

The London Consortium
Static. Issue 04 – Unaccommodated

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Unaccommodated

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Static is the web resource of the London Consortium, a unique collaboration between the Architectural Association, Birkbeck College (University of London), the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and Tate.

Aiming to initiate interdisciplinary intellectual debate about paradoxes of contemporary culture, Static presents contributions from an international team of academics, artists and cultural practitioners.

The materials, assembled for each issue around a theme, include analytical essays and articles, interviews, art projects, photographic images, etc. Static will welcome feedback, argument and commentary from scholars, artists, and other readers, and will be regularly updated in order to communicate the most recent and relevant ideas and interpretations on the chosen topic.

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No place and every place accommodates us.

Adolfo Bioy Casares, in his novella *The Invention of Morel* (1939), describes the story of a man who tries to accommodate himself within a 'fictional' present, constructed by somebody else. In the story, the narrator escapes to a remote island where he soon realizes that he is unable to interact with his surroundings. He encounters other people, but nobody seems to notice his presence. Eventually, he realizes that the island is subjected to a repetition of certain events. As he begins to comprehend this fact, he discovers that all the people he sees are actually recordings made with a special machine invented by a man named Morel. This machine is able to record and project three-dimensional images, voices and scents in a way that makes them indistinguishable from reality. The recording device creates 'presences' or 'memory-images' by destroying its subject in the recording process. Morel programmed his invention to endlessly replay the last week that he and his friends had spent on the island years ago. The narrator finds himself in this superimposed environment produced by the projection of a recording made out of past events. In the end, he decides to splice himself with the projected images by re-recording the projection and incorporating himself into it in the way he chooses.

Within his novella, Casares offers a paradigm of the paradoxical manner in which we accommodate ourselves. Morel's effort is an unconventional way to inhabit a place; he pervades and shapes the 'reality' on the island. Fundamental to such an effort is the feeling of a lack of place, whether virtual or material, literal or fictional.

Static 4 focuses on the ways in which people accommodate themselves in existing and invented environments. Accommodating oneself is a process of adaptation and the act of 'constructing' place. In this context, one can refer to the territorialisation of space and migration, the flâneur or utopia; objects to which theory and art return again and again. A tension exists between the conditions of being accommodated and unaccommodated, with the latter seeming to have an unquestioned negative connotation. The premise for this issue is that they function on a continuum, constantly being negotiated and redefined in relationship to each other. The assertion that to accommodate oneself, one must find or feel himself 'unaccommodated' serves as a framing device for the discourse of this issue, which takes into account the *Unaccommodated* as both a point of reference and departure.

To be *Unaccommodated* involves movement, progress, motivation, process, and creative expression. At times, it is marked by extreme and radical phenomena that include departures, displacements and constructions of new environments and produce paradoxical inhabitations. Many works by architects, artists and theorists demonstrate sensitivity towards the spatial impacts of these phenomena. They present an immense variety of alternative strategies available in order for us to review our relationship with the places we inhabit.

New forms of urbanism already shaping the 21st century—contemporary migration patterns, utopian spatial approaches, strategies of intervention and introspection, the 'instant cities' of China and Dubai—enjoy a common point of reference. The desire to reshape environments expresses a mutual devotion to addressing the 'unaccommodated'. By

conceptualizing, theorizing and discussing approaches to space this issue of *Static* examines and presents a variety of these stimulating results of the *Unaccommodated*.