

ACADIA'S BROWSER: CONNECT — LINK UP — GET A BUZZ

Céline Pinet

Paul Petrunia designed ARCHINECT with one goal in mind: Use the Internet to make ARCHItecture become more conNECTed. The site did not make headlines with an amazing IPO. It is not the subject of a major dot.com ad campaign. Instead, it gets away from mass marketing to offer a vehicle for profound creative expressions. It brings designers together, generates ideas, asks questions, discusses philosophies, and leaves marks as if inevitable forces of nature caused it.

Constant novelties in the site are without a doubt what engage and entice viewers. ARCHINECT has the luxury of having a creative audience submit stupendous new cover designs every month in an attempt to master the land of the Internet. It is like visual poetry. The April 2000 cover is an embodiment of what could have happened on New Years Eve — but did not (see figures 1 and 2). With a different philosophical tack, the January 2000 cover shapes the web to sell the idea that machines need love too (see figure 3).

Through a moldable, ever changing web site, Petrunia draws us back over and over again to discover the latest juicy news, links and hypes submitted by readers. It's like a spiritual experience. I am stirred by information about two apartments in Neutra's "Treetops" building that are available for rent (I wish I could be there)¹. Then I find out about a virtual tour of an exhibit featuring 100 up-and-coming artists at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in New York. It raises the question: Is this the future of museum visiting?² Is the sacred museum institution giving way to technology and thereby reaching a wider audience?

Virtual galleries can quite easily expand their reach, stretch themselves and their concept. ARCHINECT presents one which does just that: Peter Rentz's gallery depicts assembly robots designed to illustrate the idea that software and religion have more in common than we think (see figures 4 and 5). Rentz's work is based on an article by Umberto Eco (1994) comparing Catholicism and Protestantism to iconographic operating systems (e.g. Windows) and command line operating systems (e.g. DOS), respectively. Intrigued? My only problem with this metaphor is that I can't stop trying to find analogues for other religions. Would the Greek Gods be compared to UNIVAC? What about Jehova's Witnesses?

Targeting a different belief system, Andu Ku and Ted Ngai from the Organized Crime Design Collective focus on lifestyles of the vain and extravagant. Their "Tub A + Tan" apparatus lets you perform those humdrum tasks of bathing and tanning at the same time. What a time saver! This gizmo is all the more pleasing in that it is presented via luscious computer aided design, modeling and rendering (see figure 6) and that it glorifies the proportion of human form as the ideal measure.

Beyond esoteric concerns, ARCHINECT also offers information about real life venture: Regularly updated pictures

show intimate progress in the construction of art lofts in Venice Beach CA (figures 7 and 8). It's a bit like watching the royal family live their lives. You can read the architect's project notes and see construction details emerge. You can fulfill your voyeuristic urges by following how the City of Los Angeles' provisions influence the project. The project is unusual in that while lofts are typically designed from building conversions, these are planned from the ground up for studio use. It is a project to be followed and ARCHINECT is doing just that. Thank you ARCHINECT, for keeping us connected.

ARCHINECT aims to bring together a community of designers that too often toil in anonymity. It is a success in what it attempts because of the monumental participation it gets. It is wonderful to see in that it testifies to the presence of creativity for its own sake within our community. It symbolizes the inherent presence of conceptual philosophy across the design boundaries jumping from religion to humanism to urbanism to individuality.

But what makes this Web Site especially prized is its understanding that the Internet is a moving target. ARCHINECT shows that change should be a constant when publishing online. Anybody can make something good if it never changes. Thanks to the participation of the design community, ARCHINECT changes and it publishes monthly issues in style.

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Figures 1 and 2: Portion of the April 2000 cover design by mschmidt from virus.one (www.virus1.net) & K10k (www.k10k.net).

Figure 3: January 2000 cover design by DFORM1. DFORM1 is a 2 years old design studio based in Aarhus, Denmark.

Figures 4 and 5: Peter Rentz from Forcefield presents a gallery of assembly robots

Figure 6: Tub A + Tan: Architecture and Rendering by, Andu Ku and Ted Ngai from the Organized Crime Design Collective.

Figures 7 and 8: GTO Electric comprised of 16 lofts in Venice Beach, CA. By architect Ali Jeevanjee.

Notes

1 News posted by Alan Loomis.

2 News posted by Mason White.

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