



## Developing architectural narratives

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Lawrence Lek, Shiva's Dreaming

Architecture, which in the last few years has increasingly been the protagonist of the gallery space, is still mainly identified by the general public with the professional practice. Nevertheless, since the perception and fruition of architecture has increasingly gone virtual through the web, the difference between the “real” object and the unrealized project – or the collateral manifestations of architecture – has been fading away.

The show with the title *Re.presence: How the see architecture*, at Sto Werkstatt, explores the different forms and states that architecture assumed over the last few years, through some examples of contemporary practice, including film, video installation, video-games and more. Rather than exploring the use of new technologies in architectural design and representation, *Re.presence* brings together different examples of experimental projects, offering the chance to understand architecture through atypical narratives. In some ways, all the works showcased address the boundaries between simulation and reality, representation and fiction, body and space, history and utopia.

All these conceptual dichotomies inspire the projects presented in the show. The exhibition features multiple works, explained below. Firstly, the video game *Shiva's Dreaming* by Lawrence Lek, which is designed around the theme of simulated architecture. The game set is a virtual replica of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, on the night it went on fire in November 1936. In the video game the player's movements in space generate explosions and cascades of glass shards. The architecture automatically regenerates after. The game challenges the viewer-user to explore the loose boundaries between real and simulated experience of space.

The installation *The visceral intricacies of Magister Ludi's Archetypes* by C. Fredrik V. Hellberg, is probably the most intriguing moment of the exhibition. The multi-media project is realized with mirrors and a video projection with sound and suspended paper surfaces. Inspired by the Hermann Hesse's novel *The Glass Bead Game* (1943), the installation presents a fiction interpreted by the four characters of the novel who inhabit the architecture constructed through the video projection.



C. Fredrik V Hellberg, The Visceral Intricacies of Magister Ludi's Archetypes

The work *Outside* by Adam Nathaniel Furman employs a video and a small sculpture/model. The narrative attached to this work is developed around the relationship between imagination and reality. The virtual architectural model, represented both in the video and the installation, is an enclosed aggregation of buildings; an abstract series of architectural archetypes. The fictional architecture is accompanied by text played in the background. This text unfolds the meaning behind the inaccessible building enclosure; the imaginative power of the unknown and unseen as the only place where mystery can still survive. In this case the work refers to the gap between real and imagined, and to architecture as the border between the two categories. In contrast with the video game and the architectural transparency of the Crystal Palace, where the player is overwhelmed by the virtual space, here the separation between inaccessible interior and exterior clearly marks the distinction between real and imagined, fiction and reality.

The last piece showcased is the film *Haptic Skins of a Glass Eye (Proxy)* by Ilona Sagar, which also addresses the dichotomy between reality and simulation. The film was shot in part at Sto Werkstatt. The artist attempts to represent the separation between bodily sensorial experience and psychological self caused by technological advancements. Using the metaphorical material of the glass (she also refers to the psychiatric disorder known as “glass delusion”) she

represents the desegregation of the self who lost contact with the real world. The material, transparent and fragile, is also a metaphor of the thin “veil” or skin that separates reality and simulation, interior-self and outside-body.

Finally, outside the gallery walls, the online virtual platform developed by Studio BAAKO ([www.re-presence.org](http://www.re-presence.org)) connects the artists’ works with several references and ideas in order to encourage new production of knowledge. *Re.presence*, which is also part of the Clerkenwell Design Week this year, is a great chance for both designers and the public to experience architecture outside the box and reflect on its powerful immaterial forms.

<http://www.re-presence.org/re-presence.php>

[http://werkstatt.sto.com/en/what-s-on/news-detailview\\_33920.html](http://werkstatt.sto.com/en/what-s-on/news-detailview_33920.html)

## How do the questions addressed by the exhibition challenge the conventions of architectural theory and practice?

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