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Introduction: Architecture as Moving Boundaries

Simone Ferracina

Organs Everywhere (OE) started ten years ago as an online platform—and as a cry for help. During the day, architecture consisted in the design of jaw-dropping and resource-hungry structures for a minuscule percentage of the population, but at night and during weekends, I could pin to it anything I wanted: it could become soft and hairy, odd and uncomfortable, sticky, invisible, and inefficient. Arakawa and Gins speak of an architecture of “what if” (2002)—and Organs Everywhere shared the same sense of counterfactual irreverence, possibility and wonderment; a belief that architecture, as a profession and discipline, could be more than the embodiment or enforcement of privilege, or of the celebration of the (shiny and shapely) outputs privilege buys.

From a flat in Brooklyn, I uploaded bundles of text and images to a website, hoping that—like messages in a bottle, or like the golden record mounted on the Voyager spacecraft—they may reach someone on the other side of the planet, or in other planets altogether. And in a manner of speaking, they did. Shortly thereafter, Organs Everywhere had started to feature the writing, drawings, and experiments of some of the most provocative thinkers on the European and North American scenes, and to promote conversations that approached architecture from the edges of the discipline, plunging it into a strange fabric that combined the voices of architects and designers with those of philosophers, artists, science fiction writers, activists, researchers, poets and scientists. Following Peter Cook’s intuition that to experiment in architecture is to experiment “out of architecture” (Cook 1970, 7), each new issue aimed to question the discipline’s boundaries, technologies, methods, and (e)valuation systems—and to keep them unstable.

The first rule was the absence of rules. Magazines and journals tend to abide by strict protocols and formats, prescribing fixed word and image counts, or consigning relevance to the narrow frames imposed by specific questions and themes. In these contexts, editing is always also an editing out, and the curation of parts towards a coherent (and potentially violent) whole. Here, instead, contributors were invited to propose and impose their own questions and values, and to do so in the form that most suited them—be it the long-form philosophical chapter or the single-page account, the prose poem, the photographic essay, the fictional story, the art project, or anything in between.

Since then, CE has valued transdisciplinary, speculative, and irreverent explorations over strict publishing formats and academic purity or orthodoxy, promoting a profanatory and open-ended ethos. Each issue has strung together disparate organs and limbs, activating precarious couplings and associations, and testing new metabolisms and monstrous assemblages. And so does the CE Case Files imprint continue its commitment to the making and unmaking of monsters, both by anthologising past contributions into fresh configurations and designs, and by combining them with entirely new articles and voices.

These books are not pure and obedient projects, but precarious and recalcitrant collections/collisions of files, moving objects, time horizons, positions, and possible futures.

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