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Virtual Raves
in Synthetic Landscapes
Hybrid Rave Space

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Virtual Raves in Synthetic Landscapes

Project Description: The typology of public event spaces has transformed substantially over centuries. Ranges of spatial configurations have been developed with numerous instances and adaptations; many have occurred in our own century as the information needs of the modern society evolved. Bernard Tschumi denotes these phenomena as architectural urbanism where city-generators, functions, and programs combine and intersect in spaces of endless cross programming. Today, derelict industrial spaces [terrain vagues] have become social places that accommodate public activities. New technologies, particularly those associated with electronic media have radically influenced the program and typology of these event-spaces. Yet, in spite of social, technological, and material changes, the essence of the event-structure has not changed, it remains a place of interaction.

The students investigated the history of rave revealing origins couched in the dance rituals associated with the Black Plague. Today, the rave has developed into an event-space characterized by its anti-capitalist notions and techno-music rage as generated from a digital environment. The result of this paradigm shift is an environment fraught with electronic pulsation. These pulsations are technologically enhanced and thus accelerated to levels that can not only simulate but also stimulate the human heartbeat. At the center of the rave is the techno-shaman. The techno-shaman is the architect of the event that controls color, light, space, tempo, and ultimately, the crowd.

Once the students understood the rave vocabulary, they began to intersect the idea of ruin and the possible implications of inserting a rave into one of the industrial sites. Through a close reading of these spaces, a series of analytical intentions emerged. The selected sites are abandoned structures that were initially used for communal gathering or distribution. The functions of the sites were steel manufacturing plants, tobacco warehouses, train stations, and railyards. The research of the individual site led to a unique and active synthesis between the idea of rave and the space of the ruin. Similarities between all of the sites were then used to augment the relationship between the non-apparent structure of rave and the physical site and the possible effects that such a union might have on its urban context. From this juxtaposition emerged a pliable condition that mitigated between the container and the contained. The space between these two forces became a wall fragment that defines the boundaries between things and a space of occupation.

In an effort to simulate more closely the tension between the two spaces, Regal Plastic, a plastics fabrication and distribution company, was invited to participate in our studio. Regal Plastic was sought after because of their recent innovations into the realm of virtual constructions. Based in Kansas City, Missouri, Regal Plastic is currently fabricating the Virtual Reality Center at Iowa State University in Des Moines, Iowa. In order to narrow the boundaries between the digital environment and the construction process, the students worked closely with Robert McFarlane and Jack Smith Tyler of the Nashville Branch of Regal Plastic. The use of the synthetic material, plastic seemed 'natural' to our process. Not only were the students successful in realizing their projects through digital representations, but also they were equally successful in narrowing the gap between their imagination and the final constructed process.