

Architectural Ghosts: Storytelling and the Urban Imaginary

ZOE LYNNE COPE

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

'Architectural Ghosts' proposes architecture as a series of eleven speculative cities that function as characters engaged in a theatrical masque set in contemporary Rome, Italy. The project challenges traditional methods of architectural preservation and memory by presenting a new way to imagine history at the intersection of narrative and architecture. 'Architectural Ghosts' seeks to qualify experiences of architecture, performance and the social imaginary as catalyzed by the urban environment.

A re-imagining of the novel *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino, this project utilizes narrative storytelling as architectural medium, method and site. The framework of the original novel was analyzed, collapsed and re-written in a contemporary context. The project offers a critique of the use of the novel in architectural education and challenges the marginalized role of women presented in both the original text and throughout much of architectural history.

Calvino's cities were metaphors for women conquered by two powerful male explorers. In this project, each city was designed and illustrated relative to site, theme and the work of a prominent female storyteller, philosopher, or architect as a way to presence their ghosts. Much of the research was oriented around unearthing the accomplishments of women engaged in a partnership wherein a male counterpart received credit for much of the work. The plot is structured by an overarching conversation between a female narrator and a male character. Desire for what her voice brings into being creates a tension that drives the entirety of the plot, representation and sequencing of architectural experiences. Eventually, it is revealed that she herself is also a city; she too is a ghost catalyzed by architectural and phenomenological experiences that imply presence.

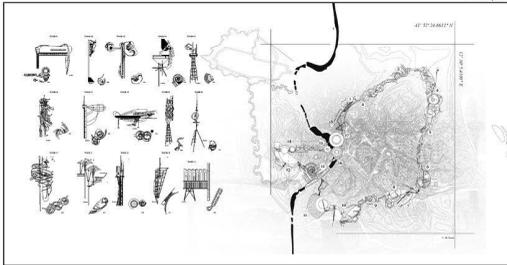
This project explores 'architectural ghosts' as allegory for the presence of the absence of presence that reveals architecture as performance. The universal gap between lived experience and representation is explored as primary function of the paradox of human desire. Literary narrative is utilized as structure for the gap of philosophical lack and as active agent for the discrete, conditional alignments that generate and inform productive encounters with the architectural imaginary. The masque, as performance between complex and layered characters, reveals the individual and collective nature of architecture, cities and the stories we tell about both.

ARCHITECTURAL GHOSTS

A Masque for the Architectural Imaginary

“Architectural Ghosts” is a re-imagining of Italo Calvino’s seminal work, *Invisible Cities*, as a proposal for eleven speculative cities that function as characters in an architectural masque deeply embedded in the historical and cultural imaginary of Rome, Italy. The project seeks to challenge conventional notions of architectural preservation through qualifying experiences of architecture and performance catalyzed by the urban environment.

Eleven Stories (210 pages), 22 Maps, 3 Films, 144 photographs, Eleven Speculative Drawings.

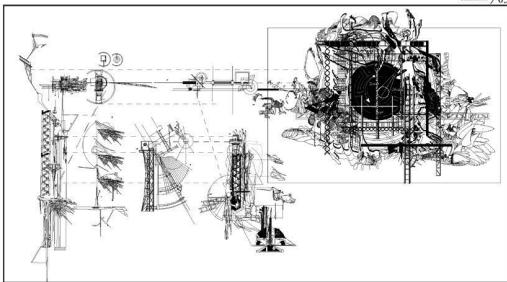


SCHEHEREZADE

The Continuous City - Mura Aurelia

The Infinite Loop 110 Hinges & Towers

1. Head & Quivers
2. Warehouse
3. Sea of Silence
4. Emotional Topography
5. Museum of Understanding
6. Transporter Pier
7. Marina Hotel
8. Preservation Facility
9. Theater & Lane
10. Convention
11. House of Walls
12. Ritual District
13. Bath House
14. Storage Chambers
15. Collection of Old Time
16. University
17. Zoned Life Force
18. Queens & Hand



HANNAH

The City of Names - Calanina Trejana

Obelisk, Tower, Labyrinth & Star

1. Inscription Switchboard
2. Platform for the Muses
3. Switchboard Hinge
4. Neoclassical Mechanism
5. Air Inaugural Tunnel
6. Roof of Features & War
7. (Red) Breaching Table
8. Mechanical Shell
9. Exterior Wing
10. Whistling Room
11. Symposium Chambers
12. Watchtower
13. Proscenium
14. Spiral Core



DENISE

City of Signs - Cinecittà

Signifier/Signified, Iconoclastic Culture

1. The City of Signs is concerned of absolute truths that are too falsehoods and to reveal, but in things.
2. The City of Signs is both truth & lie. Falsehoods are in both words & things.
3. Though you have passed through, her gaze the city can last.
4. She never sees.

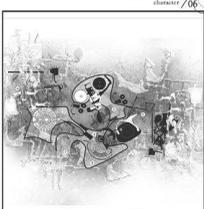


SIMONÉ

City of the Sky - Parco Gianicolo

Identity

1. Salt Topography
2. Salt Laboratory
3. Salt Laboratory
4. Salt Laboratory
5. Observation Deck
6. Salt Laboratory
7. Secret Passage
8. Blind Tower
9. Glass Language
10. Glass of Journal
11. Observation for Day & Night
12. Guide of Stone Hinge
13. Architecture of Silence
14. Language for the Sub
15. Labyrinth

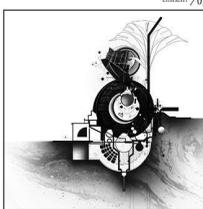


POLIA

City of Desire - Villa Borghese

Seductive Plans

1. Filmination
2. Emersion
3. Emersion
4. The Fall
5. Resilient
6. Back Garden
1. Filmination
2. Emersion
3. Emersion
4. The Fall
5. Resilient
6. Back Garden

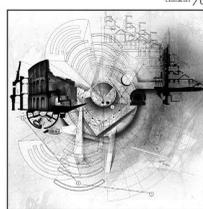


SILVIA

City of Eyes - The Pantheon

Oracles Ciphers

1. How the eye
2. Open the eye see
3. Walls for the Collection and Storage of Things
4. Ritual Topography



HÉLOÏSE

City of Memory - Flavian Amphitheater

Memory Theater

1. City on the Horizon
2. Threshold
3. Hypogean
4. Memory Theater
5. Okina Histories
6. Fossil Cores

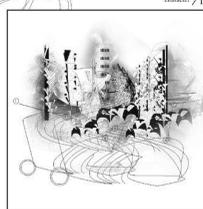


MOMOYO

City of the Dead - Piazza San Pietro

Acts of the Apostles

1. Tooth for the Beloved
2. Neuroplastic
3. Circus
4. Shadow
5. Original Footprint
6. Pin (New Basilica)
7. Connection Opera
8. The Great Bell
9. Double Bridge



SAPPHO

Trading City - Campo dei Fiori

Pavillions

1. The Architect
2. The Capitalist
3. The Capitalist
4. The Equilibrist
5. The Quietist
6. The Quietist
7. The Violent
8. The Quietist
9. The Violent

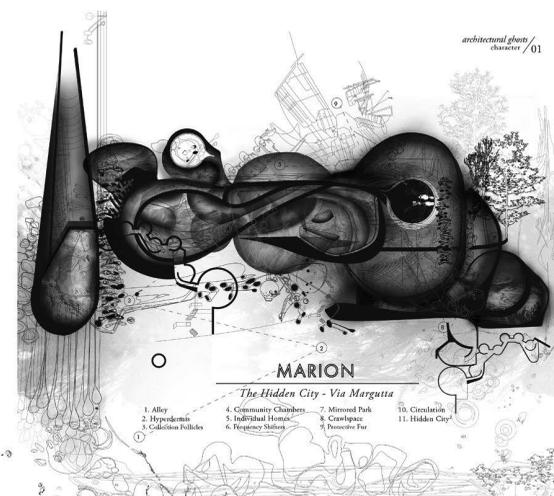


PHILLIPA

The Thin City - Porta Maggiore

Chambers

1. Tomb of Maria Virginia Estensis
2. Office of the Submarine
3. Power / Hub for Information Exchange
4. Lagoon for site mining
5. Apartment
6. The West



MARION

The Hidden City - Via Margutta

1. Alley
2. Hypodermis
3. Colossal Follies
4. Community Chambers
5. Individual Housing
6. Frequency Station
7. Mirrored Park
8. Canopy
9. Precincts Fur
10. Circular
11. Hidden City

I. (Frame 01)
L'Ultimo / The Beginning

The Megaphone stands at the corner of the city's third oldest bridge looking down at the rivers of ink that snake across his windmill hands. The folded rubricates carve this river across the landscape of folk, a lifetime reservoir of cities and towns. He flows beyond his hands. The river snags glides through the night, they also reflecting the serene image of a sleeping city. The water slips underneath this image - enshrouding and alive.

The Megaphone tries to follow all of the extraordinary rules that the Scepterlike system into his own. His voice captures routes, improbable places - cities of which no maps can be made - where architecture is spun from gilder webs, clouds and dust. The serene river line, serenity of serene absence that he does not understand. The Megaphone tries not to believe everything that the Scepterlike captures once extreme, but he cannot make himself stop listening. He never passes love, great, colorful black that slips through his flesh and legs but has been with bones exposed and vulnerable in the night. Her absence here has down the winding streets and across bridges as he watches, desperate for love to explain more of these cities that he cannot seem to explain alone. The thread of her voice carries a small and unforgiving truth that he cannot seem to ignore. In the thickness of night such as this one, the Scepterlike does not feel quite so far away.

In this midnight night, standing at the center of a bridge in the heart of Rome, looking down at the rivers raised into his hands, he finds out one, but two glowing cities looking back. These luminous green quietly cross the line between earth and sky and pierce the night. He is haunted here in a walking dream, for sees a haunting, spectral space that does not last, even when he closes his eyes.

MARION

The Hidden City - Via Margutta

The best place to hide is usually in plain sight. It is precisely the place where one has assumed that something should not be hidden, which ends up being the best place for it. This is the one place that no one is expecting to find that which is hidden or hiding.

The same is true for cities, despite the complexities involved. To reach the Hidden City, head south on the eastmost main road off of the Piazza del Popolo. There is an alleyway on your left entirely overgrown with foliage and vines. The passageway is tiny and charming. The architecture of secrecy is a delightfully colorful world pieced together out of fragments of crumbling plaster facades, chipped window sills, thick curtains of vines, silvered cobblestones, and the creeping sense that you should move and speak delicately here.

The vines are adorned with this metal filaments that chime softly in the slow breeze. Not one of the doors along this street opens and the windows too, are sealed shut and covered with mirrors. The vibrant facade that stretches down this street is a mask for the Hidden City that weaves behind it. The residents of the Hidden City, if they are about, appear to float from one side of the path to another. Gentle phantoms who trail their fingers through the reeds, slip away with the chimera, are their faces in slow, peculiar angles, they appear to vanish abruptly, slipping into the hidden air of the city beyond.

If you examine the reeds closely, you may notice the modal apparatus and tentacle-like appendages peeking through the vines. Each resident has their own, unique threshold into the skin of the city wall, and to access this portal each must perform a precise sequence of operations with the passageway, attracting it through touches, phrases whispered into disguised receptors and glances into hidden cameras. This is the only key-efficient and secure in its operation. Citizens are not seen from the Hidden City, the only way for you to experience her is through quick glimpses of the space beyond that open momentarily when residents come and go.

Just beyond the facade the wall space itself is a pliable, fleshy pocket consisting of all of the utilities and programs of the Hidden City. The walls and ceiling are continuous, sensually curving into each other, revealing inner spaces like walls of removed organs carved away. These spaces are programed as in all cities: marketplaces,

The Hidden City keeps her secret.