

The Evolution of Mimesis in Design

Creation, imitation, or in between

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Debate in Design

Mimesis

“Representation or imitation
of the real world in art and
literature.”

[Words before the Zine]

The act of mimesis has dominated art and history for centuries as a way for people to capture the essence of reality. This approach was suggested by Plato and Aristotle, then expanded in various processes of human's life in shaping different cultures and approaches. With emerging technologies, mimesis continue to expand through digital media, bridging the real and the imaginative as a way of communication. However, some may argue that it is purely as a way of replication of the existing and limit the future for innovation and unique expression. The research looks into the methodology that mimesis is used as a way of ethical creation that challenges originality throughout the history and in the future of emerging technologies.

[Beginning of Zine]

Mimesis in Design and Key figures

Nicéphore Niépce- 18th century

He started the invention of the camera, intended to capture memories that cannot be revisited. While this represents a more accurate mimesis of nature, the ideology rears far from reality, since no physical interaction is intended. Cameras allow people to experience different parts of the world without being physically present. This led me to think, with the use of cameras, people can repeatedly replicate specific elements captured by this invention, reaching a broader audience and potentially leading to mass production.



Yayoi Kusama- late 19th to early 20th century

The infinity art series created by the artist, consists of mirrored panels cladded on sides of the wall, intending to form an illusory cosmos. This design aims to reflect and emulate Kusama's mesmerizing world, offering a boundaryless effect that questions the distinctions between "reality and imagination", "fact and illusion". The design integrates multimedia design and technology into spaces to push the boundaries of mimesis in design, using it as a shortcut to replicate the artist's expression.



ChatGPT- 2022

AI is a clear example of modern day memsis as rtificial Intelligence imitates human intel-lect and behavior. This software not only just replicates human actions but also simulates interactions and scenarios between hu-man interaction, essentially serving as the 'brain' behind the technology. This imita-tion involves both direct replication of the real world and a creative aspect that offers efficiency, accuracy, and a wealth of informa-tion. As of right now, AI seems more of a

neutral technology, not biased towards any side, making it a powerful tool for various applications



Aristotle& Plato-4th century BC

One of the first thinkers that touched on top. He asserted that all human actions are mimesis and that is the way hu-mans learn, especially through art and poetry.

Plato's perspective differs slightly from Aristotle's. He argued that art doesn't imitate the physical world directly because it's a two-fold imitation: art imitates ideas and then imitates reality, making it quite far from the truth.

Walter Benjamin- early 1900s

The writer, argues that mimetic activity represents interpersonal relationships, influencing not only an individual's character but also those around them. S He argues that the human capacity for producing similarities is greater than natures and nature prod-uct similarity. This is a crucial point in the theory because it suggests that the act of mimesis isn't limited to self-replication but also involves engage-ment in a larger social practice. He also touched on the future of reproduction, mimesis should be used as a powerful tool for moving away from mass media production by adding its authenticity



Unity and the rise of Virtual Realty- 20th century

Unity is an app founded in 2004 Copenhagen by Nicholas Francis, Joachim Ante, and David Helgason. It was at first created to offer a more immersive gaming experience, but then became widely popular in the design industry. The concept of virtual reality began as an imitation of a world that the user cannot access but also a world tai-lored to fulfill individual user desires. In this context, mi-mesis is evident as it leads to human satisfaction based on individual preferences, driving further innovations and creative developments through the act of mimesis.



Annotated Bibliography

Academic Journal (1977)

Whittick, Arnold. "Mimesis, Abstraction and Perception." *Philosophy*, vol. 52, no. 199, 1977, pp. 82–89. JSTOR. Accessed 25 Sept. 2023.

Summary: Methodology of applying Mimesis

The notion of art as imitation (according to Aristotle and Plato) is seen as a way to embrace representation and expression but at one point by shifting to creativity. The reading made a point that "all expression is art", but "can not be expressions without a subject which exist external to and before the work of art." The reading can be related to our design studies. At the early stages of a project, we often conduct user research and precedent studies. This is a common practice of getting advice from existing projects as a reference before embarking on our own projects.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3749945>

Annotated Bibliography

Technical Research (1993)

Whittick, Arnold. "Mimesis, Abstraction and Perception." *Philosophy*, vol. 52, no. 199, 1977, pp. 82–89. JSTOR. Accessed 25 Sept. 2023.
Taussig, M. (1993). *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (1st ed.). Routledge

Summary: Mimesis and Colonialism/its complications

The article touches on the concept of imperial mimicry, where mimesis is affected by colonialism, causing alterity differences to become unstable. In this context, when a particular culture is exaggerated, understood as the colonized culture, it can be viewed as a force that imposes the imitation of that culture on other cultures. Furthermore, this can lead to cultural appropriation, which adopts elements from a specific culture without the consent of the original. These instances do not exemplify ethical design practices.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315227689>

Annotated Bibliography

Technical Research (1995)

Gebauer, Gunter, and Christoph Wulf. Mimesis: Culture Art Society. Univ of California Press, 1995.

Summary: Evolution of mimesis

The article explores the different trajectory of mimesis throughout history. It suggests that mimesis can also be considered a symbolic experience. The act of direct copying and imitation is seen as a way of plagiarism, and it needs to evolve to encompass deeper layers of interpretation. This evolution hints at employing mimesis as an intellectual force and embracing it as an integral part of reality. This relates to the future of project design, in which designers translate abstract artistic concepts into functional products that go beyond mere imitation

https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=-B8jLLKokSkC&oi=fnd&pg=PA9&dq=mimesis+theory&ots=xFqEu1RNvS&sig=aUxZCAEO-GghL_Bwoe8uG30VrdE#v=onepage&q=mimesis%20theory&f=false

Annotated Bibliography

Technical Research Paper (2001)

Young, R. Michael. "An overview of the mimesis architecture: Integrating intelligent narrative control into an existing gaming environment." Working notes of the AAAI spring symposium on Artificial intelligence and interactive entertainment. AAAI Press, 2001.

The research centers around the integration of mimesis systems to establish an interactive narrative environment for this new project. This degree of mimesis used in this case is tailored to users' criteria and involves an intelligent controller to maintain a cohesive virtual narrative world. In this context, it can be viewed as an artificial creation on top of the base replication, with the primary creation being the new intelligent controller aimed at achieving the highest level of immersion for the user.

<chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnbpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://cdn.aaai.org/Symposia/Spring/2001/SS-01-02/SS01-02-017.pdf>

Annotated Bibliography

Technical Research Paper (2002)

Halliwell, Stephen. *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Summary: Emotion and empathy in mimesis

The article touches on the production of ethics through mimesis. As mimesis generates different forms, shifting from realism to idealism, the question arises: which approach is used as an ethical framework? Mimesis has long influenced art and theory, deeply rooted in our culture. The future of mimetic design is essential, and the emergence of new theories becomes inevitable in the field of design. The emphasis on Aristotle mimeticism comes into play in which the methodology should consider: pleasure, understanding, and emotion.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400825301>

Annotated Bibliography

Journal (2005)

Rohrer, Tim. "Mimesis, Artistic Inspiration and the Blends We Live By." *Conceptual Blending Theory*, vol. 37, no. 10, Oct. 2005, pp. 1686–716.2005.01.015

Summary: Linguistic Mimesis

Human creativity is quite important in influencing conception blending/integration which also impacts literary mimesis. Examples can be seen from analog and metaphor in literature, blending with human creativity to build around replication. This approach can be seen as quite powerful in literature, where writers mimic physical actions in their writing. Metaphor is used as a means of comparisons between concepts. It is a new strategy that writers immerse themselves and offers a more interesting linguistic approach to produce literature that effectively captures the essence of those actions..

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400825301>

Annotated Bibliography

Journal (2005)

Feldman, Carol Fleisher. "Mimesis: Where Play and Narrative Meet." *Play and Narrative in the Process of Development: Commonalities, Differences and Interrelations*, vol. 20, no. 4, Oct. 2005, pp. 503–13

Summary: Mimesis and Individualism

The article explores the act of mimesis through the lens of children and young adolescents. The repeated patterns stemming from mimesis may indicate a form of learning that closely resembles an object or entity being imitated. Individualism builds on from the construction of mimesis. As this example, it could be interpreted that mimesis can also serve as a form of play and entertainment, allowing individuals to differentiate themselves from reality.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2005.08.006>

Annotated Bibliography

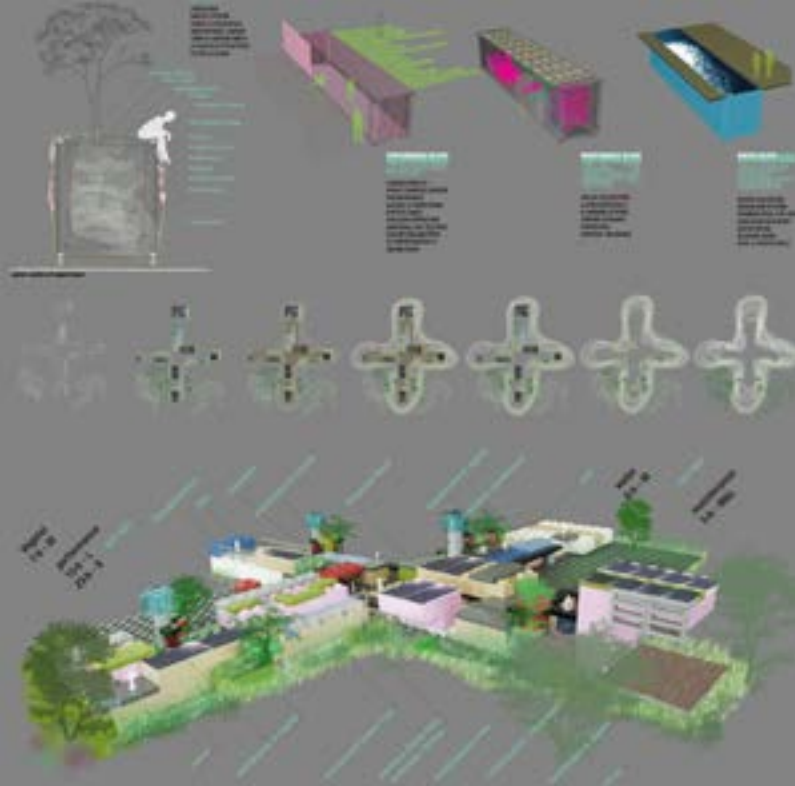
Research Article (2014)

Şenol, Ajda. "Is Art Mimesis or Creation?" *5th World Conference on Educational Sciences*, vol. 116, Feb. 2014, pp. 2866–70.2014.01.670.

Summary: Nature Derived Mimesis

Another reading explores the question of whether art is mimesis or creation, and it categorizes this debate into three main topics: creation of art is more important but the imitation cannot be ignored, art is just imitation and art is only creation. According to the reading, art could be seen as the "total opposite of the natural and actions called artificial." Drawing relevance with digital technologies, where artificial elements are introduced. However, the goal always touches on replication of some real-world experiences. For instance, virtual reality aims to immerse oneself in a world that might otherwise be inaccessible, making imitation evitable.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro>



Annotated Bibliography

Popular Writing (2005)

"Cyclic." Designboom, www.designboom.com/project/cyclic-2/. Accessed 25 Sept. 2023.

Summary: Nature Derived Mimesis

The design uses nature as a way of mimesis in which the designer "used nature as mat-builder in order to put the eternal duet - urban vs green - in balance" in other words, using nature as a foundation to harmonize the urban and green. The mimesis comes from the architectural plan imitating nature's layout. It is quite common for designers to draw inspiration from nature as a way into their creations and it is a way of embracing the environment we live in. Quite different from the other work, this work set apart from different works that the mimesis here isn't direct but rather used as a way of analyzing and diagramming positions.

<https://www.designboom.com/project/cyclic-2/>





Annotated Bibliography

Popular Writing (2015)

Amy Frearson, 3 May 2015. "OMA's Fondazione Prada Art Centre Opens in Milan." *Dezeen*, 31 Oct. 2016

Summary: Mimesis in material and luxury status

The OMA Prada Foundation designed by Rem Koolhaas uses gold as a form of mimesis. To transform the old industrial structure into a more modernized building, OMA clad the building's exterior in 24-karat gold leaf. Gold has historically symbolized wealth, and in this case, the intention is to elevate the building's simple design and surface. However, as stated by Koolhaas, "gold is actually a cheap cladding material compared to traditional materials like marble and even paint." This excessive use of imitation gold in this context contradicts what gold typically symbolizes and appears somewhat contradictory.

<https://www.dezeen.com/2015/05/03/oma-fondazione-prada-art-centre-gold-leaf-cladding-wes-anderson-cafe-milan/>



Annotated Bibliography

Journal (2018)

Geismar, Haidy. "Mimesis, Replication and Reality." *Museum Object Lessons for the Digital Age*, UCL Press, 2018, pp. 105–13. JSTOR,. Accessed 25 Sept. 2023.

Summary: Mimesis and culture preservation

The author explored the relationship between digital technologies in modern times and their role in maintaining culture through museum exhibitions. Digital technologies seem to be taking over the realm of the world and requiring users to navigate between physical and digital challenges. While this is inevitable, the author makes a valid point that we have "a responsibility to engage in the infrastructures of ethics" and to generate knowledge correspondingly through digital collections. Being aware of what and how was the piece original as well as its cultural significance is the key to incorporating mimesis in the future realm of design.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xz0wz.11>

Annotated Bibliography

Technical Research Paper (2019)

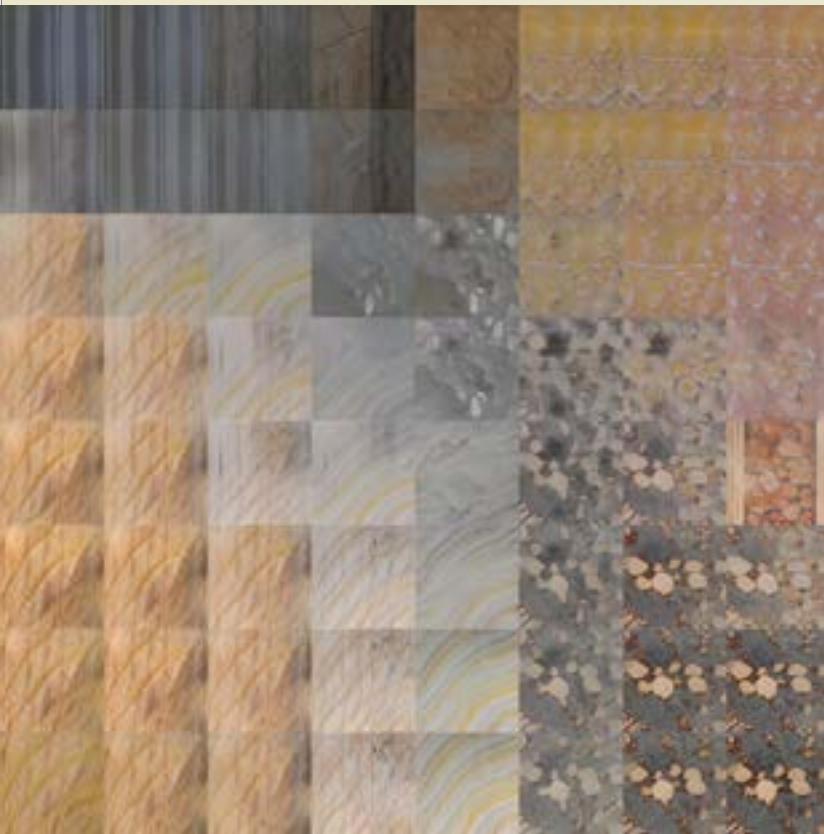
Donovan, Josephine. "Ethical Mimesis and Emergence Aesthetics." *Humanities*, vol. 8, no. 2, May 2019, p. 102. Crossref.

Summary: Mimesis and emergence aesthetic

The idea of emergence aesthetic is closely tied with mimesis and the article opposed the objectification of nature; such an act is debatable whether it counts as ethical or not. The approach of mimesis could be an approach to bring the dead alive, in other words, bring something and give it a new life. Such use of mimesis could be seen as brining certain element/culture that was forgotten into a new creation.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/8/2/102>

Annotated Bibliography



Popular Writing(2021)

"Fake Fakes & Multilayered Materialities, BRRUM (SE)." ArchDaily, 15 Apr. 2021.

Summary: Mimesis of material through advanced technologies

In the New exhibition at SPARK Malmo, Fake Fakes & Multilayered Materialities, By BRRUM (SE) located in Sweden. The exhibition used computerized and reused techniques to imitate certain material. The result is a material that draws certain qualities from the existing materials but also occupies a quite ambiguous space between the existing and the new. The ambiguity gives rise to a new material that could potentially be more affordable. The idea feels fresh but can also come across cliché simultaneously. It seems that the originality is derived from what already exists, and altered only slightly in order to pursue creating something new.

<https://www.archdaily.com/960196/fake-fakes-and-multilayered-materialities-brrum-se>

Annotated Bibliography

Popular Writing (2023)

SynthArchDream. "‘Synthetic Architecture’ Explores the Revolutionary Future of AI-Generated Design." *Designboom*, 21 Aug. 2023.

Summary: AI Generated design

The article concluded that AI-generated designs mark the beginning of an era of imitation of imaginative concepts, challenging the boundary between real and the synthetic. With emerging technologies, many new creations are portrayed as a surreal interpretation of originality, being crucial to playing a role in shaping the future. While this approach is efficient, it also questions the cultural connections between design and society and whether that will disappear. Perhaps imitation with artificial intelligence offers more suggestions, the expectation of a finished project cannot be anticipated.

<https://www.designboom.com/architecture/synthetic-architectural-dreams-revolutionary-future-ai-generated-design-01-02-2023/>



Annotated Bibliography

Scholar Journal (2022)

Topçuoğlu, Feyza. "Architecture Taking Shape Between Nature and Culture: The Primitive Hut as a Man-Made Creation." *Tasarım + Kuram Journal*, vol. 18, no. 35, 2022, pp. 1-18. ProQuest

Summary: Mimesis as a way to increase comfort and usability.

A potential argument regarding mimesis revolves around whether it represents an artificial element in architectural styles and cultural contexts. Mimesis is a natural phenomenon and can encompass natural forms. The article introduces the concept of primitive huts (man's response to the nature, where architecture acts as the mediator between), emphasizing it was created as a response to human needs and natural conditions. From my interpretation, it almost seems that mimesis suggests that humans are crafting analogs based on natural forms to enhance utility and comfort.

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/architecture-taking-shape-between-nature-culture/docview/2703458420/se->

