Digital renderings are part of a complex portfolio of representations accompanying all redevelopment projects. They are present in the form of construction site billboards, VR experiences, and animations shown on architecture firms’ websites – both as advertising but also as examples of a good practice to be admired and awarded. These renderings are ubiquitous and powerful, as they are used to sell projects to investors, attract wealthy buyers, and to convince the public of the legitimacy of their constantly changing surroundings.

The built environment of our cities is haunted and shaped by representations of an aestheticised contemporary urban life. The computer-generated depictions of new development projects invite people to imagine themselves in dream scenarios, where they lead a life of success, health, and happiness. As architectural production increasingly relies on the construction of these fantastical images, promises of fusing dreamscapes with purchasable reality hang on billboards covering raw construction sites. These virtual fantasies are changing how we experience and enjoy the city, giving origin to what Neil Leach calls a “Wallpaper* person”: someone who lives in an escapist world through role-playing and lifestyle adoption. These virtual fantasies are changing how we understand and design our built environment.

Cover image: Lawrence Lek, Play Station, 2017

January 18 - March 17, 2018
Laura Yuile
Lawrence Lek

Rendered Cities
organized by ANGL Collective

apexart nyc
Renderings are the result of negotiations, discussions, and sometimes major conflict, between developers, architects, visualizers, and consultants. Since all sales are made through these images, it is the images, rather than the development projects themselves, that are constantly reviewed and modified. It is not uncommon for an architectural model to be changed as a result of this process. Decisions are usually made on the basis of liking or not liking a rendered image – which must be beautiful, well composed, sleek, and sellable – and not on the basis of the details of buildings, materials, technical details, and wider urban context.2

Computer-generated visualizations are staged, photoshopped, and fictional, yet they manage to influence the way in which we think about our cities, and infiltrate the imagination of what future cities and citizens should look like. They are attractive because they are polished and aspirational, generic and reassuring. They are all different, yet they all look alike: constructed using the same software and the same image banks of people and urban amenities. Not only are they creating a global and homogeneous depiction of urban spaces, but these representations are becoming concrete urban realms as development projects are completed.

Felicity Hammond's work uses photography and sculpture to reflect on how digital renderings of buildings become part of the urban fabric and predict a future of the city in ruins. Hammond's work continuously exposes not only how computer-generated images are prolific in our cities, but emphasizes their inbuilt tendency to be beautiful, well composed, sleek, and sellable – and not on the basis of the de-

Laura Yuile, Rendered Cities is an exhibition that addresses how digital renderings influence the future of our cities, both real and imagined. As the artists investigate the political, economic, and ideological forces behind the proliferation of these representations, they highlight the struggle for authenticity in an increasingly globalized, generic world, where a sense of place is simultaneously compromised and continuously fought over.

Felicity Hammond’s newly commissioned installation Unit #7 presents a landscape in which the public and the private have merged: elements of domesticity and even coziness, such as a washing machine, a family, and tiny dollhouse furniture, cohabit within a raw and evolving environment, reminiscent of a construction site. Changing throughout the duration of the show, the installation considers how familial structures and methods of living are sold to the masses via advertising and narratives of wellness and wellbeing.

The artists in Rendered Cities aim to interrogate the transformation of cities into generic places, developers play an increasing role, but they are not the only ones at fault. While digital renderings seem to trap us in an eternal present, a world where habitable environments are made through these images, it is the images, rather than the development firms or private-public partnerships. Their convenience to the extent that we have surrendered to the forces of alienation and fragmentation of contemporary life. The spatial aestheticization enabled by computer-aided architecture technologies to propagate the possibility of a dream-like second life – where everything is possible, architects produce non-spaces that surpass the presupposed uniqueness of a place, they simultaneously "exacerbate the effects of alienation and fragmentation of contemporary life."