Rare New Species II
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WILD
Introduction

The second installment of Rare New Species situates itself within a global condition: any kind of cultural material triggers a wild multiplicity of connections of various materials, from people, to machines to asignificant and abstract entities. Their total coherence is no longer relevant, neither is their origin or significance, but what counts is the universal and instant retrieval of an information ocean, that compresses time–since time began–directly and brutally.

This new epidemiological realm is supported by the automatic, abstract, non-visible and machinic processes of a pure technological nature that now silently governs our societies. Humans are now part of large entities formed by amalgams of things: from other humans, machines and biological entities in which we are now not necessarily the centrepiece nor anymore the priority in these processes. This causes multiple frictions between our biologically-based selves and the non-stop technological and dark nature of the technological compounds to which we belong.

Furthermore, for the first time ever the construction of subjectivity and the processes of valorisation are the main target of the processes of production, and have expanded the production of tools and commodities to aesthetics and cultural materials, in which their value has a volatile, fragile and fleeting nature. Such an environment to which human societies are now subjected and living within and provides Dip5 the impetus to design new constructed entities; and to expand upon classical understandings of context, to propose wild notions of collectivity and publicness that exist as both physical and virtual natures.

As previous years, Rare New Species II will be supported by The Consortium of Fantastic Ideas--the creative laboratory that addresses emerging and extraordinary situations--that is stubbornly obsessed with the present, as a moment that collapses present, past and future moments and rejects any kind of nostalgia.

Forms of the Collective

Let us cast our minds back almost 2,400 years: Aristotle’s view of the city was established in the first two chapters of Politics as the meeting point for the various oikoi, for people from different places and families. The process of creation of the first cities is defined as synoikismos, literally, the process whereby different oikoi would form a city by deciding to live together to provide mutual protection and assistance. Cities then became a gathering of people who were not the same or similar, but who accepted they had to coexist under the same system of rules, in reciprocal equality. More than a physically complete thing, the city was a tacit and ongoing process of negotiation and interaction, agreement and disagreement. However, putting aside this concept of the origins of the city and its potential relevance today, modern urban environments are in no way close to functioning as peaceful and harmonious melting pots of diversity in which social identity is built upon equal participation between different elements. Urban agglomerations are not only home to difference, but also host and provoke violence, conflicts and inequality. Consensus and equitable participation are only two of the possible scenarios that can arise from the dispute between different ways of life. Control, marginalisation and violence are others, as is the creation of elective communities, such as social groups or subcultures, which argue against mainstream cultural structures through style and the public exposure of alternative ways of life. Both direct forms of negotiation and interaction (for example, urban revolts of discontent) and mediated or indirect forms (public exposure of alternative aesthetics) are extreme examples of the range of potential manifestations of the constant public redefinition of social constructs.

Public space ceases to be mechanically associated with emptiness (as opposed to the built-up urban fabric), or with free and universal access, and becomes the space for a collision between dominant cultures and new practices that are attempting to discuss them. The process of being together physically and sharing space, while at the same time collectively building the scene through public interaction, becomes a process of constantly reviewing and reformulating identity for a given society, and therefore for the city itself. The pieces that make up the city work as incubators of alternative ways of approaching the world, promoting public dissidence and difference and embracing and inducing alternative lifestyles removed from the passive models of consumption. As a phenomenon of intermediation, public space is then defined not only by the architecture that contains it, but also by the actions of users and of the people who inhabit it: it becomes a meeting place for people and objects of all classes and origins – humans, non-humans, biotic materials, physical and virtual technologies – all in constant interaction.

There are a limited number of physical spaces within this special category. Usually associated with cult and religion, they have a public condition that extends far beyond the basic sphere of human activity, attaining a higher state through being invested with a set of meanings by a concrete social group. In many cases this ‘publicness’ is generated not only by a series of activities or rituals but by the meaningful use of certain features – language, ornamentation, materiality, iconography, the role of the objects – which evokes the beliefs or values that are shared among the group. Consequently, these are not universal and generic, but aesthetically and culturally grounded spaces.

Public Wilderness

Nature provided the source for literacy in the beginning of our species when it was realised that the world was patterned and it varied seasonally; that animals and plants lived and died; that there was a presence or absence of water. As our species became adept at understanding and forecasting nature so changed our relationship to it. Crop cultivation, animal domestication, river diversion and irrigation came as products of new knowledge about nature which then lead to the idea of constructing permanent habitation. Architecture itself is a product of the control of nature.

Antiquity’s mythical accounts on nature were made way for its rational inquiry. Later advances in scientific instrumentation brought both conceptual changes in the understanding of nature, but also newfound skepticism that nature was not what it seemed through the human eye. Nature no longer was defined by perceptible qualities such as color and sound but as equations and laws. The purpose of inquiry into nature went from a mere acquisition of knowledge to an abstract inquiry meant for fashioning nature according to wants and desires.

In this light we can see the ecological predicament between us and nature has having naturally evolved out of our continuous cultural evolution.

“Rare New Species II” is concerned with public space that could be mistaken for wilderness. We see that the evolution of the understanding of nature has ended in our desire to construct an artificiality that is indistinguishable from nature. Through this, wilderness is understood as
sufficiently complex artificiality (socially and materially), that produces a public space that is conceptually and spatially familiar to us as nature itself. And as interpretation of nature is never sufficient for all people in all places at all times, we’re concerned with wilderness that springs from the contents and context that create it.

An increase in the complexity of artificiality that we give birth to is a product of the tools that we use. Currently we’re are producing unprecedented complexity due to the raw power of technology that is causing large qualitative shifts in reality. The same technology has almost but eradicated the means through which we used to understand the world.

Perhaps our common notion of public space needs to be separated from its value as real estate investments and explored as recipients of meanings associated with a collectivity; as constructs that reflect a particular state of the technology or spaces of interaction; as vestiges of complex relationships in material and culture; as receptacles and means that facilitate a range of actions and associated functions. But also as receivers and emitters of critical content; as devices that exceed the mere requirement for production needs, as entities that far from being static, evolve over time.

Rare New Species

During the first semester the students will collectively develop and work in the definition of an encyclopedia of Rare Species of Buildings as a guide and manual. The spaces will be those that once constituted typological experiments based on the collective and which could be taken as close examples of a typology, of an abstract entity that brings together shared features. Each student will identify 10 public spaces throughout history and will exhaustively document them, not only from the point of view of their material, as built artificial environments describing the organizational, spatial, or tectonic conditions, but also specifying the connections with their material, social, economic and cultural contexts. Further, the public spaces should be described as manifestations of wild contexts that have resulted in configurations that could be considered Rare New Species in their respective contexts. Each student will prepare analytical drawings that will rigorously describe the conditions that make the examples belong to the category of Rare New Species and afterwards will compile the examples in a volume that will be used and constantly referred to understand historical precedents that through a certain confluence of phenomena—visible or not—came to form public space. It is required that this document be used to help with the student’s own translation from understanding wild context and phenomena to formulating collective space.

Actors

If collective space can be defined as a space of interaction in which different individuals from different backgrounds can connect and build a way of being together that accentuates or solve directly or indirectly their disputes and differences, then, before anything it is necessary to know who the actors are, who are the guests, who at the same time are subjects and objects of interaction in this changing set of interconnections. Therefore, to define that space surpassing the categories where we as humans are usually incorporated in architecture (such as client, user) or in other disciplines of knowledge or of political action (crowd, people, class...), each student has to precisely define the protagonists of this set of interactions, as a decisive step in the definition of the space of the collective. Which species will congregate each space, which groups or subgroups and their culture, which objects and technologies and meanings are embedded in them, which origin have all these actors and which technical and material culture may be associated with human groups, will be fundamental to characterize the proposal.

The Consortium of Fantastic Ideas is intensely interested in the integration of different human and non-human species as a fundamental issue for the construction of the collective, understanding that the space of interaction that we pursue is not exclusively of a human nature, but that the transformation of the environment also concerns and encompasses the field of interaction between human and other species.

Stages

The possible steps for the project can be read as both phases in development, but also stages on which to manifest/present the different and conflicting natures of every proposal. Every student is advice to follow strictly every single proposed step to accomplish the targets established by the brief and the calendar and they are advised to follow every single step. Our work will be to open new doors to the unknown which remain in a state of constant development and evolution throughout the different terms. Each student must firstly follow every single step preparing documents that respond to each of the briefs and secondly check the work over the weeks, connecting the consecutive steps each other and recreating the previously executed documents. As a necessary comprehensive task of definition of the nature of the project, it is crucial to review, develop and complete the documents for every review, pin-up and jury.

Constitution

The idea of a constitution has numerous meanings: it serves as an artifact that presides over the functioning of something but it also captures notions of the body and the bodily; what something is made up of; its volume or structure. In "Timaeus" it is described how the first constitution was written to welcome anyone wanting to live in the city with others. Every student will define throughout the year a Constitution that must define the spatial conditions, location, extreme new Umwelt to which the project is referred, purpose, social and cultural background of the

project and its location, trying to establish every single aspect of the project. Its content describes the specific aspects of the future project and must be related to abstract issues described in advance.

This set of desires, strategies, rules, conditions and puzzles will be followed by the student as an explicit agenda of the project and its redefinition will be part of the development. The content of the constitution defines the spatial conditions, climate and programme in relation to a physical place, along with any other aspect that builds the future project. This includes a discussion of abstract issues, set out with an eye to intellectual clarity and ambition. The constitution determines any feature of the project. It is not a simple description, but an initial test of the conditions to be constructed, formed out of convictions, intuitions and materials extracted from different fields of knowledge. It is a stream, an evolving list, capable of storing history and defining the main characteristics of the project while being developed. It can be defined as a proviso, a kind of contract, or a manifesto. Every single student has to adjust content and form to convert it into a form of inquiry about the project and should be subjected to permanent revision along the year. The constitution is the tool to assess the work everyday, and it will be constantly reviewed throughout the year, confronting the daily tasks with sets of rules, to redefine and critique the work. Along the year the constitution has to be gradually transformed into the final one, which shape, format and content has to reflect the final state of the project and to be converted into the basis for the oral public presentations.

**Radical Media**

The visualisation of the world and in particular the links that things establish with the world around us, is in fact the reconstruction and reenactment of that world, hence the same links that are responsible for the artificial-cum-nature paradigm, are the links we wish to use to create and visualise projects in Dip 5. These modes of visualisation are therefore inextricably linked to the nature of the project, its environment and the model of transformation of its umwelt? that it proposes. Therefore, the mode of representation and the content of the project must be necessarily linked to an argument and must be central in the understanding of the conditions of the specific context that the student has established. The documentation is therefore not indicative of the sake of producing, but it is a means to understand.

Notwithstanding the search for new visual languages must also be met with the conviction that the exploration of traditional models of content (and even format) mixed and hybridize with new technologies is a fertile territory for the desired convergence of content and media, richness and criticality. The invention of new hybrids and therefore of new Radical Media is an objective (indivisible of the quality of the proposal) for the transformation of our environment.

This year the Radical Media will pay particular attention to the forging of new visual languages given the projects are reflective of experiments of new transformations of the world around them. The attention to refining the documents and indeed the notion of “beauty” that the project proposes and must pursue the maximum conceptual rigor and the most extreme beauty. From techniques of projection but also to the transformation of our environment.

**Deep Resolution**

The term deep resolution is meant three-fold: one, resolution as a methodology to inquire with more rigour and to engender criticality; two, to adopt contemporary techniques of complex creation; and three resolution in the technical descriptions of the project for advancing a modification of reality. Deep resolution is both an enactment of procedures to necessarily complete a project, and as a platform to pursue and transmit knowledge with which to understand it.

For the Consortium there is no culture without associated techné. Therefore the techniques associated with the project are central to the advancement of the modification of reality which is the project, and act as the practical cultural knowledge with which to understand it. They are neither tools, nor resources, but culturally constructed and transmitted operational modes to reimagine again the world and to manipulate it.

Manipulation of any kind requires techniques but any kind of practical knowledge that allows us to activate both the control and the fantasy of these manipulations. Therefore, cartographic systems that allow us to physically and conceptually position ourselves, as individuals and as a society; systems of representation that help us form a mental image of the world; analytical tools to quantify reality through analog and digital systems; geometry and atmosmetry to help us measure the world and its atmosphere; and intentional manipulation of perception can be the central subject of such techniques.

For us these techniques are also cultural materials. There are no inappropriate or improper techniques. The social and cultural appropriateness of the techniques and the discussion on which technique or which combination of techniques is developed is a crucial part of the development of the project.

**Reading/Reflection**

The project’s chosen means of visualisation must at the same time embed a critical spirit and a radical message by adding layers of knowledge and new levels of understanding of the proposal. In doing so, the proposals must avoid current trends in visualisation or even inherited models. To enhance the richness of the discourse, students must—in parallel to making documents—be using reading as both an inspiration to create documents and also for grounding work with related, objective information. Reading and the extraction of meaningful content should be seen as direct impetus to make documents. The process of making documents is the time to reflect and draw precise and necessary conclusions from the reading process. It is integral that the conclusions drawn are a synthesis from reading and are thought of in light of the project’s full understanding. We will construct a living archive of visual and textual references: essays, poems, books, drawings, art, (moving-)images, websites to materialise new-found links between reading and documenting as a process of forming a critical position and simultaneously question contemporary notions of beauty.