

# MUSEUM FOR DISAPPEARING TECHNOLOGIES

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## Studio Brief:

The rapid (and planned) obsolescence of contemporary technological innovations—such as smartphones and personal computers—create a condition by which everything becomes the Past faster. This recurrent demotivation of digital apparatuses provides opportunities to tectonically engage with their forms.

We will interrogate the state of techno-culture in Singapore through the design of a museum or exhibition as if we were 100 years in the future looking back at the present. The “future” will be treated as a conceptual inflection allowing us to critically evaluate, diagnosis, and respond to our present society with some projected distance. It is anticipated that the “non-place” of the “not yet” will be given tectonic form primarily through treating the present as a ruin.

Mastery of a particular computer program such as a computational software is laudable, but that technology will inevitably be superseded by the next generation of digital tools. The goal of this studio is not merely to become proficient with a particular application, but to question how that technology changes us and our design awareness, even our perception of space. As suggested by my colleague Penley Chiang, over the last twenty years the cellphone has done more to change our understanding of space, distance, and time than any successful architectural project.

The discipline of Architecture still has a vital role in this negotiation with emergent digital systems and can examine our professional assumptions, proposing new modes of action. In addition to orthographic visualization and exploratory mixed media model-making procedures, we will collaborate with A.I. software programs to interrogate issues of design agency, authorship, and cultural production. Using large language models like ChatGPT to simulate a kind of Surrealist “automatic writing” and treating Midjourney as a visualizer of our current “collective unconscious”, each project will analyze, challenge, and create a formal design response to these algorithmic ecosystems using both manual and digital techniques. These A.I. tools produce re-combinatory effects based on existing, often copyrighted materials, in order to produce *simulacra: propagating copies for which there is no original* (see Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*).

### **Studio Objective:**

Each project will be asked to establish a relationship to time; giving an Architectonic definition of time. It is the premise of this studio that *Architecture’s temporality is embedded in its syntax*, instantiating a distinctive time-space. Peter Eisenman’s proposed idea of “*Lateness*” is one such possible “archi-time” wherein certain historical building precedents maintain a non-dialectical compositional indeterminacy / irresolution (containing opposing spatial gestures without resolution). This syntactically precise ambiguity challenges the temporal ideology of “progress”. Other possible positions include (but are not limited to) cyclic time / eternal recurrence, in-finite duration, Walter Benjamin’s “historical monad”, Giorgio Agamben’s “messianic” time, Léon Bloy’s idiosyncratic understanding of salvation history, and apocalyptic expectation.

### **Expected Design Principles:**

- **Architectural Syntax:** Design performance (both physical and virtual) can be “read” in the lineaments of building form, often revealed through orthographic projection (Plan, Section, Elevation). *Analysis* will be required to isolate and highlight these formal maneuvers and refine their language.
- **Reading as Drawing Method:** Student engagement with essential texts should result in significant marginalia that can be used to direct design. Notes, diagrams, and vignettes can emerge in the margins of a book as a response to our engagement with a text.
- **Representation is the driver of Architectural Ideas:** The critical use of A.I. softwares and digital fabrication tools, along with analogue and “thick” physical modeling techniques will be used to question the form-making process and expand design visualization.
- **Literary Dimension of the City:** Urban form will be treated as a palimpsest of intersecting “texts” (social, economic, political, and mythic). Projects will be tasked not only to generate formal structures, but also to critique socio-institutional assumptions about building program.

### **Essential Readings:**

Benjamin, Walter. “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 253–264. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 2007.

Eisenman, Peter with Elisa Iturbe. *Lateness*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020.

Mindrup, Matthew. “The Merz Mill and the Cathedral of the Future.” *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* 14, no. 14 (2013): 49–58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24135/ijara.v0i0.455>