

# Surplus *Reality*: GenAI and the Post-Truth Architectural Milieu of Representation

Anabel PRETTY

Senior Lecturer, School of Architecture, Unitec Institute of Technology, Aotearoa, New Zealand  
apretty@unitec.ac.nz

## Keywords

Deleuze; Benjamin; generative AI; architectural representation; post-truth.

## Abstract

This paper explores the convergence of Deleuze's multiplicities, Benjamin's loss of aura, architectural representation, and Generative AI in contemporary creative practices, specifically within architectural representation. Deleuze's concept challenges hierarchical structures, fostering new configurations of thought, and Benjamin's notion questions the authenticity of reproduced images, influencing the transformation of the intersection of art and architecture.

The emergence of architectural representation blurs physical and virtual boundaries, while Generative AI introduces algorithm-driven spatial designs. Investigating these intersections, this paper explores their impact on architectural practices, particularly in digital design. It examines how Generative AI challenges traditional authorship and creativity, promoting collaborative processes. Synthesising these concepts ascribes the evolving landscape of architectural practice in the digital age, emphasising the need to engage critically with these frameworks.

## Research Problem Establishing a Territory: Rose-Tinted Glasses

Surplus Reality: GenAI and the Post-Truth<sup>1</sup> Architectural Milieu of Architectural Representation explores the intersection of Gilles Deleuze's concept of *multiplicities*,<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin's notion of the loss of aura,<sup>3</sup> the advancement of digital architectural representation, and the subsequent emergence of Generative AI (hereafter GenAI) in contemporary creative practices, specifically architectural representation.<sup>4</sup>

Deleuze's multiplicities suggest a non-hierarchical, interconnected network of elements, challenging traditional modes of representation and fostering novel configurations of thought and expression. Whereas Benjamin's concept of the *loss of aura* highlights the transformation of art and architectural representation, questioning the authenticity and uniqueness of the *mechanically* reproduced image. Against this backdrop, the advent of architectural representation signifies a shift in how space is conceptualised and represented, blurring the boundaries between physical and virtual realms—truth and post-truth (Consider Figures 1 and 2).

Furthermore, the rise of GenAI (within this paper, *Midjourney* v5 and v6) introduces a new paradigm in architectural design and representation, enabling the generation of complex, algorithmically driven spatial configurations—*multiple reality*

1. Colin Wight, "Post-Truth, Postmodernism and Alternative Facts," *New Perspectives* 26, no. 3 (October 2018): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2336825X1802600302>.
2. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980], trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 9.
3. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction [1935]," ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, *Illuminations*, 1969, 226–43, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351226387-29>.
4. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art In the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* [1935], ed. Michael William Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, and Howard Eiland (Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2008), 39.
5. Edward Relph, "Digital Disorientation and Place," *Memory Studies* 14, no. 3 (June 2021): 572–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211010694.6>. Gilles Deleuze, "Conférences: Theory of Multiplicities in Bergson (Cours Du 30/11/1969)," *Webdeleuze*, November 30, 1969, <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/111>.



Figure 1: Annabel  
Pretty, Image  
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Figure 2: Annabel  
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Series. (*Prompt/ Zoom,  
Cinematic hyperreal  
image, surrealism,  
picturesque folly  
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landscape, sublime  
landscape, aspect  
ratio 1:1, no humans,  
polaroid 600 instant  
film, James Turrell  
lighting, Greece v5.2*)

*architectures*. This paper investigates how these theoretical frameworks intersect and inform contemporary architectural practices, particularly in the context of digital architectural design and the fabrication of imagery. It examines how GenAI technologies challenge traditional notions of authorship, creativity, and the role of the architect while also expanding new possibilities<sup>5</sup> for collaborative, generative design processes.

By synthesising Deleuze's concept of *multiplicities*,<sup>6</sup> Benjamin's *critique of aura* and the advancements in architectural representation and GenAI, this paper aims to interpret the complex interplay between technology, representation, and creativity in contemporary architectural discourse.<sup>7</sup> It underscores the importance of critically engaging with these theoretical frameworks to navigate the evolving landscape of architectural practice in the digital age: are we looking through rose-tinted glasses?

Benjamin's exploration of mass culture can be viewed as laying the groundwork for Jean Baudrillard's concepts, as articulated in *Simulacra and Simulation*.<sup>8</sup> Baudrillard contends that *Simulation* transcends the representation of a territory or substance, instead generating a hyperreal devoid of originality or reference point. This notion extends Benjamin's argument on the disappearance of the original in technical reproduction to its extreme, where the concept of originality loses all significance. The hyperreal perpetuates endless reproductions without anchoring in any sort of reality - eminently helpful in assessing imagery within the broader field of GenAI. Additionally, Benjamin's notion of aura, which denotes a distant relationship between the object and the spectator, is further examined - aura encapsulating not only the uniqueness of the object but also its subjective perception.

Baudrillard hypothesises that the image's conception<sup>9</sup> and its consequential representation as such, "I saw it as the end of architecture [...] by pushing the concept to its limit and primarily by using the photograph as a point of departure."<sup>10</sup> This notion is evident in the belief that a significant portion of images no longer represent a subject or depict the reality of an object; instead, they primarily serve as the technical realisation of all the inherent capabilities within the medium. Especially in the case of GenAI (Consider Figures 3 and 4). Baudrillard further suggests that image-makers, including both photographers and amateurs, mistakenly believe they are capturing a scene when, in fact, they are merely operating a device that taps into an infinite realm of virtuality. They simply serve as technical operators of the device's boundless virtual capabilities, analogous to the paradigm of GenAI and *multiple-reality architectures*.

6. Gilles Deleuze, "Conférences: Theory of Multiplicities in Bergson (Cours Du 30/11/1969)," *Webdeleuze*, November 30, 1969, <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/111>.

7. Matias Del Campo, "Everything Can Be an Author: Rethinking Agency in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," ed. Matias Del Campo, *Architectural Design* 94, no. 3 (May 2024): 20–29, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.3051>.

8. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* [1981], trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

9. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* [1981] [1981]; Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel, *The Singular Objects of Architecture*, trans. Robert Bononno (University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1990); Jonathan Crary, "Modernizing Vision," in *Vision and Visuality Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Bay Press, 1988), 29–44.

10. Baudrillard and Nouvel, *The Singular Objects of Architecture*, 47–48.

11. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], trans. Richard Howard (Hill and Wang: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1982), 26–27.

12. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], 26.



Figure 3: Annabel  
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January 2024 MJ v5.2  
Cyanotype Series.



Figure 4: Annabel  
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Baudrillard's notions tie into Barthes's concepts of *studium* and *punctum*,<sup>11</sup> highlighting the photographic medium's role in shaping an image's perception and impact. On the one hand, *studium* being those general all-encompassing elements of the image: the political, the cultural, the rational, and indirectly meaning of the word 'study'. Barthes alludes to the image's effective, cultural, and intellectual charge by suggesting that the total understanding of the Latin word *studium* is understood as an "*application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity.*"<sup>12</sup> The *studium* is what gives the image its 'depth' and 'aura', and it is what Barthes calls the 'generous element' of the image, its 'affective and cultural envelope'—it is the element of the image that is not a 'sign of death' but a sign of life, the element that 'sustains' the image.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Barthes theorises that the *punctum* is the element of the image that 'pricks' or 'punctuates' the spectator - it is the element of the image that is 'individuating' that makes the image 'personal' and 'unique'. *Punctum* is the element of the image that 'hits' the spectator. "*A photograph's punctum is that accident which 'pricks' me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).*"<sup>14</sup> David Bate urges that it is the 'plurality'<sup>15</sup> that defines the subjective and personal response to the *studium* and *punctum*. The confabulation of the five elements - Operator, Spectator, Spectrum, *studium*, and *punctum* - is to be articulated in this manner, as interpreted by Jolanta Wawrzycka through the lens of Barthes. According to Wawrzycka's analysis, the Operator,<sup>16</sup> as defined, occupies a distinct position in the reception chain, specifically at the stage where the image attains visibility, accessibility, and intelligibility. It is the one who gives the image its meaning. The spectator is the one who receives the image; however, in recognising the *studium*, the spectator accepts and understands the photographer's intentions as part of a sort of cultural contract between the creators and the *consumer* - *spectator* - *viewer*, which allows them to comprehend the operator's intentions and states:

*These functions are: to inform, to represent, to surprise, to cause to signify, to provoke desire. And I, the spectator, I recognise them with more or less pleasure: I invest them with my studium (which is never my delight or my pain).*<sup>17</sup>

### **Establishing A Niche and Occupying the Niche: The Milieu of GenAI as a Visual Slot Machine**

The utilisation of photomontage<sup>18</sup> and image-based multiple-reality architectural assemblages<sup>19</sup> have given rise to cohesive works that possess an aura of authenticity, producing imagery that appears to be evidence-based. Yet, these hybrid image-based architectural assemblages bring about a profound transformation in our relationship with *spatialities*,

13. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], 89.
14. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], 27.
15. David Bate, *Photography After Postmodernism: Barthes, Stieglitz and the Art of Memory* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 31.
16. Jolanta Wawrzycka, "Photographeme: Mythologizing in Camera Lucida," in *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 90–98.
17. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], 28.
18. Max Bonhomme, Christian Joschke, and Laura Truxa, "Introduction. Une généalogie des images composites [A Genealogy of Composite Images]," *Transbordeur: Photographie Histoire Société*, no. 7 (2023), <https://transbordeur.ch/fr/2023/introduction-genealogie-images-composite/>.
19. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980], 07.
20. Mark Dorrian, Riet Eeckhout, and Arnaud Hendrickx, *Drawing Architecture: Conversations on Contemporary Practice* (London: Lund Humphries, 2022), 111.
21. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything:*



Figure 5: Annabel  
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February 2024  
MJ v5.2 Calotype  
& Tintype Series.  
(Prompt/ Imagine  
linear architectural  
structure, mirrored  
horizontal NEOM  
whimsical, film stock  
calotype).



Figure 6: Annabel  
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February 2024 MJ v5.2  
Calotype & Tintype  
Series.

fundamentally reshaping the traditional connections between physical, tangible elements (such as materials and objects), relational contexts, and conceptual agents (ideas, strategies, and approaches). These *multiple-reality architectures* blend analogue and virtual elements, creating immersive realms of great power that redefine the process of spatial production. As a result, the legibility of these captivating and ambiguous images, as well as the author's underlying intentions, are brought into question. C.J. Lim refers to them as "historical and cultural montages."<sup>20</sup>

Visual evidence is always partial and contextual - facts can be factual or interpolative, especially where photography is concerned, as established within the writings of Benjamin. A conceptual reading of visual evidence will always be an alchemy of the reader's or, rather, spectators' prior knowledge and the probable intention of the authorship of the maker. As suggested in the prompt in Figure 5. Probable<sup>21</sup> inasmuch as the author, or maker, or artistic intention is often a constellation of theories frequently unveiled to the audience or spectator - and thus only to be speculated on. A fiction - a folly - a follie.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, this research considers the spatial constructs of these speculative-hyperreal montages or rather *assemblages*, as the latest evolution of the architectural type of the multiple-reality architectures known within this paper as digital follies. Visual *digital follies*, as instances of pre-eminent symbolic contrivance, are a prime instrument for such research - yet are they just visual slot machines with no "control from the operator/prompt author?" Undoubtedly this is not the case as prompt authors need extensive understanding of the text-to-image descriptive language<sup>23</sup> (Figures 2, 5 and 7) as used by photographers and Art historians. Represented digital multiple reality images (Figures 5 and 6.) are artefacts that enable architects, architectural photographers and art photographers to create new assemblages with spatial elements freed from material and temporal constraints: the ability to use GenAI as a type of visual slot machines; prompts entered by the "operator" (human) encoded by the GenAI right down to the pixel level<sup>24</sup> yet are they 'just' slot machines or is there more going on?

These incompatible elements can be created from a bricolage<sup>25</sup> (agglomeration, collage, or quilt<sup>26</sup>) of elements, some of which the operator may have made, combined with those which may have been 'found' (or rather - liberated, stolen, or otherwise appropriated). The hyperreal architectural images' digital follies sit at the fulcrum of Baudrillard's four phases of the Simulation,<sup>27</sup> all of which have highly permeable boundaries. Even the architectural hyperreal post-built image, the slick hyperreal marketing image heavy with Photoshop, is

*Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013), 03.

22. Barbara Jones defines follies as "Follies are built for pleasure, and pleasure is personal, difficult to define. Follies are fashionable or frantic, built to keep up with the neighbours, or built from obsession. They are at once cheerful and morbid, both an ornament for a gentleman's grounds and a mirror for his mind" Barbara Mildred Jones, *Follies & Grottoes* (Constable, 1974), 01.

23. Dejan Grba, "Incidental Reverberations: Poetic Similarities in AI Art," in *Hertziana Studies in Art History*, Vol. 3 (2024): From Hype to Reality: Artificial Intelligence in the Study of Art and Culture, ed. Eva Cetinić and Darío Negueruela Del Castillo (Bibliotheca Hertziana - Max Planck Institute for Art History, 2024), 42.

24. Arthur I. Miller, *The Artist in the Machine: The World of AI-Powered Creativity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2019), 82.

25. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* [La Pensée Sauvage, 1962], trans. George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966).

26. Dorrian, Eeckhout, and Hendrickx, *Drawing Architecture: Conversations on Contemporary Practice*, 111.

27. Jean Baudrillard, *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford

hardly a *reflection of profound reality*,<sup>28</sup> nor are the hyperreal architectural renders as a possible building of the pre-conceived images. Nevertheless, as per Baudrillard's four phases, they both have elements of a *mask of reality* and an *absence of reality*. Artists, photographers, and architects blur these boundaries and create a sort of fantastical hyperreal hybrid possibility also termed *architecture fiction*,<sup>29</sup> believable, unbuildable, but questioning spatial relationships.

Throughout the Twentieth Century and into the Twenty-First Century, various artistic techniques such as assemblage, montage, collage, and cut-and-paste<sup>30</sup> have been employed to visually depict the manipulation of mass-produced industrial works. Though predominantly manual, these methods reflected the influence of industrial processes on artistic production. Assemblage, in particular, mirrored the assembly line of industry, serving as a means to represent and critique mechanised production methods. The chunkiness associated with cut-and-paste techniques symbolised industrial modernity, as the modular nature of mass production often resulted in bulky assemblages, regardless of the smoothness of individual parts, Mario Carpo discusses the post-human in that "[...] Every text is a collage of chunks" suggesting that "[...] method of cut-and-paste composition was so general and widely applicable that it could have been easily extended to other contexts and contents."<sup>31</sup> This *chunkiness* emphasises the necessity of combining disparate elements to form a cohesive whole, reflecting the heterogenic nature of the mechanical assembly,<sup>32</sup> yet within the contemporary paradigm, we have the seamlessness of GenAI.

Robert Elwell critically examines the work of writer and photographer Tom Picton and posits that it is essential to consider the role photography - and by extension, architecture - serves in contemporary culture as a "*craven image*"<sup>33</sup>, devoid of soul and filled with deceitful flattery, always prepared to give equal photographic admiration to the most ordinary dwelling as it would to the grandeur of the Parthenon. These images are imposed upon an unsuspecting audience by a collusive and unholy alliance of architects, photographers, and art editors. '*Craven*', in this case, alludes to the notion that the photographic image has abdicated its moral duty to represent faithfully as it is a palimpsest to many variables of the architect's intents, the photographer's interpretation and the editor's mandate. Furthermore, Geoff Dyer proposes that similar to a palimpsest "(strictly speaking, a photography of a palimpsest)", the significance does not reside solely beneath the layers; instead, its enigmatic truth emerges from the interplay of "[...] *erosion and accumulation*" manifested by these layers. Thus, examining a photograph's qualities consecutively encourages that "*they are revealed - and concealed - simultaneously*."<sup>34</sup>

University Press, 2001), 171–73.

28. The photographers and photographic practices of such as Hufton + Crow, Iwan Baan, and Hisao Suzuki.

29. Filip Dujardin et al., *Filip Dujardin: Fictions*, trans. Wolfgang Himmelberg and Gregory Ball (Hannibal Publishing, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2014), 06.

30. Grba, "Hertziana Studies in Art History, Vol. 3 (2024)."

31. Mario Carpo, *Being Post-Digital Design and Automation After the End of Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2023), 135.

32. Carpo, *Being Post-Digital Design and Automation After the End of Modernity*, 139.

33. Robert Elwall, *Building with Light The International History of Architectural Photography* (London: Merrell, RIBA, 2004), 162.

34. Geoff Dyer, *See/Saw Looking at Photographs: Essays 2010-2020* (Canongate, 2021), 43.

35. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [1974], trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell, 1991), 38–39.

36. Robert Elwall, *Photography Takes Command: The Camera and British Architecture 1890-1939* (RIBA Heinz, 1994), 05.

37. Koray Degirmenci, "Photographic Images in the Digital Age Does Photography

## Surplus Reality: GenAI and the Post-Truth Architectural Milieu of Architectural Representation: *Combinational Creativity and Glitches*

Often, the photograph has been the medium of exchange, or rather a metaphorical bridge by way of disseminating, analysing, synthesising and therefore discussing the building, rather than the actual physicality of a person's interaction with the building. Lefebvre would call this the "lived"<sup>35</sup> (representational) spatial construct rather than the conceived (representations of space) within which this paper is concerned. Nevertheless, Elwall declares of this: "Photographs have, however, become the currency of architectural exchange."<sup>36</sup> Could it be that, as Koray Degirmenci alludes to, the main factor of this paradox is the contradiction between the loss of the aura and essence<sup>37</sup> or atmospheric intensity due to the 'democratisation of multimodal visual communication or photography and the amplification of the mnemonic (memory) role of the 'auratic' in architecture? Is the lived experience to be negated as perception of the building can only be mediated through an imperfect or 'false-perception' image? Iman Ansari, when interviewing architect Peter Eisenman, deliberates on this paradox such that: "The 'real architecture' only exists in the drawings. The 'real building' exists outside the drawings. The difference here is that 'architecture' and 'building' are not the same."<sup>38</sup>

Benjamin's essays on photography initially discuss the issue and nature of the 'image-worlds' and 'image imperatives'; Benjamin considers these image imperatives to be both objective and subjective - the images that emerge from within us are inherently subjective, but our understanding and interpretation of them are influenced by something objective - namely, the interaction with a particular photograph.<sup>39</sup> Benjamin's writing intimates that images that emerge from the camera and, consequently, the author (photographer/operator) are inherently subjective. Still, our perception of them is shaped by something objective, invariably through self-context and knowledge base. Neil Leach poses the question: "If photography, according to Walter Benjamin, confronts the aura of an artwork, what does AI challenge?"<sup>40</sup> The issue with GenAI may not solely revolve around the dissolution of auras but rather the prospect of copyright infringement. Despite that perhaps copyright is a false route, as humans are deeply involved at every stage<sup>41</sup> in creating imagery - the computer might dream in numbers, yet the human dreams in imagery and concepts.<sup>42</sup> The GenAI, in this case, MidJourney, dreams or rather hallucinates<sup>43</sup> in pixel numbers nevertheless, the operator dreams in heterogeneous visual imagery - Arthur I. Miller suggests this is termed *Combinational Creativity* sourced from Margaret Boden.<sup>44</sup>

Still Exist?" in *The Aesthetic Dimension of Visual Culture*, ed. O. Dadejick and J Stejskal (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 147.

38. Iman Ansari, "Eisenman's Evolution: Architecture, Syntax, and New Subjectivity," *ArchDaily*, 2013, <https://www.archdaily.com/429925/eisenman-s-evolution-architecture-syntax-and-new-subjectivity>. Consider also Ansari's Instagram account @imansari.

39. Benjamin, *The Work of Art In the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* [1935], 264.

40. Neil Leach, *Architecture in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: An Introduction to AI for Architects* (London, UK; Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022), 69.

41. Miller, *The Artist in the Machine: The World of AI-Powered Creativity*, 122.

42. Anne-Laure Oberson, "Making Sense of AI Generated Images in the Process of Imagination," in *Hertziana Studies in Art History*, Vol. 3 (2024): From Hype to Reality: Artificial Intelligence in the Study of Art and Culture, ed. Eva Cetinić and Darío Negueruela Del Castillo (Bibliotheca Hertziana - Max Planck Institute for Art History, 2024), 96.

43. Matias Del Campo and Neil Leach, "Can Machines Hallucinate Architecture? AI as Design Method," ed. Matias Del Campo and Neil Leach, *Architectural Design* 92, no. 3 (May 2022): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2807>.



Figure 7: Annabel  
Pretty, Image  
Generate 10 May 2024  
MJ V6.0 Cyanotype  
Series. (Prompt/ zoom,  
pavilion, wide open  
spaces, seascape  
Bernd Hilla Becher  
style, single point  
perspective film style  
cyanotype -- weird  
150 v6.0)



Figure 8: Annabel  
Pretty, Image  
Generate 10 May 2024  
MJ V6.0 Cyanotype  
Series.

Perhaps GenAI can help transform and understand human creativity - the pleasure of the glitches<sup>46</sup> and the memories of other pixel - level imagery allowing for new formations of assemblages of spatial constructs, the glitches adding a degree of personality and neo-avant-garde-ness to the imagery not unlike the darkroom glitches of yesteryear - nostalgic days of darkroom glitches adding rather than detracting - consider both Figure 3. with its odd mirrored lower section akin to a double exposure and Figures 5 and 6. Both of these have “images within images” and memories of other images, like negatives within negatives, as with possibilities of former darkroom technologies and possible futures. Is it a breakdown of reality or a combinational creation of surplus reality?

### **Surplus Reality: GenAI and the Post-Truth Architectural Milieu of Architectural Representation: *Leaning into the Milieu of Hallucinogenic Images; Buildingness***

When one considers the notion of *leaning into the milieu of hallucinogenic imagery*, one must, of course, embrace the ambiguous object as represented by the image (Consider Figure 7 and 8). Jonathan Hill discusses how ambiguity is vital to shock the viewer into giving meaning to the object and allowing the maker/prompt author/operator to translate their own interpretations<sup>47</sup>. Within the context of this paper, I use the term “*buildingness*” where the ‘buildingness’ qualities of these images generally speak to the qualities of either entire fictions - digital follies or partial fictions - semi-authentic-folly, albeit the spectator is often unsure of what they might be viewing - yet they describe a very tangible structure. ‘Buildingness’ is this author’s contribution to the discourse within architectural representation - to describe the qualities of the representation of a structure, which makes it seem like an authentic building which has been mechanically reproduced by a singular “photograph” - in this case, a simulacrum as the “photograph” is created from potentially millions of pixel chunks, consider images in Figures 5. and 6. Encoded by GenAI yet dreamed by a human hand<sup>48</sup>.

Buildingness’ and the notion of believability<sup>49</sup> are inextricably tied together, uncannily so.<sup>50</sup> It is the slippage of the believability of the building and its representation to the spectator which is at the heart of the hyperreal digital follie. One might say that the operator/photographer is always involved in some capacity of construction.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless the ‘buildingness’ qualities of the image slip and slide between the potential fictions and a possible authentic building - imbuing both qualities of the real and the unreal. When regarding this author’s notion of buildingness, it is helpful to consider Richard Hill, who uses the term construal - how people perceive, comprehend, and interpret their world in terms of realistic and non-realistic articulation and how

44. Miller, *The Artist in the Machine: The World of AI-Powered Creativity*, 26.
45. Margaret A. Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*, 1st ed. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2016), 68.
46. Rosa Menkman, *The Glitch Moment (Um), Network Notebook 4* (Institute of Network Cultures, 2011).
47. Jonathan Hill, “Centuries of Ambiguity: Sublime and Beautiful Weather at the Farnsworth House,” in *Critical Architecture*, ed. Jane Rendell et al. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 170–81.
48. Alberto Fernández González and Mark Garcia, “A Posthuman Architectural Artificial Intelligence Speculum? Text and Images in Future Spaces,” ed. Mark Garcia, *Architectural Design* 94, no. 1 (January 2024): 22–29, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.3010>.
49. David Levi Strauss, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*, ed. John Berger (New York, N.Y. Aperture Foundation, 2005), 75.
50. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (The MIT Press, 1992), 214.
51. Fiona Hackett, “Photography, Architecture and Inner Space,” *Building Material* (Architectural Association of Ireland), no. 19 (2009): 108–13.
52. Richard Hill, *Designs and Their Consequences: Architecture*



Figure 9: Annabel  
Pretty, Image  
Generated 10  
May 2024 MJ V6.0  
Cyanotype Series.



Figure 10: Annabel  
Pretty, Image  
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May 2024 MJ V6.0  
Cyanotype Series.

they are central to architectural meaning - further suggesting that it is the fluidity of the movement between the real and the imagined.<sup>52</sup> It is the seamless slippage between the two that produces such interesting forensic close readings of the imagery in Figures 7 and 8.

The building, as an object, should be approached and examined in a manner similar to drawings, photography, writing, films, and commercials - this perspective is warranted not only because these mediums often serve as our encounters with the building but also because the structure itself functions as a mechanism of representation. After all, as Colomina suggests, the “building is a ‘construction’ in all meanings of the word.”<sup>53</sup> It ironically loops back to the notion of the assemblage image and its representation exhibiting qualities of ‘buildingness’.

The link between architecture and its representations is unusual, strong, and utterly vital. Nevertheless, it is almost totally explored, depicted, explained, and characterised by its representations: rather than any physicality. At the most basic level, it is the terminology used by architects to choose what to depict and prioritise assembling the façade, visualising the camera perspective, creating the image for the customer, and contracting the photographer. It influences how the spectator understands and appreciates architecture on multiple, more intricate levels. At the level of debate, publishing, and citation, architectural representation perhaps outperforms architecture itself.<sup>54</sup>

### **Conclusion: World Forging and Surplus Reality**

Akin to the ‘surplus reality’<sup>55</sup> as evident within a psychodrama, the world-forging<sup>56</sup> and the surplus-reality of the GenAI manifests in housing the imagination of the architect/image conceiver. When considering the hallucinatory machinic GenAI, one might return to the thinking of ‘Bachelardian space: “Housed everywhere but nowhere shut in, this is the motto of the dreamer of dwellings. [...] A daydream of elsewhere should be left open therefore, at all times.”<sup>57</sup>

Benjamin argued that the artwork’s aura diminishes with the advent of mechanical reproduction techniques like photography and film. Mechanical reproduction detaches the work from its original context, enabling mass distribution and consumption. As a result, the unique presence and authenticity associated with the original are diluted or lost. Copies lack the “here and now” aspect of the original, leading to a loss of aura. In essence, Benjamin saw the reproducibility of art as both liberating and problematic. It liberated art from its dependence on ritualistic settings and elite audiences, making it accessible to the masses. However, this accessibility came at the cost of diminishing the aura, the mystical quality

and *Aesthetics* (Yale University Press, 1999).

53.

Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1996), 13–14.

54.

Ágnes Anna Sebestyén, “Shaping Ephemeral Architecture by the Media,” in *Ephemeral Architecture in Central-Eastern Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, ed. Miklós Székely (l’Harmattan, 2015), 171–84; Kester Rattenbury, ed., *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions* (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), xxii.

55.

Ali Watersong, “Surplus Reality: The Magic Ingredient in Psychodrama,” *Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association*, no. 20 (January 2011): 18–28.

56.

Neil Leach, *Camouflage* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006), 19.

57.

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* [La Poétique de l’Espace, 1957], trans. Maria Jolas (Beacon Press, 1994), 62.

that gave the original work its value and significance. So, Benjamin's notion of the loss of aura is rooted in the idea that the traditional modes of experiencing and valuing art are disrupted by the proliferation of mechanically reproduced images and objects, leading to a shift in the perception and reception of art in the modern age.

In conclusion, the realm of GenAI image-making offers a captivating exploration of world-building through the lens of surplus reality. Benjamin's notion of *loss or aura* and Deleuze's concept of *multiplicities* serve as profound guides in understanding the glitchiness inherent in these images, which act as portals to new worlds - *multiple-reality architectures* and consequentially digital follies. Within this glitched landscape, where traditional boundaries dissolve, a surplus of reality emerges, reshaping our perceptions and inviting us to traverse uncharted territories of imagination.

Through the interplay of Benjamin's *loss* and Deleuze's *multiplicities*, GenAI images transcend mere representation, instead embodying a dynamic interplay of presence and absence, singularity and multiplicity. Each glitch becomes a node in a network of possibilities, a doorway to alternate dimensions where reality is refracted and reconstructed in endlessly surprising ways.

In this process, GenAI image-making becomes an act of world-building, where the boundaries between creator and creation blur, and new realms of experience are forged. These images challenge our preconceptions, inviting us to reconsider the nature of reality and embrace the rich tapestry of existence that emerges from the glitches and anomalies of the digital landscape. In the end, it is through the lens of surplus reality that we glimpse the true power of GenAI image making not merely as a tool for replication but as a catalyst for the milieu of new worlds, where the boundaries between the real and the imagined dissolve, and the possibilities are limited only by our capacity to dream.