

Imaginary Architecture: Photographs by Filip Dujardin

Filip Dujardin, a 40-year-old native of Ghent, Belgium, is a professional architectural photographer. In addition to his commercial work, he has collaborated with the Magnum photographer Carl de Keyser and with his contemporary Frederik Verduyck. He also pursues personal creative projects, such as his ongoing series *Chimneys*, which consists of photographs of fireplaces in deserted modern dwellings. Another series, *Sheds*, focuses on dilapidated and abandoned buildings in the countryside.

Fictions, the series on view here, is also an ongoing project. However, the images in this series are heavily manipulated. As the series name would suggest, these photographs do not record actual buildings. Instead, Dujardin, who studied architecture before becoming a professional photographer, imagines buildings he would like to create. He often makes a cardboard maquette or a 3D computer model of the shape he has in mind. Staying near his home in Ghent, he searches out buildings to photograph that will supply the desired textures and edges. Back at the computer in his studio he cuts, pastes, and shapes segments from these building images and compiles them into the envisioned form.

Some of Dujardin's resampled buildings are structurally impossible, constructed in ways that defy engineering. More often they are subtly implausible. Some of the most intriguing buildings seem perfectly ordinary at first glance, revealing their fictional nature as the viewer registers missing or incongruous details. Although some buildings are more obviously fabricated than others, they are all portrayed in a real-world setting, usually a flat, grey countryside or somber cityscape.

Some of Dujardin's buildings have a surreal quality, like the images of another Belgian artist, René Magritte. And like Magritte's work, Dujardin's images undercut their prosaic realism with impossible elements. A long tradition of fantasy architecture is also found in the work of Albrecht Dürer, Heironimus Bosch, and Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Dujardin updates this tradition using modern buildings and modern methods; many of the buildings that Dujardin dissects and reassembles were constructed in the last 50 years near his home in Ghent, and his tool of choice for assembling his images is Adobe Photoshop.