

Catalogue of the exhibition "FANTASMAGORIA – DIBUJO EN MOVIMIENTO",
Fundacion ICO, Madrid, 2007
Text by Montse Badia

Pia Rönicke

"*Somewhere Out There*", 1998. "*Outside the Living Room*", 2001.

"*Camouflating History*", 2001. "*Storyboard for a city*", 2001. "*Untitled Eames Model*", 2001.
Animations on DVD.

"*Somewhere Out There*": 09' 10"; "*Outside the Living Room*": 09' 08"; "*Camouflating History*": 03' 00";
"*Storyboard for a city*": 05' 00"; "*Untitled Eames Model*": 01' 36".

Courtesy GB Agency, Paris. Andersen_S, Copenhagen.

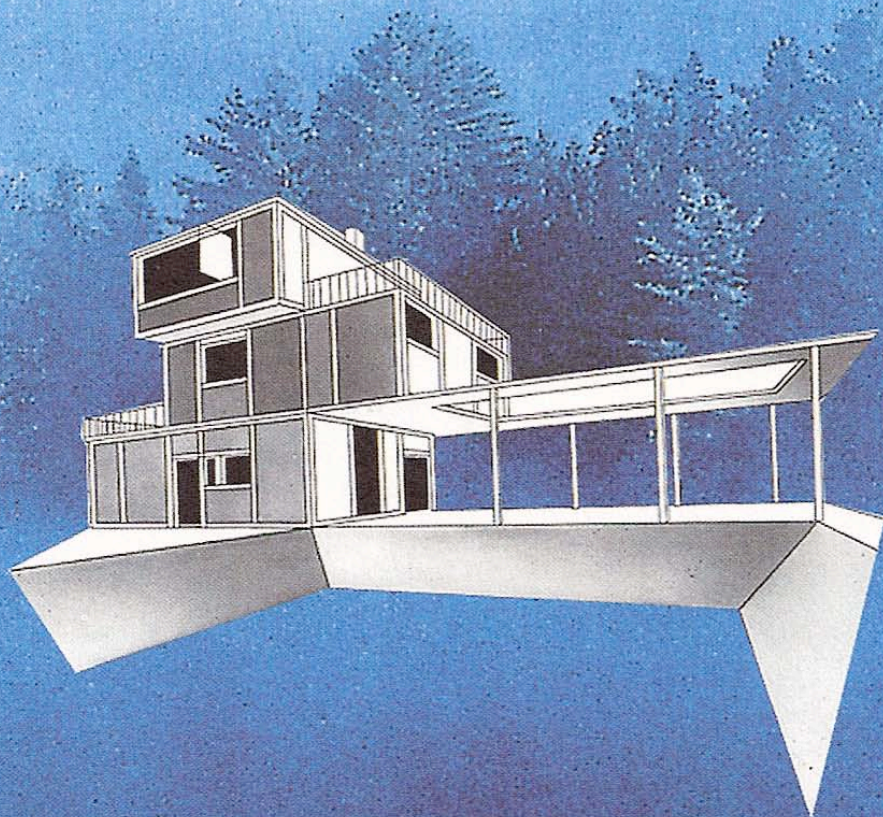
"What happens to visions when contemporary societies go about realising them? How and why are they whittled down and is that always a bad thing? Why do certain approaches to planning and building provoke curiosity in an artist? What is it about the most radical projects for societies, cities and dwellings that makes them aesthetically relevant, although they may seem naive and even monstrous when regarded from a political or social perspective?" These questions posed by Anders Kreuger in his text for the catalogue of the exhibition entitled *The Plan is the Dictator! What is the Plan...* (Lunds Konsthall, 2006) perfectly define the starting point of the work of Danish artist Pia Rönicke (Roskilde, 1974).

Rönicke cannot escape fascination for the utopia of modern movement and her belief in the idea of progress, in the link between perfection of form and the function of architecture, art and design in building a better society. Rönicke's fascination for this historic time in which architects, engineers, politicians, artists and ideologues have united to create a modern society cannot be separated from the disappointment of the failure of said utopias. Her videos are real visual and sound *collages* which include fragments of films, adverts, magazines, comics, drawings and photographs made by the artist herself. In them, Rönicke asks how unrealised plans or dreamed-of cities which never got built would have survived today.

Storyboard for a city (2001) is a cartoon made from twenty three independent drawings and an atmospheric music score, showing a huge panoramic shot of an urban landscape in which the sketches of houses and groups of buildings merge together, reform and dissolve autonomously, as though they had a life of their own. The video becomes a comment on the rigidity of urban development plans which can only come to life when they confront the chaos and contradictions of day-to-day life.

Untitled Eames Model (2001) re-contextualises the image of a roofless model of a house furnished with Eames designs, relating it to an environment of twentieth-century classical architecture, idealised landscapes or Japanese engravings, among others. Accordingly, Rönicke questions the idea of permanent beauty linked to utopia by positing its possible alteration based on changing circumstances.

Somewhere Out There (1998) and *Outside the Living Room* (2001) are two videos which become poetic collages or notes evidencing a process of artistic thought. Among the **visual** references and quotes to be found therein, are the Dada and Russian avant-garde movements, iconographic elements from the International Style, as well as other references from **popular** culture such as Japanese comics (manga) or the world of fashion.



In *Somewhere out there*, it is as though the buildings of the modern movement were fleeing their geographical and historical context, as a protest against the rigidity of modernist ideas of the ideal city. In *Outside the Living Room*, Rönicke considers the relationship between nature and modern homes, or rather, the use of the garden as a replacement for a non-existent relationship. The artist takes this argument to an extreme by showing the paddy fields on the rooftops of apartments designed by Mies van der Rohe on Lake Shore Drive or the Amazonian jungle invading Manhattan.

With these *collages*, notes or sketches, Pia Rönicke analyses how architecture determines our behaviour. Between fascination and criticism, it is evident that the artist cannot deny her love-hate relationship with architecture. This is why her criticism is in no way didactic, but rather subtle, poetic and with playful hints to it.

Montse Badia.