

You Can See My House From Here

An Installation by Christopher Collier & Alex Williams

Urbanism doesn't exist; it is only an "ideology" in Marx's sense of the word. Architecture does really exist, like Coca-Cola: though coated with ideology, it is a real production, falsely satisfying a falsified need. Urbanism is comparable to the advertising about Coca-Cola — pure spectacular ideology. Modern capitalism, which organizes the reduction of all social life to a spectacle, is incapable of presenting any spectacle other than that of our own alienation. Its urbanistic dream is its masterpiece.

- Attila Kotányi, Raoul Vaneigem
1961

The Installation takes the form of a castellated city constructed from cardboard. It is fashioned in the manner of a child's fantasy, recalling the intricate models of dolls houses or train-sets and the home-made play spaces that children construct in order to develop and act out their dreams and fancies. A figure with a bindle walks towards the gaudy, towering city upon a yellow road paved in gold leaf. Opposite the towers lies the clichéd rural idyll that this figure has left behind, nestled beneath the mountains, threatened by a looming bulldozer.

The piece examines the dichotomy between rural and urban space and the way in which we relate to these geographical and cultural constructs; how we mythologize them and the preconceived notions that surround these definitions. It seeks to question how useful the urban/rural archetypes are within contemporary culture and in particular to question the conventional notions of urban-centricity within the cultural, critical and economic spheres. It questions the draining migration of talent and culture away from marginalised rural spaces towards the fairy-tale, promised land of the Big-Smoke (& Mirrors): the glamour of Eldorado and the Emerald City where the great and the good gather from across the globe, like Dick Whittington in the children's story, to seek their fortune. It examines, through the naive visual language of a child embarking upon this psycho-geographical journey, the cultural and environmental implications of the rural-urban migration that is taking place across the world and the way in which it is mirrored through the migration and subsequent alienation of artistic practice.

When one undergoes the examination of the outside world, one also pronounces one's own sentence. In fact, one's choice is "round trip." From the demands of the shop windows, from the inevitable response to shop windows, my choice is determined. No obstinacy, ad absurdum, of hiding the coition through a glass pane with one or many objects of the glass window. The penalty consists in cutting the pane and in feeling regret as soon as the possession is consummated. Q. E. D.

- Marcel Duchamp, Neuilly,
1913