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Auto Atmospheres & Artificial Ecologies

Natural Architecture and Artificial Environments

We humans are all weather men, constantly cultivating and modifying the climates that surround us at every conceivable scale, from the miniature local excretions of our subcutaneous cells to our operatic military manoeuvres in weather modification. Each adjustment acts as a form of architecture – a sheltering moment in our unending project of climate control, submitting the chaos of the external climate to the controlling and organising tendencies of humanity.

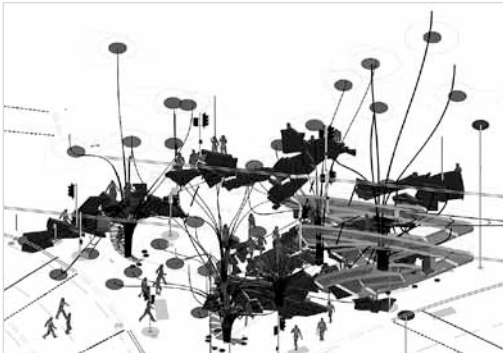


Fig. 1: The Boughs of London Photo: Alex Haw – atmos

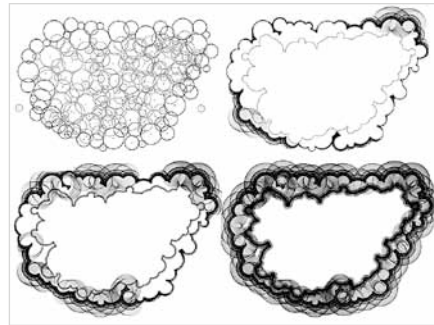


Fig. 2: The CLOUD Photo: Alex Haw – atmos

Architecture's role in the construction of our inhabitable environment has always been multifarious and ambiguous – functional yet ornamental, liberating yet repressive, physical yet also mental. With the rise and proliferation of digital media technologies, the climate it confronts has expanded far beyond the traditions of rain and heat to a much murkier artificial cloud of our own construction, an ever-evolving physio-cultural soup of data and information utterly eroding the distinctions between the virtual and the real.

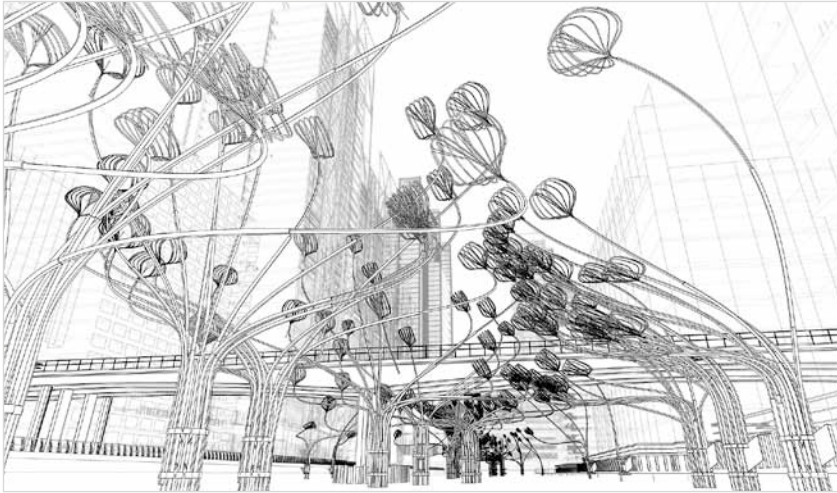


Fig. 3: Sunlands Photo: Alex Haw – atmos

This paper surveys an extremely brief history of architecture's relationship to both weather and media, probing both the climate as culture, and techno-artistic experiments as new weather systems. It surveys the twin scales of our climatic ambitions, from our participation within small-scale ecologies of the internet to our global projects for weather modification across the entire earth. The paper ends with the case study of our own studio's investigations into architecture's relationship to weather, new and old, and our ongoing investigation of the manufacture of artificial climates.

Our collaborative project for the CLOUD for London 2012 explicitly proposes an immersion into the twin climatic streams of the physical and the digital, immersing its visitors in gusts of data whilst they hover above the actual clouds of London, offering an environment composed as much by the particulate matter of man-made acts as sunshine and raindrops. Weather Projection broadcast live solar and satellite data from around the world into an observation space overlooking Sydney Harbour, transmuted the instantaneous data-space of the internet back into a tactile, luminous, immersive, social environment. Sunlands delivered qualitative environmental data back to the barren quantitative landscapes of Canary Wharf, updating unflinching automated universal time with the rich and ever-changing experience of global solar time.