

curve

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Interview

Carlos Hinrichsen



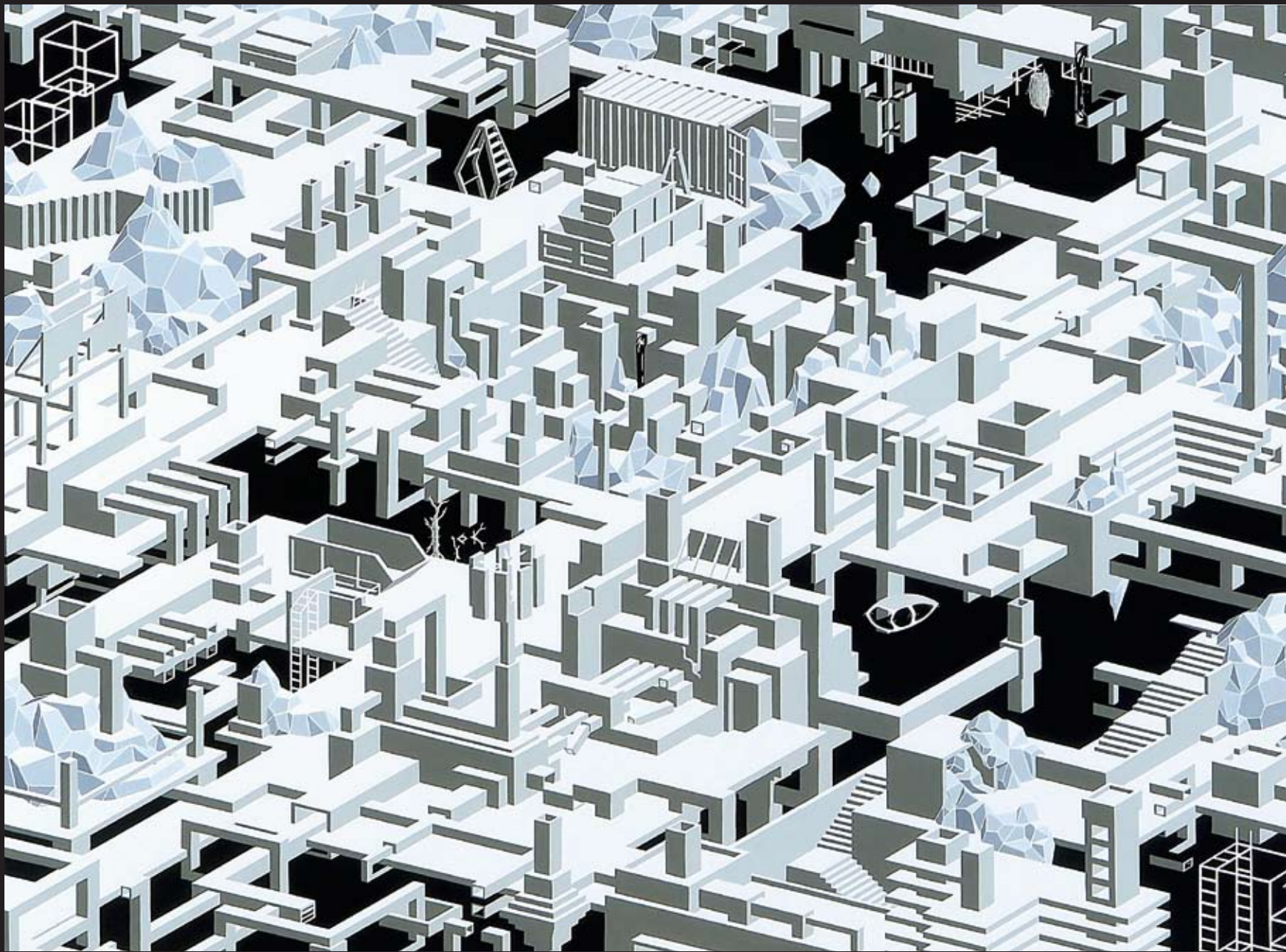
form product package

Object lessons
educating designers

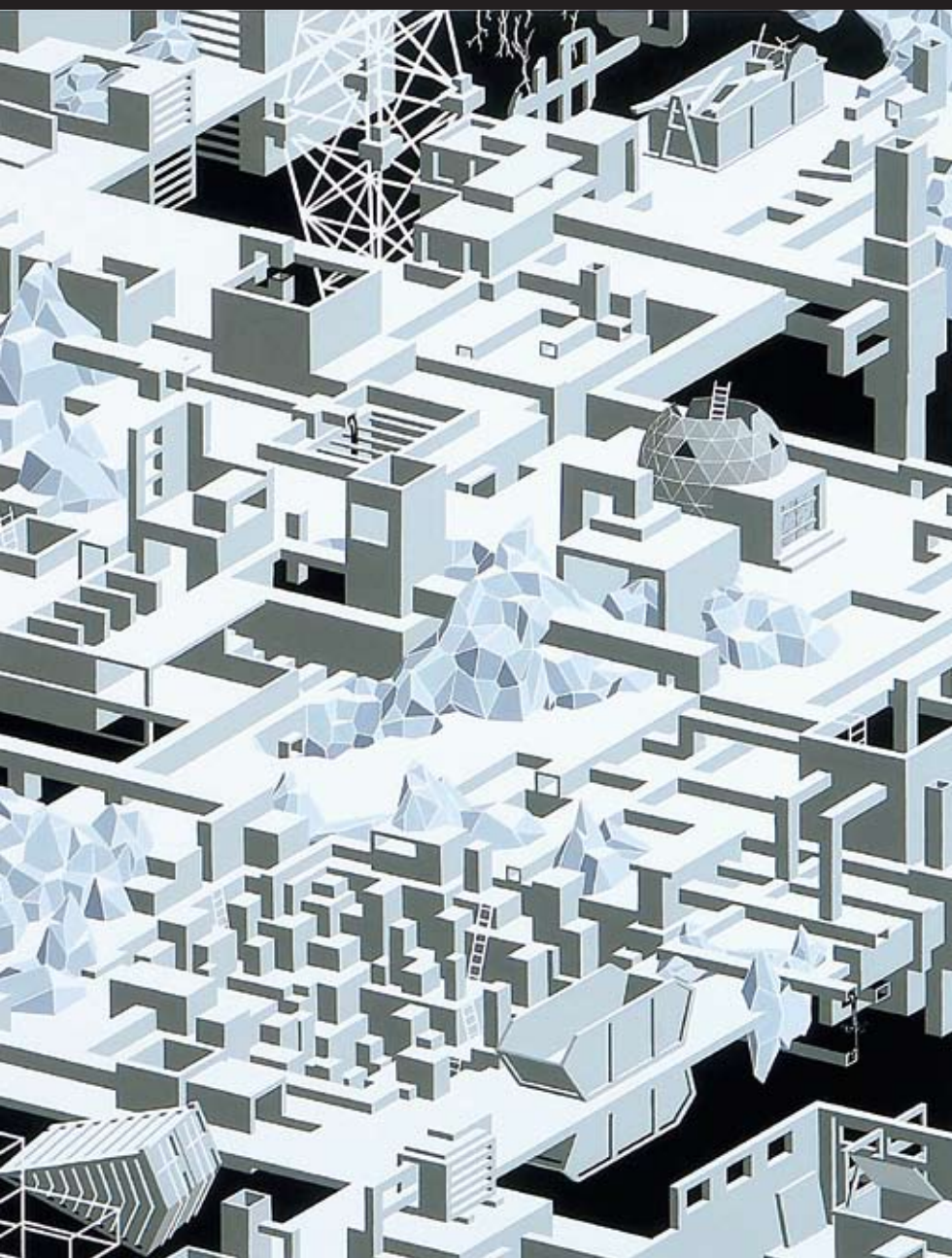
Bose systems
amped up



photography by John Brash



Architectural algorithms: Richard Giblett



Artist Richard Giblett explores the urban environment in architectural renderings across two and three-dimensional forms. Investigating the binaries of nature and culture, his built cities are often imbued with an artificially coloured glow, as though reconstructed from a science-fiction novel. Lending a dystopian view of metropolitan living, Giblett is worried by the fatalistic foundations of our big cities. His work explores social environments that have grown through use and necessity, suggesting that overdevelopment may lead to our impending demise.

Predominantly using plywood in his built work, Giblett incorporates artificial light and found materials to convey his message. Fluorescent green light emanates from an escalator, denoting what lies within: a hot-house of greenery exploring the real and the artificial. Reconstructed skip-bins at varying scales compile as though a maze or visual illusion, rendering the utilitarian form an object for aesthetic contemplation.

The artist's two-dimensional works include minutely detailed drawings and photographs of prophetic cityscapes. Exploring axonometric projections and elevated vantage points, these works on paper mirror the messages conveyed in his built forms.

Currently living and working in Melbourne, Giblett completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at Curtin University, Perth, and in 2001 was awarded an Asialink residency at Ssamzie Space, in Seoul, Korea. In 2005 the artist undertook a further residency abroad, in New York through the Australia Council. His experience working in these expansive cities has provided boundless inspiration for his work going forward.

opposite page from top
untitled (escalator), 2004-05, Australian Centre
for Contemporary Art

Obsolete Plant, 2008, gouache on paper



untitled (escalate) 2004-5, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

Giblett's 2004 *Plant/Room* exhibition at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, presented a full-scale sculptural replica of an escalator. The green light sneaking out from its steps belied the contents of its cavity: a conservatory of plant life teeming in neon green artificial light. Accompanying sounds of the forest – cicadas and trickling water – served as an antithesis to the form in which it was contained. Removed from its functional purpose, *Untitled (escalate)* encouraged the viewer to consider their own physical and economic environment. The installation was complemented by two graphite drawings. The first depicted an urban setting in axonometric form. Portraying high-rise buildings from a skewed direction in order to reveal multiple sides, the cityscape was juxtaposed with the second drawing, a similarly dense composition of mushrooms and fungi. Through this comparison Giblett aimed to make a connection between expanding urbanisation and fungal growth, where forms are continually overtaking each other.

Re-presented in *Uncanny Nature*, curated by Rebecca Coates at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, in 2006, the escalator work was given a renewed context in a group exhibition. Viewed upon entry to the gallery, the structure was invitingly angled as though one might climb aboard to gain access to the remainder of the exhibition. In close proximity to Giblett's work were a large wall appliqué from Noël Skrzypczak, intricate Blu-tack creations from Alexander Pittendrigh and neon bush paintings from Tony Clark. The 'sick pink' and ominous greens of Skrzypczak's gargantuan paint installation appeared as though foreboding monsoonal clouds, overpowering Pittendrigh's delicate works and mimicking the lurid pink of Clark's *myriorama* paintings. While Skrzypczak's work remained in peripheral view it was difficult to wholly appreciate the apocalyptic message behind Giblett's glowing hothouse of environmental commerce.

New Dystopias at Perth Institute for Contemporary Art in 2006 presented three major works extending Giblett's dystopian view of hyper-urbanity. The exhibition included the works *Subcity: While you were sleeping* (2005), *System* (2005-06) and *Raw Nerve – 66 Manhattan Holes* (2006). *Subcity* consisted of an elaborate tableau of the Plug-in City, or city that takes shape over a short timeframe, absorbing vast amounts of natural resources and energy. Depicting the anxieties surrounding the rapid expansion of urban sprawl, *Subcity* was formed as an intricately detailed plywood representation of buildings and infrastructure in a multi-level grid enclosing a spherical form. Illuminated

by a green light, the unit appeared as though a fixed atomic mass. *System*, by comparison, offered a complex algorithmic projection of built structures. Signifying a distinct urban strategy, its components floated in disassociation to gradually fill the space. *Raw Nerve*, an accompanying photographic work, explored the culture of congestion from an elevated vantage point.

In *Skipnosis*, Giblett's 2008 exhibition at Murray White Room, Melbourne, the artist reinterpreted the utilitarian and ever-present skip-bin. The exhibition consisted of a large-scale plywood sculpture entitled *Self Container (Bindala)*; a model, *Apex*; and a detailed gouache on paper, *Obsolete Plant*. *Self Container (Bindala)* was installed at the far end of the long gallery space, complemented by its warehouse-style concrete floor and high ceiling. The forms slotted together in repetition as though a complex labyrinth. Referencing the omnipresence of waste and the continual development of inner cities, the work presented a considered, minimalist interpretation of Giblett's ongoing artistic concerns. Sculpted in closer resemblance to an actual skip bin, *Apex* conveyed stacks of timber as waste, the after product of a building site. Constructed from plywood and paint, the small-scale model explored a sense of chaos in contrast to the ordered calm of the larger installation. *Obsolete Plant* presented a gouache painting on paper depicting crystallised forms undergoing absorption by an expanding built environment. Returning to the underlying message of Giblett's earlier drawings the work offers a contemplation of simple geometry as though computer rendered.

The work of Richard Giblett highlights the similarities between our organic and constructed worlds and plays them against one another as opposing forces. Inviting us to contemplate our global, spatial and economic future, the tension between harmonious and conflicting renderings of built and natural environments invokes a dual sense of chaos and calm. Despite the fundamentally apocalyptic view presented in Giblett's works, negativity is circumvented by the pure aesthetic enjoyment of the objects he creates. ■

Melissa Loughnan



above
Apex, 2008 and *Self Container (Bindala)*, 2008