

On drawing virtual objects, and rendering dreams

by Marialaura Ghidini

If a 'fly-through' is the flight that an airplane makes through an area or region for observational purposes, the term most commonly indicates a computer-animated simulation of what would be seen if one was actually on such an observational flight. The former is a real scenario; the latter is a constructed virtual journey aimed at recreating existing, at times imagined, or often soon-to-be scenarios. These journeys simulate the experience of moving around 3D-rendered forms, patterns and lights. All together these give form to objects, landscapes, architectural spaces and interiors, represented with minutiae to appear almost photo-real and interactive. But why? What is their purpose?

Inspired by gaming and its immersive virtual environments, fly-through animations have become commonplace in the activities of design agencies. Large numbers of 3D visualizers create them on instruction; to fulfil the promotional needs of various markets, above all the real estate industry. The visualizers' *task* is to create convincing renderings of the dreams that one—the industry's potential customer—wants to live. The essentiality of their role lies in skilful interpretation of the client's requests and a capacity to visually convey the feelings of one dwelling in his soon-to-be property, which is presented already filled with painstakingly rendered objects, decors, and features. The dreams of the person who flies-through have to appear virtually real, digitally tangible, interactively experiential so that narratives of the real estate market can materialize¹, anonymously and on the cheap.

In fact, these digital craftspeople are often unaccredited, underpaid and limited in their action by the clients' instructions, despite the fact they are the ones who allow for the commodification of the dreams of others. Drawing—the practice of representing the visual world on a flat surface—becomes the rendering of 3D forms, patterns and objects in tridimensional space. It also becomes concerned, for the most part, not with creating original designs but with enhancing those already existing. To favor production efficiency, the designs used are often models collected in online repositories, such as the well-known 3D Warehouse— a library that is full of objects created equally by both skilled professionals and amateurs. Hence the hybridity of this contemporary form of drawing, which merges a thorough understanding of software and an eye for design with the ability to 'objectively' interpret instructions; giving life to a process based on parameters and expectations that is unevenly collaborative. What we might be exposed to here is a creative form of production that, while rooted in drawing, has been morphed by computational tools and so-called digital economies, including new forms of labor inherent in them.

The new body of work by Tara Kelton, "*interiors.lib (Fly-through)*", taps into this overlooked scenario. It does so by shuffling the cards of the commission-production-display game, by playing with who the artist is and what is meant by digital in a time in which little separates it from *the physical*. And such shuffling seems to have originated in the following question: what happens when the eye and the hand of the artist, and the originality of her gestures, are

¹ "Driven by passion, conceived by top class designers, XXX City rises to be the destination next," states one of the many advertisements for promoting new real estate compounds that are commonly found in the major cities of India or on purposely-created online catalogues.

replaced with the choices of craftspeople of 3D-rendered forms, the skills of informal and often amateur workers, and instructional, almost top-down, processes of production?

The artist offers an alternate scenario: a seeming drawing room for the exhibition viewer to walk through. It is an environment where what one observes is a soon-to-be everyday scenario that is partly real, partly imagined and not fully constructed yet. The view of this collection of works is punctuated by an array of digital renditions whose state hovers between being embodied objects or images of 3D ones flattened on surfaces. What brings them together is the fact that they are copies of copies; they are often renditions of models found on online repositories of 3D objects which are *almost* like the real thing: the mirror, the sheet of paper, the marbles, the still life and the abstract painting. In the same manner in which 15th century artists and artisans used the pattern book to ease processes of production by appropriating existing sets of designs, forms and patterns, Kelton rarely proposes her own artistic creation or design. However, what the artist has not conformed to is to work with ease and efficiency. The artworks in “interiors.lib (Fly-through)” are the outcome of practical and creative negotiations with the 3D visualizers and desktop publishing (DTP) workers she decided to work with. By providing them with sets of instructions—either sourced online or created by herself—Kelton asked her collaborators to materialize them according to their own interpretations. She willfully assumed the questionable role of the commissioner, the client, to have her needs, and perhaps dreams, rendered in space. By taking up this slippery position she has given form to a system of collaborative production for which the figure of the craftsperson, the amateur and the inventor merge together, perhaps to propose a critique of the dynamics related to how digital economies and emerging markets shape not only social desires but also forms of production and labor.

Paraphrasing Paul Cezanne², one might think that what “interiors.lib (Fly-through)” shows the viewer is an attempt not to reproduce the digital world and its aesthetic forms in space, but to represent it as the set of dynamics underlying technological developments and the socio-economic systems they facilitate, which at times end up in the commodification of dreams ones wants to live as rendered by the hands of those who are rarely seen.

Text written to accompany Tara Kelton's exhibition "interior.lib (Fly-through)" at GALLERYYSKE, Connaught Place, New Delhi; 5 Nov 2015 - 9 Jan 2016



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² “I have not tried to reproduce Nature: I have represented it.” by Paul Cezanne as quoted in: Gusteren, J. (1990). Katherine Mansfield and Literary Impressionism. Amsterdam: Rodopi. pp. 17.