



The Nuclear Chronicles

Design Research on the Landscapes of the US Nuclear Highway

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- The work utilises tools and a medium (animation software and graphic novel) that are traditionally outside of the architectural fields, expanding the audience to designers and non-designers
- Within the fictional narrative contemporary issues relative to landscape architecture, large scale engineering/geoengineering, water scarcity, agricultural resources, and landownership are addressed
- Representational strategies for design research within the architectural fields are explored through heavily relying on a visual and spatial format in comparison to the typical verbal or written structure
- The reliance on a visual format can increase the audience to those that align to storytelling and graphic based books
- The drawings and positioning from the book can further engage with gallery exhibitions of still and motion graphics. (Animation sequences of the narrative are planned to begin production in summer 2024 as a further extension of the project.)

The Nuclear Chronicles: Design Research on the Landscapes of the US Nuclear Highway leverages fictional design narratives as devices for discussing the impact of nuclear technology within the territory of the western United States. Storytelling registers design research in a graphic novel format while promoting the use of such a method to provide insight into speculative design that informs and aids in approaching the contemporary territorial issues that landscape architecture seeks to address. The conflicts and controversies surrounding the landscapes of the “Nuclear Highway” system of the United States are made visible through a graphic novel format. The research visualises alternative realities in which projects actually proposed by the US government that were not carried out are implemented. The narratives provide perspectives from both the landscape and its occupants of how such dramatic infrastructures and policies, if implemented, would play out. Novel economies, infrastructures, and technologies are generated to cope with and adapt to the newly defined realities of the post-atomic age. The work intends to address methods of presenting design research that move beyond written and verbally dominated modes into spatial formats. The nuclear highway — through its scales, ecologies, economies, technologies, and geographies — is leveraged to legitimise speculative design and storytelling as modes of operation for furthering research and intervention in the field of landscape architecture.

Andrew Madl is an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee Knoxville College of Architecture + Design. His teaching and research explores digital media to speculate landscape consequences in response to technological explorations and advancements.

