

DISCOURSE

03

EPIC
FAIL:
SPECULATION AND THE
CATHARSIS OF CITIES

RMIT Architecture & Urban Design values ideas-led venturesome design experimentation and exploration. To be venturesome is to be brave and take risks. At RMIT students are asked to articulate the positions contained in their projects, to be critical and assert their interests and future directions. It is important that architectural projects and ideas are situated within wider discussions in the discipline and that propositions are formed that suggest how a contribution can be made to disciplinary, as well as to wider contexts and ideas in the world.

The Architecture & Urban Design Discourse Series will use three themes as catalysts to initiate conversations amongst design studio leaders and reveal their positions, attitudes and propositions. There is a long standing tradition of discourse at RMIT and this series aspires to reveal our collective and diverse concerns and facilitate speculation on how these might contribute to advancing the discipline and the wider terrains that they engage in. If we drill down and look behind the statements made at design studio presentations, what do they explicitly refer to, what do they suggest and what do they lead to? Vivian Mitsogianni - Deputy Dean Architecture & Urban Design

Friday 8
Sept. 6:00pm

Swanston
Academic
Building (SAB)

Building 80,
Level 2,
Room 07

Convenors

Emma Jackson &
Mark Jacques

Moderator

Mark Jacques

Speakers

Helen Duong
Jay Grant
Emma Jackson
Simone Koch
Carey Lyon
Mark Raggatt

Respondents

Mauro Baracco
Vicky Lam
Patrick Macasaet
Paul Minifie

The design studio’s process of speculating on a better world through conceiving ideal models and through conjuring some kind of Utopia seems certain for failure, but it does seem to be innate and it might, like religion and property speculation be inextinguishable. Is the search for the ideal in the studio ultimately a futile and dangerous one that necessitates a suspension of reason and realism or is the speculation / fail / speculation / fail cycle of the design studio intrinsically part of what we do both at RMIT and in practice? Is it even possible to conceive of a design process at all without the ideal, without utopia or without a paradise?

These symptoms are acutely present in the design and conception of cities. From Babel to Masdar via the Radiant City, the Garden City and New Babylon, our canonic models are epic fails – dead on the drawing board. That they endure and have currency in the way we talk about the making the world suggests one of two conditions. Either that failure is cathartic and there is restorative power in speculation or that we’re addicted to the escapism of the ideal – profession junkies looking for our next hit of failure. Discuss.