URBAN ASSEMBLAGE: THE CITY AS ARCHITECTURE, MEDIA, AI AND BIG DATA.

• Proposal Title:
Chocolate teapots and Swiss cheese: Revisiting yesterday’s Virtual House to design better homes for tomorrow

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• Abstract (300 words):

“Never before have the technological, economic, and social changes around us occurred so rapidly or been so destabilizing. Virtualization itself represents the essence, the cutting edge of the mutation that is taking place. As such, virtualization ... manifests itself as the very process of humanity's "becoming other", its heterogenesis.” (Levy, 1998, p.16)

In 1999, celebrated theorist Vilem Flusser’s essay “With as many holes as Swiss cheese” offers an etymology of the domestic dwelling. He speculates on the future House as the walls become perforated by holes for wires to penetrate, allowing information to flow between public and private. He argues that this increasing porosity demands a new approach to interpersonal relations through the production of a new kind of ‘technological house’.
The 19/20 edition of the ANY (Architecture New York) Journal 1998 was entitled ‘The Virtual House’ it brought together world-renowned philosophers (including Rajchman) and architects (including Leibskind, Herzog and de Meuron and Eisenman) to speculate on and discuss the potential nature of such a construction through a series of competition entries.

Now, almost 25 years later the pandemic has thrust us into this state of virtuality as we scramble to simulate our everyday lives from our homes via our computer screens. On the 23rd March 2021 the sale of the first NFT digital house in the world ‘Mars House’ by Krista Kim marked the start of our immersion into the virtual.

This presentation will revisit the theories of Levy, Rajchman and Flusser, examining the history of the virtual house in order to try and understand the conditions and context of this precarious present. It will also investigate examples of architecture and design practice situated within the field of ‘Home Futures’ for clues to help us understand, design our future virtual house.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Peter Maloney is a Senior Lecturer in Interior and Spatial Design at CCW, University of the Arts London. He studied at Chelsea School of Art, Central St Martins and London College of Communication. He has worked across design disciplines from Architectural Glass to Virtual Reality producing outcomes for prestigious clients. He has exhibited and presented work at The Barbican, BFI, Tate Britain, Tate Liverpool, ICA, RIBA, The Architecture Foundation, The National Gallery, The Art School, Chicago and the Ars Electronica Centre in Austria.

He was part of a research project that presented the Virtual Reality and the Gallery conference at the Tate Gallery in 1994. In 2017 as part of the Digital Maker Collective he organised four Virtual Reality Symposia, at the Tate Modern, bringing together industry and research experts to discuss Virtual Histories, Virtual Economies, Virtual Bodies and Virtual Spaces.

In 2018 he was commissioned to make work for the New Horizons: Beyond 2001 exhibition celebrating 10 years since the opening of the Stanley Kubrick Archive at UAL and 50 years since Kubrick’s film, 2001: a Space Odyssey. His teaching research and practice explores the critical relationship between new technologies and spatial practices through speculative methods.