

Speculations

Step into the building site. Among the city's endless renovations is another space undone: the floor covered in sheets of corrugated plastic, its surfaces marked up for work apparently yet to come. The whited-out room might seem like some sort of attempt to abstract a place, casting it as if a generic, idealised cube in architecture software, a projection only interrupted occasionally by facts like a cornice here, a fireplace there. Impressed unevenly onto this is a maze of walls and corners, the outlines of an architectural plan.

Such plans are often smaller drawings, documents produced for the moment when something is about to be built or modified. It's made for a moment preceding its construction, an indication of a more malleable physicality, a sort of speculative fiction of space. In here, disparate notions of space are mapped onto each other, leaving us to orient ourselves between their layers.

The building you are uncertainly standing in, sketched around you, walking through its partitions and placements, has its own uneasy history. It is part of a series of related buildings constructed by Camden council across North London in the early 1970s, that architecture critic Kenneth Frampton once described as part of a 'movement towards achieving denser, anti-suburban, proto-ecological patterns of land development'. The estate, once vilified as wasteful and problematic, has survived much of the privatization push of the previous decades – with a majority of the flats still occupied by council tenants, in an area that is now otherwise unaffordable – and since become an emblem of a disappeared heyday of social housing, where designs were both ambitious, relatively small scale and - well, *social*.

Tallentire has taken such storied ideals, and here placed them eight kilometres south and slightly west, into the building in which you are also standing: a Victorian row designed by a relentless 19th century property developer who sought to upscale the area, its domestic spaces for the gentleman of an expanding city now turned into a shifting space for contemporary art. You might note, sandwiched between these specula-

tions, a common intent of terraforming, reimagining an area into the fiction of the plan, a fiction rewritten with each era's projection of the city. One intertwined with the other; over the course of the week the plans will scuff and compress with your footsteps - actual trails become ghost trails through the ideas of development, gentrification and what housing becomes.

measurement plan is part of a series of temporary inhabitations, a set of works where architectural plans have been superimposed in tape - sometimes for weeks, sometimes less than a day, only a matter of hours. The presence of the spaces they outline can offer a sort of odd tour: a one-to-one scale of doorways, bedrooms and sitting rooms to blankly survey and peruse, as if you are a potential client or property speculator, an unlikely tourist in someone else's house. The incursion is deliberately brief: the unmaking of these works is just as important as their placement, each work completed by the tape being pulled up, the materials balled up and stacked up, ready to move on elsewhere. The pace and efforts of the tape being taken off the surfaces varies each time; sometimes it comes off easily, in satisfying lengths with effortless tugs, at others it has been more laboured, involving scraping tools and patient nail-picking. But in each case, as the outlined rooms, stairways, and cupboards disappear, the rate of their disassembly matches some historical timbre, whispers metaphors too blunt to bear about the evaporation of council housing, of social support, of the social itself. When we measure, we set out a plan: a fiction of space that has to be shared to be believed, to be built. Speculate a city: what spaces do we want to share, to believe?

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