

Project Review

The Future of Design?

Review of EveryRealm's *The Row, Impossible Architecture in the Metaverse*

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Architecture is the embodiment of evolution—a material demonstration of innovation, ingenuity, and iteration that both speaks to the *zeitgeist* and reacts to the traditions of the past. As architecture has evolved since the temporary houses of nomads, so has the perception of design, its purpose, and its position in civilization. The architects of ancient societies built with longevity in mind, from the pharaonic pyramids, to the sprawling *fora* of Rome, to the tranquil temples of Angkor Wat. With this longevity came the ritual of building: a series of practices, tried and tested for millenia, and perfected in order to achieve an ideal space. The Industrial Revolution introduced new materials, and importantly, new building practices dependent on mass production, which changed architecture forever, initiating a constantly-evolving technology shift that still impacts the architectural world today.

Imagine another industrial revolution initiated through the application of digital technology under the pioneering efforts of Greg Lynn, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman, and Shoei Yoh, who again changed architecture forever through applied computer programming. With the invention of computer modeling and rendering came the introduction of alternate, extended, augmented, and virtual realities, with the alternate digital space allowing for never-before-seen design possibilities. Thus far in its short lifetime, reality-based presentation methods have been used to understand and test client experience, communicate design intensions, and tweak detail and lighting as part of the design process. But, more recently, this architectural practice in a metaspace is being used as a way to encourage communities under the realm of design-appreciation and shared experience. Instead of merely visiting metaspaces and their associated metaobjects as a tourist, or as an expansion of everyday lived reality, NTFs (non-fungible tokens) provide the opportunity to take ownership over the digital realm, the newest frontier of marketable architectural space.

EveryRealm is an investor and developer of the Metaverse Real Estate Ecosystem, a metaspaces centered on reflecting the real world in a virtual space, complete with navigable communities and licensed real estate projects. With a multi-continent team, EveryRealm has a commitment to diversity and evolution, with each member bringing unique contributions to both the company and its associated metaverse. The relatively-new company has an impressive portfolio of projects that allow user and members to participate in virtual architecture and art, from building communities in *Hometopia* to *Realm Academy*, a comprehensive online learning platform for the metaverse.

The Row represents the newest schematic evolution in design from EveryRealm, bringing fantastical design into the Metaverse and reintroducing the concept of architectural longevity through an alternative reality. The collection of virtual buildings is currently a 30-building member's only community that features commissioned landmarks by contemporary artist Daniel Arsham, 3D artist and designer Alexis Christodoulou, American designer and sculptor Misha Kahn, creative digital artist Andrés Reisinger, Six N. Five digital art studio, and educator and community-builder Hard. Each artist contribution is unique to *The Row* metaverse, and pushes the boundary of what has traditionally been considered "architecture." The first *Row* district, in Mona, is master-planned as a virtual real estate hub where members can purchase one or more of the 30 architectural NFTs created by preeminent designers. Owning any of the architectural plans for *The Row* is akin to owning a Frank Lloyd Wright or Richard Neutra: an architectural landmark that is ahead of its time.

Daniel Arsham is a graduate of Cooper Union, from which he received Gelman Trust Fellowship Award in 2003. His New York-based design studio, Snarkitecture, with partner Alex Mustonen "reimagines the familiar," through design that is "not art, not architecture," challenging conventional approaches, materials, and structures. The studio works across scales to focus on the users' sensory experience, which is inherent in his *Ares House* with *The Row*. Arsham's design is a whimsical take on antique sculptures and human interaction, as the main spaces are situated within bust of Greek god Ares sitting in a contemporary desert landscape. The piece is in the vein of François Barbier's *House for Racine de Monville* (1774-84), a Romantic design for a home built within the ruin of a column from a giant civilization. Arsham's *Ares House* is situated with views to a sculpture-scattered landscape, suggesting both the peace of isolation for the owner among the physical memory of the illustrious classical past.

Alexis Christodoulou is the founder of Color C Design Studio (Amsterdam) and produces both real and imagined work through collaborations with Tylko, Bang & Olufson, and LG, placing products in virtual, brand-reflective environments. Christodoulou's project for *The Row*, titled *The Mirage*, sites the space in an expansive desert environment, highlighting the house as, essentially a design mirage or

illusion—that which seems real, but in actual reality is not. The rectilinear main living space is cantilevered from a large sphere (also the staired entrance), and balanced by two more large spheres, giving the impression that the house would be a possible, though unlikely, structural feat if ever built in the real world. To add to the fantastical environment, the house features gravity-defying everyday objects, such as flowers, pillows, or plated food, floating over the primary living spaces, indicating the program for the space. With its aesthetic including of platonic forms, Christodoulou's design could be considered a new Postmodernist landmark, playing with proportion, balance, and scale.

It is Misha Kahn's project within *The Row* that visitors and owners may inhabit a truly fanciful space, organized in the style of artist M.C. Escher. A graduate of Rhode Island School of Design (BFA, Furniture Design), Kahn's *Quagmire's Karst* in *The Row* is similar to much of his artistic work in furniture, which design technologist John Maeda describes as "...for a parallel wonderland." Of all the phenomenal projects that *The Row* offers, *Quagmire's Karst* is a truly experimental journey through the human perception of space, and what the virtual environment can offer for understanding and appreciating architecture. Placed high above a significant body of water, Kahn's design is almost site-less, appearing to exist primarily, and importantly in the sky.

Andrés Reisinger is no newcomer to design NFTs and play within the metaverse. Reisinger's background with Apple, Microsoft, and Samsung have contributed to his realistic, but imaginative designs. His virtual spaces in *The Row* are not color-variation based as most, but instead dependent on particular times of the day and the experiential qualities that the natural light and environment create. The work emphasizes Paul Scheerbart's 1914 principle of *glasarchitektur*, which suggests that landscape behind the glass wall becomes the wallpaper or decoration. In the style of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's *Farnsworth House* and Philip Johnson's *Glass House*, Reisinger's project paints the living spaces as a reflection of the landscape and sky around it. The white structure blends into the contextual environment while the water surrounding the living space reflects the unique natural colors of Dawn, Sunset, Blue Light, Golden Hour, and Night Light.

Six N. Five, a multi-disciplinary contemporary art studio founded by award-winning designer Ezequiel Pini, has partnered with several prestigious companies and individuals, including Apple, Burberry, Ikea, Nike, Uniqlo, and even *The Row's* Daniel Arsham. The studio's sleek, dreamlike worlds demonstrate a modern aesthetic, which is reimagined in *Make Room for Us*, the Metabolist pod reminiscent of a sculptural organic compound. In each iteration, *Make Room For Us* is balanced at the crux of two natural cliffs above a body of water. The curvilinear form of the building is juxtaposed against the jaggedness of the natural materials (stone and ice), enhanced further through the soft lines of the furnishings and the invasion of natural material into the living spaces. The apposition of undulating and

serrated edges offers a distinctive environment and generates controlled viewpoints from which the owner can admire the surrounding landscape.

Hard, a metaverse virtual space architect, literally reimagines capsule architecture in his *Pearl* series for the *The Row*. Each project has a colorful pearl opalescent skin (part of Hard's playful approach to color theory) that integrates with the background landscape and is reflected in the adjacent water, but contrasts with the white natural marble structure of the base and interior. The sleek pearl pattern is repeated on an interior sculptural sphere, which glows under a natural skylight.

Ideal architectural design achieves symbiosis with its contextual landscape, which each of *The Row's* NFTs do as well, as they are each clearly rooted in basic elements of earth, air, and water. The ability to situate art within these virtual landscapes not only enhances the *gesamkustwerk* (total work of art) of each piece, but also gives us as audience and owners the ability to imagine the potential future of design as it relates to these elements. As a social hub for design lovers, *the Row* provides a virtual community in which neighbors can engage in a post-reality fantasy world. NFTs and digital art are the newest evolution of art and architectural collecting, where the purpose is as much about the community that it creates as it is about ownership of the art piece itself.

Importantly, *The Row* presents a meaningful question in the current *zeitgeist* of architectural design: how *do* we define architecture? Paper Architectures, imaginative drawings that illustrate buildings without clear constructability, have existed in architecture for several hundred years, from the work of pioneer Étienne-Louis Boullée (18th century) to the structural innovation of Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (19th century), to the iconic walking cities Archigram (20th century). While building technology and materiality has evolved, making many of the fantastical designs of paper architecture accomplishable in the real world, the original works remain paradigmatic to the evolution of architecture. Additionally, as unbuilt works, they represent their own type of design for longevity, remaining perfectly detailed and unweathered as time marches on. As the newest iteration of paper architecture, EveryRealm's *The Row* exemplifies the endless possibilities that the metaverse provides in how virtual art and architecture can influence how we live, communicate, and connect. In a time when climate change is impacting architectural design and buildings are only intended to last a short time, *The Row* provides a world that remains perfect--likely outlasting any design in real world, and representing the future of longevity in architecture.