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Illustrative Poundbury: Reading illustration in the built environment

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Abstract
Taking the notion of a possible vernacular ornamental quality perceivable within the built environment as a catalyst, this article will attempt to position the sometimes-eccentric housing development of Poundbury in Dorset as a framework for Illustration practice. The particular auspices of the new town are utilised as a discursive springboard into the possibilities of imagining illustration as part of a communicative artefact in a wider physical and social context. To this end, this article explores the Poundbury development itself as a set of possible images presented within the larger communication of the town. This is done with reference to architecture's interactions with ornament as well as specific overlaps between design, image and architecture in consideration of the social ramifications of such material as it forms the content of communication to a wider audience. The priority of this investigation is the wilful exploration of potential disparate subject matter under shifting definitions of illustration practice in order to open up and explore such practice.

1. Introduction

'All architecture is essentially wallpaper: underneath, it's all the same stuff' – so stated Ben Pentreath, the architect reasonable for a large part of recent developments within the new town of Poundbury (Wainwright 2018). This might be understood as a practical appraisal of the decorative potential of design. If so, we are being instructed to consider this wallpaper – these designed edifices – as separate from the structure of the building. Perhaps even more than this, should we consider this architecture as a separate pictorial implant placed on the wider physical and contextual structures of the town? This would seem a limiting way of imagining architecture, but possibly intentionally so, a defensive positioning against a critical discourse of 'fake-ness' regarding the Poundbury project (Bayley 2008). In the face of architectural critic Johnathan Meads' description of Poundbury as a 'Thomas Hardy theme park for slow learners' (Meades 2013), perhaps the offended architect might be moved to renounce the entire built environment as a theme park, wallpapered under the auspices of commercial and practical constraints within the context of its manufacture.

Indeed, within illustration we could have some sympathy for such defensive positioning. Illustration as overlooked by graphic design or 'scorned by fine art for its commercial grounding' (Male 2017: 10) may seek to defiantly contextualize itself within manufacture and distribution to reassert the cultural merit of a popular exchange between art and commerce. Specifically, illustrator and academic Alan Male defines illustration as operating within five 'broadly recognised contextual domains' within which a 'transfer of message to audience' is enacted (2017).

This necessary celebration of commercial content within the ownership of the illustrator's creative discipline does not preclude the consideration of image functioning as illustration in a wider context. Indeed, it may be the case that a focus on more problematic, sometimes less straightforwardly commercial frameworks may offer us a window into 'contextual domains' of future commercial practices.

One project of imagining a wider framework for illustration would be that of illustrator and theorist Catrin Morgan. In her article 'The nomadic illustration' she invokes Mieke Bal's use of 'narrative text' (Bal 2017) for her wide definition of illustration as 'any image that participates in a complex text presented as a communicating artefact' (Morgan 2015: n.pag.) She goes onto acknowledge that this definition of illustration may not be perfect, but nevertheless it does allow her 'to discuss images that would normally fall outside of the illustration discussion – that is, images not created by an artist or illustrator in response to a brief'.

It is within this imperfect yet freeing positioning of illustration that this article will attempt to utilize elements of semiotic reading, alongside historiographic grounding together with analysis of significant stated intentions and opinions. This is done with the specific aim of framing a particular example of town planning – the Poundbury development in Dorset – as a framework for illustration. In the pursuit of this, any exploration of authorial or critical opinion is done in awareness that a

work's meaning is subject to a shifting context, often removed from the author's stated intention. As Bal herself outlined, 'intention, agency, and subjectivity are not whole, not even in the putative moment of execution, because the work is made to change over time, and thus to slip out of control' (Bal 2002: 266).

The placing of opinion and intention alongside elements of semiotic awareness and framing may lead to disjointed examination. Nevertheless, this is a strategy followed under the supposition that illustrators might do well to embrace elements of misconstruction on the theoretical level as they already do, on an everyday basis, in terms of the practical application of their work (Barwick 2015), i.e. the 'happy accident' scenario (Anderson 2012; Ong 2019).

The priority of the weight of this investigation is to provide the room for an exploration of subject matter under shifting definitions of illustration and wider cultural practice. This article will attempt to frame illustration practice from outside of the discipline, in the hope that this might free up practical possibilities within illustration.

The town of Poundbury, made up of interacting architectural edifices, and subject to regulated constraints, visually framed as illustration may seem somewhat of a stretch. Nevertheless, this conceptual leap is attempted in awareness of examples from the wider built environment, contextualized under the auspices of graphic design, originating from the notion of environmental design (Poulin 2012).

In graphic design practice we can observe a historical re-framing that increasingly moves to inhabit the concerns of other disciplines by both practitioners and critics. If the remit of graphic design can be so effortlessly expanded, then why do we face such challenges in the consideration of illustration as a wider practice?

There are no easy answers to this question; however, to some extent we can attribute a narrowness of definition to a conventional view of illustration's meaning, function and intentions seemingly subservient and unchallenged since the time of discipline defining practitioners such as Audrey Beardsley, Walter Crane and others.

2. Illustration as something?

In consideration of conventional wisdom of historical examples of illustration practice, we might note an unconventional impetus within such practice to escape from a formal subservience to other creative disciplines. In the work of illustrator, educator and political activist Walter Crane, there is indication of an assertion of image as an authored vision in itself. In the title page of *The Golden Primer* (1885) (Figure 1), is a visual manifestation of such an assertion. Art Historian Grace Brockington, in her analysis of this title page, explores an illustrative indication of a dual authorship with an awareness of the importance that Crane placed on his status as a co-author. Crane classified image and design as a type of language equal, if maybe perhaps superior to the written

Figure 1: Prof. J. M. D. Meiklejohn, Walter Crane, The Golden Primer.

word. 'He is a co-author rather than a mere illustrator, his designs present us with an alternative, rather than a subsidiary, reading of the book' (Brockington 2012: 367).

In common with the flow of this analysis and also in line with Brockington's evocation of the mere-ness of illustration, we can see echoes of the thinking of illustrator and academic Stuart Mills in his book of interviews with musician Brian Eno, *More Dark than Shark* (Eno et al. 1984). In the book Mills outlined a prevalent view of illustration from the 1980s as a practice that at its weakest would produce images that 'merely imitate' rather than 'complement in a manner likely to enlarge upon the already known or stated' (Mills et al. 1984: 6).

This latter category was for Mills the ideal functionality for illustration. In his book, he proposes exploratory practices in reaction against the illustration of his time, which he perceived as being 'somewhat lacking in intellectual rigour'. Mills imagines a return to what he called 'obsolete definitions' of illustration in an attempt to formulate new ways of perceiving future possibilities. He stated 'To illustrate also used to mean to illuminate, to set in a good light, to confer honour or distinction upon' (Mills et al. 1984: 6).

This focus on illumination of subject has current precedent within academic thinking regarding authorial models of illustration practice, as propagated by illustrator and director of the Falmouth

Illustration Forum, Steve Braund. He defines Authorial Practice as 'concerned with those areas where the illustrator creates, originates, influences or considers the content of the communication' to audience (Braund et al. 2012).

Questioned specifically regarding this definition of illustration, Braund states that he prefers 'the most open definition of illustration which doesn't restrict the creative potential of the discipline', noting that 'commerce imposes all kinds of limitations that are, in my view, only of secondary importance'. He goes on to reflect further that 'defining things is a job that often masks commercial ideology' that operates 'due to a power relationship and to commercial value. To maintain power' (Buckley 2010).

Even without exploring whether or not this is the case, it is not too much of a stretch to imagine that defining illustration solely from established commercial perspectives may limit the potential to imagine new practices. Passive acceptance of commercial constraints or indeed sector-based definitions (i.e. editorial, commercial, children's book, etc) regarding the concept and practice of illustration may close positive and potentially constructive avenues of thinking in terms of the practice as a whole.

3. Design as anything!

Illustrator and artistic director of *Granta* Magazine, Michael Salu, in questioning the meaning of illustration within the cultural landscape of today, put forward the idea of a 'levelling of the playing field' within image culture. He goes on to propose a visual culture within which 'graphic designers, sculptors, painters, creative developers and even musicians amorphously meander across different parts of our creative industries' (Salu 2012: 21).

With this contemporary inclination for creative overlap, it is clear that it may be of use to consider the interactions between other disciplines to clarify any potential of imagining illustration in the built environment. With this in mind we might reflect on precedented interactions between graphic design and architecture or urban planning. Within our time, we have the emergence of practitioners who place the urban environment within the realm of graphic design. Environmental graphic design, perhaps once understood as the use of visual elements in environments to connect people to their location or place like street signage or urban advertising, has now expanded to include projects of large-scale urban development with social and political objectives.

In *The Field Guide to Supergraphics: Graphics in the Urban Environment* (2018) co-founder of Californian design studio AdamsMorioka, Sean Adams outlines prominent examples of what he sees as graphic design, which involves 'architecture, the environment, light and space and the culture of the community to add meaning and value' (Adams 2018). One key example featured within the book is the Plaza de la Hoja development in Bogotá, Colombia. In interview, Adams states that for him 'the work Boa Mistura does with disadvantaged communities is remarkable'. He goes on to explain that Boa Mistura 'Transformed the Plaza de la Hoja in Bogotá, Colombia with a beautiful mural; a complex of 12 buildings built to house families displaced by violence and conflict in Colombia' (Dawood 2018).

This fits into a wider discourse from within graphic design as outlined by distinguished American graphic designer and educator Katherine McCoy. In her 1990 paper for *Design Quarterly*, she put forward the view that design and graphic design in particular might be noted to be 'dissatisfied with obedient delivery of the client message'. Within this, the practice can be perceived to 'have sort out new roles and functions within our creative landscape'. She goes onto add; 'Graphic designers influenced by fine art, are going "one step beyond the 'problem-solving' tradition" by offering additional content and self-conscious critique to the message revising roles associated with both art and literature'.

This perhaps being the case – considered from a wider theoretical context – on the practical level there are precedented risks involved with championing self-conscious, potentially polemical design. As ground-breaking activist and critic of twentieth-century urban planning Jane Jacobs might have it, 'The trouble with paternalists is that they want to make impossibly profound changes, and they chose impossibly superficial means for doing so' (Jacobs 1992: 271). It is not necessarily the case that well-designed, contextually aware typography, used to decorate a public space with the word 'Vida', would directly lead to a better life for the inhabitants of the space. Nevertheless, the lives of the people who inhabit the surrounding area may still be improved by the action and implementation of design, even if this improvement may have nothing to do with the intention of the designers or the mechanics of the design.

In the context of Mieke Bal's position on the matter, we might understand it that 'the maker of an object cannot speak for it. The author's intentions, if accessible at all, do not offer direct access to meaning' (Bal 2002: 45). This being the case, conceivably there is the possibility of a multitude of reverberating, unintended outcomes and meanings of positive, neutral or indeed negative consequences resulting from the implementation of the designed, decorative or illustrative. We might understand this occurring irrespective of the intentions of the author or indeed any further layer of interpretation or critique. As Mieke Bal would have it; 'The object is the subject's "other" and its otherness is irreducible. Of course, in this sense the analyst can never adequately represent the object either: she can neither speak about it nor speak for it' (Bal 2002: 45).

In any case, with respect to a place that people will be born into, live and imaginably may die within, it is difficult to envisage how you would measure (or indeed define the nature of) a quantifiable impact resulting from the designer's intentions within such a context. There is possibly more sense in trying to understand something of the meaning of the designed, if we were on lookout for the 'visual text'[1] within such an urban community. What may be useful is a critical assessment of the narratives that arise from the mass of authored elements forming the physical context of such a community.

If community is taken as both the focus of the work and the audience of such a project, it is of interest to understand how such authored elements taking place stimulate and interact within the public space – and further than this – the communal audience. With this aim, perhaps it is possible to discern something of the meaning and the outcomes of a project engaging with narrative or

1. The image as examined semiotically, comprised of information or 'signs'.

indeed visual text as framed by the urban environment. Specifically, there may be some traction in regarding the town as illustration.

If we are to focus on the interrelationship of such work, the authored contextual setting for visual texts within the communicating artefact of the town, then we are fulfilling some of Steve Braund's aforementioned requirements for an understanding of illustration practice. Certainly, for the particular purposes of this investigation, it is noteworthy to consider such projects associated with town planning or architecture under the auspices of Catrin Morgan's positioning of illustration within a 'communicating layer of a narrative composed of signs'. If we take it, as she proposes, that a 'communicating artefact could be a website, a text message, a book or a T-shirt' (Morgan 2015: n.pag.) then further than this we might also imagine illustration operating within the communicating artefact of the constructive environment, an artefact as a result of a project of town planning.

4. The town as illustration

This uneasy undertaking is perhaps made more plausible when considered in terms of specific authored characteristics of the urban development of Poundbury. Rather than an example or extension of architectural design or environmental design, we might position Poundbury itself as a work of environmental illustration formed of visual texts. Mieke Bal herself outlined a semiotic consideration of New York City that is of some interest in terms of this positioning of practice.

> New York City, in many ways the heart and icon of American culture enables the casual stroller to be struck by the semiotic charge of environment. It's very layout – its central axis centripetally drawing toward green heart that reminds us of the nature it has replaced, its monumental avenues running along Central Park – demonstrates the importance balanced intercourse between background and figure, between over plan and specific details, and between chaos and organisation.
>
> (Bal 1992: 556)

Clearly the chaos of the city – the chance consequences – disrupts any obstinate reading of such place as a framework for illustration or indeed even as a forum for a framed understanding of visual text. Nevertheless, the experiment of the new town, with its subtexts of authored vision and clean-slate approach to the construction of a place, is plausibly a better fit for such a reading.

Within the auspices of the new town, Poundbury is perhaps uniquely qualified to fit the reading of town as illustration, designed as and built with a mixture of a development brief and masterplan, guided by the architect Léon Krier, in mild adherence to a set of principles outlined in a book of architectural musings by the Prince of Wales. *A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture* (Prince of Wales 1989).

In both the planning and the final developed detail of Poundbury, there is a prioritization of the pictorial and ornamental. This is attempted with the aim of delivering what might be defined as a visual nostalgia in the communicative potential of the built environment. Elements of what might be understood as popular nostalgic form operate in the attempt to re-produce or indeed produce what Krier would define as 'vernacular building' (Krier et al. 2009: 51). In the larger environment, this results in an eerie and otherworldly sense of the town, visible as built image. We are left with a built apparition or indeed illustration of a past England, a quaint, folk-like place that never existed.

In her article 'From folk culture to modern British', Desdemona McCannon outlines a relevant development to be observed in the engagement of illustration practices with the 'vigour, decorative quality, and […] bluntness of message found in folk art'. She goes on to position a more naturally subversive 'cruder, vernacular alternative' to an establishment use of 'folk art in mainstream design […] associated with a backward-looking, nostalgic take on "Englishness"'. As a historical example of this, McCannon offers the Lion and the Unicorn pavilion from the 1951 Festival of Britain, in itself an engagement with the possibilities of sculpture, illustration and architecture. 'These heraldic animals were shown as being representative of the fearless eccentricity of the nation. There is a whimsicality to some of the exhibits, the register dipping into what could be called "quaint"' (McCannon 2009: n.pag.).

In the Poundbury project and his wider practice, Krier envisages a modern adaptation of classical architecture as the true 'artistic culture of vernacular building' (Krier et al. 2009: 51). The visual result of this is a mix of the monumental and the aforementioned quaintness or whimsy. Krier sees classical architecture to function effortlessly, as part of a suggestive vernacular 'concerned with the symbolic language construction, with the decoration of public structures, with buildings, squares and monumental features in general' (Krier et al. 2009: 51).

The architect Adolf Loos, in a moment of era defining rhetoric, may have stated ornament to be a crime (Loos and Opel 1998: 167), and Krier, true to the performative individualistic possibilities opened up by such rhetoric, is keen on making his own such statements. We might imagine Krier to see himself in playful antithesis to the dialogues that have sprung from assertions of early modernism. However, in places, this playful antithesis may be perceived by critics as a reactionary conservative focus. Perhaps this is equally evidenced in image and form as it is in his writings or public pronouncements.

5. The town as illustrated critique

In common with previous given examples of environmental design and with parallels to a reimagined authorial practice of illustration, the planning of the town of Poundbury and its comprised buildings and facades offer again, in Katherine McCoy's terms, 'additional content and self-conscious critique to the message', rather than simply a designer's response to a brief (1990).

This additional critique operates on two levels.

The first level is a continuation of Léon Krier's career spanning criticism of what he might perceive as the dominant ideologies of modernity. This is evident in his practical work, his writing (Krier et al. 2009) and in his published self-illustrated book, *Drawing for Architecture* (Krier 2009).

Specifically in Figure 2 we have an illustration seemingly drawing parallels between contemporary design, notions of modern art and elements associated with multicultural society. It appears as a socially and ethically reactionary suggestion of the grotesque within a layer of misfiring humour.

Intentionally or not, the operation of humour is actually widely evident in Poundbury's undertaking. Krier may have it that 'The decorative refinement of a monumental building will look ridiculous if reduced to the size of a house' and this certainly holds true, and yet examples of such buildings are evidenced all around Poundbury (Figure 3). Poundbury itself operates as a self-evident embrace of the ridiculous and the absurd. Yet the joke, if taken as a joke at all, is buried within layers of image and design that communicate in multiple, sometimes competing messages.

This may be posited as another level of self-conscious critique to the message. Moving on from a response to perceived dominant ideologies within architecture and society, this self-conscious or perhaps semi-conscious critique disrupts and plays with the potential of Krier's masterplan and by extension Prince Charles's original brief. These buildings and this location – as designed – are not intended to remind us of the problems with imposed and planned tradition, the fallacy within forcing custom in designing the vernacular. However, within the houses and squares, colonnade and statues, this is exactly what is often communicated. We are left with the strange or otherworldly, an odd place.

The overriding quality of the sum of all the parts of Poundbury seems to be converging on the strange or, to some degree, absurd or humorous potential of such a project as it interacts with its residents and further audience. As picked up upon with the surrounding cultural discourse, we have 'a toy town, a museum of a mythical past' (Spain 2010), a 'strange to see one man's dream made real in bricks and mortar' that is both 'reassuringly serene and ever-so-slightly eerie' (Forrest 2017).

This being the case, Poundbury has found itself easily lent as a visual backdrop for those wishing to capture an otherworldliness in film or TV; 'You don't know what it's making you feel, and you don't know why you feel slightly uneasy about it', claimed director Tom Harper, who selected Poundbury as the location for an episode of the sci-fi anthology series *Electric Dreams* (Fullerton 2017).

Seen as a fitting location for the adaptation of Philip K. Dick's short story 'The Commuter', Poundbury is a place chosen for its 'strange feel' (Fullerton 2017). In the episode, the town is suitably used to depict a fictional place defined by the fact that it should not exist, only made tangible because it nearly existed.

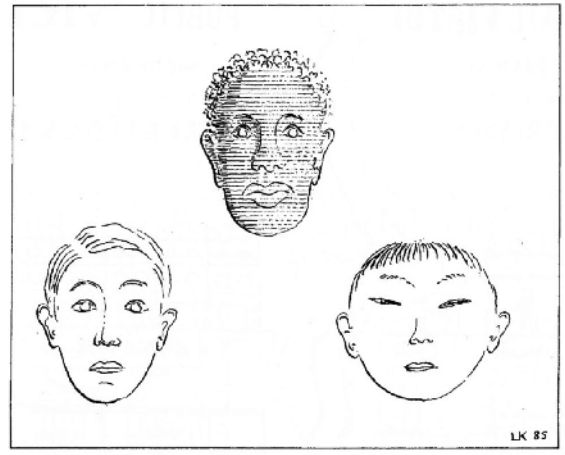

Figure 2: Illustration from Drawing for Architecture *by Léon Krier, MIT Press.*

Figure 3: Poundbury housing.

6. A fault in construction

Within this colloquial discourse regarding Poundbury's strangeness, rather than focusing solely on a larger impression of the built environment, we should also consider the interaction between elements of the monumental and less imposing structures and details of a house.

It is this odd pseudo-Moorish construction (Middle, Figure 3), a Dorset Alhambra painted in pink, that provides the context for the communication. By Meike Bal's definition we might take this as our communicating artefact settled within the larger artefact of the town. However, this bigger picture may not be of the most interest here; rather, it is one of the smaller pictorial decorative elements that might be of potential significance for those trying to understand the operations of such a place.

All architects who wish to design buildings within the boundary have to adhere to a strict Poundbury building code (Poundbury Management Company 2019) that regulates key features and materials of buildings. Fine details of design and workmanship are controlled by the Duchy through legally binding agreements with each developer before the freehold is released (Duchy of Cornwall 2006). One small part of such an agreement stipulates that a boiler flue must not be situated on the exterior of the house.

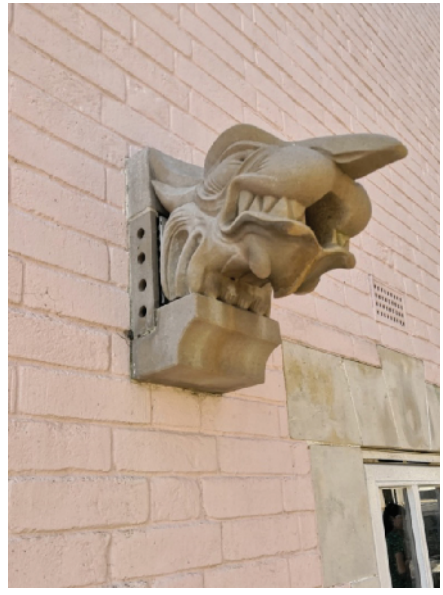

Figure 4: Gargoyle disguising boiler flue.

In advance of a tour by Prince Charles to mark the town's twentieth anniversary, the buildings and edifices were inspected to ensure that they stood fully in adherence to the building agreements. On the corner of Penhale Walk and Netherton Street, it was noticed that a boiler flue was illicitly protruding out towards Netherton Street. After consultation, 'the problem was considered at the highest level' (Edwards 2009) and the solution was found. The flue was to be disguised by a Gargoyle (Figure 4). Modernity was to be hidden by an ancient apparition with a new function. No longer was the gargoyle to act as a drain; it could now operate to spew hot steam, out of the castle and into the street, a fantastical addition to the Dorset Alhambra, as part of the town that should not have existed, the town that only nearly exists.

Returning to a consideration of the practice of illustration, we can imagine this undertaking in the context of seminal illustrator of New York Saul Steinberg and his statement regarding concealing or hiding. Steinberg relates strangeness as a strategy of image building to transform subject matter into 'jokes, puns, or anyway into strangeness: so-called humour'. To clothe reality so that it will be forgiven' (Steinberg et al. 2002: 84).

For Steinburg this might be his 'clothed' images dealing with the realities of fascist Italy or the everyday chaos of New York. Functioning on perhaps a less ambitious level, we have a decorative figurative element protruding from a pink house in Poundbury, simply a practical concealment beholden to impractical regulations. More than this, however, considered as an illustrated element specifically in Steinberg's terms, we are left with a visual joke or pun on the very same regulations. This undertaking has resulted in a strangeness: akin to Steinburg's strangeness, a clothed reality that wants to be 'forgiven'. This is further evident within the wider experience of Poundbury, made up, as it is, of eerie, nostalgic, decorative edifices. Behind such facades – or further than this, behind such illustrations – it would make sense that something more than just steel lattice is being hidden.

The architect Auguste Perret, a contemporary of Adolf Loos, stated that 'Ornament always hides a fault in construction' (Jencks and Silver 2013: 77) However, it could be that this concealment need not be considered to be something done in bad faith. The preservation of the fault by it being hidden may not necessarily be a bad thing. In the case of the boiler flue gargoyle, both the impractical-ness of over regulation and the perceived aesthetic fault are neatly and humorously hidden together. In any case, ornament might not necessarily be a crime for Perret or even for Adolf Loos, if we are to judge them on the legacy of their constructed designs.

7. Windows as wallpaper

In further consideration of this notional hidden and ornamental quality, we can next consider England's 1696 window tax and its unexpected relevance to Poundbury's contemporary ornamental edifices and their illustrative potential.

The window tax was established so that the more windows a property was judged to contain, the more the property owner was to be taxed. This resulted in windows across England being bricked up

Figure 5: Poundbury and scale model of Albert Speer's Germania.

(Pressman 2016: 140). In this way, windows became both ornamental (which windows already were), but also seemingly functionless. Although they had lost their practical function, to some extent the ornamental and indeed illustrative potential was brought to the forefront; this became the function. Here again was perhaps a 'Hiding of a fault in construction', or more accurately, a fault with the relationship between the regulations that we used to govern ourselves and the type of world we wanted to live in. This is the hidden message of the bricked-up window, left as an absurd, ornate trace of windows that wished they could exist.

Nevertheless, the tax itself was abolished in 1851. This being the case, what are these bricked-up window-spaces in 2019's Poundbury hiding, or perhaps in this case, illustrating? In a less straightforward sense, conceivably there are similar forces at play. The bricked-up windows of now operate on some level to communicate the desires, hopes and dreams of people who occupy such buildings.

However, this situation is not forced by regulation; it is not a direct trace of a process that has been enacted by a system of taxation. With this designed communication, we have an illustration of a nostalgic absurdity. This absurdity is as a result of the desire for authenticity in the conscious creation of a convincing fake, an authored vision created in the space between Krier's masterplan and the practical implementation of the forced vernacular.

Returning to the Poundbury factsheet, it states;

> The architecture at Poundbury is unashamedly traditional, using a variety of Dorset material such as stone, slate and render. The architecture draws on the rich heritage of Dorset and, in particular, on the attractive streets of Dorchester itself.

However, the majority of Poundbury does not suggest a rich heritage of Dorset. In some places, in common with Krier's lifelong desire for a reappraisal of the work of Albert Speer (2013), we have buildings that would not look out of place in the designs for Germania, the unbuilt capital of the Third Reich (Figure 5).

In terms of the ambition to use traditional Dorset materials and techniques, in reality most of the stone is reconstituted; the traditional facades hide steel frames and blockwork walls. As Ben Pentreath of Pentreath Architects, responsible for much of Queen Mother Square, stated, 'We are engaged in creating a convincing fake, […] All architecture is essentially wallpaper: underneath, it's all the same stuff' (Wainwright 2018).

8. Truth to materials

The primary communication of Poundbury is not one of truth to materials, as we might imagine Léon Krier would have it. It could never be. Nevertheless, decoration does have function, and does

Figure 6: Strathmore House and Gothenburg City Hall.

Figure 7: Gothenburg City Hall with its modernist extension as designed by Erik Gunnar Asplund.

communicate, but its aim is wide and it can often deliver an excess of meaning. For example; 'Prince Charles has built a stunning replica of Buckingham Palace' as stated by the *Daily Mail* (Dean 2016).

The spokesman for Pentreath architects replied: 'Buckingham Palace was never the inspiration for Strathmore House. The major influence for all our work at Queen Mother Square is the English Palladian tradition' (Sawer 2016).

When held up for interpretation, decoration encourages misinterpretation and invites a depositing of multiple truths. This perhaps being the case, another more appropriate reading (or misreading) may draw comparisons between Strathmore House and the Gothenburg City Hall (Figure 6).

Certainly, the visual similarities are much more apparent than they are between Strathmore House and Buckingham Palace. Pentreath architects imagined that English Palladian tradition is also a difficult match. The seventeenth-century municipal architecture of Northern Europe might be a better fit, although neither offers a definitive or widely used categorization.

As Krier would have it, these buildings form part of cities and landscapes that are 'illustrations of our spiritual and material worth. They not only express our values but give them a tangible reality. They determine the way in which we use or squander our energy, time, and land resources' (Krier et al. 2009: 99).

In agreement with this statement and in defiance of chronology, the modernist extension of the Gothenburg City Hall (Figure 7) might reply. Gifted the ability to talk, it would say, 'let us reappraise the way we use our energy time and resources to better fit the future world in which we all aspire to live'.

Criticism from the time of the extension's construction had it that the interior was not appropriate for the intended austere function of a lawcourt. In response, the architect of the project, Erik Gunnar Asplund, explained that this was precisely the point, 'simply because people are filled with concern and anxiety, a friendly, kind and sunny light has been let in' (Olsson 2009).

Perhaps in Strathmore house, we might read another message. In the very absence of any modernist extension, Strathmore House might be saying 'you have gone too far'.

In *A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture* Prince Charles outlines his own anti-Modernist revisionism, 'everything cries out for a reappraisal of our values and attitudes. Don't be intimidated by those who deride such views. They have had their day'.

Prince Charles' radical, yet meandering text attempts to tie together social criticism regarding ecological conservation, with notions of the traditional within the built environment. Relevant here is Alice Twemlow, writer, theorist and critic of design practices, responding to a question on the role of the critic within the architecture of today:

> If you take architecture to be less about individual buildings, and more about the structural, political and conceptual framing of the shifting relationship between public and private space (which I do) then the role of the architecture critic merges with that of the social critic […]
>
> (The Architect's Newspaper 2018)

Twemlow here is inciting engagement with a very contemporary concern regarding the diminishing realities of urban space in the public sphere. Again, this is an attempt to define public space and the urban environment as a set of values and possible communications.

Perhaps we might best understand this communication as being visually framed. In her article 'The decriminalization of ornament', Twemlow mentions the design group Omnivore as an example of practice that 'utilises pattern and ornamentation, blurring the line between design and illustration' (Twemlow 2005). Omnivore describe themselves as a design studio with a 'voracious appetite for art-, architecture-, and culture-related design work' (Omnivore 2013). Twemlow cites them as perceiving a baroque-friendly visual environment that 'represents a swing back to something more dense where things aren't so stripped away' (Twemlow 2005).

This type of looking back or visual nostalgia need not be something connected with a reactionary conservative impetus within our society. Filmmaker and journalist Adam Curtis article for his BBC blog describes a much earlier utopian vision of urban planning, this one radically anti-conservative,

> In the 1830s Charles Fourier outlined an extraordinary new kind of society based on communities he called Phalanxes. Fourier didn't want to change people. All the different things inside their heads was just what they were like – and you worked with that extraordinary range of human nature and channelled it to create societies in which everyone played a role suited to

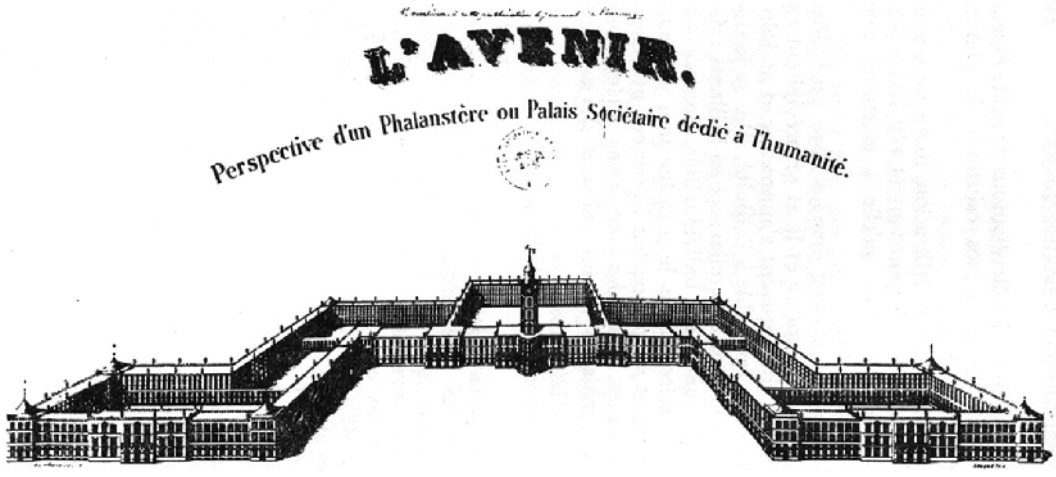

Figure 8: A perspective view of Charles Fourier's Phalanstère. Illustrated by Victor Considérant. From 'Description du phalanstère et considérations sociales sur l'architectonique'.

> their nature. His vision is wonderfully optimistic. Even potential murderers are allowed to work off their psychotic impulses – as butchers.
>
> (Curtis 2011)

Again, in depictions of this vision, we see monumental architecture alluding to an ornamental classical past (Figure 8), a visual nostalgia for a time no one had ever really experienced, thus a fitting visual framework for a utopia so ambitious it could never possibly exist, illustrating as Krier would have it our 'spiritual and material worth'.

Conclusion

Back in Poundbury, we have the Queen Mother statue in Queen Mother Square. In the *Daily Mail* article regarding the lowering of the statue, the paper exclaimed: 'Poundbury has been created on the basis of architectural principles found desirable by Prince Charles. It is intended as a Utopian idyll where there is no segregation of social classes' (Duell 2016).

As strange as this may sound, this description is in line with the thinking of Prince Charles as outlined in *A Vision of Britain*, consequently utilized as the basis of the Poundbury masterplan with its intended mixture of social, affordable and luxury housing.

However, in awareness of Jane Jacob's aforementioned criticism of a superficial paternalism within urban design, it is clear that areas of housing designed in a semi-unsegregated manner may not straightforwardly equate to a desegregation of social class. Perhaps operating on a more powerful level than such design, we might consider the communicating illustrative elements of Poundbury, specifically, in this case, the statue of the Queen Mother.

Considered under the auspices of illustration, a statue of a former member of the hereditary monarchy as centrepiece for such a Utopian idyll might seem to be a mismatch. This iconographic, pictorial and sculptural work might be understood as celebrating the supremacy of one family within a notional tradition of class divisions. We might take this as the narrative text of the statue, communicating within the wider artefact of Poundbury itself. From the illustrator's perspective, it is hard to see how any desegregation of social class might be the intention or meaning under the iconic weight of this visual text placed at the heart of the communicating artefact.

If this article was to offer any critique of Poundbury, it would not be on the basis of a mismatch between the design brief and realities of the functional built, nor would it be regarding the eerie artifice of Krier's imagined Dorset vernacular. These loaded building blocks and associated visual elements, placed within the public sphere hypothetically, might offer huge potential for reappraisal at some point in their lifetime.

Optimistically, we might have it that the strangeness or eeriness created by a loaded disconnect between reality and intention, together with an excess of authorial design, may end up becoming an

asset to the community of this unusual urban development. As it was for the producers of the TV adaptation of Philip K. Dick's short story, Poundbury's usefulness or meaning might have nothing to do with the good intentions of its design; rather it may in occur in playful ambivalence to such intentions.

Nevertheless, in a final reckoning from the perspective of the illustrator, we might perhaps be able to offer at least a surface critique of the visual communication on offer at Poundbury. Akin to the misfiring humour visible within Krier's illustrated polemics of modernist design (Figure 2) and as exemplified by the Queen Mother statue, Poundbury is affected on an illustrative level by uncomfortable connotations of social hierarchy and hereditary privilege embedded in the relationship between the place its images and meaning.

Conceivably in this settlement's interminable lifetime, there may be some escape from the reverberations of this polite yet tyrannical image. In line with Krier's concept of the vernacular classical together with past romantic and melancholic notions of architectural antiquity (Perpinyà 2014) for differing reasons we may all have to wait for time in which Poundbury stands in ruins. Perhaps at this inconceivable point, the opportunity to read meaning in such a place might present itself more clearly.

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