

# MIMESIS

# VOL. 9

PAPRIKA VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1

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# ISSUE 01

# PAPRIKA!

HELLO, THIS IS YA MAMA

(AMELIA GATES)

Vocicemail 3417

"hello, this is ya mama, if you're coming back to the house... can you stop and get me a small cheeseburger... I want no lettuce, tomato and pickles and stuff on it, just mustard and cheese. Get the smallest one you can get cause I got \$2 to pay you back... call me back... just mustard and cheese on it... and I got \$2... thank you... call me back... bye."

Vocicemail 3229

"this is ya mama... will you please call me... I've been calling you... you won't answer your phone... all I want is to go on... are you there... or something... I don't know what's going on with ya babe... but I wanna hear your voice... call me back... are you watching the football game... how do the cowboys (laughter) okay call me back..."

For the past year, I've received voicemails from an unknown elderly woman who's desperately seeking to connect with her son. Despite my repeated attempts to inform her that she has the wrong number, she remains persistent. She grows sad as time goes on, and continues to beg her son "baby cakes" to call her, and says that she misses him dearly.

In these voicemails, she also shares glimpses of her life, from watching football games to attending jury duty, and moments when she's feeling under the weather. Her emotions fluctuate during these calls, ranging from deep sadness and concern to occasional bursts of laughter.

I often find myself pondering what this woman looks like and where her son might be. Does he, too, leave voicemails for an unknown recipient with a mistaken number? Does he miss her just as much? Lastly, I can't help but wonder if she ever got her burger with just mustard and cheese.

The image below, created through the collage technique, features only the etchings and drawings produced by students during the Paprika! Exquisite Palimpsest event, adding an artistic interpretation of this unusual connection I've forged through these voicemails.



DESTRUCTION OF LIMINALITY IN THE DIGITAL

(IANG LONGI)

In the digital, there is no dwelling or liminal space—no place for rest and reflection. Nor does there seem to be a need for transition spaces anymore. Access to everything is simultaneous and instantaneous. We do not go to things anymore; rather, these places are accessible to us everywhere all the time. We can deal with finances, education, and socialization from home all in a few taps, and we can be transported to somewhere across the globe without physical travel. With the growing expectation for services, media, and entertainment to be more efficient, the thresholds of our patience and willingness to exist in transition diminishes as well.

Liminal spaces facilitate breaks and disruptions of circulatory space and spatial experiences. These transitional spaces are a place of becoming with boundaries that acknowledge the end of one thing and beginning of another. Liminal space exists in between environments so that we may externally project onto it and interact with it to synthesize past experience into causal models that are then tested and reflected on.

In the digital, however, there are no breaks. If there are transitions, they are instant and sought to be minimized by designers of the interface architecture. If a UI requires any embarking to access a

years to deal with the police order and its violence, physically manifest in the model as support systems. The discourses, feelings, thoughts, and strategies of nineteen years are the main sources of its energy. Further on, it will continue to offer its accumulations to the subsequent protests. The Condenser explores the possibility of critical space-making by baffling its observer through its odd existence, seeding curiosity over its endeavor. The observers then unfold micro-narratives and add new meanings to existing stories. In this sense, the parallels between its operation principles and feminist storytelling become visible. Here, architecture's narrative identity intentionally disrupts and reestablishes its own methods to critically engage with a situated state of what Donna Haraway defines as the "thick present," referring to the condensed troubling mechanisms of today. Gathering the fragments that constitute a phenomenon that has already turned into a meta-narrative, The Condenser is built upon seemingly minor experiences, interviews with the protesters, and site documentation. It puts forward an experimental approach to design research in the form of allegorical place-making by magnifying invisible, overlooked, seemingly insignificant interstices of political space.



OOPS—EUREKA IN REVERSE!

(EDMOND DRENOGLJAVI)

Is Prishtina a kitsch? An act of mimesis? Or is it an original work in itself? Is Prishtina a city of mania for appearance? Refined? Touristic? Consumed?

What on earth is Prishtina? ...heureka! It is a remix culture.

Yes! Eureka. But, in reverse

Prishtina, this energetic capital city, tells a tale of history and evolution through its architecture. One side of this narrative centers on the Modern-era buildings that have long stood as symbols of progress and innovation. As time marched on, these buildings faced disfiguration in the form of neglect, urban development, and sometimes even war-related damage. In addition, a cultural transformation is underway, one that not only reshapes the city's architectural landscape but also challenges conventional notions of authorial purity and the role of mimesis in creative processes.

Prishtina's Modern-era buildings, characterized by sleek lines and a vision of a brighter future, were emblematic of Kosovo's aspirations in the mid-20th century. At first glance, they might appear as relics of the past, struggling to retain their original glory. Yet, their narratives of yesterday, instead of celebrating victories, resurface as haunting reminders of our society's apathy towards the challenges that plague our cities. Far from being abandoned to the ravages of time, they have become the canvas upon which contemporary artists, architects, and thinkers collaborate to create something new, to mend and reimagine the original, and to doubt the final creation.

The question of authorial purity once stood as a bastion preserving architecture from the hysterical tides of change. The conventional ideals that held architecture in a state of detachment from the tumultuous world beyond its facades are now gradually giving way to new ways to call for protest. In the case of Prishtina, they may seem silent but are resolute in their stance against the daily suffocation that the city endures. The Modernist movement in architecture, on a functionalist basis, tried to create an architecture that expiated history. In our context, it appears as though a second era is taking place, mirroring the principles of Modernism. This unintentional repetition raises questions about the direction of urban development and architectural choices within the city as well as how an artist or creator maintains control over their original vision and design without significant alterations or compromises.

In the midst of these questions, shifting paradigms, and architectural debates, the city's residents become both witnesses and participants in its transformation. They are the ones who navigate the streets, and encounter visual chaos and ugliness. But, in Pr-

page or feature, its design is deemed un-intuitive. Loading screens for more than a couple seconds are considered problematic. Every tap should instantly take us to a destination. Every space is filled with pure data meant to entertain and captivate, thus flattening the transitory time and spaces void of pure content. There is no information processing in a digital environment, only information. Only the computer is granted the ability to process the infinite and simultaneous information being produced, reproduced, and circulated. Any psychophysical processing for a person must be done outside of a screen where infinite flow of input can finally be disrupted to be digested. Without such temporal detentions, we experience information as a flowing stream with no beginning and end.

Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism* (1991) characterizes society as "a series of pure and unrelated presents in time" and argues that "our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time." However, even categories of space are dissolving. Now we live in a control society that rezeals and outlines in his "Postscripts on the Societies of Control" (1990), which is dominated by information access instead of by the spaces we inhabit. Realms of power, work, recreation, home, and play are no longer spaces to go to, but instead are now places made accessible to us by technology. Participation of all parts of daily life can be done remotely now. No longer contained to locations, each capitalizes into the digital in a gaseous state, creating a society based in movement with no destinations during and between and to no end.

The fluidity of Deleuze's control societies reminds me of Marcos Novak's "Liquid Architecture in Cyberspace" (1992), which is an architecture that transforms as its visitors and ideas evolve. It is void of transitions "without doors and hallways, where the next room is always where it needs to be and what it needs to be." This reactive shapeshifting environment functions similarly to ways that Big Data algorithms evolve and present content that caters to our needs and influences our consumption and relationships to our milieu based on the content, people, and services we engage with. Before the World Wide Web was launched to the public domain in 1993, and before it even became dominated by user-generated content around 1999, Novak was able to predict the mechanisms of today's internet. Unbound by physical limitation, the online networks we interact with function like liquid architecture. They are not only highly dynamic, but also assume an accelerated temporal quality that is linked to the impermanence of non-physical digital infrastructure, emphasizing the come and go of ideas and the structures that support them.

Liquid architecture's ultra-fluidity takes you somewhere new without travel. It is not the person who processes information, but the architecture that processes

the user and reconfigures new information to be reproduced again, constantly morphing without giving the user a moment of stillness. There is no friction between user and environment, and thus, there is an elimination of boundaries.

Without boundaries, there is no distinction between here and there, or external and internal. And without these boundaries, there is no space-time for contemplation and action, only absorption. By completely surrendering to the digital, the exterior world becomes interiorized and liminal space disappears, killing the generative possibilities along with it. For the moments that we turn toward screens, we exist disembodied. The psychophysical connection is cut and we are rendered unable to synthesize new ideas out of memories from our physical experience that we were once able to in liminal periods.

WHY ARE HALLWAYS SO AWKWARD?

(TAMM MARRAS RAO)

Whenever one is walking from one end of a hallway to another, and one sees another person on the other end, there is this moment of an awkward social interaction. There is an acknowledgment of familiarity but no verbal action as the social construct of that space does not necessarily allow for a comfortable situation for an exchange of words. Further, there are also situations when people pass each other in the hallway in the span of twenty minutes at least five times; by the third or fourth time it occurs, it seems almost foolish to acknowledge one another's presence yet again. Some of these types of interactions result in humor and other times you may want the Earth to swallow you whole from the ground instead of saying a forced "hi" again.

Maybe we investigate the theory of coincidences briefly and try to situate the hallway within it. A coincidence is essentially a series of synchronic events. So, it really is just a question of two individuals making a choice to be physically present at a certain time and place that just so happens to be the exact same. It may be interesting to think of the hallway as a physical manifestation of this type of coincidences. Historically, before the hallway was created, people moved through rooms. If we were to relate to something we all may understand instantly, it is like moving through studio spaces demarcated by the professor running it. Today, the act of going from one space to another within a building has been physically manifested into its own space, the hallway.

Through this system of connecting all other spaces to one space, a high-traffic zone gets created as it requires one to always return to this space to get to the next. The shape and the size of the other spaces

that surround the hallway usually requires it to be unusually, uncomfortably long. It creates a distance between two people who are at opposite ends of this unnaturally long and narrow space that only allows for a certain type of acceptable social cues such as a head nod or a big wave. It also is a moment for eye contact being made first before words are exchanged. The anticipation of this moment can be dreadful for some. Again, it is the length of this space that catalyzes this ritual.

However, these moments are fleeting! They finish before you even begin to ponder what has just happened! That so-called awkwardness is probably a teaching in disguise. Maybe hallways are just a mundane space teaching us how to be more social, extroverted beings. After all, the space is created for one just to pass through and not stay for too long. It may be worthwhile to consider: should this experience be over-studied and over-thought, as this piece of writing has just done, or should we just enjoy this awkwardness as a moment of teaching us how to laugh at ourselves and move on with life?

THE CONDENSER

(IMLIKE BESIKI)

The Condenser is an architectural allegory device that spatially speculates the 20th Feminist Night March in Istanbul. It is an attempt at critical inquiry toward both the power dynamics of space and the spatiality of power dynamics in politically charged spaces. The model is 40 cm long, 45 cm wide, and 36 cm high; and consists of plexiglass, 3D-printed pieces, acetate, fabrics, threads, and wooden pieces. It has three main zones; the first one is Funfair, which establishes the spatiotemporal narrative of the March. Funfair is built upon an eight-minute audio recording of the Feminist Night March 2022. Thus, the slogans are the main notations that divide unequal segments within the circle. Each segment between slogans is either stretched or compressed according to the affective intensities within the auditory data. The second is the Affects part which deals with the preminent feeling/affective layers of the protest. The affective layer can be traced on the model through colored threads and fabrics attached to pores and hooks, each of them referring to a different protester's interaction with certain elements of protest, such as slogans, music, and memories. Lastly, the third is Generator, which is in charge of how the affective solidarity takes place. This zone maps how the past of the protest relates to the present by centering the experiences of senior feminists and protesters. Their tactics and suggestions accumulated over the

SHIP SHRINE

(ILU LU CROUZETI)

The work of time is crucial in the becoming and the affirmation of things; hence, they get redefined indefinitely. Sometimes, they degrade; other times they are intentionally being altered in order only to efface traces of their past. Things like the Shinto shrines (1) and the ship of Theseus (2) get rebuilt, renovated, and restored as part of their identity. The alterations enable a preservation of traditional technologies, construction knowledge, and possibly an approximation of their essence.

The relationship between tradition and change has always been complicated by the fact that change is itself a tradition. Change is put to use in the most pragmatic manner; it is a permanent source of power like a perpetual motion!

(1) The Shinto tradition honors ephemerality by extending their beliefs to the transmission of knowledge. It is believed that the knowledge, not its vessels, have to be treasured. The poetic beauty of the transient accounts for much more than tangible heritage. For example, in architecture, the wealth of society is not transmitted through what was built, but how it was built. The Shikinen Sengu ceremony celebrates the rebuilding of shrines every few decades as it serves to maintain the longevity of the Kami deity within the shrine. Communities gather, disassemble, and rebuild shrines to pay respects and to transmit traditional crafts across generations. Physical degradation is inevitable and necessary to commemorate aging cycles. The only constant is change.

(2) Heraclitus famously said, "one cannot step into the same river twice." He assumed that neither I, nor the river, nor the Shrines, nor the Ship of Theseus are the same as yesterday. Our identity is fluid, our composition changes; that is undeniable. But identity isn't undermined solely by the composition of our parts. The material out of which the ship is made is not the same thing as the ship, and the ship without its planks isn't the same thing either. There is identity beyond change.

Many of us spend our lives trying to escape the thought that we are not eternal. In pursuit of infinity, we transmute knowledge from one vessel to the next. We have intermediaries, such as ships, shrines, and bodies. We organize periodic transfers of information. We hide deities and gods within things. But in the end, "the hand may shape the flower, but it is still a flower."

(Donald Richie, *Viewed Sideways* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2011), 43, 184, 21)

Prishtina, there exists a paradox. The city's perceived ugliness seems to be a consequence of its inherent beauty. In this architectural metamorphosis, the city's buildings bear the marks of not only physical change but also a nuanced struggle between authorial purity and the communal urge for self-expression. From the smallest changes—extensions at grade, vertical additions, balconies converted into internal uses, or added surface of the apartment through consoles, seemingly random murals, and haphazardly placed posters—to large changes that transform important buildings, all act as the rebellious brushstrokes of a city yearning to assert its identity.

This inclination towards ostensible decoration actually reflects a deeper sentiment: our collective dissatisfaction with the city and a testament to our inclination towards comforting illusions. While these acts may be perceived as defacement, they also represent an apologetic claim to the urban canvas by its inhabitants. In this developing narrative, the concept of authorship extends beyond architects and designers to include the city's diverse residents, each adding their unique strokes to the story of Prishtina's ever-evolving urban fabric.



Fig. 1. Edmond Drenogllava, "Udresjaq Prishtina," 2021.

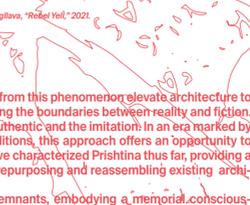


Fig. 2. Edmond Drenogllava, "Rekel Yell," 2021.

These produced images that emerge from this phenomenon elevate architecture to a representation of truth, effectively blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction. They disregard distinctions between the authentic and the imitation in an era marked by the interchangeability of cultures and traditions; this approach offers an opportunity to reconsider the architectural styles that have characterized Prishtina thus far, providing a fresh perspective on ongoing projects by repurposing and reassembling existing architectural elements.

These images essentially serve as remnants, embodying a memorial consciousness that has persevered into an era that emphasizes the importance of remembrance. They have no limits, no boundaries, and no definition. They emerge as a result of the deritualization of our world; a society deeply immersed in its continuous transformation and renewal, valuing both the new and the ancient, the future and the past. These images possess a simplicity and vagueness, appearing both natural and artificial. They are immediately accessible through concrete sensory experiences yet also amenable to the most abstract interpretations. They endure solely due to their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless cycle of peeling and an unpredictable ripple effect of consequences.

By design, these transformations challenge the very essence of the original architectural documents. They disrupt established norms, and this process serves not only to replicate but also to reinterpret, thereby altering our perception of an authentic work. This theme is an antidote to traditional notions of authorial purity, and suggests that architects should immerse themselves in the city's narrative. Through the techniques of mimesis, the art of imitation, and the embodiment of societal issues and protest, defacement in Prishtina's Modern-era buildings transcends its conventional role. It evolves from mere compositions of aesthetics and function into a vessel of societal engagement.

In this narrative of renewal, the city's architectural heritage becomes a symbol of collective evolution. It reflects the capacity of human ingenuity aided by digital media and collaborative spirit. It mends and reimagines the original, manifesting that mimesis, far from being a solitary act, can thrive in the fertile ground of collaboration. As Prishtina continues to write its architectural history, it serves as a reminder that unexpected moments lead to brilliant visions, breathing new vitality into the city's architectural heritage, a remix culture of the past and the present, the individual and the collective, the original and the imitation. It is a "Eureka" moment, but one that unfolds in reverse.

FROM THE EDITORS ON THE GROUND

The three drawings developed for this issue were generated simultaneously but independently. As the event progressed, subcultures in drawing emerged influenced by each respective site. From the floor drawing emerged many traces of feet, from the pit drawing many sketches of faces. These were manifestations of mimesis, of cross-pollination developing cultures of iteration and ideation. Visible collaboration was the ethos of the generative event.

By contrast, the final composite emerged as a product of unforeseen collaboration. Unintended dialogues between faces and feet became the subject of the work. The relationships between content developed by independent authors subverted the content itself. The tension between collaboration and competition forms the composition. The authors of this tension are untraceable and unknowable.

This document is but another layer in the continuum. The contents presented here are reflections of this ethos and of this composition. Reinterpretations, re-generations, and reiterations of collective thought. And you, reader, are the next layer still, as you process and filter the words and lines on this page, you become a collaborator of the continuum of MIMESIS.

IMPERIAL AUTO-MIMESIS: LITHOGRAPHY AND THE ACACIA SENEGAL

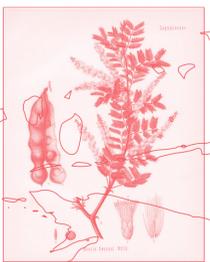
(ALEX KIMI)

This is a lithographic illustration of acacia senegal (right) from the second volume of Medicinal Plants, published in 1880. Also known as the gum acacia tree, acacia senegal grows primarily in West Africa, and was at the time one of the primary sources of gum arabic, a highly valued commodity in Europe. So heavily in demand was gum arabic throughout Europe in the 18th century that entire imperial wars were waged by the British Empire to usurp French colonial control over its trade. Gum arabic has

myriad industrial applications, and it also happens to be a key ingredient in lithography. That is to say, this is a print of acacia senegal produced using acacia senegal—one might call it a kind of auto-mimesis: a representation of an object created by using the object itself.

Prior to the development of lithography in 1796, illustrative printing was generally limited to engravings and woodcuts, a time-intensive and laborious process. However, lithography allows artists to draw or write directly on the printing stone, making for a simpler technical procedure and a more refined, precise illustration. Rapidly (and more cheaply) preparable and finely detailed, lithography was of particular use to colonial interests, expanding the capacity of European artists and scientists to produce and reproduce images of imperial material culture and environmental knowledge. In other words, lithography was itself an auto-mimetic imperial technology through and through—predicated on colonial practices to supply its production, and propagating a mass culture that fed the demand for imperial expansion.

Indeed, the 19th century saw an explosion in the production of printed images that circulated visions of empire and the pleasures and anxieties that came with them, due in large part to the economic and representational qualities of lithography. As it was uniquely capable of handling complex ornamentation, lithography was especially favored by Orientalist illustrators and architects. Notably, the development of chromolithography, which introduced multi-color printing to the lithographic process, was credited to a printer reproducing architectural friezes on Egyptian tombs. Indeed, the introduction of color greatly accelerated architectural interest in the technology, and several



widely influential books on Arabic architecture were produced by European architect-travelers who sought to publicize their grand tours across "The Orient." One such architect was Owen Jones, who published Plans, Sections, Elevations, and Details of the Alhambra in 1843. The richly colored and finely detailed plates from this publication made it a "landmark work," and catapulted Jones to become a leading Orientalist designer in England. He was eventually awarded a commission to design the interior decorations of the Great Exhibition of 1851, as well as a series of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Alhambra Courts for the Crystal Palace complex a year after the Exhibition itself.

The Great Exhibition itself, of course, is well known as perhaps the single most iconic nexus of auto-mimetic modern-colonial practices: its express mission was to authorize the British Empire as a civilizing force for the world, even as colonial sites mounted throughout the 19th century. Lithography played a significant part in this history as well—illustrations of the Exhibition widely circulated in the British press, considerably extending its influence beyond the already unprecedented physical scale of the Crystal Palace. Though it is impossible to quantify the Exhibition's role in extending that mission, the second half of

ON FLATNESS

(LAIME SOLARESI)

In 2017, the trans artist Miro Spinel's installation "Trans Fat" couldn't make it through the programmed three days of performance because of the unbearable smell of fat spread on the floor and on the performers' bodies. One ton of fat and four bodies in action enacted the existence of fat trans bodies, but also made a statement in defense of the thickness of fat in times of planetary virtuality. Fat is energy, defense, mediation between the outside and the inside. It works under and on the skin, a

layer in the architecture of our bodies: the skin of the skin is the fat. Fat is generosity, for a life fat in pleasures is a good life.

The gay architectural literature of the 1990s was prolific in analyzing the relationships between sexuality and surfaces. The bathroom was seen as a place of production of pleasure, and of reproduction of gender divisions. This suspended space of body physiology faces one of the hardest architectural challenges, that is, to protect the whole building from human fluids. The increasingly complex system of pipes that brings clean water for body purification—mainly, superficial fat dissolution—and expels our excrement needs both to get as close as possible to our bodies to absorb its fluids, and stay far enough away that it can keep its integrity. The ceramic membrane of bathroom walls is an architectural—armory, invented—to better mediate the relationship of the construction to our own skin. In this surface war, we are always dragged in and expelled from the bathroom.

A clean bathroom is one of the most repelling ambiances a body can experience. The strong acidity of bleach can hurt our eyes, alongside the aseptic shine of tiles and mirrors. On the other side, a dirty bathroom is repulsive. Its stickiness invites us to adhere; its strong odors

are an open archive of our bodily history, a mixture of familiar residues that we want to forget; and the yellow, brown and black of its corners presents a repulsive palette made of universal elements produced by our organs.

By reminding us that there is no Self without a Body, fat is anti-modern par excellence. The modern obsession with transparency and light has always struggled with the body and its fat. Fat works against transparency. It is opaque, thick, slippery and anti-crystalline. There's nothing worse for a glass building, and nothing more irritating to Apple's minimalistic creations, than greasy trails on their surfaces. But, ironically enough, the most advanced gadgets have added fat as a layer of information security. What better way to identify ourselves than through fingerprints—the fat decal left by the geography of our fingertips. Like a building without people, a person without fingerprints ultimately doesn't exist, is a ghost. Bodies and buildings need fat. Fatness is their very condition of existence.

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only increases the chance of creating artificial ruins. The production of monuments is the commodification of history, and to speculate we must invest in money and time.

The historians of architecture writing this neo-future are the absurd heroes—as much through their passions as through their tortures. Their scorn of the monuments, their hatred of death, and their passion for their metier won them that unspeakable penalty in which their whole beings are exerted toward accomplishing nothing. The struggle itself toward infinity is enough to fill their hearts. One must imagine the historians happy.

economy, technology, and climate? Pearce was especially attuned to the interplay between weather, energy, and movement; in a word, thermoregulation (fig. 3). In the early stages of the project, Pearce happened upon a BBC television program about terrariums (narrated by David Attenborough, of course). Pearce saw the most potential overlap with the terrarium's inner workings; the habitat, like the proposed Eastgate Center, must maintain a fixed temperature to remain operational, somewhere between 29 and 32 degrees Celsius.

Because of the dramatic, diurnal flux of temperature in Zimbabwe, the cooling is regulated to a narrow margin, necessitating the constant opening and closing of mounds and heating vents that circulate air through convection currents. The Eastgate complex's 48 brick chimneys connect to a plant room where low and high fans drive air into the shafts which then direct the air to low-level grilles. Resembling the metabolic heat of termites, human- and equipment-driven activity jointly heats the air before exhaust ports vent it out through a network of masonry ducts that link back to the main vertical shafts. These conduits and machines work in turn to purge and store air; essentially, the building is breathing.

PALESTINIAN THOBES—REFLECTION ON ENVIRONMENTS

Let me see your clothes and I'll tell you who you are—this couldn't be more true than in the case of Palestinian thobes. Often reduced to its aesthetic and historic value, a traditional Palestinian thobe was a tool of ordinary women to reflect their existence and relationship with their environment.

The origin of Palestinian thobes remains vague. The fragile nature of the material and the practice of recycling dresses made it impossible to collect thobes of previous centuries; however, experts believe it to be rooted in the times of the Phoenicians and Canaan in ancient Palestine. Its current origins with male elements like thobes is most probably the result of the Islamization of Palestine and introduction of Arab-Islamic art to the region.

Even though the origin of embroidery in West Asia was mostly practical, Palestinian thobes stand out because of their prominent artistic value rather than for their functionality. In pre-colonized Palestine, women were mainly taking care of domestic tasks, which left them with time to work on these dresses as an activity of leisure and contemplation. Reflecting both on nature and their own existence, the authors would usually choose between different social coded colors and motifs, creating unique dresses both for festival occasions and for everyday use, inseparable from the woman's origin, social status, and skill level. For instance, a woman of Be'er Sheva would prefer to use the Nafal—a local dessert flower—rather than a cypress tree as a central motif, stitching it in blue if she is single or widowed, or yellow against the bed eyes.



Nevertheless, the Palestinian thobe can be understood as more than just the woman's ID card. It's a testimony of Palestine's history. Motifs were also adaptations of other cultures passing through Palestine in form of empires or even just products. The Byzantine architecture in Palestine, for instance, inspired locals as much as a Persian rug in the busy streets of Jerusalem would do. Beyond the variations in design between every village were due to the remoteness of their location in Palestine with only a few exchanges between them. This changed in 1948 with the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and the expulsion of indigenous Palestinians from their land. In refugee camps across neighboring Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, Palestinian women would share not only their pain over their lost homeland but also their art through which they stayed connected. A new Palestinian dress was created through the interchange of different motifs from a variety of Palestinian thobes.

Motif and design of the new Palestinian dress are, as a result, no longer rooted in a particular region but rather in a collective memory of pre-1948 Palestine, expressed as a political statement. These spaces of creation became a place of exchanging local culture, traditions, and stories. Its outcome was a new Palestinian dress that would allow for an expression of resistance through art—and a symbol of historic connection to their indigenous land.

The intellectual and political dimension of the Palestinian thobe is best visible in the "infidra dresses," referencing the first infidra. The Arab word infidra translates to "shaking of" and was a popular uprising of Palestinians against the brutal Israeli occupation that remains in place to this very day. During these protests, women would radically transform motifs of their dresses and include symbols of Palestinian resistance, such as the map of historic Palestine, reflecting political aspirations and solidarity.



Today in occupied Palestine, the traditional thobe is produced industrially outside of the country and is less common for daily usage. Instead, its standing as a piece of national pride remains stronger than ever. In everyday life, one always encounters the figure of Mother Palestine, an elderly woman in a Palestinian thobe, in children books or commercial ads. But also in high culture, like in the art of Jordan Nasser, the tattered stitching of the thobe is used in the diaspora as means to reconnect with Palestine.

The design of the Palestinian thobe changed over the last hundred years quite a lot; however, its intellectual backbone is still present. It is a medium that represents the natural connection between the indigenous people of Palestine and their land. It is a canvas for artistic self-realization and political aspiration. It is a piece in the social weaving of Palestinian society and a symbol capable of representing collectivity and individualism at the same time. The Palestinian thobe is an example of how we can navigate through binary ideas of universalism and individualism, internationality and nationality, and even nature and culture. If a workman used nature to produce culture and Jordan Nasser used culture to place himself in nature, we can conclude that there is no divide between nature and culture but rather that everything is mutually inter-connected.



THREE GLORIOUS BUILDINGS OF THE UNIVERSITY, OR, THE MYTH OF THE HISTORIAN OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE AGE OF THE NEO-STYLES

(YIFEI ZHANG)

The Opera House: Our university tour commences at the Opera House, an enduring monument for generations of excellent scholars in the timeless pursuit of music. We are now able to determine the exact year of its completion, and it reveals that it was the very year that a miserable plague swept through the cities and the countryside. Although some of the history has fallen into the tenebrous unknown, we know that the Opera House opened two years later, which is indeed a testament to the perseverance of the builders, stone masons, carpenters, metalmiths, as well as university magisters, scholars and students inhabiting the city that we know and adore today. Its opening must have been spectacular—a visit to the theater (or, the theater) reveals its full glory. Indeed, the beauty is beyond words. A philosopher once remarked that when we cannot speak, we must be silent. Now, we must move on.

The Institute: The second step of our visit is the Institute Building. Constructed during the fin-de-siècle—a time of art, literature, and music that conjures up much of our romantic imagination—the building itself is a cauldron that epitomizes all the cultural achievement of this belle époque, and its excellence is the manifestation that architecture is the summation of all arts. In the parlance of the time it is said that the building is "Saracenic" and "Oriental," which reveals a re-learned admiration of cultural achievements of the "Near East," a movement echoed by the allied arts. The opulence of the building brought to it distinguished personalities of the top echelon—two former chiefs d'état attended its ground-breaking and an erstwhile Russian sovereign the dedication.

The Administration Building: Finally we are at the Administration Building, a rather recent work of architecture that speaks with an ethos close to that of ours. Constructed only a few years before WWI, we can even find an abundance of photographs taken during its completion. Indeed this building may look a lot older than what it really is—Neo-Byzantine in style, it sports an arcade replicating that of the Doge's palace in Venice.

If there is any accusation of anachronism, it is based on the naive presumption (or normative prescription) that time is linear, which is nothing but a spatial metaphor and of course, time is not spatial at all. What we can expect is that any such architectural neo-style can gradually accrue meanings through the attachments of its users so that it is no longer "neo," and indeed, with the passage of time, becomes incommensurate, would people in the year 2023D care much about the difference between the Dover castle and a Disney castle? It is now the year of MMXXIII (which is entirely extraneous to this discussion), and what can be certain is that revivalism, "renaissances," neo-styles of all sorts will continue to reappear. Indeed, to talk about style, is totally inadequate—it is not neo-style but no style, no style but this an sich. And indeed they need to be constructed as soon as possible and as much as possible to quickly generate convincing monuments in the nearest future. And no, they are not monuments—in just a couple of decades they become indistinguishably history. Pollution and climate change is without a doubt an aid: acid rain accelerates the deterioration of stone, and an uptick in natural disasters

NEURAL PATINA

(ANDREW BAKO)

The ever-evolving landscape of artificial intelligence has engendered a new aesthetic discourse within the realm of digital media, art, and architecture. Images generated by AI, much like any other creations, are subject to a form of simultaneous deterioration and emergence—a phenomenon we can frame as "neural patina." Analogous to the wear of physical artifacts, the digital transmission of AI-generated content offers a paradoxical relationship between the celebrated imperfections, the ephemerality, and the decay of digital imagery.

The term "patina" refers to the thin layer that forms on the surface of metals, such as copper or bronze, as they oxidize over time. This natural progression is not just about decay; rather, it's often celebrated for adding character and an authentic historic narrative to an object. Mohsen Mostafavi writes that "in the process of subtracting a 'finish' of a construction, weathering adds the 'finish' of the environment." Similarly, neural patina can be described as the imperfections, degree of deviation from their source material, and the romanticized ruin of AI-generated content as they are processed, transferred in style, or intentionally deconstructed in their fidelity.

In Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes speaks of the "punctum," an element of a photograph that breaks through the "stadium" of general interest and provides an unexpected detail that pricks or wounds the observer. Images and objects produced algorithmically exhibit an uncanny quality, appearing almost real yet peppered with imperfections, formal mishaps, and errors no human would make. These anomalies both challenge our perceptions of reality and unsettle our expectations of digital precision, eliciting an emotional response. Straddling the line between the authentic and the fabricated, the neural patina they bear serve as evidence of their borderline existence, charting their journey through countless training phases, reminiscent of the indelible marks a sculptor leaves with a chisel.

The fertility of AI intersects profoundly with the Japanese concept of "wabi-sabi." Wabi-sabi celebrates the beauty in imperfection, transience, and the natural cycle of growth and decay. Traditional Japanese tea bowls, for example, might be valued not in spite of, but because of, the imperfections they bear—a chip, a crack, or an uneven glaze. These markers tell a story of usage, of history, and of a moment captured in time. Similarly, the unforeseen peculiarities of AI can speak to the observer, offering clues towards their origin, towards a moment in time in which the "model-in-training" had yet to master its depictions of reality.

However, this brings forth a profound debate regarding authenticity and value: Does the aesthetic condition of neural patina carry the same authenticity or cultural value as its physically eroded counterpart? Perhaps it is not about comparing the two but understanding that they signify different types of narratives regarding the passage of time. While physical patina narrates stories of material existence, interactions, and time, neural patina speaks of the digital realm—of processing intricacies, AI interpretations, and the software's unique interaction with data. Both are valuable in understanding the deeper nature of the objects they adorn.

While AI continues to reshape the contours of art, design, and imagery, the concept of neural patina offers a critical lens towards the aesthetic reception of artificially generated content. By intersecting with philosophical understandings of representation, emotion, and the beauty of imperfection, neural patina challenges and enriches our understanding of the digital realm. It invokes a sense of wabi-sabi in the digital age, compelling us to find beauty and depth in the transient, the imperfect, and in generative decay.

A MALL FROM A MOUND

(ITARA VASANTHI)

Biomimicry in the field of architecture is a resurgence of a concept that is rather innate and long-standing: imitating nature in our work. Now, as temperatures and populations skyrocket, so too have concerns about sustainable engineering—sparking interest in biomimetics as a possible solution.

Architect Michael "Mick" Pearce's mall sought to recreate terrarium morphology on a macroscopic scale. The Eastgate Center in Zimbabwe is a shopping complex and office block in Harare's city center that was built in 1995 (figs. 2 and 3). It is the largest commercial building in the country, boasting 26,000 square meters of leasable office accommodation and 5,600 square meters of retail space, rounded off with covered parking for over 400 vehicles. But even more surprising than its size is the fact that the center is entirely cooled, heated, and ventilated by natural means.

From the beginning, the Eastgate Center was very receptive to Harare's local market.

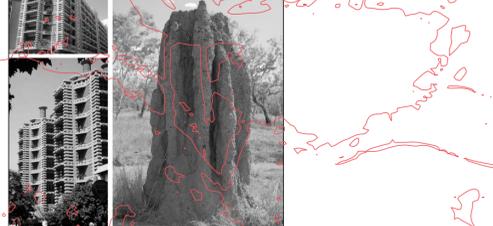


Figure 1. Termit mound and Eastgate Center comparison



Figure 2. Eastgate Center, Harare, 2022, Architectury

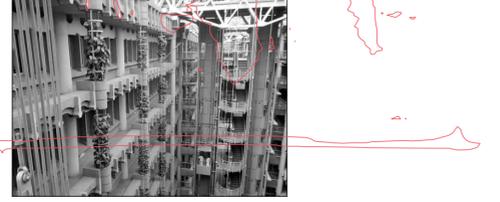


Figure 3. Interior atrium of Eastgate Center, 2018



Figure 4. Learning from Termites, 2015, Materials Lab

Eastgate's form is an expression of environmental control. The towers are oriented on an east-west axis to minimize solar heat gain on north- and south-facing sides. The repeating solid and void strips on the outside are differentially shaded and cross-chew on screens run the length of the atrium to intake air; these features give Eastgate its distinctive articulation. Eastgate Center is a kinetic realization of Harare's built heritage, old and new, counterbalancing its industrial interior with its traditional exterior (Fig. 4). With respect to efficiency and performance, Eastgate accomplished its mission of providing an eco-friendly and sympathetic building for a bustling Zimbabwe district while picking up a thing or two from our insect neighbors.

- 1. George Baird, "Eastgate Centre, Harare, Zimbabwe," The Architectural Expression of Environmental Control Systems (Paris & France, 2001), 164-73.
2. Nishita Saparam, "Natural Ventilation in Tall Buildings: Development of Design Guidelines Based on Climate and Building Height," University of Southern California (2018).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Baird, The Architectural Expression of Environmental Control Systems, 164-73.
7. Ibid.

MIMESIS

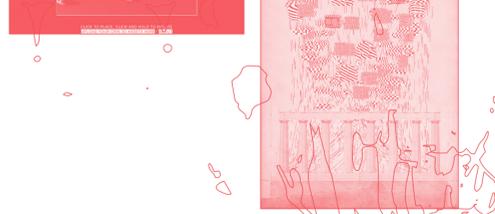
(OLIVER MEDDOW & IAN ERICKSON)

"Pneú History: Re-Completing the National Monument of Scotland" is an ongoing palimpsest of work with each iteration (AR filter, essay, structural analysis, interview, physical model, browser-based video game) further agitating and mending its original source: the National Monument of Scotland.

The National Monument of Scotland began as a popular 1822 proposal to build an exact replica of the Ancient Greek Parthenon atop Calton Hill in Edinburgh to commemorate fallen soldiers of the Napoleonic Wars; however, when construction ended in 1828, only a fragment of the initial proposal crowned the hill. The partial Parthenon is seen as a failure so severe that the monument has since been known as

material and fiscal constraints. A trio of proposals (eastcoombs for national heroes, an extension of the National Gallery, and a full Parthenon replica) were revived and rendered in digital soft-body geometries under simulated pneumatic pressure. Shiny particle-spring-based statistical membranes of white and blue pixels—the colors of the flag of Scotland since the 16th century—provided stark contrast to unadorned, crystalline stone. The three folios initiate an irreverent digital pageant that collides the Neoclassical with the contemporary in a spectacle of mutual absurdity.

The ready-made ruin of the unfinished monument requires a palimpsest of perpetual repair: mending seams with structural analyses, commemorating failed inflation attempts with AR graves, reattempting meshes as sewn pillows, and sliced PLA prints, and most recently, creating variations in pressure from users in distant browsers.



GOSSIP GIRL REDUX

(IRITA WANG)

Gossip rules the world. Consider a bigger, more democratically owned narrative machine than gossip. Consider a collective palimpsest constantly creating networks of threads linking one to another, at the same time, reweaving itself over and over. Gossip is the "operational text."

XXXX: It is perhaps not entirely surprising that the ghost writer behind the ever-haunting character "gossip girl" was the lone writer of the social scene, set at a fictional Upper East Side high school in the cult TV show that aired in the 2000s. The character itself, an aspiring writer who would later be published in the New Yorker, fueled the character/media as a narrative machine throughout the series, entangling life with fiction. The ghostly presence of gossip was embodied by Kristen Bell's sly, ultra-feminine voice, and casted in the reflections of short yet crafted pieces of texts, sometimes accompanied by low-resolution photos on the screen of a Blackberry. Gossip girl was never the beholder of truth (though sometimes resembling a figure like god), she writes and rewrites herself, and as her consumers thereby also are her feeders of sources and materials—a narrative machine of multiplicity. The "real" becomes manipulated by gossip to be a medium that performs, that writes its own scripts.

Interactive Palimpsest: Celebrity culture-fueled gossip machines lubricated by crowdsourcing and Instagram and Twitter have not surprisingly refreshed the popular imagination and access to "personal" information at a speed at which the tabloids cannot keep up. People in design love to gossip. When work entangles with life, jealousy and lust fills the room. (Who partner broke up? Who was seen with someone much younger? Who slept with whom in Venice? Who ended up marrying a student? Who said something mean about someone else? Who is doing lines at that hotel bar? And with its own set of baggage of celebrity culture, design begins to have its own "deux mois." Words of many mouths that inadvertently become transcribed online into "stories," "posts" and democratically editable files on the cloud. The social cloud that gossip brings is inadvertently more than the theorization of that subject's oeuvre. The kissing of the surfaces matter less than the kissing of the mouths in the realm of curiosity towards architecture. The gossip matters more than the discourse. The discourse is half gossip.

Parasite, Chimera: The talk that happens around the talk. On the talk. Below the talk. Inside of the talk. The chatter, disruption, information mediated by murmuring. Michel Serres's conception of the parasite is borrowed here in the collaging of gossip. To further confuse the reader, the figure of the chimera herein assembles a denkfingur that renders the host and the parasite. The parasite-eavesdrops for the information, and replicates and passes it on to another. The "small" players bring distress to the big guy. The making of the chimera then becomes the collaging of facts and their exchange, often in secret. Just as the parasite is defined in relation to a well-functioning system, a chimera is defined in relation to a fully formed, contained body. As Michel Serres writes, "There are channels, and thus there must be noise. No channel without noise." These channels with their architectural forms (think/eaves, think gutters) nevertheless produce the unexpected for the architects. As the "heroes" of the odysseys are constantly haunted by these mutant creatures, the parasite of gossip now (hopefully) haunts the shifty men in architecture. But just as parasites can never kill the host, there is no end to the story. The chimera always exists as an assemblage, peeking through the leaves in the wild.



Figure 1. Gossip as a palimpsest of chimera. Image by author.

- 1. As opposed to the "operational image" proposed by Henry Frowick.
2. Michel Serres, The Parasite, trans. Lawrence R. Scheinh, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. First published 1982 by Johns Hopkins University Press (Baltimore).