HERE’S THE STORY

After editing, producing and at times forcibly coercing 15 issues of PRAXIS into existence, we thought it was time to change our approach, if only for an issue. For fourteen years we have debated, discussed, indeed agonized over virtually every word and image on every page—not to mention the relation between the words and images—and it seemed a good opportunity to radically change our M.O. We invited Ana Miljacki as a guest co-editor, partly because of her interest in the idea of architectural narratives-—which had been floating around our editorial meetings for a few years—and partly as a way to bring her intelligence back into the Praxis fold after a two-issue hiatus from a role as project editor. Ana brought to bear not only her expertise on the topic of architectural storytelling, but a mandate that the issue be an“unmediated”one. That is, that the articles—(each a kind of) story(ies) (in their own right)-- stand as autonomous tales: without introductions, without captions, without intensive image editing. The emphasis on storytelling as particular form of narrative created a unusual, radically different, and indeed “special” Praxis—one without buildings, but which, we would argue emphatically, does not lack architecture.

The special edition, then, contains a collection of “True Stories” told by architects that amount to a compilation of narrative techniques (fiction, comic, storybook, film). Missing are the conventional architectural representations or tropes that usually fill the pages of Praxis: plans, sections, renderings, detail drawings, photographs. Nor will the reader find our standard article layout, with spreads carefully orchestrated and curated to educe particular aspects of a project, or frame a portion of the design process. This is how Praxis tells the story of a project, and it involves many months of editorial teeth-gnashing, back and forth with architects and our designer, tweaks and modifications. Instead, this issue we’ve relinquished control and allowed the authors tell the stories themselves. so we hear their voices, rather than ours so as to focus on contemporary storytelling techniques across a range of methodologies.

As we collected material four narratives types emerged post-facto: the novel, the comic, the storybook and the film. While architects tell stories in other ways these four resonated with the most contemporary and experimental work we found, and with genres already familiar to us. Each of these storytelling methods forms a part of our everyday, non-architectural lives, but when deployed in the context of the design disciplines produces a new way of <producing architecture, designing?>

While conceptually we <met our goal> of the work unmediated, the mere translation of any story into the standardized print of a journal required some manipulation. As narrative types, the comics and storybooks combine both text and image on the page, and thus remain relatively close to a normative architectural journal article, even if the representations themselves are far from the conventions of architecture. Wes Jones’s Nelsons—return to life after a long hiatus following their ANY demise—made popular and possible the comic form as an aspect of architectural critique. Lai and Shima’s work simultaneously adopt and reference the conventions of architectural representation plans and sections in their storytelling while simultaneously critiquing them in the stories the representations tell. Keith Krumwiede’s story submits the contemporary developer suburbia to the formal principles of the founding fathers' idealism, with plans of the absurd and totalizing Freedomland, assembled from developer homes.

The films and videos became the most challenging stories to translate and justify their presence in print. As Bruce Mau’s ciné-roman La Jette captures a film of still images that becomes the book, MOS's movie in print attempts to translate the temporality of the slow caress and allow the reader to focus on the narrative drama. Printed on high gloss paper, with a black background, this and the other film articles use different approaches to incorporate this non-architectural medium into print. While the videos that accompanied MoMA Foreclosed Exhibition in attempts to make information about the architecture or its design process accessible to a wider audience MOS is using film as story of the architecture itself

In some respects, the articles farthest from the allegedly architectural are the ones that we’ve characterized as “novels,” articles that conjure up images rather than actually employing them. What can these tell us about architure? Not sure what to say here…

Conclusion?

what did we learn? (either as editors working in this different way or from the material itself?) what is our take-away from this issue Tell me more. ;)