

Wonderland

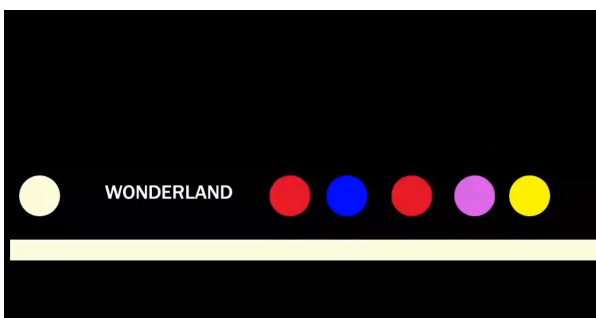
A Speculative Exploration of Learning and Desire

Namrata Dewanjee

All meaningful human interaction will happen (is already happening) digitally in the near future. The real world is only a theatrical space- a space to react to and record content and run back to the digital space to broadcast the collage of our experience.

[paraphrased from Bo Burnham's Netflix Special "Inside"]

The city is a living, breathing entity in a constant state of flux characterised by its desire to grow, spread and become. 'Becoming', Deleuze writes, 'is an anti-memory'. In Bangalore's bustling Church Street, this desire for growth and expansion takes on a frenzied, almost paranoid quality, inducing the same in the visitor who gets caught in its web. Here, the vestiges of British colonial occupation intermingle with the glittering signs of consumer capitalism, promising endless possibilities for satisfaction and fulfilment, bringing to mind Lenin when he described 'colonialism as the first large-scale expression of capitalism.'



Click on the image to watch the video

Into this charged atmosphere comes Wonderland, a speculative exploration to see the city as a centre for learning and vice versa. This intervention does not aim to provide a remedy for this paranoid condition but to fuel it further, investigating the possibilities that emerge from a city in flux. It is a whimsical investigation for an Architectural Design

Studio as part of the sixth-semester undergraduate curriculum to explore idealistic and abstract ideas and to understand the nature of education and its relationship to the city. Wonderland questions if education (or the city) can ever be truly democratic in a schizophrenic society in which, according to Frederic Jameson, the individual 'lacks a personal identity, is unable to differentiate between self and world, and is incapable of experiencing continuity through time.'

Wonderland is a threefold exploration taking place in three distinct sites on Church Street, each one embodying a different aspect of the city's restless desire to become more and more itself. At the first site, the memory of the soon-to-be-demolished Shrungar Shopping Centre looms large, a symbol of the city's perpetual flux and change. The second site is where 1 SOBHA Mall stands today. The intervention imagines the absence of the mall but is unable to ignore the possibility of the site being, as the builders of Sobha describe, 'A plush shopping centre. A world-class entertainment avenue.'

Abutting the site is the Stacey Memorial School established in 1964 in the heart of what was the British Cantonment in Bangalore. The intervention utilises the conventional spaces of education offered by the school while providing new modes of learning and interacting with the city. The third site is Church Street itself, tying the projects in the first and second sites with its schizophrenic desires.

