in order to protect Earth from pollution. Many ideas of the Völkisch movement influenced the former shaping of strong environmental protection legislation in National Socialist Germany that was the first in the world to be implementing it. Some prominent Völkisch movement members were mixing environmental issues with open racism and anti-Semitism as Peter Staudenmaier wrote in his book *Ecofasism*. The Holocaust idea can be connected with the idea of the innocent and pure Mother Earth, where only those who deserve it, by protecting and nurturing it can live in harmony with nature. ■



Still from film 'Site Specific_LAS VEGAS 05' by Olivio Barbieri

Las Vegas gambling its future

LAS VEGAS Cities like Las Vegas and Dubai don’t seem to be particularly concerned about the imminent shortage of water and energy threatening them. There’s a somewhat apocalyptic side to this. Hardly a century old and built in the middle of the desert, Las Vegas is not only the biggest gambling city in the world, it’s also the largest per capita consumer of water in the US. The city takes almost 90 percent of its water from Lake Mead, where water levels are plummeting as a result. The idea seems to be to enjoy it while it lasts: *après moi le déluge*.

But other dangers appear to be threatening Las Vegas as well. New, tax-free casinos are springing up like mushrooms in Indian reservations, which are subject to their own legislation. In the end, Vegas may not succumb to its own artificiality, but may be under Indian threat – almost two centuries after the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was passed by the American legislature. ■

Beneath the desert sands: safety, convenience and luxury

USA In the middle of nowhere, in the Mojave desert in the western United States, stands a bland little hut made of concrete. The small building gives access to a secret refuge, constructed in preparation for a variety of potential ‘end-of-days’ catastrophes. Deep under the desert sands lies a bunker dating back to the Cold War. This bunker – still fully functional and outfitted with a nuclear blast detector – is currently be-

ing renovated and converted into what is meant to be the ultimate underground hide-out, where well-paying ‘refugees’ may comfortably abide the apocalypse, whether it be an atomic war, a meteorite impact, some ecological disaster, biological warfare, or total economic collapse.

The entrepreneurs behind this initiative have compared the bunker’s design to that of a luxury cruise ship, where the end

of time may be idled away as if on a holiday - for as long as a year if necessary. Among other things, the shelter houses a fully equipped hospital, a movie theatre, a dental clinic, supplies for a year long stay and comfortable living quarters. The only thing slightly less idyllic compared to cruise ships will be the view from the cabin windows. The bunker is part of a network of twenty similar shelters, situated all over the US, potentially housing a total of some 4000 refugees. The network is being commercially developed by the Vivos company. The government has its own shelters, so why shouldn’t American citizens be allowed to have their own hideouts?

The bunkers are currently being equipped. And that’s just as well, because, as we all know, all Hell will break loose in 2012. For just \$50,000 (children pay half price) you, too, can prepare yourself for the inevitable. It may not be cheap, but you really can’t put a price on safety. ■



Vivos Shelter (source: www.terravivos.com)



Life: Supersurface by Superstudio

Life: Supersurface

Superstudio is one of the most well known protagonists of the Italian radical architecture from the end of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s. With the cycle *Five Fundamental Acts* Superstudio objects to the idea of architecture as a dead piece of decoration of life. Instead, Superstudio chooses to show the great themes of life and creates an architecture based on the ‘Five Fundamental

Acts’: life, education, ceremony, love and death.

Life, Supersurface is a film from this cycle and was shown for the first time during the exhibition *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* in the Museum of Modern Arts in New York (1972), curated by Emilio Ambasz. Originally, the 35mm film was made to imitate commercial advertising and promotion films. As an argument for

the liberation of mankind, *Life, Supersurface* projects a never-ending communication and energy grid that is rolled out over the entire planet. The film mostly consists of stills made to move and zoomed in images of this network. At the end, two actors dance a ballet of nature and technology. ■

Conspired environments

Konrad Becker

Only absolute tyranny or a spontaneous random mob could be pictured as devoid of concerted action and conspiratorial planning. Even random mobs will try to avoid division by police forces, and autocrats routinely compartmentalize information as operations strategy. Conspiracy is the default mode of oligarchic societal structures, from Rome to Byzantium, medieval dominions and contemporary plutocracies. Orchestrating more or less ingenious forms of scheming has always been the order of the day, and there is a blatant conspiracy of the rich to get richer. In a

worldwide machinery of business interests and individual gain, corruption gains a new power. But conspiracies are not necessarily by individuals or a minority against a majority, nor are they always centrally controlled or coordinated. El Iblis Shah identifies multiple “conspiracies of the many against the few” in Western democracies.

The very emergence of the modern term “conspiracy theory” and contemporary conspiratorial concepts is connected to the globalization of trade in the late nineteenth century and the materialization of

complex worldwide interrelations. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the first use of the term dates back to an economics article from 1920, and only much later did it began to enter regular usage. It was related to investigations into the complex matrix of a global economy and its veiled vectors of influence. Simplistic collusion theories are profoundly silly when they do not include enough vectors of influence, yet by connecting too many dots they become a cloud of worthless vagueness. However, conspiracy theories are also poetic abstractions, enlight-

ening allegories and amusing dramatizations, instructive entertainment as well as informative and useful. They are abstractions that constitute a valid effort to engage with an increasing complexity of causal interrelations and the patterns of collusion of interests and influence in a networked world. In a largely integrated global media environment the politics of power are necessarily related to communications agenda-setting. There is a largely invisible conspiracy of data-mined preferences linking customer profiles (“whoever bought this item also bought

this one”) to virtual purchase circles of online shops and music portals. In Western pluralistic societies the power to influence results in democracies where the concept of a public and a free press remains widely invisible too. Manufacturing consensual reality cannot be explained by a paranoid model of infiltration or a simple understanding of duped recipients of messages designed to inhibit an imaginary “true consciousness.” It requires a more thorough understanding of subjectivity and social gravity. Looking into the mechanisms of the power of media and

PR reveals how manipulation by external forces can be challenged. Those with a sense of opportunity utilize communication settings to create their own meanings instead of the ones imposed by a cultural cognitive industry. Parallel cultures of unauthorized rereading of meaning gain momentum through aligning interests and what could be called networks of cultural counter-conspiracies and epistemological guerillas. ■

From: Konrad Becker, *Strategic Reality Dictionary*. Autonomedia 2009.

Second Life on Sale?

Of virtual worlds and things that pass

Piet Vollaard

THE GRID, JULY 2010 – According to the Second Life Grid Survey almost half of the 60,000 ‘regions’ existing in 2010 are ‘dead or stored’. Is an exodus threatening the most successful virtual world? And does it matter?

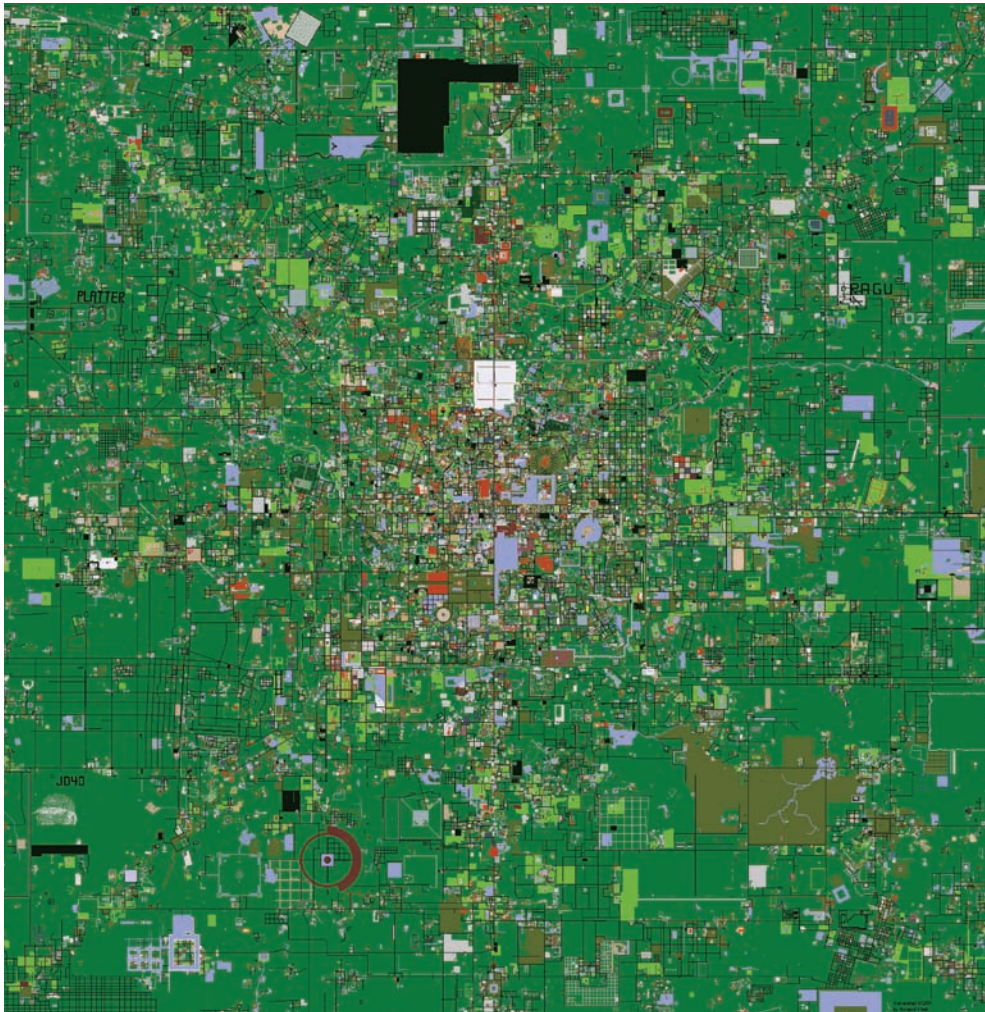
If various economic, social and political reasons in the real world obstruct the creation of an ideal city and an ideal community, then it should at least be possible to realize this ideal in the virtual world. Indeed, the laws of economics and politics do not apply there. And, partly due to the absence of any restrictions of place and time, the possibilities for building a strong social community should be much more real.

This probably was the train of thought of many Internet pioneers. And indeed, there is no other place than the virtual world of the Internet that has seen the establishment of so many alternative communities involving so many participants, and so many cities with so many buildings. There is also no place, for that matter, that has seen them disappear just as quickly, but that is inherent in pioneering. After all, the former Wild West of the United States was also littered with deserted villages and small towns.

As from the moment people were capable of communicating from a distance through computer networks (Arpanet, late 1960s), they started sending each other messages, raising discussions and setting up collective groups. Initially, this concerned scientific and military communication, which was the prime reason for setting up the Internet, but before long the subjects and the groups linked to these subjects expanded in many different directions.

The Well

In 1985, Stewart Brand and Larry Brilliant started The Well (*the Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link*), which is generally considered to be the first real online community, including the first newsletters. Brand is one of the big pioneers of the 1960s alternative movement in California. His book *Whole Earth Catalogue*, which was published in various volumes between 1968 and 1972, was more or less considered to be the bible of intellectual counterculture of those years. In 1966, Brand set up a public campaign to disclose to all inhabitants of this earth the satellite photos NASA made of the earth and which were kept secret until then. And this photo was put on the cover of *The Whole Earth Catalogue*. Brand intended to use this catalogue to gather all relevant scientific, cultural and countercultural information, and continually update and correct this information with the help of readers. The *digi* slogan *Information wants to be free*, attributed to Thomas Jefferson by some, and unearthed and popularized by Brand was the ideological basis of the Catalogue and of its successor on the Internet: The Well. In the years of the Internet before it became the worldwide web, when communication was still only text-based and conducted by email, newsletters, BBS (Bulletin Board System) and news groups, many communities like the Well came into being. Eventually, these communities ended up as the predecessors of so-called web2.0 communities like Facebook, LinkedIn, Hyves, etc. Communities that are far less ideological, but all the more popular.



The map of Alphaworld, circa 2005

MUDs

In addition to this ‘serious’ application of internet communication, the new medium was also used for playing games ever since its conception. In many cases, these games were based on the so-called *role playing games*, like Dungeons and Dragons, starting from the very first pioneers like the Colossal Cave Adventure (1975) and Zork (1977) up to the enormous success of MUD (Multi-User Dungeon), which became the generic name for this kind of online gaming communities as early as 1978. The variations (and the related abbreviations) were enormous, and with the introduction of the graphic possibilities of the www, these role playing games were able to develop into the present, highly successful generation of online games such as Warcraft.

Virtual cities

Next to the more text-based online communities which initially revolved around exchanging information and discussion, and the role playing games which were mainly about having fun with like-minded enthusiasts until the early hours, a third variant originated, i.e., the online virtual worlds, or in *digi-language*: MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game). One of the predecessors in this genre was the Active Worlds application which was set up in 1994 as an alternative browser, while the first popular browser Mosaic was made available to the public only one year earlier. Whereas browsers such as Mosaic were mainly concerned with information transfer (text, but also images, hyperlinks and file transfer), the makers of Active Worlds envisioned a combination of information transfer and online communities such as the many MUDs. An important innovation was that users did not make pages (as done for websites)

but were building houses, initially in so-called 2.5D, but before long in 3D. With a personal avatar (an online alternative personality) and from their self-constructed virtual house, users were able to seek contact with fellow inhabitants, but could also transfer information, both by means of chats and by links to ‘ordinary websites’ (of course, nothing was ordinary in those days). With this, the ‘real world’ approached the virtual world. In these virtual worlds, distance, which was later neutralized by the Internet, was replaced by proximity: you actually had to walk over to your neighbour (in Active Worlds you could also fly to go quicker) in order to see what he had to communicate. And in order to be able to talk, your neighbour had to be ‘in.’ The fact that the city was an attractive metaphor, is also apparent from the conception of *De Digitale Stad* [The Digital City], the first Dutch public Internet provider and portal which was started in 1994 and later turned into the xs4all provider, next to a host of other companies. You entered *De Digitale Stad* on the ‘central square’ and your personal website was referred to as your ‘house.’ You could collect your mail at the post office, go to the education square, health square and, insofar as relevant in the first few years, take the subway to a website outside of the city.

But *De Digitale Stad* was 2D and controlled top-down. Active Worlds soon appeared in full 3D and its control was restricted to a building and social protocol and a ban on commercial use. Following installation of the ‘browser’, you could visit the city and its residents, look at houses and larger buildings and chat with avatars. But the best thing (I thought) was that you could build houses and palaces yourself and invite your friends to these constructions where you could later even show film clippings (through online links), make music, visit shops (through links with online shops), gambling houses (you get the picture), etc. And all of this

around the turn of the century when many people still looked at the Internet as a hype which would blow over.

Alphaworld

In fact, Alphaworld (the name given to the most important city in Active Worlds) was no more than a large, open, green-coloured field with X and Y coordinates. In the middle of the field (at coordinates 0,00; 0,00) there was an entrance gate where a guide would welcome visitors. Residents of Alphaworld could look for their own spot in the field to start building. Especially, this possibility of building turned out to be a success. Alphaworld had a special building materials site where you could collect building components, a worthy combination of IKEA and Wickes. Alphaworld moreover included a AW building school and users were encouraged to think up new building materials and complete building components (staircases, elevators, doors, house fronts, furniture, etc.) and offer these on the building yard. Over time, Alphaworld grew into a complete city of which a ‘map’ was only published later. The most remarkable feature of this city map was the chaotic development spreading out from the centre. Not very surprising if you let the inhabitants loose without any form of regulatory city design. But anyone looking at the Alphaworld map through one’s lashes could detect higher levels of density along the north-south and east-west axis and the diagonals. This was the result of localization by means of coordinates. Indeed, N2000; E2000 or SE;W3000 is easier to remember than N37564, E2947. If you lost the coordinates of your house or that of your friends, you would never find them again. Not really a problem because you could build as many new houses as you pleased. This turned walking through the suburbs of Alphaworld into a bizarre experience. To your left and right,

you would see unfinished and deserted houses, or pieces of roads that suddenly stopped, but also complete castles including moats looming up at the horizon. Futuristic, Escher-like constructions that were apparently erected in 3D, but for which the builder obviously lacked the 3D insight in order to arrive at something coherent, and therefore just left off and started again elsewhere. No wonder you would never meet many people in the areas outside of the centre.

Enter: the money

Alphaworld still exists, but never received a large following. Today, there are several virtual worlds. Significantly different from the no-money politics of Alphaworld was Entropia Universe, a large multiplayer world, which totally revolves around (virtual) money. Although development of Entropia was already started in the mid-90s, the first public and commercial application saw the light no sooner than 2003. Entropia is set up in a science fiction-like environment where you claim land as a colonist with the goal of increasing your possession. Next to a whole range of other forms of production, you can win minerals and sell these; so, a true paradise for wannabe economists and speculators. However, the concept behind Entropia mainly is that users first have to buy themselves into this world, and then can engage in making as much money as possible. And Entropia also offers the possibility of conversing this virtual money into real money at ‘the bank’. At the first public sale of virtual banking licences in Entropia, approximately 400,000 real US dollars were made. At its highpoint, Entropia had more than 800,000 users. The Guinness Book of Records refers to the sale of a virtual space station for 330,000 real dollars as the most expensive virtual object ever. In June 2010, the makers of Entropia announced that they will sell their world for 6 million. With this ending, Entropia more than anything resembles the classical pyramid scheme with early birds getting away with the money at the expense of those enrolling later.

Second Life / Real Life

Almost at the same time as Entropia Universe, the comparable vir-

as a result, also a success among users. Around 2004, you were hopelessly obsolete if you had not at least one avatar in Second Life. Banks and other large companies were queuing to open up a branch in Second Life. Artists and journalist sometimes stayed in Second Life for months on end to report on their virtual reality. And various countries opened up an embassy in Second Life.

Like in Alphaworld, you could build your own dream palace in Second Life. But you could also become a land owner (which was more or less free in Alphaworld, where you only had to pay a small user’s fee to start building). And you could also buy complete islands in Second Life to cover with commercial real estate (how fairy-like). Despite the rather sweet appearance of Second Life, money quickly made this world go around too. And although it concerned virtual money, calculated in Linden Dollars (named after its creator Philip Linden), virtual real estate in Second Life, and in some cases popular avatars were quickly converted into hard cash in the real world. Moreover, Second Life, like Entropia, offered various ways to make money with activities other than friendly chats, including, of course, online gambling. This was prohibited in 2007, which in turn, resulted in ‘virtual bankruptcies’ of ‘in-world’ banks, thus having economic ramifications in the real world. In addition, Second Life increasingly faced fraud, extortion and violence. Violence which also found its way into the real world, forcing youngsters to give up their avatar or their possessions (something which is also found with other popular online games). In 2009, around 230 inhabitants were able to make more than 5,000 US dollar from Second Life. Now in 2010, the attraction has totally worn off, and you are no less than a loser now if you are still hanging around in Second Life: “So 2006!”

And so ends what may have been the biggest promise on the Internet in a major let-down. The virtual world is not the real world. But worse than that: it is just no fun to keep hanging around there, and then it is easy – unlike the real world – to step out. Online communities are still flourishing in many forms and on many different platforms. This is a situation which is likely to last, although new hypes will also certainly come into play. However, whether we will ever be able to really lose ourselves with our avatar in our virtual city and lose contact with the real world, is highly debatable. And even though, at some point, we may be



Amsterdam for sale in Second Life (source: www.timothyhorrian.com)

tual world of Second Life took off. In this virtual world, money also plays a role but is not as prominently featured as in Entropia. Second Life most resembles Alphaworld, but uses virtual money and has more technical possibilities. Especially building and enhancing the avatar, your ‘second identity in your second life’ is much more important than in Alphaworld. Unlike Alphaworld and Entropia, Second Life was an immediate media success, and

able to use all our senses in this virtual world (up to now, we can only see and listen), and be able to experience the physical sensation of making love (according to some people, the real ‘killer app’ of the Internet), it will still be easy to step out, to put the virtual real estate on sale, ignore all virtual friends, give away the virtual money, and if so desired, commit commercial suicide and return to the daily reality of the real world. ■

Nerds stay at home



Still from film 'Hikikomori' by Francesco Jodice and Kal Karman

TOKIO Hikikomori and Otaku are Japanese adolescents who have turned away from the hustle and bustle of metropolitan life. 'Hikikomori' means 'to retreat from society'. These adolescents, mostly boys, no longer see the point of joining in the urban ratrace and they're not sure what to do with their lives. 'Otaku' means both 'nerd' and 'home'; it is the moniker these adolescents have given themselves. They hardly ever leave their rooms, and spend their time gaming,

watching videos or reading comics. Communication with others is preferably done through indirect means, like mobile phones, or the internet. The Otakus are a countermovement, distancing themselves from city life, that never resting, frantic, ever-demanding, money-making, money-spending machine that is urban existence. Where are the residents of Matrix City? - They're in their rooms, preferring the virtual realities of internet to the spectacle of the big city. ■

Urban-physical spaces transform into gamespaces

Ilias Marmaras

The immersion of virtual worlds and the networks of the digital social media in the recent years have strongly influenced and transformed our perception of the urban landscapes, changed the social relations and gave birth to new forms of political struggle. We cannot talk anymore about separated environments like the "physical" as opposed to the "virtual", but rather about a fusion that is perceived as a constant change. Consequently, in these new environments identities, subjectivities and performative actions are born and function in

a dimension that can be seen and analyzed as an "imaginary dimension consisted of new forms of desire production" while at the same time older ways of understanding the social and the political power relations and hierarchies should be considered. A fusion that gave form for a period of time to such a gamespace happened in Greece, and especially in Athens, during the riots of December 2008.

The events that took place during this period can be seen much more clearly if one goes further

from the standard political analysis that is usually used to explain the causes and the results of such revolts and political movements by introducing terms and concepts used in the online video games, virtual worlds and in the social media. Terms as *single user game*, *multiuser game* or *gameplay* become very useful in order to understand the forms of participation, the ways of acting and the political demands of these 'urban wars'. The riots can be presented through such terms – as well as the streams of information, the emergence of which

became possible through the social media and to some extent in the virtual world of Second Life.

If, until now, we were accustomed to the quotidian competition until "final fall" in the realm of the people -a competition that produces the legislative frame context of the mutual extermination of the players in the social arena- perhaps now is the time to see a new kind of war, the war that is turned against the gamespace itself. ■

Gaming as a job

SHANGHAI It's everyone's dream: cashing in on your hobby. Korean and Chinese adolescents have found their very own niche market within the online gaming community. As long as you're up playing all hours, why not try and make some money? The name of this new game is 'gold farming': young gamers collecting as much in-game currency and other virtual goods as possible and selling them to other, less talented or less patient players, who are willing to pay. The digital merchandise is made available through sites like Ebay, where they can be purchased using PayPal's online banking system. Reliable figures for gold farming are hard to come by, but estimates suggest that gold farming has been around for many years and that millions of dollars are involved. This money, however, is to be divided among tens of thou-

sands of young people gaming incessantly. Online game designers and hosts are unhappy about this new development and virtually every game prohibits gold farming. Some countries even go so far as to ban the possession of any virtual money, thereby banning a large portion of online games. Several revenue services are looking into the new industry, not least because there is a concern that an entire economic system, of unknown scale and mysterious attraction, is materializing outside of their reach. Chinese goldfarmers could probably not care much less. Says one of them: 'I suddenly realised that the online sale of cheap virtual products to Americans is the same as exporting cheap Chinese labour.' As long as Chinese prices remain competitive, gold farming will be profitable to them. ■

Facebook threatening to sue 'suicide site'



ROTTERDAM Tired of your Social Network? Liberate your newbie friends with a Web2.0 suicide! The Web2.0 Suicide Machine is a program that allows you to 'unfriend' yourself from Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace. The Suicide Machine then deletes every trace you left behind on the internet through these sites. After using the Suicide Machine, you'll be completely Web2.0-free. And without Facebook, you'll finally be able to find the time to meet real people. Without Twitter, you'll be free as a bird. The Suicide Machine started out innocently enough, but it has led to a debate on social media and privacy, culminating in a warning by Facebook to shut the program down. The Suicide Machine speaks to the mixed feelings that social media arouse in some. On the one hand these media are readily accessible and seemingly open platforms, a means for the world to meet at the push of a button,

and to share news, exchange invitations and gossip with friends and friends' friends. At the same time, however, they're also a very insistent medium, their user-friendliness the result of shrewd design. And of course, the accessibility of these platforms comes at a price – their owners are making a lot of money. They do this by selling advertising space, but also by making the personal data of millions of users available to interested commercial parties – at a price, of course. Privacy is of only minor importance when it comes to selling these data, a fact users are largely unaware of. In fact, hardly anyone takes the trouble of reading internet's fine print. Users are therefore largely unaware of the fact that, by signing up, they consent to the use of their data. The builders of the Suicide Machine soon got to know Facebook's serious side, when the company threatened to sue them. ■

Persuasive technologies

Konrad Becker

The power of suggestion works most effectively by making targets believe that ideas and desires they identify with are made up by their own mind. "The most potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed," said Steve Biko about the politics of consciousness, in I Write What I Like. Soft despotism of ideological warfare cultivates and exploits mass irrationality. Victims are guided by their own desire into a trap, a situation which limits freedom irreversibly. "Who moved the cheese?" When the cheese is stealthily moved,

you can bet that it is a trap. Influence works best with victims unaware of manipulation. Eventual internalization of rules is the goal of engineering consent through creation of myths and necessary illusions. Perception management handles audience interest by attracting media attention; it uses simplified labels, distinguishing symbols and distinctive phrases or slogans. Strategic communication must be carefully timed and informed by intelligence on events and public opinion. While communications may be channeled through prestigious leaders,

credibility alone determines output. When white communication sources are less credible or have undesirable effects, black disinformation is employed. Consequences of actions need to be carefully considered and, in order to deal with counter-reactions, a deflection form of action or diversion needs to be in place to diminish frustration impact. Traditional disciplinary programming is long term and discontinuous, contemporary consumer control societies are based on continuous short-term rapid cycles without limit. Prisons

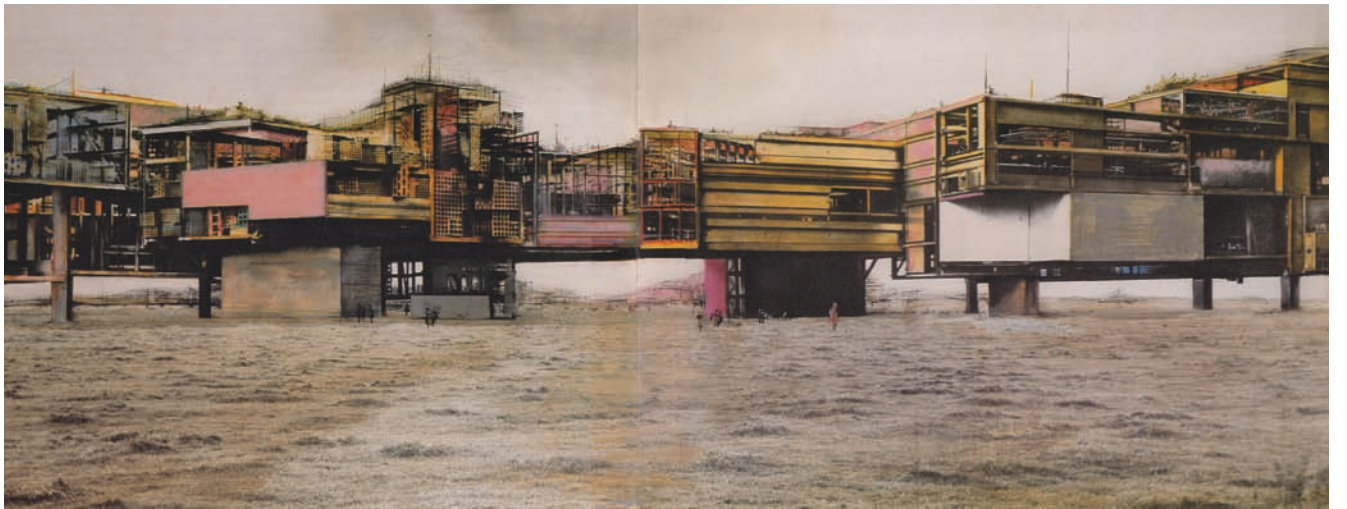
without walls raise desires and satiate them through fetishized consumer democracy. Through social control of primary drives, one-dimensional humanoids compliant with submissive consumerism and economic productivity grant stability. Instead of repressing desire, the shaping of identities for stable societies draws on strategies of creating and designing products for the innermost desires. Motivational research in corporate focus-group sessions is modeled after psychoanalytic group therapy and personality assessment schemes. Lifestyle marketing segmentation

in definable categories of personal values allows psychographic targeting beyond income and location demographics. While security and belonging is a primary psychological need for mainstream economic target groups, for the aspirational segments of society what counts is status and the esteem of others, while for the category of overachievers it is control. For a percentage of reform-oriented populations, self-esteem is at the forefront. There is no society but personal satisfaction, self-actualization through consumer products that make it possible to

express one's self. Removed from social concerns, the seduction into a hyper-individual lifestyle of isolation advertises capitalism as socialism for oneself. To get into the mind of voters, politics converts into a consumer business responsive to vote markets. When systems fail in their domination over individuals by means of persuasion, they take control through rituals of fatality. Technologies of mind transform into machineries of death. ■ From: Konrad Becker, Strategic Reality Dictionary. Autonomedia 2009.



Oilfields in Baku



View on Sectors (photo: Victor E. Nieuwenhuys, source: Haags Gemeentemuseum)

Oil Rock in Baku, a realized New Babylon?

BAKU, AZERBAIJAN One of the world's oldest oil cities is Baku, the 1,500 years old capital of Azerbaijan. As early as in the eighth century, the presence of oil in the ground was already known. Marco Polo says in his travel journal: "Near the Georgian border, there is a spring from which gushes a stream of oil, in such abundance that a hundred ships may load there at once. This oil is not good to eat; but it is good for burning and as a salve for men and camels affected with itch or scab."

Boomtown

Ever since the fifteenth century, surface oil has been won from wells. However, commercial development took a real flight at

the end of the nineteenth century when the need for fossil fuels started growing quickly. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Baku was the largest oil field in the world, good for fifty percent of production worldwide. In those years, Baku was a real boomtown and also a centre of finance and speculation, comparable to a city like Dubai today. The extraction of oil enabled the city to grow into one of the most prosperous cities of the region. Parks, large urban dwellings and a majestic boulevard still bear witness to this wealth. Baku also was the stage of the onset of the Russian revolution. And as is always the case with large oil fields – there is nothing new under the sun with the Iraq war – the oil

fields of Baku were the object of heavy fighting. In fact, the battle of Stalingrad in World War II was a struggle for the control of Baku and consequently, for a second oil supply duct in the direction of the Mediterranean Sea. Post-industrial landscape Today, Baku continues to be a big oil producer, but it has since long ceased to be the most important one; this role has been taken over by the Middle East. In and around the city, the extraction oil fields look deserted, while oil is still seeping from the ground. And off the coast of Baku lies one of the most fascinating industrial landscapes of the world: the so-called Oil Rock, a system of oil platforms, derricks, workers' houses and connecting roads built on

piles sixty miles from the coast. A terrifying and at the same time sublime post-industrial landscape which nowadays has largely passed into disuse. The authorities do not deny Oil Rock. This would also be impossible as it can be seen from the boulevard and is certainly visible with Google Earth. However, a visit to this oil town is not exactly encouraged. A BBC team wanting to make a documentary there was not granted permission and could only film the 'city' from a helicopter. It is said that many of the platforms have subsided and that at some places water is even gushing into the former workers' houses.

New Babylon

Images of the Baku oil field are no less than apocalyptic. How-

ever, strangely enough, the city on piles also strongly resembles the Situationist project New Babylon of the Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys. Constant, who worked on the project from the late 1950s until the beginning of the 1970s, envisioned a new city which would spread out like a network of large steel spatial constructions over existing cities and landscapes. This city was to offer room to the free creative development of the nomadic *homo ludens* (the playful man) liberated from the need of having to work. In order to realize this project, Constant gave up his painting and for years on end produced a large quantity of models, drawings and collages exploring the potential of new Babylon.

In many respects, New Babylon is a utopia, albeit a utopia in images and not a described one (as is common). However, gradually Constant became less convinced of the feasibility of his project. Like many of the former Situationists (Constant, for that matter, was already expelled from the movement by Debord at the end of the 1950s), he became disillusioned with the possibility of a real creative revolution in the aftermath of May 1968. Although he never renounced the idea behind New Babylon, the last paintings of the project made around 1974 reveal an increasingly dystopian image. Images which are terrifyingly close to the images of post-industrial Baku. ■



illustration: Ramon Knoester, WHIM architecture

A refuge of buoyant refuse

PACIFIC OCEAN There are places in the world's great oceans where 'plastic' islands can be found. They are formed by plastic that is either blown or dumped into the sea, and is then carried to specific spots by Atlantic currents, where they accumulate into floating refuse heaps. Although these islands are often invisible from the sky, they consist of huge quantities of pieces of plastic, big and (mostly) small, suspended just beneath the ocean's surface. In fact, there is so much debris, the chances of being able to clean everything up seem slim indeed. Maritime species, like seabirds and turtles, swallow the plastics and may die as a result of not being able to digest them. Another problem is that toxic wastes, such as PCB's and DDT, attach themselves to small particles of plastic, that find their way into the digestive systems of humans, when they eat seafood.

The newly found islands inspired Ramon Knoester (of WHIM architecture) to try and transform the floating heaps of garbage into buoyant isles that are fit for hu-

man settlement. The idea is to create islands by processing the debris *in situ*. Knoester is now researching what technical requirements are to be met. One option under consideration is to gather all the small pieces of plastic that are currently degrading and seeping into the marine ecosystem, and to melt these together for some new purpose. It would be killing two birds with one stone: collecting the debris will become more attractive and floating islands are created that may serve as places of refuge for victims of climate change. Life on one of Knoester's *Recycled Islands* will be similar to that in any urban context, but it will be as independent from mainland existence as possible. The cultivation of food will take place on the island itself, as will the development of energy and the recycling of waste goods. Since there is so much plastic floating around, Knoester's projected islands are no small matter: his first design would cover some 10,000 square kilometre, roughly the size of Hawaii. ■

ROTTERDAM Under the slogan *Superuse*, 2012 Architects are working on more efficient forms of recycling in construction. Over the past years, the firm applied the most unexpected forms of 'superuse' of 'second-hand' materials; a playground of discarded wind turbine blades, a coffee bar made of old washing machines, a 'listening bar' annex lounge chair of old car tyres, a watchtower of stainless steel draining boards, a shop display of old car windows, etc. By now, 2012 Architects also finished the completion of an entire villa almost completely built from recycled materials and components.

As from the 1960s, recycling has been an important strategy for sustainable, ecological or green building. Recycling reduces the refuse heap and puts an end to unnecessary energy consumption. 30% of Dutch refuse originates from construction. Today, approximately 90% of this refuse is being recycled. In practice, this means that the refuse is sorted, and shredded or crushed. This material is used as base material for embankments, or melted down or compressed into new materials. However, the value added to the base materials in the production process of construction materials, is largely undone by the process of recycling itself. It is required to use energy in order to shred or crush the refuse and produce materials which at most have the same properties as before, but are usually of lesser quality. Moreover, many materials are not suited for this way of recycling because they are compound materials and can only be broken up in separate base materials by using a great deal of energy. This problem is in part solved by second-hand markets and shops. The big advantage of second-hand use lies in the fact that the high-grade properties of the compound products are pre-



Wikado project 2012 Architects, playground made of recycled wind turbine blades (photo: Karola van Rooyen)

served and are not degraded to low-quality building materials. However, in construction second-hand use is hardly common practice. Current second-hand use in construction must be regarded as the still-smouldering remnants from the 1960s subculture. This is not to say that this subculture has not professionalized over the years. With its Rural Studio, the University of Auburn (Alabama), for instance, applies a combination of local construction techniques and radical re-use. For one of the buildings of this university, laminated car windows, which are normally disassembled, granulated and melted into low-quality products (usually bottles), are applied in their original composition to build a large glass front.

Superuse

Superuse assumes that much 'refuse' can be used in its original, unaltered state. There is no need to disassemble or crush the materials. Clever design in which the existing characteristics of the refuse are included in the design at an early stage, may lead to innovative applica-

tions and unexpected styling. A use beyond the actual, original use: *superuse*. To realize this, it is necessary to make quite some changes to the traditional process of design and construction. Salvaging in its broadest sense must become part of the process and not only be part of the end, but also be considered at the beginning of the building process: salvage company and contractor combined in one. In addition, the design process must also be adapted. Designers can no longer rely on the exact specifications of recycled building materials, but need to discover the hidden qualities second-hand materials have to offer. By way of listing such hidden qualities and to learn from mutual experience, 2012 started a website, www.superuse.org, allowing everybody to place his or her examples of superuse. It is not required that the refuse is taken from buildings alone. Next to materials and semi-manufactured products, installations, entire buildings and parts thereof as well as urban residuals also qualify for re-use. An important

new 'design task' particularly relates to recognizing the specific building properties of refuse materials which were not used in construction originally. This demands thorough research, creativity, and knowledge about the properties required from a specific building product in order to understand that the side of a refrigerator is suited as insulating material for house fronts and that washing machine doorframes are perfectly locking windows. In listing the properties of the refuse, economic aspects may also play a role. Many products are now already subject to payment of a statutory removal contribution. This means that some products can be purchased for 'negative material costs'; in other words, they bring in money. In the future, the costs of this removal contribution are expected to increase, thus providing an additional economic impetus for re-use. It may not be long before it will be more expensive to throw a product away than it is to mend it. ■

The use of subsidized rapping

Jacco Hupkens

KANALENEILAND, UTRECHT As a hip-hop city, Utrecht is known for its eclectic, positive music, with C-Mon & Kypski, Kytteman's Hiphop Orchestra and Arts the Beatdoctor being its most famous representatives. But there's another hip-hop scene to be found in the city, that of the *community centre rap* in neighbourhoods that have been in the news in a negative way over the last couple of years: Overvecht, Zuilen, and Kanaleneiland. Usually the lyrics of this music don't carry much hope. They're about surroundings in decay, criminality and poverty. Through organizations for well-being, the city supports projects in which adolescents from these neighbourhoods can develop themselves as a rapper. However, it's still rare for one of these youngsters to become a serious artist. What exactly is the use of subsidized rapping and what role does hip-hop play for these neighbourhoods' youth?

Mark van Rijn is an MC and an experienced leader of workshops in the Utrecht Centre for the Arts (Utrechts Centrum voor de Kunsten, UCK), which manages radio and music studios in several community centres in Utrecht. According to Van Rijn, most of the youngsters he guides in the workshops want to rap only because it's cool to call yourself a rapper, not because they are interested in rapping as an art form. "About seventy percent of them look at it as something temporary, a good way to express their emotions. But they don't want to practice in being on stage, they don't want to learn how to do freestyle (improvised rapping, ed.) and after a while they give up on hip-hop. To develop oneself as an artist, and to build up a network, one has to try harder, and they don't.

KK kehba's in Kanaleneiland

A significant phenomenon is the

fact that almost all of the boys from Kanaleneiland use *gangsta*-slang, American-inspired lyrics about gang violence and criminality. "They will rap something like 'I'm the Big Daddy from the street,' etcetera. Come on man, you're twelve years old!" says Van Rijn. Or they copy a verse from the YouTube-clip *Shab 180cc*, which has a soundtrack about racing and stunting on motor scooters and breaking in and is very popular in the neighbourhood. (Stunting with scooters and bikes, usually by riding it on one wheel for a while, is a popular activity amongst the local Moroccan-Dutch youth.) Some lyrics from the *Shab* soundtrack's lyrics: "No problem at all/ screwdriver, lever, flipper and a brick." The song is made by the The Hague-based hip-hop group DHC. Some people are having problems with the song being used as a soundtrack for an Utrecht film. On YouTube for an agitated commenter responds with a heavy Dutch-American accent: "Fuck Utrecht kk kehba's ('cancer whores', ed.) I'm kk glad that I'm a Hagenees (inhabitant of The Hague, ed.), wollah." Kanaleneiland, quickly built in the sixties, mostly containing blocks of flats with cheap rental apartments, has many unemployment and criminality problems. In the last couple of years these problems have decreased, but are still very substantial. A city-survey showed that in 2008, fifty percent of the neighbourhood's inhabitants felt unsafe, mostly because of difficulty with adolescents. Half of the people in Kanaleneiland are low educated, a number twice as high as the city's average. Forty percent of the inhabitants are Moroccan-Dutch, twice as much as there are Dutch or Turkish.

The first thing Van Rijn advises his workshop's participants, is to rap about something close, about

their own lives: family, school, or their own neighbourhood. That's how in 2007 *Hands Off My Neighbourhood!* came about, reacting on an assembling-ban in a part of Kanaleneiland. This restriction was ordered in an attempt to contain street criminality. Rapper Yassin 'Loki' Celli describes the neighbourhood as one of "cameras and misery," wrongly portrayed by "the media," unemployment being the cause of all the trouble. Meanwhile he brags about his "VW Golf VR6 with big fat rims."

The song became a small hit on YouTube - it has about 150 thousand views. Loki performed in a clip by the sensation blog GeenStijl and Volkskrant.TV, a quality newspaper's blog, made a report on him in which he points to racism: "Don't think every Muslim is the Taliban" and "I'm a Moroccan, so I'm the main offender." Volkskrant portrayed him as a social commentator and a mouth-piece for his Moroccan neighbours. According to Van Rijn, who was involved with Loki's music, six months later Loki's fame could be expanded thanks to a music video accompanying a song about Geert Wilders, who had just released his web film *Fitna*. "For this clip we had gotten a 5000

euro subsidy from the city, on the condition that the clip would be completed in two and a half months. That's when he started showing diva-like behaviour. He wanted motorbikes in the clip and someone famous. It wasn't possible. In the end I had to give back the money to the city." Loki wasn't to be reached for this article, according to his Hyves-page he is mostly working on his studies right now.

Social competences

If getting youngsters seriously involved with music is so difficult, why then does the UCK put so much effort in this workshop? Van Rijn: "It's not as much about the artistic result as it is about the process. For high schools, rap is a way to get attached to the so-called "social competences" of difficult adolescents. It's very hard to get them to write an essay, but they are willing to try writing rap lyrics. Loki's failed music video does make Van Rijn dreary, though. "This boy, like many others, mostly wanted to be cool, play the rapper. It was all about the attention. Now he has wasted all goodwill. Actually, this example has taken some power out of my optimistic believes in these kind of big projects." ■



A radical alternative for Vredenburg

UTRECHT In 1973, the last section of Hoog Catharijne was opened which was, together with the Rotterdam-based Zuidplein, the first real mall of the Netherlands. Six years later, the adjoining music centre Vredenburg was also opened. Today, both former showpieces are under drastic renovation. But things could have gone the other way too.

In the early summer of 1968, the city of Utrecht asked four architects, including Herman Hertzberger and Frank van Klingeren, to present their vision on the construction of a new cultural centre. The entire area around the station is being redeveloped at the time and the city decided to have a new concert hall built on the Vreeburg square, next to shopping mall Hoog Catharijne, another planned project for the area. Van Klingeren pleaded for an open, informal cultural centre, which he believed should not be situated on the border, but in the heart of the new shopping centre and around the public square. He pleads for accessibility - a centre for all layers of the population with a large degree of openness, and a combination of cultural functions, all with the emphasis on experiment. In an interview with the *Utrechts Nieuwsblad* (29 June 1968) he explains: "The music house in Utrecht must also have a very informal architecture, where you have entered before you know it. I would like it to have a fantastic café annex restaurant where you can eat and drink and at the same time see the Utrecht Symphonic Orchestra or a beat group and

where you can pass through while shopping. My focus is on the direct interrelationship between human beings: I am not into all kinds of passages, doors and other obstructions which can never be overcome by the broader public audience anyway. You need to create all possible (unclosed) spaces where anything can happen"

Frank van Klingeren (1919-1999) was one of the most radical architects of the Netherlands. He was unparalleled when it comes to giving shape to the large societal changes of the 1960s and 1970s. He summarized his mission with the word 'de-clotting'. He was all about breaking away walls; metaphorical walls such as the walls between the - in the Netherlands still very present - social pillars (social democrats, Protestants, Catholics, liberals, etc.), the walls between the young and the old, between various classes of society, etc. but also breaking away actual, constructional walls. In 1967, cultural centre *De Meerpaal* in Dronten was opened: one big glass box with diverse functions (open air theatre, market place, café, creative spaces, conference rooms, cinema, but also spaces for sports and games), all mixed together and especially: without walls. Of course, in addition to unexpected encounters and interaction between various cultural expressions, this also resulted in nuisance. On market days, it was hard to hold a conference, and during a sporting event, it was hard to understand the quieter passages as recited in the open air theatre. But Van

Klingeren regarded these troubles as an advantage: it was the beginning of a get together and quite possibly, of mutual understanding. Integration and confrontation, two sides of a lively and open society as encountered by Van Klingeren in the villages and little towns around the Mediterranean, where public life, both political/social and cultural, was not clearly divided. Whether this resulted in a nice looking building was of less interest to him; a 'smoothly functioning social mechanism' was his main concern.

You need to create all possible (unclosed) spaces where anything can happen ...

In Utrecht, he did not succeed in his goal. The city was not very enthusiastic, "I don't get this at all. I fail to see how a music centre can function without differentiation at least." Drawings were never made, the plan never went beyond an ideological concept. A few months after the interview, he got involved in a car crash and was unable to work for quite some years. Later, in 1974, he would build the controversial centre 't Karregat in Eindhoven, which even combined a school without walls and cultural facilities and shops.

After much struggle and alternative plans, the city of Utrecht finally got its Vredenburg music centre after a design of Herman Hertzberger. Some elements of the concept of Van Klingeren were still present; it was (originally) possible to walk past the foyer of the music halls while shopping. But it all was a watered down version of the radical integration envisioned by Van Klingeren. Today, half of this centre has been torn down in the process of building a new music building around the old concert hall. This time, also, elements of Van Klingeren's ideas have been preserved because the design concerns a collective building housing various different organizations. However, this design would nonetheless not meet with much enthusiasm from Van Klingeren: the walls between the various music organizations are solid and mark-proof, and only the foyer may allow for some mutual encounter. But the need for differentiation was anticipated well. And, for that matter, he also clearly understood that buildings are never finished, that there should always be space for changing insights. In the interview he predicts that there will naturally be future changes: "[one has to] keep another million in the pocket, so after five years you can announce that you will start some renovations in order to remove any manifest deficiencies." Maybe the city of Utrecht would have been wise to pay more attention to the words of this radical outsider in Dutch architecture. ■

Sound creeping through the streets

The hauntological city

Melvin Wevers and Pim Verlaek

Streets or landmarks guide us through the matrix of the city similar to the way the grooves of a vinyl disc guide the needle. Think of Lauryn Hill's 1998 music video "Everything is Everything" where New York City is transformed into a gigantic record, with a needle amplifying the street surface into the song's rhythm. When the DJ scratches the record, the streets are moved back and forth - shuffling the movements of passersby. The multitude of dynamic grooves that exist within modern day cities are often constructed upon visual and physical markers.

The work of the German sound artist Christina Kubisch augments the visual and physical make up of the city with both audible and inaudible sound. For the Impakt Festival 2010 she has created an audio walk through the city of Utrecht. Participants are equipped with customised headphones that are able to turn electromagnetic vibrations into audible sound. As people follow her route, the plethora of different sounds the city sustains are exposed. The immense impact of sound on the experience of the city becomes apparent.

The character of a city is regularly defined by its architectural style, its culinary tradition, and last but not least the personalities of its inhabitants. Sound, one of the main contributors of the character of a city, is regularly omitted from this list. The perception of space is predominantly determined by the aural characteristics of a location. Moreover, one could envision the dynamic nature of a city as a cesspool of vibrations. Sound does not always have a clear origin, but its origin always lies in a past that is still haunting the matrix city. Sound is creeping through the streets, canals, buildings, and crevices of the city as a ghostly entity.

These eerie vibrations of sound are not only markers of old times, but also of the present times through the existence of new technologies, such as wireless Internet signals or the electronic security gates at shops. The assemblage of old and new alters our auditory perception of the city. This tension between the past and the present is inscribed in the notion of the *hauntological*. This concept has been developed by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida to describe the existence of the *specter* - neither a being nor a non-being. Derrida compares the specter to the *undead*, as the concrete anticipation of death: a state of which it is not certain when it will come, especially since death might have already passed the present. If one would draw a parallel to sound, the spectral character of sound makes it difficult to determine whether the sound's origin lies in the past or in the present. As the sound produced by the old and the new are difficult to separate, a feeling of uncanniness presents itself.

A past that is haunting our hearing

One could draw a parallel between the hauntological and the

sound of the city. As the city alters, buildings cease to exist or shift in function, while in the meantime vibrational forces of old times still resonate. Artist within musical genre cultures such as Hypnagogic Pop, Chill Wave, and Hauntology, deal with these processes. In their work they are not simply trying to reconstruct a mythologized time past that is not to be reclaimed. They communicate that the past has always been spectral, in other words never existent and never non-existent. As we live in a time where the past has and still is *saturating* the present, it becomes apparent that there is no clear origin that could function as retro. In other words, there exists no such thing as a clearly circumscribed past; the past always comes from another preceding past. Following the hauntological, there is no past that is not of the ghostly kind.

By adding the sonic hauntological to the matrix city, one is problematising the linear socio-cultural development of the city. By either thinking of the city as a modernist project, or by trying to reclaim the past through post-modern notions of retro - the notion of progress is either clearly linear or nihilist. Instead of envisioning the city as a dead-end street, the hauntological move of seeing time in its spectral multidimensionality equips inhabitants with tools to speculate about a future that is neither nihilist nor nostalgic. Instead, the lens of hauntology allows one to perceive the sonic urban landscape within a hazy temporality. This results in seeing the city as an object disjointed in time. Demarcations between center and periphery, between foreground and background sounds become contorted. What appears is time out of place, an uncanny presence that oscillates between the old city structures and the new technological currents.

Urban shamans

There are those who turn to tour guides and *urban planners* for itineraries through the city. We argue that by embracing the hauntological perspective one turns into an urban shaman: a facilitator of new perceptions of the city through an altered reverence of the vibrational currents in the city. Urban shamans strive to capture the city's hauntological presence through the technological uncanny. Kubisch does so by the amplifying electromagnetic signals, while others turn to lossy media such as VHS and cassette tapes. Their use of the technological uncanny presents us with the spectral characteristics of the matrix city. As a result, we are able to not only discern between signals and noise, but also to sense possibilities of a more nuanced view of the city not stagnated in noise or preoccupied with the rustic remembrance of the past. The hauntological citizen is equipped with a novel urban consciousness and sonic literacy. ■

New summer of love

John Thackara

A new crop of establishment reports pour cold water onto *high-tech*, high-gloss, high-complexity urban futures. A new report from *Lloyds Insurance*, for example, predicts diminishing energy security for rich countries. 'We are heading towards a global oil supply crunch and price spike' the report states, in which 'energy infrastructure will become increasingly vulnerable'. It looks as if the energy crisis and the financial crisis could be feeding off each other. One respected financial blogger, Stoneleigh, describes the hydrocarbon epoch we're in now as a 'fleeting interlude in history' and anticipates a 'net energy cliff' and accompanying deflation in the years not too far ahead.

Many people assume that 'green tech' will save our high entropy lifestyles as oil and gas become less abundant. But resource constraints also pose hard questions for *high tech* urban scenarios. Rare earth metals essential to the production of green tech – hybrid cars, mobile phones, thin layer photovoltaics, lithium-ion batteries, synthetic fuels, among others – are running short. According to the EU's *Raw Materials Initiative*, we are approaching Peak Antimony, Peak Cobalt, Peak Gallium, Peak Germanium, Peak Indium, Peak Platinum, peak Palladium, Peak Neodymium and Peak Tantalum. Otherwise stated: we might be able to manufacture solar panels, or electric cars, but there won't be enough rare minerals to make both.

The bigger problem is that these discontinuities – in terms of climate, financial systems, and resource flows – are so *unpredictable*. We face an array of so-called 'wicked problems' that are simultaneously complex, contingent, uncertain, and urgent. A single-vision, top down approach to design and planning simply does not work in the face of this uncertainty. A somberer-than-thou new mood articulated by Clive Hamilton in *Requiem for a Species*. 'It's too late to avert catastrophic change' Hamilton insists; 'our politics and institutions are too dysfunctional to make elegant adaptations. We'd better prepare ourselves for surviving as best we can.'

Surviving as best we can

What does 'surviving as best we can' mean in an urban context? The new watchword is 'adaptive resilience' – a condition in which society, and its citizens, learn how to adapt, and respond to change, continuously. In this situation, the design focus evolves from the delivery of large-scale, hard-wired solutions, towards a focus on resource ecologies and a re-skilling of the citizenry. In this context, writing reports, proposing policies, and designing plans, are no substitute for taking practical action in our daily lives. Otherwise stated: You can't eat information. What works best in a complex context is to devise a potential solution, implement it, at least in prototype, and watch what it reveals about the problem itself through the changes it effects.

This inverts the normal flow of design thinking. When it comes to *wicked* problems, a solution must come before the problem. States Horst Rittel, who first coined the term, 'solutions to *wicked* problems are not right or wrong, merely better, worse, good enough, or not good enough'.

Another *wickedness* expert, Valeria Brown, points out that this welter of perspectives, ideas and meanings is 'not self-integrating'. Looking a bunch of different people in disciplines in a room won't deliver progress. Tackling wicked problems, she concludes, is 'like herding cats'.

Integrated participative changing processes

Cat herding is untypical, to put it mildly, of the design processes that have governed city design until now. But these are hardly typical times, and new approaches to co-creation are springing up. In his new book *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* Adam Kahane explores why it is that some groups of people manage to solve such complex problems, while others stumble or fall. For twenty years Kahane has worked around the world on many tough and vital urban and social challenges: food security, health care, economic development, judicial reform, peace making, climate change.

'A challenge is dynamically complex when cause and effect are interdependent and far apart in space and time; such challenges cannot successfully be addressed piece by piece, but only by seeing the system as a whole.'

A challenge is socially complex when the actors involved have different perspectives and interests; such challenges cannot successfully be addressed by experts or authorities, but only with the engagement of the actors themselves.'

And a challenge is generatively complex when its future is fundamentally unfamiliar and undetermined; such challenges cannot successfully be addressed by applying "best practice" solutions from the past, but only by growing new, "next practice" solutions.'

source: *Power and Love, A Theory and Practice of Social Change*, Adam Kahane

Our two most common ways of trying to address social challenges, Kahane writes, are the extreme ones of aggressive war, and submissive peace. Neither of these ways works. 'We can try, using our guns or money or votes, to push through what we want, regardless of what others want—but inevitably the others push back. Or we can try not to push anything on anyone—but that leaves our situation just as it is'. Kahane's book explores a way that is neither war, nor peace, but collective creation. 'To co-create new social realities, we have to work with two distinct fundamental forces that are in tension: power and love' (my emphasis). Kahane draws on definitions of power and love suggested by the theologian Paul Tillich. Tillich defines power as "the drive of everything living to realize itself, with increasing intensity and extensity." Power in this sense is the drive to achieve one's purpose, to get one's job done, to grow. Tillich defines love as "the drive towards the unity of the separated." Love in this sense is 'the drive to reconnect and make whole that which has become or appears fragmented'.



Secret Garden Party 2010 (photo: Danny North)

The love practitioners

This notion of love as the 'drive to reconnect' has nourished an emerging infrastructure of *next-generation* Institutes. They organize events and deploy "social technologies" with the common aim of raising awareness and enable collective action. The *Presencing Institute*, for example, deploys a process called "*Theory U*" as part of its drive to create a "*Global Awareness Based Action Research University*". Otto Scharmer, who conceived *Theory U*, runs workshops around the world in which mixed groups 'co-sense and co-create positive change'. Another newcomer, the *Elos Institute* in Brazil, is a social non-profit organization founded in 2000 by a group of urban planners and architects. Its purpose is 'to propel the movement to make the world we all dream a reality, now.' *Elos* runs a collaborative game called Oasis that 'awakens and enhances communities through rapid and high impact

actions.' These typically involve NGOs, local government, and people from adjacent other neighbourhoods of the city. A cross between an architectural *charette*, and an Amish-style barn-raising, Oasis games typically end with a square, a park, a day care centre or a cultural centre being built there and then. Then there's an *Alia Institute*, based in Halifax Nova Scotia, whose leadership-development model blends intensive skill-building modules facilitated by pioneers in their fields, mindfulness meditation, creative process, and plenary dialogues. These and other institutes intersect with a network called *Art of Hosting*. This global community of practitioners uses "integrated participative change processes", maps, and planning tools "to engage groups and teams in meaningful conversation, deliberate collaboration, and group-supported action for the common good".

Down and dirty

If the plethora of new-agey buzzwords used by these new insti-

tutes makes you nervous, join the club. The timeliness and value of their work makes sense, but their arcane language, and an insistent focus on the word "leadership", gives this institutional arm of the love movement a whiff of cultishness. In the broader culture, the love bug takes lighter forms. I've hung out with a bunch of smart and energetic twenty-somethings this summer; they seem equally at home running Oasis games with troubled communities, and hanging out at wild festivals such as Secret Garden Party (see picture above). This new love generation is well aware of the challenges that survival will pose to us all in the times ahead. But they seem determined to have fun confronting them. Their positive energy complements the work of the serious new age institutes beautifully.

But as I said at the top, you can't eat words. And skilled facilitation, however empathic and artful, is a means to an end – not the end in itself. Practical skills are an essential part of the mix. This focus on practical preparation explains the rapid growth of the Transition Movement. The transition model 'emboldens communities to look

peak oil and climate change squarely in the eye' and addresses the question: 'for all those aspects of life that our community needs in order to sustain itself and thrive, how are we going to rebuild resilience in response to peak oil, and drastically reduce carbon emissions in response to climate change?' The core activity of a Transition Town is Energy Descent Action Planning (EDAP). Rob Hopkins, who developed the process and founded the movement, describes the capacity of a community to embark on an EDAP as "resilience."

On a smaller scale, but no less down-and-dirty, I especially like the sound of Radical Urban Sustainability Training (RUST) in Albany, New York. This intensive course touches on cleaning contaminated soils using plants, fungi and bacteria; rainwater harvesting; aquaculture using ponds, plants, fish, algae; Worm composting and soldier flies; edible and medicinal mushroom cultivation; and so on. It's a long way from the leadership training of the new age institutes, and from the new-hippiness of the festival circuit. But we probably need all three. ■