HERE’S THE STORY

After editing, producing and at times forcibly coercing every issue of PRAXIS into existence over the last fourteen years, we thought it was time to try a different approach. We invited Ana Miljacki as a guest co-editor to help us break our own mold, partly because of her interest in architectural narratives—a topic which had been floating around our editorial meetings for a few years—and partly to lure her intelligence back into the Praxis fold after a two-issue hiatus from her role as project editor. To this issue, Ana brought not only expertise on the topic of architectural storytelling, but also a mandate that the issue be an“unmediated”one. That is, she insisted that the articles—each its own architectural story—stand as autonomous tales: without introductions, without captions, without intensive image editing. The emphasis on storytelling as particular form of narrative created an unusual, radically different, and indeed “special” Praxis—one without buildings, but which, we would argue emphatically, does not lack architecture.

The special issue, then, contains a collection of “True Stories” told by architects. 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 layout, with spreads carefully orchestrated and curated to educe particular aspects of a project, or frame a portion of the design process. Instead, we relinquished control to our contributors, allowing them to author their own stories in their own voice. The stories they tell employ a range of contemporary storytelling techniques. that emerged post-facto into four identifiable types: the novel, the comic, the storybook and the film. While by no means a definitive list(yuck?), these four categorizations resonated with the contemporary, experimental work that we found, as well as with familiar extra-disciplinary genres and allowed us to conceptualize graphically and xxxx how to represent them in the space of this journal. 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, representing. Expressing generating architecture, architecture, designing? I have no idea what you’re getting at here>

Although conceptually an unmediated issue, the translation of any story into a standardized journal format requires some manipulation. As narrative types, the comics and storybooks combine both text and image on the page, and in this context remain relatively close to a normative architectural journal article, even if the representations themselves are far from traditional architectural conventions. Wes Jones’s Nelsons—resurrected after a long absence following their ANY demise—made popular and possible the comic form as an aspect of architectural critique (but do we need to say something abou the form of the article?). Lai and Shima’s work adopts and references plan and section drawings—in their storytelling, while simultaneously self-concsiously referencing those drawing conventions in the stories they tell.

The films and videos posed the greatest challenge to translate into print. As Bruce Mau’s ciné-roman La Jette captures a film of still images that becomes the book, this print version of MOS’s Romance of Systems attempts to capture 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 the MoMA Foreclosed Exhibition are almost documentary in format, explaining the project or the process of its making, MOS’s films stand as a fictional story of the architecture as protagonist. itself

The stories we categorized as “fictions” seem farthest from conventional architectural storytelling methodologies as they conjure images rather than actually employing them. Keith Mitnick appropriates the form of the novel as an architectural trope, while FKAA, in a more blatant act of appropriation, bordering on plagiarism, offer architectural strategies for “argumentation” so the article becomes a fiction about crafting fictions.

Mark Wigley once described architectural theory as a kind of “storytelling.” arguing that all architects—and ultimately all architecture—was a form of storytelling, Students are trained to tell stories about their buildings, (once more thing here about critics,) and buildings are “megaphones” telling their own stories. Underlying Wigley’s polemic was a desire to assert theory as a practice equal to building, to legitimize the emergent field of architectural theory, and to challenge the burgeoning ossification of the theory/practice (we might say writing/building) divide, calling for a more fluid definition and operation of both. (Need one more thing here about what he is doing and how he was doing it…) Almost twenty years later, with a re-emergence of architectural narrative in a vastly altered disciplinary landscape, what questions do these stories now provoke? For certain, today, we can tell the story of how we have partially arrived at a disciplinary moment when the theorists aren’t simply telling stories about architecture, and buildings are no longer trying to tell stories about themselves. The stories have become the architecture. (suggest that somewhow have not met exceeded—or perhaps circumvented—wigley’s provocation? Not longer need the architecture…?)