CRITICAL PRACTICE IN AN AGE OF COMPLEXITY - AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITIQUE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

• Paper / Proposal Title:

Planetary Estrangement, SCI Fi Faux Finishes, and #Throwaway Architectures – x3 Real Projects (in response to “…can a practice be critical?”)

• Format:

Written paper + verbal presentation + screening

• Author(s) Name:

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• University or Company Affiliation:

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• Abstract (300 words):

AMENDMENT TO ORIGINAL PROPOSAL (critical perspective)

Consider the analogy of computational program to building program as an actual convergence. An online classroom, for example. In both systems, the provisional nature of “programming” frames a critical evaluation of its infrastructure with regard to time. The accelerating nature of these digital or mixed reality programs (office, classroom, theater, etc.) can be misconstrued as program itself and result in physical architectures which are indiscriminate and ineffectual. This practice of generalization is a referendum that pits the slowness of architecture against the uncertainty of technological speed. Ultimately, the process adversely marks buildings through its erosion of context in lieu of rapid and superficial content consumption. “We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning”. 1
Generalized objectives derived from an accelerated digital programming of buildings result in an architecture which is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere; an anonymous condition that contemporary internet culture terms #throwaway.

The work that follows supports rapidly evolving architectural programs, often digitally derived, through prototypical physical infrastructures. The physical consequence of these infrastructures looks to structural and material research for opportunities to conspire or collaborate with “programming” in a localized, grounded way. The resulting oscillation between object and subject becomes the objective for these infrastructures as they both facilitate and influence use by virtue of being a distinct place.

The intention of this proposal is to present these works through this aforementioned critical theme, and in response to your inquire “…can practice be critical”.


1/ Deep Space Maine (off grid writer’s cabin) – rural Maine, USA

Deep Space Maine is a writer’s cabin which assumes a role within the speculative literary works it aims to facilitate. This creative agency is derived from the mutation of unorthodox Northern Michigan vernacular architectures toward science fiction themes of “de-familiarizing the familiar”. When coupled with an off grid deep woods situation, the result is an otherworldly connection to our world, earth.

2/ Manistique Block Club Movie Terrarium (off grid theater + greenhouse) – Detroit, MI

MBC Movie Terrarium is a neighborhood infrastructure which occupies a vacant lot in South East Detroit. This prototypical mash-up collapses distinction between humans, nature, and artifice into what eco-theorists term a hybrid condition or “technonature”. By day this structure facilitates plant growth and by night PV powered projectors beam a low light looping documentary of neighborhood elders onto the plants and graphic terrarium walls.

3/ #Throwaway Auditorium (2018 Venice Architecture Biennale / satellite) – Detroit, MI > Venice, Italy

#Throwaway Auditorium is a project commissioned by the GAA Foundation as an adjacent offsite to the 2018 Venice Architectural Biennale, housed in a renaissance palazzo. This project has a financial incentive to reduce weight and ship one-way, and therefore incorporates ephemerality and disposability as an infrastructural logic. The compostable structure is made from papiér maché paste derived from my university recycle stream which is then combined with lavender and dried into a smell-good structural skin. The structure integrates automotive speaker technology to present a soundscape of local audio recordings.
• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Aaron Jones is a registered architect, illustrator, and fabricator based in Detroit, MI. Aaron produces experimental theaters, pop-up structures, and critical writing in collaboration with leading creative professionals and organizations around the world. He holds a Master of Architecture from Cranbrook Academy of Art and was a fellow at the Centre d’Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis, sponsored by the US Dept. of State. Since 2011 Aaron has practiced on Detroit’s east side as co-founder of Talking Dolls studio and simultaneously taught at the university level at Lawrence Technological University’s College of Architecture and Design. Accomplishments include work with The Storefront for Art and Architecture (NYC), the Goethe Institut (Johannesburg), On The Boards (Seattle), 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale, and the BEMIS Center for Contemporary Art. Recently, Aaron participated in the 2017 Biennale Internationale Design St. Etienne and served as visiting architect at Cranbrook Academy of Art.