

DREAMS

Rendering

UNFOLD

REALITIES

an act of translation

UNFOLD

DREAMS

**critique of contemporary
systems of representation**

**WALKING TO NEWHAM I ENCOUNTERED
COMPUTER GENERATED IMAGES.**

I ASKED MYSELF:

WHAT DOES THIS IMAGE WANT FROM ME?

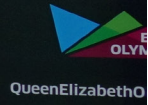






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“ The hierarchy of contemporary images is based on sharpness but also on resolution. A high resolution image looks more brilliant and impressive, more mimetic and magic, more scary and seductive than a poor one. It is more rich so to speak”

Hito Steyerl; in defense of the poor image



FISH
ISLAND
VILLAGE
HACKNEY WICK

FISH ISLAND VILLAGE
HACKNEY WICK, E3

PFABODY

THE TRAMPERY







“the language of renderings is based on preexisting images: that which have been seen before, historically or personally associated, familiar to perception and mass reproduced [...] the stock of this visual language is circumscribed by social and political conditions of the time of its production”

**Doreen Bernath, intrusive rendering
dictation of stereotypes and the extra-ordinary**



search engine tab: woman sitting png



search engine tab: man sitting png

FISH
ISLAND
VILLAGE
HACKNEY WICK

Right 
By Christopher Farrell
www.farrellart.myportfolio.com
This artwork formed part of the
original Community Hoarding
Project-run in association with
Creative Wick in 2016.

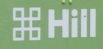
 
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FLOREN

FLOREN

FLOREN



“Algorhythmic rationality which manifests through computation is an unprecedented form of governmentally founded on managerial efficiency and legitimised by the added value of code. The speed of calculation superseeds any human speed of thought creating therefore a new “digital realism”

**Franck Comerais and Jacques Athanase Gilbert;
« Introduction. Le gouvernement des données
», Études digitales, n° 2, 2016 – 2,
Le gouvernement des données, p. 11-19**



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RENDERING: AN ACT OF TRANSLATION

Renders also known as CGIs (computer generated images) have become ubiquitous as part of the production and consumption of the built environment. Digital tools such as 2D and 3D softwares have reshaped the landscape of architectural representation for the sake of enhanced speed of production and surplus exchange value.

In contemporary architectural culture the render commonly refers to a computer generated image that make seem 'real' a building prior its construction. this kind of imagery is often used for communicative and marketing purposes satisfying a clients desires. Renders besides existing on computer screens can also be found in the physical world; best guess is in real estate brochures, on hoardings, on a A1 panel at a developers forum or on the home page of an architectural office's domain.

Renders far from being 'real' in the sense of being true are highly manipulated images and instrumentalized. they are symptomatic of the digital revolution which has transformed working processes in many professions, architecture included with the introduction of BIM technology. (Building integrated modeling)

Politics of images

In her essay in defense of the poor image, the visual artist hito steyerl depicts how the production and consumption of images in a capitalist neo liberal economy is embedded in a matrix of hierarchies:

“the neoliberalisation of culture as commodity has generated a particular hierarchy on the visual world leading to the disappearance of poor images.”

This plea in defense of the poor images depicts how neoliberalisation has reshaped the audiovisual landscape shading non commercial forms of visual imagery making “experimental and essayistic cinema almost invisible”

In the context of the renders found on mega residential developments across London (east london precisely) the visual quality of these images is similar - a deliberate attempt to imitate the “real” which succeeds so well that the image leaves in fact little space for interpretation. Like all forms of magic - the intent is to create stupefaction.

In the context of architecture

in his essay, translation from building to drawing, Robin Evans questions the act of translation which occurs in the practice and creation of architecture.

He states:

“I was struck by the peculiar disadvantage under which architects labour, never working directly with the object of their thought, always working at it through some intervening medium, almost always the drawing, whilst painters and sculptors, who might spend some time on preliminary sketches and maquettes, all ended up working on the thing itself, which naturally absorbed most of their attention and effort.” p3

His reflection continues so to suggest that from enlightenment architecture has always been communicated through visual mediums prior construction, although the status of the drawing evolved from being a functional intermediary to an image acquiring more power and becoming an end to itself. he states further on:

“ For architecture, even in the solitude of pretended autonomy, there is one unfailing communicant, and that is the drawing”

From this assertion of the “unfailing communicant” which is the drawing, Dr Doreen Bernath further enquires the nature of the render highlighting how the embodied knowledge of building and the relationship between mind and body dissolved in a chain of intermediary tools, from the instant of imagination to the realisation of the physical object. (paradoxically, the effect upon perception is reversed, whereby the perception of a building represented through a render “abolishes the distance between intention and realisation.)

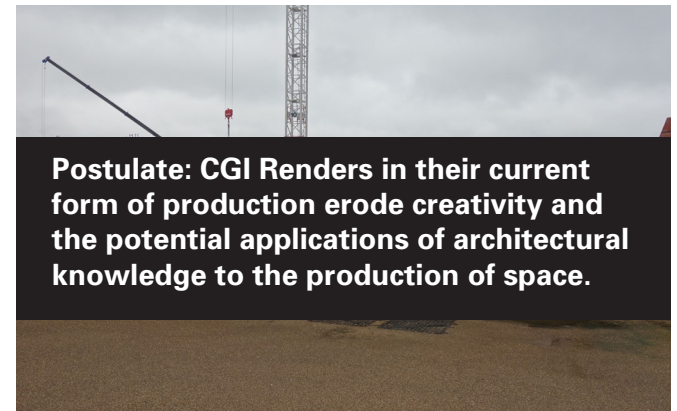
“eventually with digital technology architecture’s ardent basis in physicality began to dissolve”

Whilst digital technology has widened this distance within the process, architecture has moved from being experienced and valued physically” in its manifestation to being valued through drawings and texts.

In her essay on : “the intrusive rendering: dictation of stereotypes and the extra-ordinary” Dr Bernath’s most poignant critique to the rendered image as a commodified tool is that:

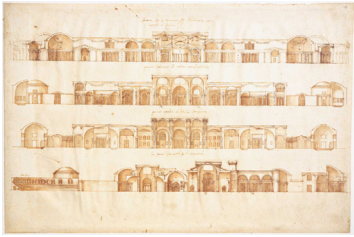
“the design represented through renderings dissolves the authority of the design as a purely intellectual enterprise”

**DO ARCHITECTURAL CGI RENDERS AND
THEIR TECHNICITY LIMIT THE SCOPE OF
IMAGINATION AND POSSIBILITIES THAT
CAN BE INVESTED IN DESIGNING A PLACE?**

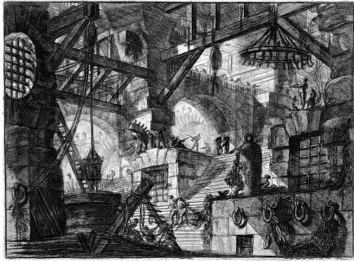


BEFORE THE CGI... A BRIEF LOOK INTO THE EVOLUTION OF RENDERS

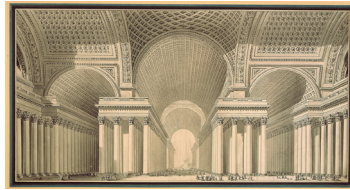
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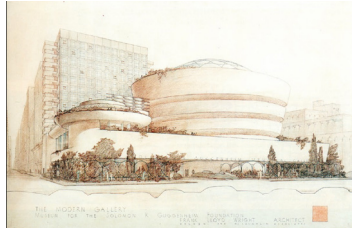
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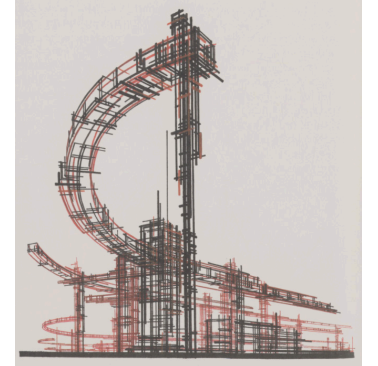
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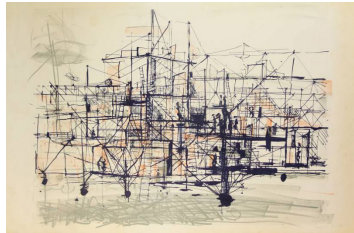
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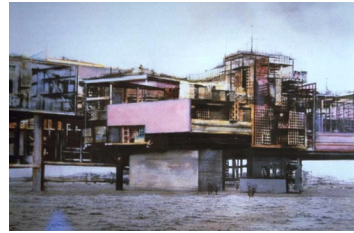
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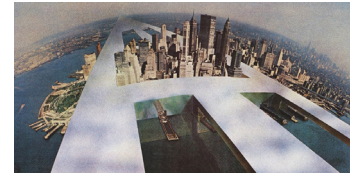
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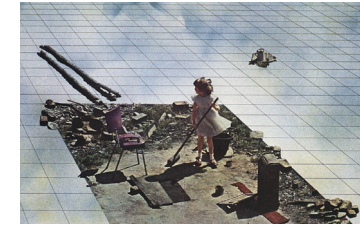
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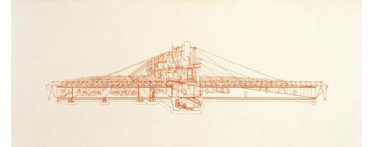
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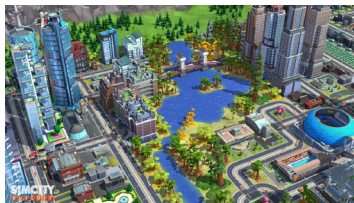
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19



01

Andrea Palladio 1508-1580

rendered lateral section- it is said the shadows were drawn by the apprentices in the studio.

02

Giovanni Battista Piranesi 1720 1778

The imaginary prisons, architectural fantasies. an influential form or representation with the use of perspective

03

Etienne Louis Boullée 1728 - 1799

metropolitan cathedral - 1782

04

Thomas Sandby 1721-1798

A hall of Magnificence, 1775

05

Joseph Michael Gandy

John Soane perspective, 1820

06

Joseph Paxton 1803 - 1865

Cross section perspective The great victorian way, 1855

07

Sydney Smirke 1798 - 1877

Design for Gallery III, Burlington House, Piccadilly, Westminster, London: perspective of gallery looking east, 1866

08

Frank Lloyd Wright 1867 - 1959

"Guggenheim," 1951, Perspective; Pencil and colored pencil on tracing paper

09

Iakov Chernikhov 1889 1951

Speculative constructivist experiments, Composition 21, 1930

10

Nieuwenhuys 1920 - 2005

The new babylon, abstract drawing

11

Nieuwenhuys 1920 - 2005

The new babylon, collage

12

Superstudio

the continuous monument 1969, collage

13

Superstudio

the continuous monument 1969, collage

14

Richard Rogers

Microprocessor factory 1984

15

Will Wright, Sim City

designed in 1989 - 2017

Build the city of your dreams, viewed between bird's eye and the isometric

16

Minecraft,

designed in 2009

a world where you can destroy and build free from all real world contingencies

17

BIG . Inventons la Métropole 2017

CGI render by tegmark (based in Romania)

18

Foster&partners + Apple,

2017

apple headquarters, cupertino , tech utopia realness, CGI render

19

Zaha Hadid architects

birds eye view, cgi render

REGARDS & WISHES

Introduction

The industry behind cgi making has considerably grown in the last decade, with resources becoming cheaper and more accessible. A parallel industry has emerged with the unique purpose of creating rendered visuals for architectural projects. In order to gain further insight into the processes of cgi making, experts in the field, visual artists as we call them, have opened a window into their own methods and shared a critical outlook on their roles within the wider construction industry.

Victor Enrich is a visual artist which has shifted from a commercial field into the artistic production of cgi images. his work depicts the doctoring which goes into image-making challenging tastefully the “realness” of an image.

Can we trust CGI's and their realist / atmospherical impression?

I would rather begin my answer with another question. Can we trust journalism when talking about something that happened far away from our location?

CGI is a tool, a marketing tool. But, above all, a subjective tool. Anyone can use it the way they consider most appropriate according to their customers' demands. And, most of the time, the end result is a blurred combination of the customer's taste and the CG artist taste, in a sort of an unspoken agreement in which both parts would feel satisfied enough. The former seeking to market their building concepts while the latter their visual skills.

So, I would rather deny the existence of a duality realistic/atmospheric. It is more of a gradient, in fact. A sea of graphic possibilities that providers must be ready to embrace in order to gain success in the industry, even though, in the end, specialization takes it all, and Cg artists are being called by their unique visual language.

How much time, cost, and labour goes into the making of an image?

Each rendering's/animation/VR production overall cost is always a sum of 2 kinds of costs: the variable costs and the fixed costs.

How much cost comes from the former and how much from the latter is defined by several factors, among which:

- 1.- Project complexity (amount of 3D polygons, large object libraries, photographic permissions etc)
- 2.- The artist skills and knowledge for the sake of a better automation of the involved processes.
- 3.- The power of the infrastructure at hand (hardware and software)
- 4.- The cost of life in the artist's location (especially office rent, utility bills)

And other minor factors, such as:

Applying amortizations of several of the above mentioned factors, especially long term investments, as well as adding up the cost of eventual 3d rendering courses or other target specific educational studies where the artist/firm employees might attend to. Making this calculation even more difficult to achieve.

An eventual detour that might simplify things up would be that the cost of an image (as the minimum undivisible 3d rendering unit available) has to be extracted by adding up all the costs of life, education & work of the artist during five years and divide the resulting amount by the total number of images/animations/VR made during

1. Project complexity

2. The artist skills and knowledge

3. The power of the infrastructure at hand

4. The cost of life in the artist's location

those same 5 years. Thus, the result would be an average. If you extend this calculation by making a survey involving artists from as many different countries of the world, you could extract a global average of the cost of one image. The question is: must the gin tonic with cucumber drunk at the downstairs pub while waiting for the rendering to be finished be included in your costs?

Note that, to make the calculation, I'm using the costs of life, education & work, not the total turnover, since the turnover includes also the profit, which has nothing to do with the cost.

For years, companies located in south America and Eastern Europe were more competitive than other ones based in the UK, US or central Europe since they enjoyed tremendously lower costs, thus affecting the global average cost of an image. Once the initial lack of confidence of, let's say, a UK firm commissioning a project to a far away CGI firm was over, the price of the image dropped to levels never seen before in the industry.

Finally, if you are managing a company you should add to the global average costs your external services (plumbing, electricity, cleaning etc) that are mandatory to properly run a studio and finally divide the new global average cost by the number of employees (including the receptionist or the IT technician) in your payroll.

What would be your main critique of render images in a commercial context?

My most poignant critique always goes to the selection of your customer base.

It's well known that the final quality of your product is not strictly related to your skills but to the quality of the customers you work for. And by customer's quality I'm not just talking about how amazing the architecture that they produce is, but also how efficient your customers are into planning their calendar in order not to transfer too much pressure to their providers or not to interfere by overloading the CG firm with too many contradictory requests. In the past, skills were a more determinant factor of quality since acquiring those skills was not an easy thing. Now, there's a global language dominating the CG industry, a language essentially set by high end firms (our influencers...) and render engine software firms (esp. Chaosgroup). Thus, making the difference just by using your skills is not enough anymore.

There's always been an ancestral complain against commercial work, which has always been criticized for being of lower quality of the "director's cut" 3d rendering. It has been, is and always be like this, since many requests coming from the CG artist are in fact out of the market. From my point of view, this complaint is total bullshit, since what dominates the scene is actually the market. So, if a cg artist is not satisfied with his own work, he'd rather start thinking to upgrade his customer base into one a higher sensitivity for his aesthetical aspirations.

In your opinion, is there much debate around CGI images and their effects in the architecture community?

The only debate that is relevant to me is how machines and automatic processes will, with time, completely substitute manual hard work. It's just a matter of time...

In the other hand, it seems to me that the only beneficiaries of the astounding amounts of 3D renderings flying over the internet today are architects, not CG artists. And this is easy to determine by visiting random architects' websites and counting how many more projects are depicted with renderings rather than by actual photos. Even sometimes in proportions of n to zero!!

CG images are useful to conceptualize architecture, thus making the latter become something more of an afterwork chit-chat rather than an actual service to society



White house abduction 2018; Victor enrich, courtesy of the artist.

DEAR VICTOR

Thank you very much for your critical response and interesting perspective on the topic.

Your first question raises the point that there should be more literacy and criticism in regards to the validity of information (all mediums included) rather than taking them for granted. We've seen this quite clearly with fake news.

Your comments have also triggered thoughts in regards to how the current economy leads to the dismantling of processes with the endless sub contractions of a project and the loss of liability. The process of automatisation of many industries has not spared architecture, and on the other hand it does enable architecture to reach a speed never precedented before.

I just had one final comment and question... You speak of taste and aesthetics which are integrant to the discipline of architecture and perhaps even more so to visual artists...

Your last line lets me think that beyond aesthetics there are ethical implications to the making of architecture as well as image making. (especially for architecture which has a real direct impact on peoples livelihoods).

Do you think cgi visual artists should develop a form of agency to make the images they produce less about the object: the building, but more about the set of relationships and forces that architecture is subject to? (in the industry context)

Thanks!

Best wishes,

Luc

Do you think cgi visual artists should develop a form of agency to make the images they produce less about the object: the building, but more about the set of relationships and forces that architecture is subject to?

DEAR LUC

Well, this is a changing world..and changes show up sooner than expected, many times in an unwanted direction, since those who can really dictate what the world is going to be have their own interests that strongly differ from those we have.

Regarding your last question, the answer is simple: if this agency were capable to find its market niche then the answer is yes, otherwise the attempt would enlarge the already full bin of good ideas. Normally, in many different industries, most of the production that involves ethics, avoiding any commercial outcome, is managed publicly (in cultural associations) or semi-publicly (as grants). I don't think they would be suitable out there, in the market, since the market's top (and only one) condition is maximum aggressiveness towards profit/optimization. (Even top firms need to commit to this rule).

In our case, however, cultural institutions, before taking a step forward into granting anyone permission to partner with for the sake of some intellectually based CGI production, need to make sure that the new potential partner embodies enough proof of past,present and future commitment to cultural production. In which case, production funds could be set, in amounts according the institution's budget.

However, this last situation is hardly possible today, since, to my knowledge, there are no agencies that work exclusively in non commercial projects. The most similar thing I have seen are these "personal" works made between projects by some high profile people. But they are most an exercise of power and skills rather than a true intellectual insight.

To this date there's not enough interest of the industry, for several reasons. The big ones re-invest most of their money in infrastructure, to be

ever more competitive while the small ones' profit is so minuscule that they'd better keep it for those periods of shortness of projects.

As a closure, let's not forget that most of the cultural institutions that we can enjoy today in the west came mostly from private initiatives, some of them becoming public (more in Europe than in the US) once they reached a certain standing point. Maybe it's time that our industry makes a first step into the creation of our first CGI dedicated cultural institution.

Regards

I don't think [some intellectually based CGI production] would be suitable out there, in the market, since the market's top (and only one) condition is maximum aggressiveness towards profit/optimization.

Interview with Alexander Hofmeier from ctrl viz, a young architectural visualisation agency based in germany, after working in architecture firms such as BIG studio, Alexander and Martin set their own architecture visualisation company.

What has led you to specialise in the production of cgi images?

Speaking for the both of us I can say that what lead us to the field of creating architectural images was our fascination for creating 3d models in our studies and continuously working in them during design processes. I think we also got influenced a lot by the offices we worked for and the way they are using images to communicate design. We started to work on our first "professional" images during our masters, when we got our first client. I think if you look at our work, one can see a difference between early and recent images.

What makes a "good" cgi image?

For me a good cgi image is very precise. Precise in observing the light, the materials and finally the whole composition. Also a very good visualisation is reduced to the minimum of different ingredients. It's focused.

How much time, cost, and labour goes into the making of an image?

The time i spend on an image depends on what it should be. If you create a very abstract one it can be 2hrs, if you want a very detailed, atmospherically well done image it takes up to 3 days including the modeling. And then you have to add the time you make corrections until your client also loves it, which can be several days again. Concluding you can say that if you have a good model, a precise idea of what you



At what stage in a design project does the cgi come to life?

want to create and a client that likes your style it can also be done in one day ;)

The costs are relatively low, as you “only” need to buy the program licenses (once) and sometimes 3d or 2d elements that you need for your scene.

Also you need a fast computer to start. So if you want a number it would be about 4k to have a decent setup.

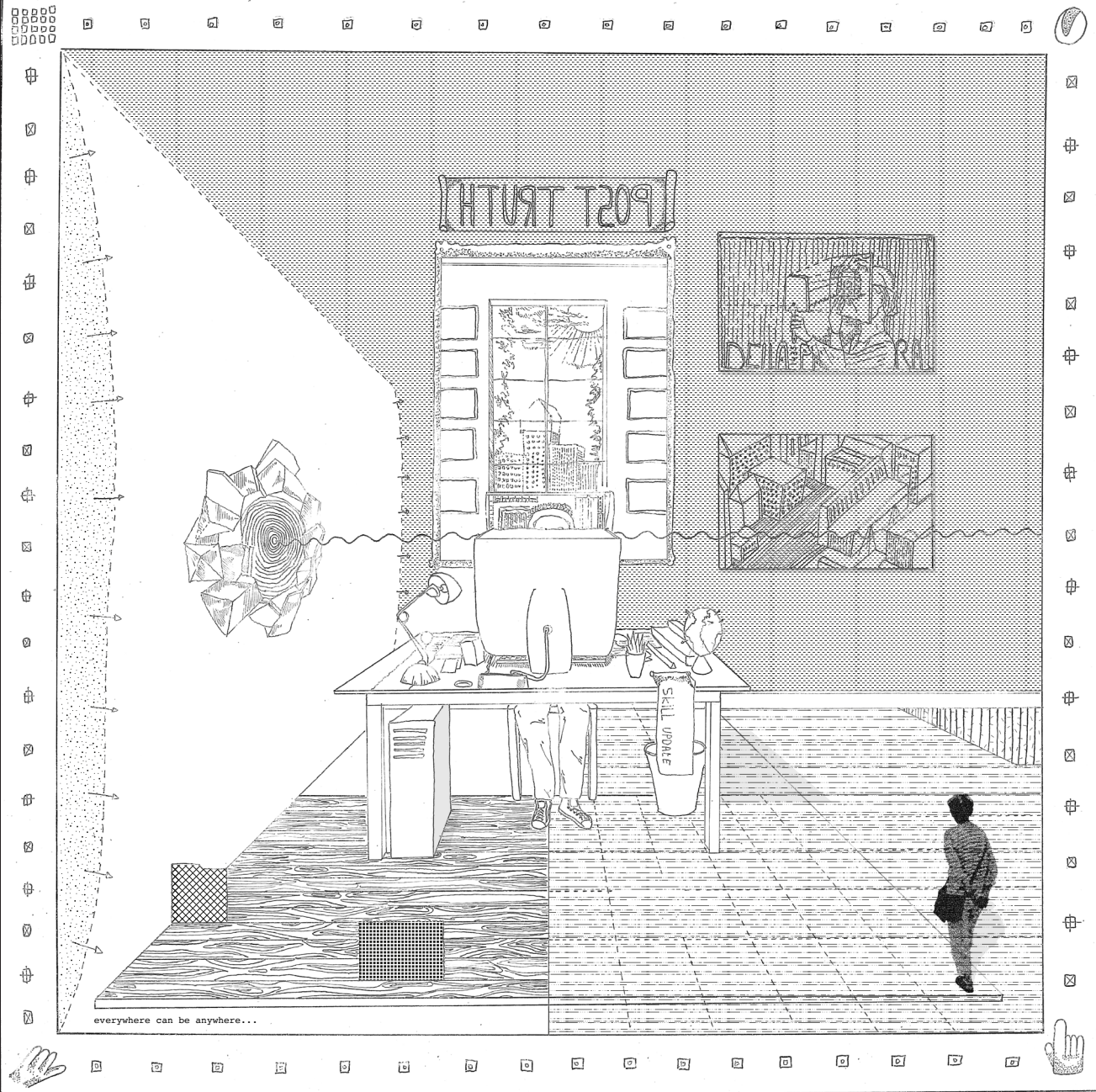
Cgi should come to life in a very early stage of design. A very important tool in cgi is the animation of natural light, which could also

have an impact on how a building will shape or orient. Of course you can make these observations on a physical model, but not that precise.

Finally, what would be your main critique towards the making of these images?

My main critique would be that many people think cgi will replace the creating of physical models, which it should not.

Also it can be misused for “tricking” atmospheres or lighting scenes. This can lead to very annoying processes in working with developers.



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Aknowledgments:

Graphic design: Amelie Scharffetter

Spetial thanks to:

Oliver Cooke, architect and Hannah Lambert, head of design at the LLDC for sharing their views on the effetcs of CGI images.

Victor Frankl and Ctrl viz for sharing their insights into the production of CGI's.