

SS: How and why does your storytelling begin with world building? You've mentioned spatial forms of storytelling, and I was wondering if you could talk about the way that's different from, for example, the way filmmaking is approached, which starts with scripts or character arcs.

LY: All architecture is a form of fiction making. Sometimes those stories get framed through the structures of the physical building and sometimes they become the landscapes of video games, or the 24 FPS of an unfolding sequence of space in a film. So I still think of my fiction practice as an architectural practice. What that looks like in the context of the entertainment industry or in the context of film is what we call practices of world building. You'll develop the environment, the world, the setting, the space. We narrate at the beginning point, as opposed to a traditional film that might begin with a script or a character. To construct our stories we develop a world first, populate that world with inhabitants, and then role play a whole bunch of scenarios. This produced a whole bunch of interesting characters that emerge within that story as a way to describe what that world is doing. This is really a spatial and architectural process of getting to a narrative as opposed to endless drafts of scripts. So the beginning point of our fictions lies within the narrative context that we are most interested in. How does that narrative context, as an alternative world, help us to understand the world that we are in, in new ways? Is it a projected future? Is it a counterfactual present? Does it become a process of imagining the world as it is, but just dialing the volume up on one specific thing? We then construct a world as a way of critiquing and thinking about the current world that we occupy. That narrative context is really a vessel for a series of architectural and urban ideas about who we are and the cities that we occupy. The notion then becomes the way in which we disseminate those architectural ideas to the broadest audience possible. Ultimately, I gravitated towards this process of world building and storytelling because I thought the ideas that we talked about as architects are really important, and I was endlessly frustrated by the way that we are continually satisfied by putting those ideas within the most extraordinarily niche mediums. Architecture books might sit in a few rarefied bookshops, or on a few hundred student desks. Lectures at a school like Yale are given to a bunch of other architects, and architecture students. World building is the way in which I can crystallize a set of architectural and urban ideas in a fictional space, but I can use the mediums of fiction to disseminate those ideas to audiences that would sit outside of the disciplinary audiences that we typically talk to. If we value what we do, it is our responsibility to find forms through which a broader public can engage with that. So, it's an architectural project that we're working on, and fiction becomes the conduit through which we launch those projects into the world in such a way that they might find traction.

CP: Our fetishization over niche mediums is tough to square with the importance of these ideas. Do you then see your work as dealing with a different aesthetic toolkit entirely? The techniques in your toolkit are much more aesthetically grounded than a more traditional built architecture, which occupies our lived experience through sheer existence.

LY: We train for five or seven years in order to understand and develop a literacy with the language of drawings, like plans, sections, diagrams. They're an extraordinarily coded language that people without that training don't really have access to. It's an extraordinary privilege to be able to understand the drawing in those terms. If we continue to code within those mediums, the critical ideas about our world that affect everyone else in it stay in that disciplinary language of the drawing. This is desperately problematic and inaccessible, and it continues the same systems of privilege. We're interested in the way all of us have a literacy in stories: we laugh and cry in front of the tv, or in a dark movie theater; we fall asleep in the pages of a novel; we read stories when we're young. It's really how our culture has shared and disseminated ideas, and we co-opt those mediums of fiction, or the mediums of popular culture, and encode within them trojan horses that hold architectural and urban ideas.

CP: To do this, you have to rely on specific registers of realism. There's a whole host of techniques you use, be it analog in the scripts that you read, the way that you use live performance, with your voice, to create a spectacle, or the quick cuts between geological footage and animated clips. The necessity for you to continue to play with this skill set is different from most architects, who use the built world as a crutch. How do you develop this craft?

LY: We're trying to explore ways that we can connect to complex ideas. With our science fiction films we will often lean into tropes, as a sort of a shared language through which we typically represent the future. A lot of times the architectural discipline or the art world, in a traditional sense, use "accessible" as a kind of derogatory term. That's another extraordinary position of privilege. So, we use the visual language of Hollywood because it becomes a shorthand through which we understand futurism. We know we're looking at a science fiction speculation because it looks a certain way. The software and 00 tools that we use produce a certain type of image, and for us that's valuable because that accessibility means that we are potentially engaging people that wouldn't otherwise be part of the discourse. I do the same with language. A big part of what I do in my live cinema performances is that I narrate the work through a very literary lens. I look a lot at some of the romantic poets, or the Beat movement, and I would bring to a condition like the planetary logistics network, a language historically associated with dailies or wandering clouds. I'm interested in the way that Ken Kesey wrote *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, where he wasn't traveling across America in an open top car, but instead was riding on board a massive container ship or wandering through a rare earth mineral mine. You can bring people into those spaces using language that's typically not associated with them. For the most part the dominant media narratives will try to render infrastructure invisible, whereas my aesthetic practice tries to drag those conceptually peripheral territories into mainstream focus. People can start to relate to them in new ways. Ultimately, there is no periphery. There is no thing outside where we dig up stuff and then refine it and turn it into the goods that we all own. We exist in this planetary scale urban context and either landscape is conditioned by that urban context already, or it produces that urban context. Everything is part of this one discontinuous planetary mega-structure and our practices of fiction are trying to render that legible and as an important part of our lives, because ultimately it is.

THE MYTH OF SMOOTHNESS

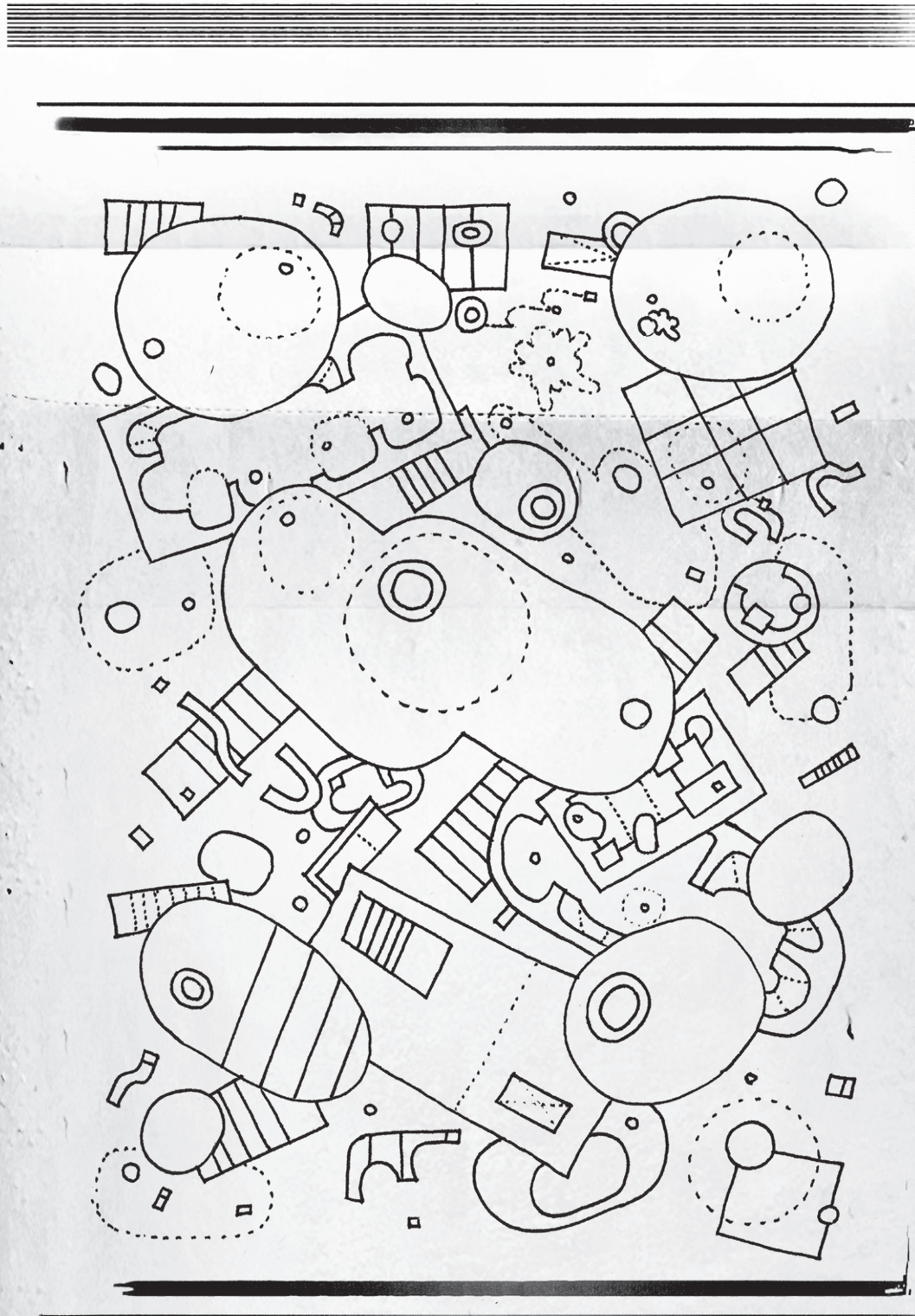
TIMOTHY WONG

SMOOTHNESS OBSCURES. The rendered images we make illuminate from our high definition screens—their smoothness drawing us in while we forget about their digital constructs. In the recent visualization competition *Render of the Year 2021*, hosted by *Arch Out Loud*, the brief describes their aim to "[seek] compelling images that tell stories of architecture, interiors, cities, and worlds that could be." Underlined for emphasis, "that could be" uncovers our discipline's predilection towards the render, a representation technique aimed at immersing and bestowing suspension of disbelief and wonder. Yet underlying this mode of seamless visualization are constructed biases distinguishing what is deemed worthy to be seen or not, between signal and noise. As the media critic Wendy Hui Kyong Chun argues, software structure and our practices of fiction are trying to render that legible and as an important part of our lives, because ultimately it is.

SS: Is there something about specific clients or projects that you choose to take on that gives you more leverage in creating counter narratives, and more creative agency?

FIGURES OVER FIGURES OVER FIGURES

JIMENEZ LAI



LY: A way to explore both of those questions is to talk about the way that a project emerges. Whether it's a distant sci-fi speculation or a documentary project, all our work begins with licking our finger and putting it up into the breeze and seeing which way the wind is blowing. We're trying to capture the zeitgeist. What is part of the contemporary discourse, the frustration, or the hope of the present moment? What part of that might we be able to contribute to in some form? Our fictional work begins with a deep engagement of the present, what we call *signal scanning*, where we look out and try to identify the current trends, the weak signals of possible futures that are out there. Then we'll get on a plane and we'll go and investigate. For the most part it means a practice of really aggressive listening, trying to reverse the tradition of architects going to a place, hanging out for two days, thinking they can solve the problems of that place by going back to the studio and making a building. It becomes just a continuation of the colonial project and isn't helpful in any sense. We will go out to a context, and try to engage and listen to the people that have been devoting their lives to that place, documenting and capturing those stories with our own platforms. So, a lot of our work will begin with documentary engagement. An extension of this process involves understanding the future as part of contemporary discourse; we're being sold futures every moment of every day. Those futures come with a whole lot of self interest, crafted by people that have a vested interest in enacting those particular futures, because, generally, they can profit from them in some form. Constructing counter narratives is really about exploring and narrating and visualizing alternative futures, so that we can see it's not all set in motion; that there are alternatives which are possible, other worlds which may be enacted if we choose to do so. By potentially laying out this whole landscape of possibilities in front of us, we can start to be more informed and active participants in instigating the futures that we want to be a part of, as opposed to passively strolling into the futures that we are being sold. I use the analogy that the landscape ahead of us is this dark and shadowy territory, and that each one of those stories becomes a torch light that illuminates one particular path, or part of that landscape in front of us. The more torches we shine, the more of that landscape become illuminated and the easier it is to navigate from one side to the other. A singular future is not productive because it doesn't actually illuminate any of that landscape at all; we need to think about both the cautionary tales and the aspirational utopias as a means to figure out how we get there.

The myths of our imagining techniques continue to resonate in our present, underpinning our

PROPHESYING AS PROFESSION

JULIANA YANG & ANOUSHKA MARIWALA

Doing—In this analog for creative work, we are sitting at Penelope's loom, drawing a thread of the past through a thread of the future. The work at hand is this laborious, repeating, careful elaboration, whose end—both the product and its telos—is revealed to be inextricable from its making.

Doing—The woven structure of textile allows it to be soft without breaking, to envelop various bodies comfortably, with ease. By not being strict, weaving (a textile, a story, a drawing) is making space for resonance in a way that overdetermined, didactic transmission cannot. Despite the co-option of narrative fictions for advertising (weaponizing the power of resonance for profit), there remain some provisional, lyrical ways of working in this mode which learn from, rather than package, warp and weft.

Believing—A shroud is not the product of outspoken expression, but one of careful fabrication. Only Penelope knows that which she is (un)weaving, and in her perpetual doing we must do the work of deciphering.

reading using making epic textile drawing

in good faith is to believe in the work and its possibilities, and all the space for misreadings between. These are all sister practices, embodied histories that are contingent on fixedness (at the loom, in the past, on the page) and perpetual motion (we must keep turning, weaving). Myth is dyadic, and of ours to make our own. The architect knows this—her hand lives in the fictitious drawing and its trace, in loose threads to pick at and undersides to be examined. Myth is she, rendered material.

Meaning—Penelope was a weaver long before weaving was her cunning defense, and will continue to be as long as we need something to wear. In rethinking our relation to contemporary modes of working, we may find histories and futures, entwined, in a practice as mundane as weaving. Its meaning is held just out of grasp, but then, in all this fiction, it is our reaching that is important.



Rendered object after several iterations.

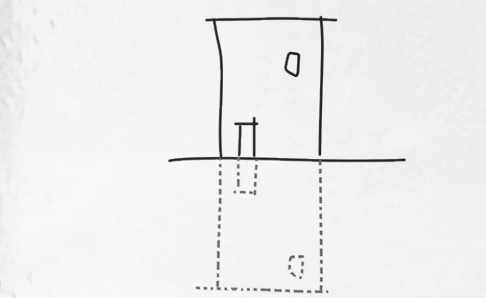
THE CONTEMPORARY PAPER PROJECT

MICHELLE SCHNEIDER

THE ARCHITECTURE "PAPER PROJECT" is a speculative one. Without built intentions, it often poses questions and makes provocations about architecture and the ways in which people exist within it. Paper Projects are determined by the architect, both in its brief and intentions, and allow boundless realities where new ideas can be introduced at their most extreme: a creative process deserving of the freedom that sketching and other analog techniques can ignite. These fictional projects exist as the platform for imagination, an infinite space held for architectural dreaming, where the unbuilt's best. Architecture as a discipline proposes novel boundaries meant to inform and construct our reality, aspiring to different worlds and subjectivities.

The digital tools and representational methods of today have challenged the modern-day Paper Project. Whereas before, Paper Projects were brought into reality and permanents by their physical existence on paper, its new site is easily misplaced in this contemporary world, existing in the virtual, ephemeral realm. At stake here is the potential loss of revolutionary ideas; digital space holds a sense of urgency, interrupting "the simmer" of architectural ideas, the manual effort offering introspective speed bumps by sheer nature of technique.

The Paper Project is the vessel that holds the idea; like art, it can be displayed, archived, cherished, housed. You can see it, touch it, smell it, exist with it. These physical, immersive environments, they could instead restore the obscured processes of the digital medium. While noise begins to unravel the myth of smoothness, we need to be careful about fetishizing noise as a decorative element. Instead, we ought to utilize it to recraft the rendered image as an assemblage of interfaces, algorithms, formats, screens, computers, disciplinary conventions, myths, and more. As the architect and critic Elle Abrons argues, we should "[overcome] this designed invisibility, opening the door to software's back-of-house...shining a light on the particularities, biases, and propensities of our everyday interfaces."⁹ We must not be merely the users of the digital, instead, a conscious actor of the rendered image.

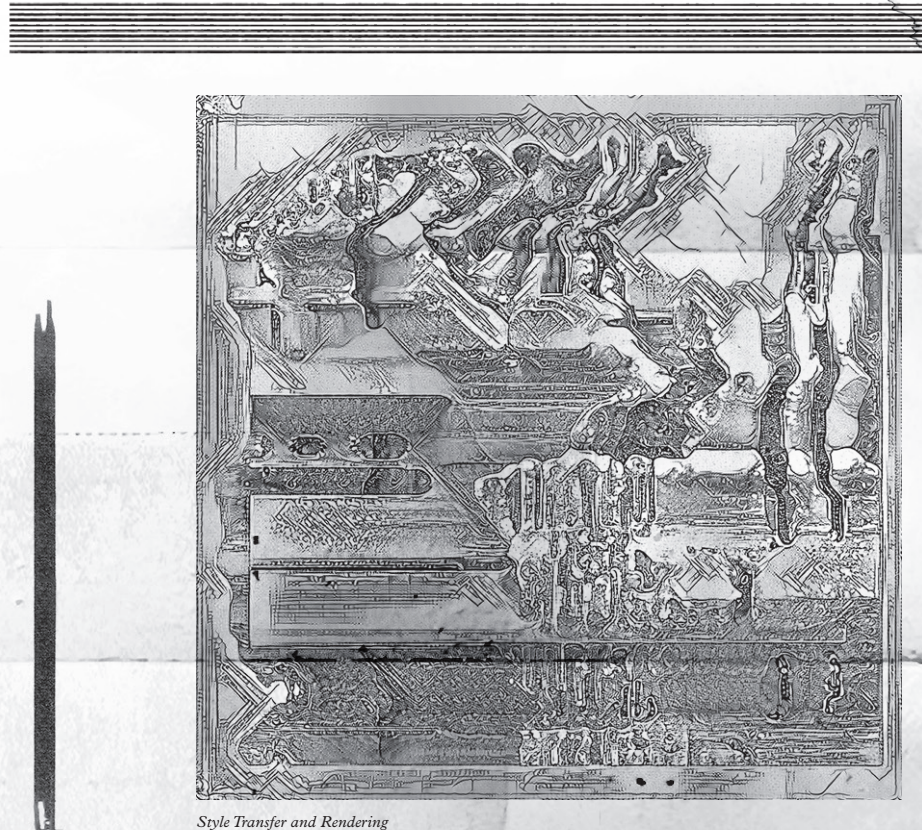


This sketch shows the image of a building above, and below it, everything else: the sensory qualities, the personal architectural experience, the *see touch smell...* qualities not necessarily built, but drawn in the imaginative space afforded between the limits of paper and human interpretation. Digital design does not evoke spatial imagination the same way that drawing can. The loss of paper as a medium and the move to digitization removes physical manifestation at the representational stage, and thus when viewed digitally, falls flat experientially.

What is the substrate to tie the contemporary Paper Project back to reality? Architecture's recent reflex towards hyper-realistic representation is a reaction to the loss of paper's physicality. Uncanny realism has begun to stand in for this lack of physical existence. The imaginary potential conferred by the Paper Project is now denied in favor of a plateau of sameness, foreclosing the interpretative room necessary to progress. It's in that inarticulate space where interpretive value lives and architecture thrives.

RENDERING SERLIO: A PEDAGOGY OF VISUALIZATION USING NEURAL NETWORKS

GABRIEL ESQUIVEL, SHANE BUGNI



THE DISCOURSES ON LANGUAGE AND DRAWING established by the classical architectural treatise find new disciplinary relevance in current advancements and discussions concerning machine learning. *The Serlio Code*, a body of research that examines the illustrated expositions of Sebastiano Serlio through the lens of artificial intelligence, provides one such example. The intention of the project is not simply to synthesize new images that recreate Serlio's illustrations, but rather modulate their qualities and investigate their 2D to 3D translation beyond traditional rules of representation and orthographic projection. Architectural intelligence encoded in representation describes the ethos of an artistic endeavor, imposes severity and logic, and prepares forces and materials to create the architectural object. This project outlines a digital culture that integrates canonical architectural intelligence into a contemporary practice, producing a new form of agency and a new mode of dialogue between a designer and a particular precedent.

Image-based neural networks synthesize artificial images that are indistinguishable from authentic images. However, GANs can also operate diagrammatically by creating an exchange between continuous analogical modulation and codification of discrete digital units. Analog information (image input) and digital information (noise) are both synthesized by the discriminator and then fed back into the system as new inputs. This process creates a continuous feedback loop, transferring code into an analog pictorial flow of the image in each successive training cycle. In other words, the GAN renders a fictitious modulation of the analog and the digital through pictorial flux.

Our representational tools continue to redefine our agency within the discipline, and this necessitates a reappraisal of the canon—like Serlio's treatise—through a hyper-digital lens. How can the democratization of technology and digital innovation bring new opportunities for agency when we consider projects that use these neural networks, while visually impressive, often lack viable applications for the discipline? Creative adoption of neural networks does not only redefine the terms under which we make images, but also opens new aesthetic and social discourse. Therefore, it is necessary to augment existing strategies of it through the layering or reapplication of these neural networks.

We must start to question the way these tools begin to shape our visualization pedagogy. While representation starts with a subjective structure presupposed to be isomorphic or identical to that of the objects differentiated under unity, Deleuze generates the structure of the object out of pure difference itself. This implies both the a-subjective, differential ground of representation and the virtual, dynamic tendencies that inevitably transform it. If language, 2D to 3D procedures offer a way to communicate the project through virtual and fabricated objects as a way of producing this difference.

While this project operates in the realm of drawing as represented by Serlio's treatises, the question of style transfer through tv maps breaks from the drawing at a certain point and engages the territory of rendering, a word used to denote an interpretation and translation. Within each process of style transfer and rendering there is a continuous flux of difference moving away from the original isomorphic condition, from drawing to rendering, to object. When the representation is taken to a fabricated object there is a complete disruption of representation. *The Serlio Code* is an important experiment for indexing and developing a design paradigm that sits squarely within our hyper-digital era. This approach to design speculates the translation of architectural intelligence to an artificial intelligence, and establishes the need for new visualization pedagogies before returning to the language of architecture. The architect gains a new kind of agency by using contemporary mechanisms of cultural production. Through the intentional collection of the data set, the selection of images used for the production of new objects, the process of three-dimensionalization, the assembly of fragments, and the final translation to form, much of this territory remains uncharted.

1. Jean Jaminet, Gabriel Esquivel, Shane Bugni, *The Serlio Code: Analog-to-Digital Information Processing in Architecture and Artificial Intelligence*. ACADIA, 2021.
2. Generative adversarial networks.
3. Henry Sumner-Hall, *Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation: Dialectics of Negation and Difference* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 289.

FIVE PRACTICE POINTS

ANDREW KOVACS

4) Scanner
The overwhelming quantity of content on *Archive of Affinities* are images scanned from old media. Part of the production of *Archive of Affinities* also consists of using the scanner to document physical objects that have been collected. Oftentimes the physical objects collected are used to produce architectural models. The scanner helps push *Archive of Affinities* from a collection project into a production project. In this sense, when the scanner is pushed out of the realm of a collection tool and into the realm of a design tool, the scanner becomes useful to the practice. The scanner is a tool that flattens and helps to collect and to produce. The Scanner makes plans, the Scanner makes sections, the Scanner makes elevations, the Scanner makes views, the Scanner makes axonometrics, the Scanner makes collage, the Scanner makes space, the Scanner makes a catalog, the Scanner makes a drawing, the Scanner makes a rendering, the Scanner makes a photograph, the Scanner makes an archive, the Scanner makes architecture from architecture.

5) Collage
The more you collect, the more you can collage. Collage is a form of architectural practice and thinking. Like the folly, it also exists at the intersection of art and architecture. In architecture, collage has been most useful as a form of generating new representation for either fictional or real projects. The internet amplifies and encourages a collage scanner is pushed out of the realm of a collection tool and into the realm of a design tool, the scanner becomes useful to the practice. The scanner is a tool that flattens and helps to collect and to produce. The Scanner makes plans, the Scanner makes sections, the Scanner makes elevations, the Scanner makes views, the Scanner makes axonometrics, the Scanner makes collage, the Scanner makes space, the Scanner makes a catalog, the Scanner makes a drawing, the Scanner makes a rendering, the Scanner makes a photograph, the Scanner makes an archive, the Scanner makes architecture from architecture.

2) Internet
The audience for architecture has instantly expanded to everyone with an internet connection. Clients now show you Pinterest pages as "inspo" for potential designs. Discourse across regions can be collapsed or expanded. The internet flattens our shared references as a discipline, while opening and expanding architecture's audience. The architect's publicity, a key aspect of practice, is now #viral; architectural proposals, news and announcements, image collections, memories of past projects, realized projects, etc. The internet has become a new arena for architects to disseminate their ideas and visions.

3) Archive of Affinities
Archive of Affinities is an image collection project that is disseminated on the internet, a form of practice in the sense that the project literally happens daily, as images of architecture are shared on various social media platforms. While *Archive of Affinities* is primarily based around image collection, it also sparks architectural production at the speculative level. One of the first instances was a series of floor plans digitally collaged together from parts, fragments, and wholes that were then shared on *Archive of Affinities*. Operating within this logic of collection and production, *Archive of Affinities* aims to expand the limits of the discipline of architecture.

IMAGE ENVIRONMENTS, RENDERING REAL

ADAM FURE

THIS IS A REFLECTION ON the possibility of architecture to help regroup lived experience in media rich environments post-pandemic. It's a mix of concern and hope. We've all lived through the loss and isolation of the past two years, a time where we saw an already alarming dependence on screens skyrocket. To re-center our experience on the world around us, architects might seek to weave aspects of screen-based digital technologies into the built environment in a way that connects us to our bodies and each other. This idea is presented below in short meditations on the words in the title, framed in relation to the editor's theme.

Image. The editors invited me to write about 'imagining,' which I subsequently changed to 'image.' I imagine the former refers to the making of digital images, but I want to focus here on the things being made. Much of my writing has attempted to describe the transference of aesthetic characteristics from digital images into the broader physical world. Digital artifacts like pixels and glitches used to be limited to things made by the computer, but they're now as common as polka-dots or the color red. This saturation of digital characteristics into everyday aesthetics is what I call *postdigital*, and it presents an expanded domain of materiality and authorship for architects. Its power lies in its ability to infuse space with the same vivid, visual traits our devices use to hold our attention. Optimistically, postdigital space might help us look up, or get off our phones entirely.



T+E+A+M, Model Pavilion, 2021.

Environments. The second term I was asked to consider was 'objects,' which I changed to 'environments' in order to foreground spatial experience as immersive, temporal, sensory, and varied across bodies. Although there is an extensive discourse in architecture complexifying the concept of objects, the colloquial understanding of them as static things that we stand apart from risks desecrating human beings in a time when we need to double down on people. Recently, my practice, T+E+A+M, designed a commemorative holocaust pavilion where visitors move through multiple layers of media as material. Sited above a mass grave in Eastern Europe, the earth excavated for the build is kept in the form of a pile that one walks past, peers down upon, and eventually stands atop in an experience that blends visual, haptic, and proprioceptive sensations with cognitive reflection. Inside, a large topographic model is embedded in the carbon pile, collapsing represented and literal ground and inviting visitors to consider the multiple temporalities present. Walking around, one sees reflections of trees mixing with their printed copies, while inside they peer through historical imagery to present-day views beyond. Images on glass is a screen-based aesthetic, but here you must move around to experience the full-set of effects. It doesn't work standing still.

Rendering. This term was introduced by the editors and I kept it, as it's action-based. We need urgency right now on so many fronts. Two years of extreme isolation and screen excess has made us forget how to be together, and resuming old ways aren't working. Walking through the halls of my home institution, I feel a collective sense of being lost. I believe there's an opportunity here to define how we gather and why it matters. What if we used 'rendering' as a metaphor for this type of social scripting? What architects do well is make images that depict pleasurable social life. What if this wasn't limited to static pictures but applied to life as lived. As an example of what might be possible, I encourage everyone to check out Xavi Aguirre/stock-a-studio's 'Postcommodities' conference at the University of Michigan last fall. We've all likely experienced failed attempts at 'hybrid' meetings these past two years, but Aguirre's symposium was anything but. It staged a series of conversations between in-person and remote participants, simulcast through a website and a physical set mixed in real-time. It was the most thoughtful, engaging, and dynamic form of mixed presence I've encountered—like being suspended in a rendering, or an animation, awash in the colors and bright lights we love on our screens, but acutely aware of (and thankful for) the bodies around, including my own.

Real. The last change was one of opposites—swapping 'fiction' in the broadsheet title for 'real.' If fiction is meant to describe an alternative reality that sits adjacent to the real, to me, fiction feels too slow right now. We're out of time on so many fronts. Whether it's addressing climate change, systemic racism, or extreme wealth inequality, the world we've made needs to be unmade and remade now. If architects have agency in envisioning worlds, then perhaps they should be ones we take up immediately. As it relates to the digital, I would take the recent rise of immersive art experiences, from Meow Wolf to Pace's SuperBlue gallery in Miami, as an invitation to architects to think through the merging of screen-based aesthetics and physical spaces with more care, nuance, and will to democratize. How might the world we shape through architecture fold in the rapturous luminosity of our screens in a way that centers rather than overwhelms our sensory capacities? How might physical space invite us to look up or get off our screens, not in wholesale rejection, but because those same vibrant visuals are woven into our surroundings? This is a call for a digitally infused, body-centric, social play that architects might claim—rendering image environments real and teaching us how to be human again.

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