

# Architectural Objectiles – Architecture, form, meaning and experience in the digital era

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We are witnessing a change of technological paradigm with great consequences for the production of architecture. We are in many ways moving from the mechanical to the digital, and also from “mass-production” to “mass-customisation”. The conditions for industrial and technological production are changing, and in digitally controlled production repetition of the identical is no longer necessary. The notion of “non-standard” architecture, constructed of industrially produced elements that are all different, is spreading and we can now see architecture being realized based upon this conception.

Forms produced by mechanical technologies are fixed and stable; forms produced by electronic technologies are evanescent and variable. The standards of digitally governed production are not based on identical reproduction of visible forms but on the transmission of invisible algorithms, which will foster new modes of recognition, meaning creation and positioning in the world based on similarity, not identity. But prior to modern standardization of mechanical reproduction, we lived for centuries in a world that was algorithmic and normative, not visual and repetitive. In the algorithmic world the search for similarities or the recognition of hidden structures allows us to confer the same meaning onto different signs that have something in common. (Carpo 2004) According to Carpo, non-standard production and the new culture of digital machines will change our perception to more of an organic extension of human intelligence.

There is also a new conception and definition of an object – called *objectile* (Cache 1995) – no longer defined by an essential form, but pure functionality framed by parameters. This modern conception of the technological object, is referring neither to early industrial era nor to the idea of the standard upholding essence and laws of constancy, but to our current state of things, where fluctuation of the norm replaces permanence of a law. These objects – or objectiles – assumes a place in a continuum by variation, where the numerically controlled machineries replace stamped forms. (Deleuze 1993[1988]) If the status of the object is changing, there is also a correlative transformation of the subject, argues Deleuze.

This paper will, through the architecture of Kas Oosterhuis, Lars Spuybroek, dECOi, Foreign Office Architects and Bernard Cache, discuss the consequences of these technological and conceptual changes for the conception and design of architecture as well as for the conveyance of meaning and experience of the built environment. Will the new technological paradigm foster a closer relation to human experience? Are there new possible relations to “body” and perception for architecture? Is the aesthetic experience and interpretation becoming of greater importance? How does an algorithmic world of digitally controlled production, and its demand for other abilities of pattern recognition, influence the design and experience of architecture, and the construction of architectural meaning?

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