

it—from the extraterritorial to the highly local—the results of such work may not be accessible to public audiences. The methodological challenge for urban design is to find ways to translate a sophisticated, speculative understanding of the uses and forms of the contemporary city into scenarios that can compel today’s citizens to become active participants in imagining the spaces they inhabit—or, more importantly, *would like to inhabit*. At its best urban design can reveal the contents and potentialities of the city to its inhabitants, making them better allies in its ongoing production.

Thus, when understood and employed as the powerful rhetorical tools they are, maps, drawings, images, words, models, and even films can give the urban designer creative and political agency. Alternatively conspiring with and conscripting other forces forming the city, from real estate to engineering, urban design’s very representations may act as temporary sites through which the future of a built landscape may be negotiated and reimagined. This should be the critical difference between the disciplines of urban design and architecture: within the political marketplace of the democratic city, the urban designer can employ an artistic strategy of speculative engagement, while the architect is still waiting for a call from an enlightened despot.

Notes

1. Here I am drawing on an idea expressed by Henri Lefebvre, which I paraphrase as “Urban design is to the city as advertising is to commodities.” See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

2. The rail-oriented regional planning diagrams of Peter Calthorpe, and *trying to put the genie back in the bottle* density “transects” do not contend with the messy reality of the metropolis either.

3. The 1800 population of London was approximately 900,000; of Paris, 546,856; of Rome, about 150,000.

4. In 1995 I organized a conference and later an exhibition at the California College of the Arts titled *Cities in the Making*, which examined the philosophical backgrounds to and influence of Kevin Lynch’s, Colin Rowe’s, and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown’s urban design theories. Deborah Fausch, Eric Mumford, Hashim Sarkis, Alex Krieger, and Margaret Crawford were among the conference participants, and I am indebted to them for increasing my understanding of some of the material referred to here.

5. David Graham Shane has published an extensive study on urban design