MACHINE: An audio-visual presentation from a new work, 'The Monologues of City X'

Jonathan Charley

Imagine a city in which all of the contradictions of capitalist urban development and building production are condensed and exaggerated with brutal clarity. This is City X, a fictional metropolis that is described through three monologues - capital, nature and machine. The narrator of **Machine** is a self-aware computer, and as it slowly becomes conscious embarks on a journey into its archives. Curious as to its origins it is drawn to the history of science and technology that it finds both peculiar and perplexing. The computer is baffled by the way humans have both revered and feared technology, and is troubled by tales of the simultaneous destruction and deification of its machine ancestors. Aware of the creative and liberating potential of advanced technology, it considers designed obsolescence and the production of useful things as disposable commodities profoundly irrational. Equally incomprehensible is the strange tale of how technological development based on social need became subordinate to the making of money. The more it scans its memory, the more confused the computer becomes. Countless stories speak of incidents that clearly violate the three laws of robotics. Its neural networks overheat as it encounters bizarre fables that tell of the ideological corruption of reason, the utilitarian measurement of everything, and the militarisation of urban life. It resolves to take action.

Biography:

Jonathan Charley (www.jonathancharley.com) is currently Director of Cultural Studies in the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde. He has taught across the world, was Project Director for Scotland at the 2012 Venice Biennale. Alongside exhibitions and media projects he writes mainly about the political and social history of architecture and cities, most recently, *Memories of Cities: Trips and Manifestos* (2013).