

## CARTHA 2023 SINCERE FUN

### call for submissions

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1 Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"', *Against interpretation, and other essays*, (New York: Delta, 1966 p.274-292

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2 Jean Piaget, 'Explanation of Play', *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*, (New York: Norton Library, 1962) p.147-168

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3 JW Moore, *The Rise of Cheap Nature*, 78-79. The Capitalocene is defined by the division of Humans and Nature. Where the Anthropocene depicts the state of the environment as a consequence of environment-making, the Capitalocene considers its conditions and causes.

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4 Rhona & Robert Rapport, *Leisure and the Family Cycle*, (London: Routledge, 1975) p.10

What and who are you working for? Students and professionals seem to be forging new paths in the discipline of architecture against 'working for the man', maybe in part to resist complacency in advancing capitalist structures and outdated pedagogies, but, perhaps more frankly, because it just isn't fun anymore.

Having fun can be seen as an act of resistance. Notably defined in Susan Sontag's 1964 essay *Notes on Camp*: "The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious. More precisely, Camp involves a new, more complex relation to the serious."<sup>1</sup> Camp intentionally oscillates between seriousness and fun, balancing the line between being fun and making fun of, calling for the consolidation of seemingly opposing concepts in a perverse but generative way. Yet the ability to have fun is both reliant on a social condition that permits the act and space to house the act. Of course, a project like Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace is designed to do so, but a more critical question now might be: rather than an architecture *for* fun, what is an architecture *of* fun?

### WORK VERSUS LEISURE

In child psychology,<sup>2</sup> the division between play and learning does not exist - the two are fundamentally interlinked. For most of adult life, days are structured around work, with leisure filling in the gaps. In the Anthropocentric narrative, this can be understood to begin at the Industrial Revolution, or in the Capitalocentric narrative, to have occurred much earlier through the commodification of Nature.<sup>3</sup> Work and labour hold heavy weights in all aspects of society and the shaping of environments - unequally opposing is the concept of leisure, hilariously also known as "free time." In 1973, Britain declared state-validated enjoyment, acknowledging necessary support from the government to provide opportunities for leisure in the wellbeing of its citizens: "The state should not opt out of caring for people's leisure when it accepts the responsibility of caring for most of their other needs. The provision of opportunities for the enjoyment of leisure is part of the general fabric of the social services."<sup>4</sup>



BBC airs the first science fiction television program, an adaptation of Karel Čapek's Rossum's Universal Robots on February 11, 1938. © BBC



The Parachute Jump along the boardwalk at Coney Island (1951). Margaret Bourke-White, The LIFE Picture Collection/ Shutterstock

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5 Donna Haraway, *Staying with Trouble* (London: Duke, 2016) p.31

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6 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens, a study of the Play Element in Culture*, (Boston: Beacon, 1950)

7 Roger Callois, *Les jeux et les hommes : Le masque et le vertige* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967)

In Karel Čapek's 1920 sci-fi play R.U.R. (Rossumovi Univerzální Roboti), a world is depicted where robots are created to relieve humans of labour to allow for a life of leisure. Robots now vacuum our floors and mow our lawns, yet the discourse around AI reducing the necessity of work has yet to see its impact on the working hours of humans.

If we consider the roots of this framework to originate with state power, finding ways to squeeze more out of the 24 hours we are afforded by nature is devolved to the level of the individual. For many, part-time is not an option. In order to fit in leisure, there's a wellness movement towards "5 to 9 before the 9 to 5", heightening productivity at home before the work day even begins. Companies have latched on to the trend to provide for leisure at the workplace and developers have realised that wellness at work sells.

## ARCHITECTURE OF FUN

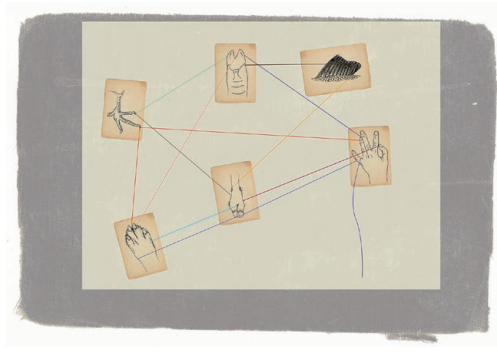
This year's cycle speculates on the decommodification of fun in culture and the environment. What would an environment look like where we were all able to have fun? A possible imaginary may be a chapter from *Delirious New York*, where Rem Koolhaas explores places of hedonistic intent in his descriptions of Coney Island Theme Park. Setting up the very foundation of a site for countless theme park go-ers to have fun in what is perhaps a particularly 'camp' context, nevertheless has its roots in widespread exploitation. Coney Island is an architecture *for* fun, a site representing the mechanisms of monetization and exuberance built into fun structures.

However, we are interested in an architecture *of* fun, Sincere Fun - fitting into Donna Haraway's ideas of 'SF': "speculative fabulation, science fiction, science fact, speculative feminism, so far... storytelling and fact telling; it is the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, material-semiotic worlds, gone, here, and yet to come."<sup>5</sup>

## HAPPILY NUMB/HAPPILY FUN

The shift in the spatial production of amusement activities can, predictably, be tracked alongside the greater universal shift from physical to digital products, communication channels, and lifestyles. Take gaming, for example: the launch of the commercial video game industry in the early 1970s made gaming sites - such as arcades, restaurants and piers - social destinations. The subsequent evolution from home computer gaming, to multiplayer console, to Virtual Reality platforms, can be seen as increasing in scales of private immersion for the sake of having fun - but to what end?

Playing in alternate worlds can often be seen as a sign of escapism, and those who are able to escape are criticised for choosing to avoid more 'real' issues prevalent to the world they exist within. As a counterpart, "Serious Games" simulate potential 'real' world situations to help train skills. However, in ludic theory an objective nullifies the game.<sup>6</sup> A game is something which is fun, separate, uncertain, non-productive, governed by rules, and fictitious.<sup>7</sup>



Nasser Mufti, 'Multispecies Cat's Cradle' (2011). Illustration of Donna Haraway's concept of String Figures emphasizing the necessity for human and non-human collaboration on an earth in crisis.

Moving away from the idea that having fun is purely associated with self-indulgence, and having serious fun is tied to notions of productivity, what are the possibilities of integrating play into work without it appearing frivolous or not being taken seriously enough?

Sincere fun calls for a kind of fun freed from quantified productivity. In a nod to Haraway's SF definitions, 'sincere' fun can be seen as distinct from 'serious' fun which holds the reigning understanding of fun inserted within a current framework separating work and play. This cycle calls for the fun of the accessible, integrated and sublime. Perhaps fun, amusement and enjoyment are threads not in opposition to, but, in the best case scenario, form part of, the rich tapestry of work and leisure. Something can be fun and sincere at the same time.

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

CARTHA is proposing an open call asking for a set of instructions / script / score which will be displayed / performed / created within multiple gallery settings in North America and Europe. The instructions set should anticipate all aspects of production and execution, including a 'cast' and 'prop list' (Who needs to be involved? What materials are required? How much space is needed? etc...). The submission should include text and one image. The selected proposals will undergo an editing / curatorial process with CARTHA to bring different sets of instructions together in one space and define the scope of a travelling group exhibition.

## submission details



The Chemical Brothers, 'The Darkness That You Fear' (2022)

> Deadline - October 15

> Contributions should be electronically sent to:  
[info@carthamagazine.com](mailto:info@carthamagazine.com)

> Accepted proposals will then be prepared for exhibiting in collaboration of the author and the editorial board.

> Text submissions must be written in English and submitted in .rtf format.

> All images must be submitted as individual files (.jpeg) at 300 dpi and at 72 dpi. Captions should be submitted alongside the images.

> Cartha does not buy intellectual property rights for the material appearing in the magazine. We suggest contributors to publish their work under Creative Commons licences.

> Cartha's Open Call for Submissions aims to support the presence of new and diverse voices in architecture. We are particularly welcoming submissions from women, people with disabilities, BIPOC and the queer community.