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

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Re-Visiting Utopia: Using Digital Technology to Create Moments of the Ideal

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Written paper

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• Abstract (300 words):
Since the end of critical theory there has been a determined withering of utopian speculations. The rise of digital architecture seemingly reinforced the preference of ‘innovation’ over ‘theory’. The projective stance as described by Somol and Whiting and underlined by Speaks left little space for the future in a condition that prioritized a perpetually marching present.

This paper argues that the position of utopia vis-à-vis digital discourse is not mutually exclusive, and that digital architecture increasingly offers a place to experience moments of the ideal. It explores how digital architecture might implicate utopian moments, and how these moments might augment our current experiences. If we consider a step back from computation towards digital and virtual exploration, architecture can once again carve space for utopian thinking. These speculations are not only representations of what a future might look like, but also an experience of what this future might be. As digital-place becomes more convincing, digital-technology
more seamless, and digital-process more integrated, the innovations so lauded by present architectural procedures might offer subversive opportunities to re-visit, and simulate new speculative ideas. In turn, these moments frame utopian fragments that reinforce our identity, and our experience of place. This immersion, while temporary, will blur the boundary of the virtual, real, digital and ideal to form individual, local utopias.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):
Johan Voordouw is an Assistant Professor at the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism and a registered architect (ARB, UK). His work has been extensively published and exhibited including the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna, International Architecture Biennale in Rotterdam, Royal Academy Summer Show London and the Venice Architecture Biennale. He completed his graduate studied at the Bartlett School of Architecture, London and his undergraduate studies at the University of Manitoba. Johan’s research interests include: digital design practice, new modes of architectural representation, and its connection to fabrication and emerging theoretical discourse.