

WHEN IS THE DIGITAL IN ARCHITECTURE?



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architecture of the software as it was given to him, as it was written by someone else. Today there are people writing their own softwares, using some of these widely available platforms, and they're no longer subject to the aesthetic protocols that were written into those early softwares, whether it was Maya, Softimage or FormZ. And I think that is a very positive step, one that is having a fairly widespread impact across the discipline.

At the same time, there is the emergence of highly specialized research by very well-trained people, in which it's almost a given that if you're going to do advanced work in computation that you have the capacity to write code. This feeds into all of the interest in scripting, in robotics and in the integration of sensors into buildings, so that you can begin to think about buildings as a kind of smart technology that is adaptive and reactive, and in the potential of measuring the performative claims that are being made for certain architectures. It's highly specialized research that's not having a widespread impact on the discipline, but I think it's being conducted at a sufficiently high level that it may ultimately filter back into the discipline.

That's the bifurcation I'm getting at: on the one hand, the normalization and democratization of softwares and hardwares, and on the other hand, the emergence of specialized research disciplines that are working in a number of very interesting areas. I'm optimistic about the future. I'm personally not

going to be writing code and involved in robotics, but I'm glad there are people who are out there doing it, and I think there's a potential in the future to collaborate with these specialists—but it is also a specialized discourse, in a way.

I'm not in the business of predicting the future, but I want to mention a couple more things. We might go back to someone like Georg Nees (fig. 15). People know about my interest in field conditions, so they will understand why I'm interested in his experiments with computer graphics. I think there's a lot of untapped potential in thinking about the computer in the context of cities and urbanism. If there's a territory that the computer has not yet deeply penetrated or where I think sufficient research and design experimentation hasn't happened yet, it's at the level of cities, and these are perfect tools to think about the complexity of the urban field. That's something that interests me very much.

And then, as we get past the early fascination with this new technology and the need to always be on the cutting edge and working with the most complex, newest and most sophisticated tools, there are artists who are taking a much more hybrid approach. Sanford Kwinter talks about taking an archaic path through the microchip, and this work is in that vein. The artist Michael Golembewski hooked up a scanner and a laptop to a very primitive camera, and he makes photographs that work simultaneously with a nineteenth-century technology and a twenty-first-century technology (fig. 16). By the

16 Michael Golembewski. *The Scanner Photography Project*, c. 2002

17 Photographs of spider webs published in *Spider Communication: Mechanisms and Ecological Significance*, Peter N. Witt and Jerome S. Rovner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Constantine Doxiadis used these images in his discussion of ekistics, the science of human settlement.

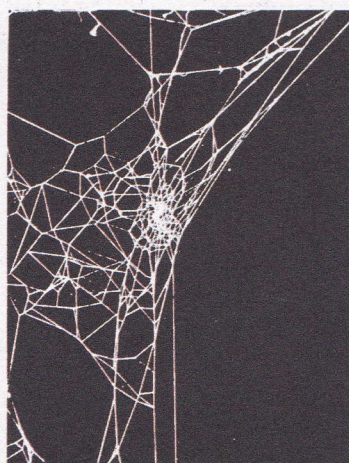
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16



238. a normal spider's web



239. the web spun after the spider had received a dose of dextroamphetamine

way, I know Michael's work because we hired him to write code in the office, and then I discovered that he has this very interesting artistic practice.

For me, these kinds of creative hybrids between the digital and the analog are very interesting for thinking about the future. Because these technologies are more familiar or normative, we can think about them in their hybridized forms. I don't mean that we have to go back to drawing by hand; it's more about understanding where we are in the present and what the potential new hybrids would be moving forward from this point.

I'm also thinking of Constantine Doxiadis and his spider webs (fig. 17). Doxiadis was thinking about the city, but also about the notion that underlying it is a regime of information. The spiders' codes have been messed with. The information has been messed with. The potential moving forward is really thinking at the level of the codes, thinking at the level of information, and not so much the machine itself, or the aesthetics of the machine that we've come to be very familiar with and to associate with the computer.