

Untimely Present(s). The Beginning of the Past or the End of the Future

Presente(s) extemporáneo(s). El comienzo del pasado o el fin del futuro

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Biography

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Abstract

While there seems to be a consensus that postmodernism has reached its end, strategies for re-conceptualizing disciplinary knowledge and finding new ways of dealing with recent developments and technological achievements are multiple. This paper's aim is to discuss the contemporary

condition through Nietzsche's term of 'untimely'. To think 'untimely' is to think against the mainstream ideas in the Zeitgeist and not necessarily for a future that has already advanced so far that the previously incomprehensible can be finally be understood. The concept of 'untimely' describes the present as an anachronism where the truly contemporary does not coincide perfectly with the present, and therefore capable of truly perceiving it. The paper illustrates how the advent of the computer has imposed conventions in architecture that are still in use today and thus are not necessarily new. Therefore, a number of approaches are being discussed to show how a project embodies the ambiguity of cultural values in periods of paradigm shift. The article concludes by questioning the hegemony of the relational model in architecture and points out the necessity of focusing on the architectural object itself – and therefore being itself 'untimely'.

Keywords

Untimely, postmodernism, digital technology, post-digital.

Resumen

Si bien parece haber consenso en que el posmodernismo ha llegado a su fin, las estrategias para re-conceptualizar el conocimiento disciplinar y encontrar nuevas maneras de operar con los nuevos desarrollos y logros tecnológicos son múltiples. El objetivo del trabajo es discutir la condición contemporánea a través del término de Nietzsche 'untimely'. Pensar de manera 'untimely' va contra las tendencias mayoritarias en el Zeitgeist, pero no necesariamente para un futuro presente que ya ha avanzado hasta el punto de que lo incomprensible hasta ahora puede ser finalmente comprendido. Por lo tanto, el ensayo está describiendo la condición contemporánea con el fin de desarrollar un futuro a través del concepto de 'untimely'. El artículo ilustra cómo la llegada del ordenador ha impuesto convenciones en la arquitectura que todavía son válidas hoy y por lo tanto no necesariamente se refieren a lo nuevo. De este modo se discuten varios enfoques que muestran cómo un proyecto encarna la ambigüedad de los valores culturales en los períodos de cambio de paradigma. El artículo concluye cuestionando el modelo relacional en arquitectura y en su lugar señala la necesidad de centrarse en el objeto arquitectónico en sí mismo y, por lo tanto, siendo él mismo 'untimely'.

Palabras clave

Extemporáneo, posmodernismo, arquitectura digital, post-digital.

Untimely as a concept

I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely – that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come. (Nietzsche 1976, 99)

For Nietzsche, the term ‘untimely’ is a source of change, the process of coming about. ‘Untimely’ aims to critique the contemporary, or to what is thought of as contemporary. He wanted to illustrate that it is time –indeed it is high time– that the supposed contemporaneity of his age, which was thought to be conscious of what is contemporary, is actually outdated. Yet to be topical actually would mean to be contrary to what is considered as opportune by the contemporaries. Thus, Nietzsche distanced himself from the demand to be contemporary and put forth that the concept of ‘untimely’ is more relevant. Untimeliness is a way to be out of joint with time, and by being so, one can see and perceive things that others cannot. It was precisely in the refusal of the *Zeitgeist* –in rejecting fashions and trends– that the young philosopher assumed the critical potential that allows thinking to trace the reality of one’s own time. To be ‘untimely’ is to stand out against the mainstream of someone’s present and to have the courage to be ‘untimely’. Courage is vital because all too often brilliant analyses, clairvoyant studies, and good projections have been ignored by contemporaries because they are considered ‘untimely’.

There is no question that thoughts as well as design projects that seek to understand a sense of life, a historical process, or a cultural shift have to be in accordance with their own time (knowing that they cannot escape from their own time but belong to it). They need a minimum amount of actuality. They have to reflect what is happening but at the same time not getting lost in it¹. However, in the same way, those who radically deny reality will

1. “Those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands. They are thus in this sense [untimely] But precisely because of this condition, precisely through this disconnection and this anachronism, they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping their own time” (Agamben 2011, 11).

recognize as little as the ones who consider themselves to be the brightest bulbs in the box. This means not only is the topical architecturally relevant, not necessarily that one is on the cutting edge blowing up every trend in a subculture to a historical event but, on the contrary, that by exceeding and exaggerating a trend, one is subjected to merely being fashionable. In other words, those who are tied to an epoch, or adjust themselves to its demands, are not contemporaries. It is not enough to participate in every event and sensation the present is offering to understand someone’s own time, but rather the present can only be detected indirectly through the past that is already inherent in the present, just as the future is implied in the Now.

In that sense, Nietzsche’s model of the ‘untimely’ can, in fact, be understood as an oscillation between different time structures, a ‘superposition’ that entails them all. In other words, time is buzzing directionless² and is a mere co-existence of punctual presents.

At this point, it should be clear that the concept of ‘untimely’ is not aiming towards something that is no longer topical but rather to something that is not topical yet. Indeed, ‘untimely’ does not express a negative relation to time such as lagging behind, or being old fashioned, as the term is still commonly understood. According to reciprocal understanding, ‘timely’ does not have an exclusively positive relation to time and is usually understood as progressive. Neither does ‘untimely’ simply mean to buck a trend. Understanding time in this way would be too easy, too simple, since, there are forms of opportunism that are nothing other than ‘untimely’. Precisely, it is the intentionally provocative breach of established ways of thinking is all too often nothing more than a covert ingratiation to time and its sensationalism. Hence, the concept of ‘untimely’ is a pluralistic and ambiguous one –a dys-chrony of plural temporalities that lacks an orderly rhythm. ‘Untimely’ is an Anachronism that reconfigures the present by breaking the coherency and linearity of the present instead of merely offering an alternative future. By doing so, the concept of ‘untimely’

2. There is no past and future as one can change from one to the other time direction by changing the sign of the ‘parameter’ time.

opens up the possibility to perceive and grasp the present. This level of understanding is impossible for ‘contemporaries’ who perfectly coincide in their own time or adjust themselves to its demands.

The (un)timely condition in architecture or the end of the future

The postmodern days of plenty, the aesthetic practices of parataxis, pastiche, parody, and collage, are numbered. “Let’s just say: it’s over”, as Linda Hutcheon (2007, 166) put it. While some are convinced that postmodernism reached its end in the early 1990s with the adoption of the digital technology in architecture, I am suggesting exactly the opposite. In fact, the 1990s and 2000s were actually the heydays of the postmodern condition. Nevertheless, what the discipline is facing today –considering the publications of recent years– is that there seems to be a consensus on the decline and demise of postmodernity, but little agreement exists about what is coming next. It is an open question³, which theorists, critics, and architects, are attempting to answer differently.

On the one hand, everything nowadays seems to be ‘post-something’; post-postmodernism, post-contemporary, post-anthropocene, post-capitalism, post-information, post-internet, post-digital, etc. Thereby, the prefix ‘post’ is indexing that the present has some relation to the past but is simultaneously distinguishable from its historic conditions. In that sense, the present is understood as something that is “itself is a speculative relation to the past that we have already exceeded” (Avanessian and Malik 2016, 11). The Now is the future of something else, of something that is not necessarily determined by the past. The term ‘post’ indicates that “we are in a future which has surpassed the conditions and the terms of the past” (ibid). On the other hand, concepts such as hypermodernism, digimodernism, performatism, or

automodernism are used to characterize the present condition of the ‘new’ paradigm. What these approaches have in common is their argument on technological advances and computerization as the source of novelty and change. Now, compared to the ‘post’, these conceptions usually refer to the future acting within the present. That is to say, the now is shaped and constituted by the future. However, what seems to appear at first glance to be concepts that overcome postmodernism are, with a closer look, rather its radicalization and do not deviate from the postmodern episteme.

In the discipline of architecture, a similar tendency can be detected. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the so-called “digital turn” in architecture during the early 1990s. Yet these digital advancements are rather the implementation and dissemination of information and telecommunication technologies (ICT) that were invented in the middle of the twentieth century on a broader basis and do not necessarily indicate an actual shift [fig.1]. Let us take Ivan Sutherland’s invention of the *Sketchpad* in 1963 as an example as it seems to be particularly relevant for architecture. The *Sketchpad* is regarded as the ancestor to Computer-Aided Design (CAD) programs, Graphical User Interface (GUI), and Object-Oriented Programming (OOP) that fundamentally changed human-computer interaction. The first interactive applications introduced the graphical representation (drawing) as a new medium for communication in the digital field and from then on were used for both artistic and technical purposes. In the 1980s and 1990s, these innovations became economically accessible to everyone, and sufficiently powerful computers (personal computers) and appropriate software became available (Gannon 2013, 19; Sutherland 1963). A downright CAD boom began following the so-called law of diffusion of innovation in the information and telecommunication technologies. The initial innovation has progressed so far that it has reached the tipping point and the mainstream has begun to adopt ideas from these concepts. This usually takes a few decades after the first introduction (Perez 2010).

Let us consider a more applied example in this context. It is less known that the provenance of the much-discussed theory of Parametric

3. “The postmodern moment has passed, even if its discursive strategies and its ideological critique continue to live on –as do those of modernism– in our contemporary twenty-first-century world. Literary historical categories like modernism and postmodernism are, after all, only heuristic labels that we create in our attempts to chart cultural changes and continuities. Post-postmodernism needs a new label of its own, and I conclude, therefore, with this challenge to readers to find it – and name it for the twenty-first century” (Hutcheon [2002] 2007, 181).

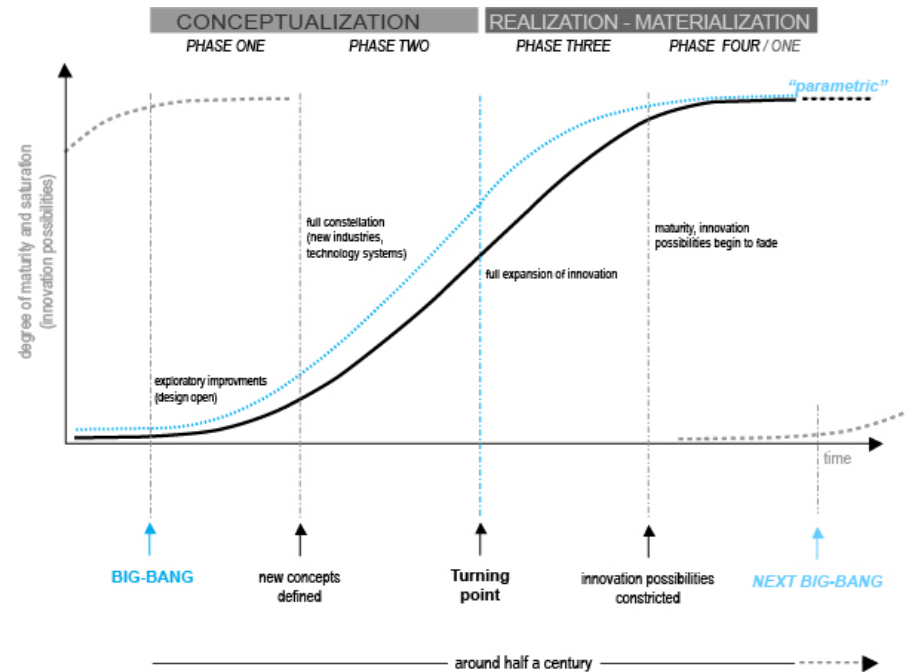


Fig. 1. Law of diffusion of innovation: Innovation trajectory of information and telecommunication paradigm overlaid with Google Books ngram viewer graph of the phrase 'parametric' for the period from 1940 – 2017. The curve repeats with the terms 'digital', 'information storage', 'data analysis', etc. Even the term 'big data' reproduces an almost similar curve. The term only shows a small up and down during the turning point of the innovation trajectory. Graphic created by the author.

Architecture coincided with innovations in computer technology during the middle of the previous century by Luigi Moretti. He coined the term 'parametric architecture' that he defines as the study of the relationship between architectural and urban systems and its dependence upon various parameters. Some of his design experiments, where the form could be changed based on certain parameters by means of a 610 IBM computer, were exhibited at Twelfth Milan Triennial in 1960 under the banner '*Architettura Parametrica*' [fig.2]. Moretti's definition and descriptions of parametric design (Moretti 1960; 2002) differ little from how the term is understood today, but rather these early visions expanded and spread out (compare

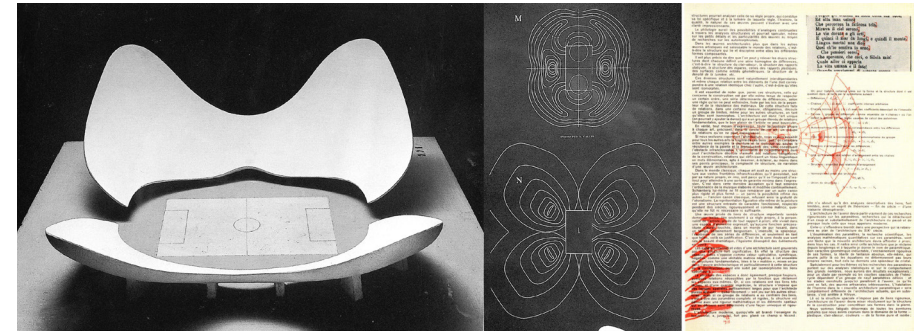


Fig. 2. Luigi Moretti: Parametric model consisting of 19 defined parameters. Left: Model version N; middle: plans of version M and N. Exhibit at the Parametric Architecture Exhibition in Milan in 1960. (Bucci and Mulazzani 2002, 114). Right: Moretti already adopted D'Arcy Thompson's references (Moretti 1954) that became very popular within the digital architecture debate. Thompson insisted that the form is a direct consequence of the forces in the environment – of environmental information – and illustrated the continuous variation and transformation of form.

[fig.3]) following the innovation trajectory of digital technologies and since the inception of the personal computer [fig.1]. Similar parallels could be drawn between the information aesthetics of Max Bense, Frieder Nake, and Georg Nees, amongst others [fig.4] in the 1960s and the more recent work in the field of generative art⁴.

Of course, there are further examples demonstrating the adoption and implementation of mid-twentieth century digital conceptions into the present form, but a detailed discussion of these conceptions is beyond the scope of this paper⁵. Instead, this paper seeks to expose the influence of the postmodern information and telecommunication paradigm on contemporary digital design. That does not mean that today's digital experiments are not useful for understanding recent developments, but many of the experiments are intensifying the postmodern rather than restructuring it. These digital experiments select and squeeze what are effectively excesses of the postmodern condition and computerized scientific

4. For more on the early computer aesthetic see Klütsch, 2007.

5. For further information see the author's dissertation (Hufnagl 2016).

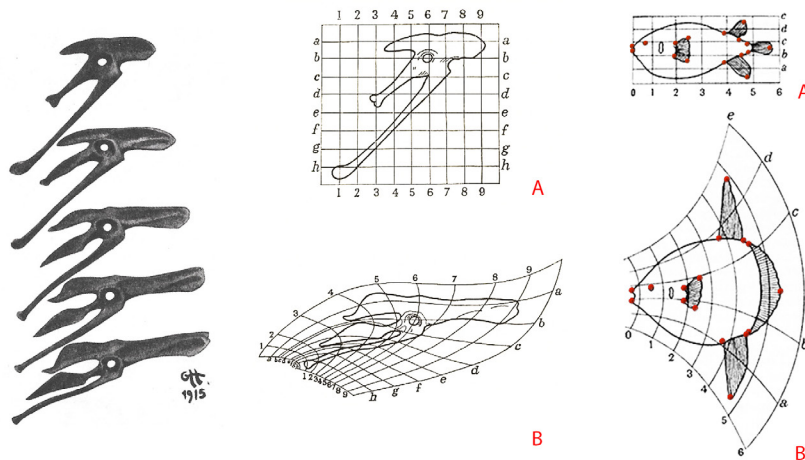


Fig. 3. Thompson (1992, 1064; 1070; 1073) used deformable grids that yielded curvilinear lines due to changes in form through the internalization of statistical data such as speed, temperature, etc. (gradient forces). (A) Basic (non-deformed) grid, (B) spline surfaces for the geometric transformation. Greg Lynn's (1999) discussion of Thompson is maybe the best known within the digital architecture debate and its aestheticization, which Moretti actually started decades before.

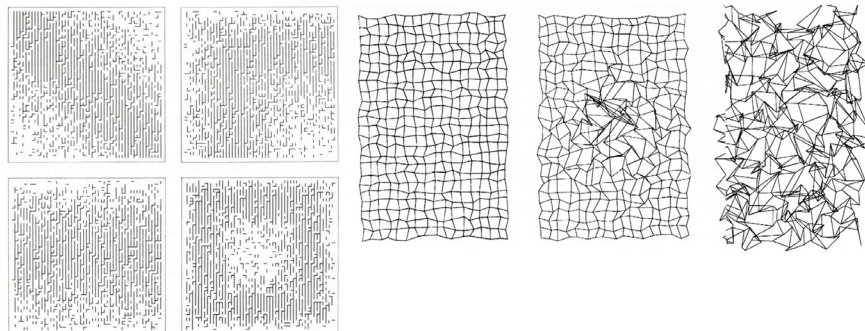


Fig. 4. Left: Frieder Nake: "Vier Realisationen aus der Serie 'Walk Through Raster'", series 2. 1-4, 1966 (Nake 1974, 236). Right: Georg Nees: "Gewebe", 1968 (Nees 1969).

knowledge, to paraphrase François Lyotard, but are not really deviations from the postmodern episteme. An episteme that is characterized by terms like 'performance', 'emergence', 'self-organizing systems', 'complexity', and 'nonlinear dynamics'⁶, furthermore, language-based science and technology⁷, such as "problems of communication and cybernetics, modern theories of algebra and informatics, [...] computer languages, problems of information storage and data banks" (Lyotard 1984, 3) etc. Indeed, architects today are still using the notions of scientific theories in order to produce meaning for computer-generated designs while sometimes forgetting where these theories actually come from.

Since the 1960s, the discourse is dominated by the conviction that due to computer technology, it is possible to capture the entire complexity of architecture and even of cities. The novelty back then was, and still is the case within digital architecture, to start from the whole presupposing complexity. This is in contrast to modernism that proceeds from the simple to the complex. The postmodern approach focuses on wholes or systems, and the structure (relations) of architecture and cities that give sense to the elements instead of the modern tendency of atomization. Postmodernists, however, claimed that the whole can only be understood as a whole, and the parts can only be known by their mutual relationship and complexity in the entire system. In that sense, the hierarchy of parts and whole are fused – known as parametricism. Some may argue that parametricism is about programming the component and abdicating the design of the whole, but actually the whole –as an architectural operation– is already inscribed in the object through its parts. Architecture finds its rules in the entire complexity of a city, as for instance Aldo Rossi already argued. It is indeed this fusion of the hierarchy of parts and whole that basically dominates the design approaches since the 1960s and coincides with parametric tools⁸.

6. Most of these terms originate from the scientific approach of systems theory (Ludwig von Bertalanffy) and include the theories of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (Autopoiesis), Stuart Kauffman (self-organization), the work of Niklas Luhmann, and Jay Forrester. In addition, chaos theory, cybernetics, and catastrophe theory (René Thom) are all related to the systems approach.

7. Notice the term 'linguistic turn' coined by Richard Rorty in 1967.

8. The author extensively explored the similarity between the postmodern theories and the early digital projects by comparing Aldo Rossi's and Greg Lynn's work (Hufnagl 2016).

In short, what these theories and strategies have in common –despite their differences– is that they describe a movement from the *Ding an sich* (thing-in-itself) to a field of relations (networks, systems). In the case of architecture, the architectural object is of less concern than its discernible relations within a field, so much so that the object itself is considered a field of relations dissolving into larger (urban) network of relations. Such an understanding ensures the necessary internal flexibility of the architectural object in order to incorporate external influences and forces (an animated field of forces) as enabled through the geometric description of topology. Topology as a nonmetric concept is the least differentiated geometric classification and is based on proximities (the notational device of the diagram is basically the same). Therefore, allowing (continuous) homeomorphic transformations of shapes results in infinite variations. That means figures can be deformed into each other while remaining topologically the same figures and would be completely distinct in Euclidian geometry. As a result, the object/context or object/object differentiation is disappearing. Sharp differences or ruptures are not desired yet it is not a homogenous but a heterogeneous smoothness that is the goal –the idea of continuity blending the hierarchy of parts and whole (Lynn 1998, 16). This was a hotly contested topic back in the 1990s, and it remains so today –for instance swarms are nothing other than field-concepts (Schumacher 2009, 19). Apparently, these concepts are based on the mathematical expression of the topological medium of the computer.

Briefly said, the ground or the context is data, a field of forces, which can be adopted by the flexibility of the topological surface and constrained by its parameters. Therefore, architecture emerges from the confluence of forces from the field of the site, the intrinsic material condition, and the dynamic environmental forces. Extrinsic forces (environmental like climate or vegetation, cultural like material, furthermore construction but economical forces as well) authorize the generation of form. The initial shape –generally a primitive form– is of less interest and is accepted without critical reflection. Architecture is decreased to the visualization of a pre-established sequence of parameters and its relation. It is reduced and considered as an editable instantiation of the inner structural logic of an algorithm. Indeed form

generation is justified through the autopoietic (and self-organizing) capacity of digital design tools, and those techniques are taken as far as they can go. Therefore, the aesthetic and appearance of architecture is legitimized by the rationality of the animation software and algorithmic form-generating programs. The final design is of less interest as it is just one possible version of an infinite set of possibilities. Rather, it is the relational model that is of interest, and with it, the process-driven exploration of form –the informal or formless in favour of form⁹. Nowadays, this approach is increasingly common and the digital tools has been overemphasized and animate techniques are detected while the architectural object is neglected.

Having outlined this, one must be aware that networks and fields might be useful models for understanding but are ultimately artificial and fictional constructions. Compared to the actual architectural object, a field of relation is always fictional to a certain extent, and therefore the relational model cannot be legitimized as a deeper way of understanding the object itself. This is because there is still a wide area of choice left in the final figuration, even if an operational logic and operational techniques are brought together into a logical process. The mathematical procedure might provide a characteristic form but more than this, logic no longer operates, and paradoxically the final configuration has to be decided on based on intuition. Hence, form is not merely the result of this process but is a mathematical description of variables in order to drive the parameters constraining the design. This is one reason why parametricism is increasingly associated with phenomenology. Although this model is useful to discover design solutions without having a prior picture of the final form in mind, it is not sufficient for the ultimate design.

9. The term 'formless' is based on Georges Batailles's definition of informe indicating that operational and performative forces determine the form. Interestingly, the discourse of formless became a prominent discussion in the architectural discourse during the mid-1990s, exactly as the full deployment period of the technological innovations of the 1960s took place. The deployment phase (the realization and materialization phase) is the second phase of the law of diffusion of innovation, see [fig.1].

Some designers justify this contradiction of a rational design process in contrast to intuition by referencing the artistic character of architecture. This justification is ennobled by postmodern theories such as Deleuze, Foucault, or Guattari and their interpretation of Nietzsche's and Bergson's 'vitalism' formulations. Even if the definitions of this term differ from each other, they share the idea of intuition, i.e., assertions are based on a predetermined ideal. Now that ideal does not require the necessity of scientific investigation for the simple reason that vitalism (the idea of a predetermined ideal), as an ever-recurring progress of the same, simply exists and therefore has to be accepted. Hence, the ideal cannot be explained by itself nor can it be defined by anything else, which is not itself. Inevitably, any justification is attributed to a kind of primordial principle or ideal that Nietzsche defined with the concept of the 'will to power' and Bergson with 'elan vital' as their vitalist formulations. In short, the digital approach is mainly based on the materialistic philosophy of 'becoming' where the form is defined by a self-generating process that shifts the interest away from the object to the performative (to what Deleuze describes as the 'possibilities of facts'). As a result, the focus is on the processual and the object appearance is directly related to the rationality of the design process. At the same time, the conditions of emergence exclude, by their openness and incompleteness, any review of the actual architectural object itself.

The problem of indecisiveness was already pointed out by Tomás Maldonado during the first digital experiments in the 1960s. This leads inevitably to the second aspect, as it is utterly impossible to establish all parameters of a design problem. To be able to capture the whole complexity of architecture or a city is simply an illusion. This is a general postmodern misconception in which e.g. also economists have constituted the last financial crisis. Not everything is integrated into the very sophisticated mathematical models that provide important insights. The models have only described a part of reality and ignored many other important aspects. In this way, the self-regulating system has failed (Schneider 2009). I am claiming the same is true for architecture. What we think about the wholeness of architecture or a city is obviously just a small part. Assume that you begin to look at

the entire architecture of a city and all its virtual forces –environmental, historical, economical, political, etc.– that act on it, and at some point, it will occur to you that you can always add something else. It would be an impossible compilation that could never be finished. Quantifiable criteria always leave a choice for the designer to make and that is still the case in the era of big data. Today's technology is enabling the storage of everything without compression, as Mario Carpo argues, but new knowledge and progress does not depend on a mere increase in the amount of data. Data needs to be processed and for this reason, we, as users, indeed sort and not only search, as Carpo (2015) argues¹⁰. Nevertheless, having taken all these factors into account, it becomes clear that the digital architectural design process just appears as a hard and rational approach on the surface but is rather a mystical belief in an intuitive process.

The final point is that today a lot of people are moving into programming and using computer-based design tools without design ambition. Greg Lynn himself pointed this out by not advocating "for another round of happy accidents and amateurism like [they] experienced in the 1990s" (Rocker 2006). The so-called digital turn in the 1990s is, therefore, indicating less of an actual shift than a move from an attempt to critically translate digital technology to a tool-driven and vocational approach by celebrating variations without cultural relevance. It must be clear, that the disciplinary content and the architectural object itself cannot simply be eliminated in hopes that in its wake, a space could open up for the unprecedented and genuinely new. Indeed, considering the overload of online publication, this *modus operandi* becomes the convention, not to say market-driven. In other words, what today is generally considered as a timely design is actually following a mere fashion and the stylization of designs. In that sense, what is commonly understood as new and contemporary, however, is on closer consideration a project of the past. Their conceptualizations are still based

10. Before entering anything in the search box, a decision needs to be made on what to ask and that is already a way of "sorting" although in its simplest form. However, Carpo, like other discussions on that topic, usually do not define big data in qualitative terms. On the contrary, Lev Manovich's research promises new insights into this discussion by combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

on postmodern science, as mentioned above, which was and is influenced by the information and telecommunication innovations in the 1960s.

The present ambiguity: the superimposition of times

In response to the hype of the digital project, the more recent concepts of 'post-digital' and 'New Aesthetic'¹¹ are emerging [fig.5] and the past seems to be the new forefront. Yet post- does not mean anti- and that digital technologies are no longer important. On the contrary, the deep and enduring implementation of digitization is a necessary condition of the post-digital state. Digital technology is taken for granted and only recognized by its absence, not its presence. In other words, just like the spirit of standardization of the mechanical age continues to exist for many products

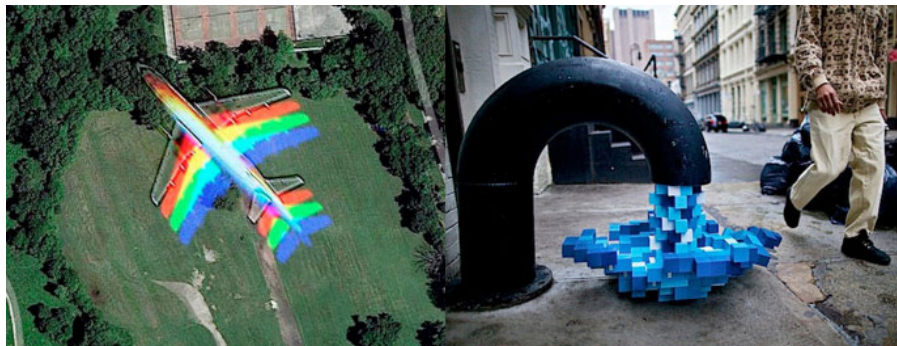


Fig. 5. On "New Aesthetics" by James Bridle. "[...] pixelated imagery, a way of seeing that seems to reveal a blurring between 'the real' and 'the digital', the physical and the virtual, the human and the machine" (Bridle 2012).

and is useful, even in the postmodern period of mass-customization.

The term 'post-digital' can also be detected within the architectural discourse. However, there are many post-digital approaches and some argue that the term 'anti-digital' would be more appropriate and is indeed a nostalgic return to the past. For instance, Sam Jacob argues that the tools of Photoshop and Illustrator are making drawing fundamentally new, thus,

fostering a positivist belief in technology. This relates directly to the tool-argument already observed in the early digital approaches in the 1990s. Furthermore, the architect is using the same vocabulary just replacing 'shape' by 'drawing'. Now the 'drawing' is connected to networks and flows that are referring to the transformational capacity of the 'drawing surface' instead of the 'topological surface'. Additionally, he points out that the constant flux of the images and the smoothness fuses graphical parts to the whole. In short, he legitimizes aspects due to the difference between the digital screen and canvas. Those drawings that today can be seen in many architectural schools are not comparable to the great pre-digital drawings of Zaha [fig.6] or OMA as Jacob argues because the drawings focus on graphic (analog) means to stylize images. In this regard, the so-called 'post-digital era' needs to be considered 'anti-digital' because it refers to realistic renderings as its antithesis and is not an actual investigation on space (Jacob 2017). [fig.7] Lev Manovich supports this argument by pointing out that Photoshop, for instance, belongs to postmodernism – "[...] it is this software [Photoshop] that in fact made postmodernism possible" (Manovich 2001, 131).

However as different as the 'post-digital' approaches may be, what they have in common is the argument that the golden age of the 'digital' is over and has turned into a past future. This means postmodern strategies have reached a commodification similar to the so-called 'corporate modernism'.

Indeed, some readers may have further interpretations and different understandings of the same vocabulary but this only confirms once again the ambiguous situation of the present transitional moment and what Reinhart Koselleck elaborated with the topic of crisis. Koselleck uses the term crisis to describe the temporal dimension of acceleration in transitional periods that are characterized by the superposition of time layers. In other words, different epochs in the same chronological time can cross each other and flow side by side and the past, future, and present become embodied through the digital, the anti-digital, and the post-digital. Hence, the contemporary condition illustrates that not all postmodern concepts are over – apparently not at all –, but that there is space to develop beyond postmodernism.

11. A term coined by James Bridle meaning the blending of digital technology and the physical world.

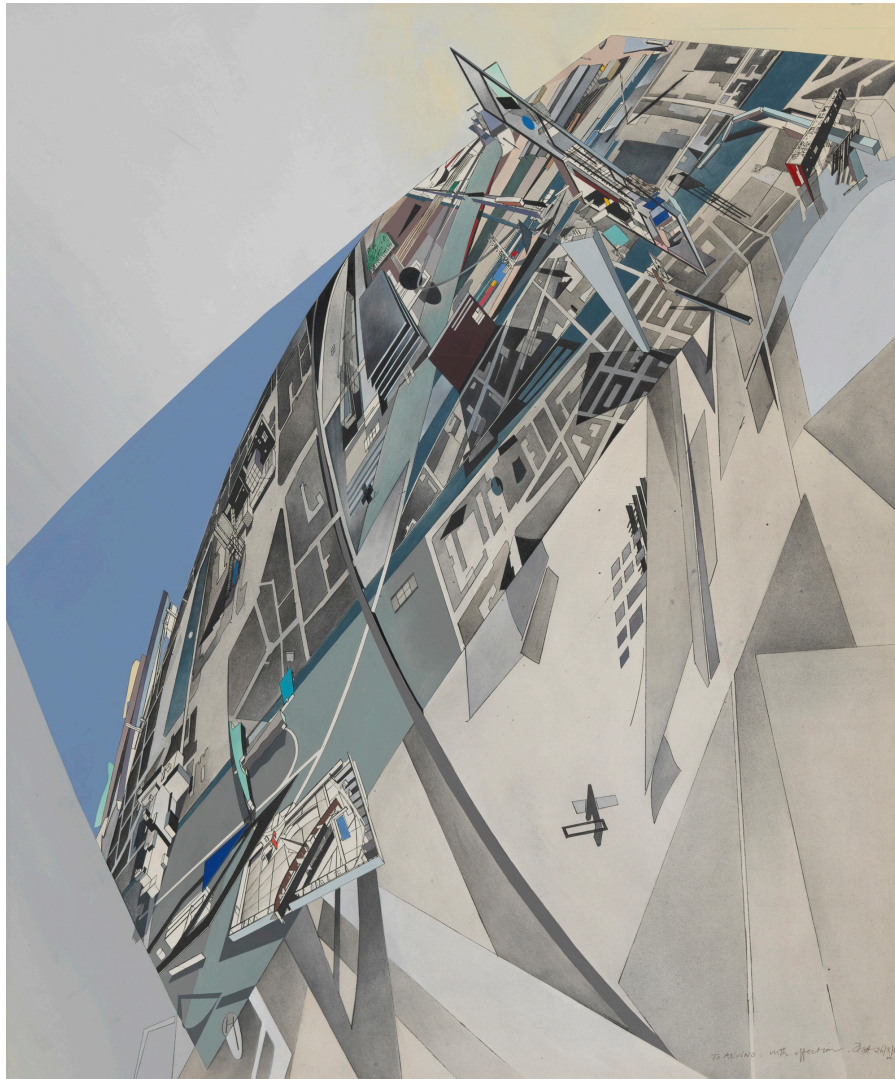


Fig. 6. "The World (89 Degrees)", Zaha Hadid, 1984.



Fig. 7. Post-digital drawing by Kersten Geers and David Van Severen (Jacob 2017).

Having taken all these factors into account, I advocate for designs that employ Nietzsche's term of 'untimely'. To be 'untimely' means to understand one's dependency on time and to separate one's self from the *Zeitgeist*. This means transcending from what is thought to be topical but actually what has in fact become a convention and meanly fashionable.

What if we can escape both of the architectural positions –digital and anti-digital– by claiming they are one and the same? They are both positions based on theories from early postmodernism, and both point to the current development of parametric digital design methods. Both concepts regard architecture as an emergence of a field of associated variable forces. The collapse of the architectural object into a network of relations describes architecture's movement from object to field. Moreover, as confusing as it might seem at first sight, Sam Jacob's post-digital drawings are of no difference from this approach. It may be time for architecture to be 'untimely' and therefore lose its relational model and begin to speculate on the architectural object itself in qualitative terms. Furthermore, as an 'untimely' approach to postmodernism, I am claiming that there is no single complex whole, no single algorithm for multiplicities, but at best

a motley collaboration of ‘wholes’. Such an approach is in contrast to an all-encompassing principle of everything because not everything relates to each other all the time as that would imply that everything is changing constantly. Instead, what I suggest is that everything, a whole as a concept, does not exist. The way forward in architecture is to cast off the constraints of the entire outdated part-to-whole discourse and adopt the concept of ‘untimely’ to guide future work.

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