

THE AFFORDANCES OF DIGITAL AESTHETICS

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Abstract

This article will examine the changing role of digital aesthetics in art and screen in a context of Metamodernism. As the problem of a structure of feeling will be argued as lacking the formalism of its cultural predecessors, the rapid proliferation of artificial intelligence as both a creative producer and distributor will be framed as an 'autonomous other' to hypothetically attest to the defunct of human orientated born digital artefacts. As much as this proposition is akin to a re-examination of metamodernity, a proposed formalism thought of as a structure of reason is as determinant to the shaping of digital aesthetics as the deployment of opposition in an era of self-aware pictorial networks.

Key words: Metamodernism, cinema, screen culture, digital aesthetics, NFT art

Digital aesthetics have undergone a transformative shift in the way that interdisciplinary approaches to screens - from movies to episodic serials to digital media and art - have, on the one hand, recontextualised cultural paradigms through what we now understand as a metamodernity (Stoev), and on the other hand galvanised new networks and digital currencies that intersect aesthetics within a multi-modal epistemology. While there is an argument in current debates of metamodernism (van den Akker, Gibbons) that a structure of feeling is a mechanism that conveys sincerity and meaningfulness within the subject (Vermeulen), the failing of such in a structural case proliferates a cultural protocol of determinism without acceptable levels of predefined critical structures gated within an epistemological framework. If metamodernism is examined as a cultural paradigm (Petrova), these considerations are without predefined theory, in contrast to, for example, what defines postmodernism, which removes a singularity of definition empowered by the mechanical understandings as we have had, say, in other more pronounced eras of modernity. If one was to take modernism, for example, and by the structural architecture of its design, it is most explicit in determining what is and what is not modernism, in the same effect as the distrust of this singularity by postmodernism, proliferated by and from a necessity of facsimile when questioning the authenticity of modernist structures. As screens of postmodernism defined a questioning, or copy, of its interrogated subject proportionately engineered through the subject as irony (Murch), screen content in the twenty-first century has changed the way digital aesthetics is now assessed and determined by the aftermath and rejection of postmodernism. Yet modernism and postmodernism both share a similarity in that they are either pre-determined by a structure of reason not apparent in a metamodernist sense, because a structure of feeling is not defined by singularities alone, nor is it akin to a predetermined structure in the same way as its former cultural periods were built on, and functioned within. Digital aesthetics in this regard are a

different kind of mechanism when imbued through metamodernism, as the basis of such has no predetermined outcome through its primordial effect.

In this assumption, digital aesthetics play a transformative role (Morrissey) in screen - and especially in the way metamodern moving images are defined as 'quirky' in film criticism (MacDowel) and contemporary art, because they can exist outside formalism, otherwise regulated by its postmodern ancestry. In doing so, it accentuates a dichotomy away from formalism simply because in metamodernism there is no formalism within or outside of its structure of feeling. One might argue that there is a metamodern affect (Gibbons) at play, and within a metamodernity there is certainly, but this affect is not a formalism in the way that, say, other modernisms are defined, and therefore the absence of such is uncertainty. The liberation comes with both adjunctive and reductive agencies for the subject, where, in an adjunctive sense, digital aesthetics works much better in propelling the subject when embodied in a critical theory not predetermined by the constructs of formalism, and thus orientates with more social visual logics attuned to emotive feelings adapted by and for the audience. The reductive consequential agencies that move away from a structure of feeling destabilise a more efficient workflow of critical thinking, because there are no boundaries gated by an order of pseudo-manifesto; it is by and large detached from emotion and meaningful intent. In, say, conceptual art of the 1990s, and in particular the paintings of Hume and Hirst, formalism played an important role in defining the separation of emotion and intellect, which we've seen time and time again as a predetermined influence for digital aesthetics. In many works of this era, the emotional feelings and trappings of meaningfulness have no consequential value to the ironic and distrust of aesthetic positivity. In the same ways, we now see the scenario reversed, with formalism and irony considered a negative and disharmonious barrier against the proliferation of meaningfulness in art and on screen. Moreover, a postirony argument (Konstantinou) frames irony 'as a major feature of postmodern media culture' (p.87) that for the purpose of instilling a formalism - a structure of reason - addresses the disparity between a postmodern concern and a metamodernity claim, proportionate to an argument that this paper proposes to be the Achilles heel of metamodernism, with formalism attested through irony, which has no concern for thoughtfulness and emotiveness in any way. In fact, through formalism, emotion as a structure of feeling is more or less defunct if not ignored altogether. Of course, a knock off in such an effect influences digital aesthetics in both the subject and the way in which the subject has a mechanical relationship, none other than what we experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jovanović).

The identity of, and within, digital aesthetics during the pandemic has seen a very different emergence of agency that society has not become accustomed to, since the more destructive instances of bubonic plague in cases of, for example, the Great London plague, and before that, the Black Death plague. But like any pandemic of great magnitude, the eras after a pandemic have historically been archetypal through hardship, war, and disruption, leading to an Enlightenment period after the fact. We saw this with the early modern period's rise to the Renaissance, the English Enlightenment, and the reconstruction of London after its great fire. We have also seen this in the immediate years after the Spanish Flu in the early 1920s, albeit short lived thereafter before the Great Depression.

Digital aesthetics during the current pandemic have attested back to a search for meaningfulness through the subject, as we've seen in the proliferation of NFT art, most notably in the work of Beeple, Hirst, and Bored Ape Yacht Club. These aesthetics seek not to question structures within a formalism, but instead to imbue a structure of feeling and branding based on the social neediness of beauty, hardships and anxieties towards power structures, wealth inequality, and the distrust of political and institutional entities. Where postmodernism was a formalism to question truth through modernist structures, the pandemic has universally prompted collective questionings of formalism in a reversal, not so much to find truth in historicity, but rather to replace it altogether in an enlightenment connected to feelings of social togetherness and affordances of collective aesthetic comforting.

This sudden reversal for digital aesthetics is embedded with meaningfulness at its core based on the social needs and emotive insecurities of a global populace in crisis, manufactured with barriers that attest a reckoning of the natural balance of power, the natural world, and social equity. For example, digital aesthetics in the 1990s were limited to the technologies available at the time for a society not enveloped in a constant mindset of crisis, and the consumers who drove this aesthetic consumption through hard and soft media. Technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and internet art had already been in service through a handful of artists, but there were still no mass delivery systems to enable gigascale accessibility to the likes of what we saw in the rise of social media, where everybody suddenly had free aesthetic tools to communicate through the digital without the barriers to geography and software expertise, as it was even at the start of the 2000s. Therein lies an argument that digital aesthetics are predetermined by the technological accessibility of mass society, with the immense pressure of gigascale participatory determinism circumventing the limitations of technology when this accessibility is restricted, and consequently, impacting on the accessibility of aesthetic epistemology. A comparison between, say, the work of Barney in the *Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2002) and Beeple's *Everydays: the first 5000 days* (2021) is disparate within the subject, because the *Cremaster Cycle* was made for cinematic experiences as a singular object - a 35 mm film reel, a DVD, or a Blu-ray disc purposed for an immediate analogue of audience engagement - and *Everydays...* as a multiplicity - an NFT token and accompanying JPEG made for trading within a crypto network. And it's this network aspect where born-digital artefacts have become networked artefacts as a network in itself; 'network' taken as a system of databases connected to a financial exchange. We can see here that the system, or in Beeple's case, the cryptocurrency network, becomes part of the digital aesthetic, where the distribution of the artefact and the encrypted network is just as important for digital aesthetics as the artefact itself. In effect, networks are meta. Moreover, in the case of a Beeple's NFT artwork, the work is as much to do with the network it trades within, as it is to how it makes us feel as a visual comfort by an epistemology determined by a network within an aesthetic. At no point in western art has the system of distribution been so integrated within the aesthetic of an artefact, whether born-physical or born-digital, as it is in the digital aesthetics realm of crypto art; not only for the subject, but also in a culture status quo (Pruitt).

What can be drawn together from this assumption is that the system and visuality are the same thing in contemporary digital aesthetics. This divisive statement may be seen as a polarising proclamation, but the logic of its inquiry is implicit in the way that audiences who consume and drive demand for digital aesthetics engage with the

artefact, insofar as its barriers, which attest to the redundancy of digital aesthetics and its interference with the proliferation of scaled markets. In a pre-digital age, this thought may have been incomprehensible based on the small scale operations of the art market conjured as an analogue. But since the advent of NFT art integrated within crypto currencies, the unregulated superlatives governing the expansion of crypto art markets allowed the sheer scale of NFT art collecting to be something Chayko (2021) describes as crashing the art world. The fact is that digital aesthetics as a network shadow the relatively small and hokey art world analog, bringing into question the redundancy of the art world, as we know it simply because of the financial weight and classifiable branding of digital minting, like ISBN branding of books and text based works, that cryptocurrencies expedite irrespective of issues that control the physical art world based on supply and demand. The rarity of an artwork is based on its own singularity of the artefact itself, but in the case of digital aesthetics unleashed in the crypto world, where rarity has nothing to do with the singularity of an object, but more so with the uniqueness of its binary form. What we can see here is that the binary form and physical singularity are at odds, and so too are the markets which define their trade as a digital aesthetic. My point here is that digital aesthetics is the artefact and also the network of the artefact; it's now both.

To look at demographics in this context, a known fact of the art and screen culture worlds is that digital aesthetics is more inclined to influence younger audiences because of their dependence on the digital as an essential service, which currently measures over half of the world's population. So in the aspect of scale, the legitimacy of digital aesthetics will be shaped and influenced by younger audiences, who are the people most engaged through its accessibility and consumption. This is an aspect rarely discussed through digital aesthetics, and it needs to be further explored, as aesthetics mediates a higher demand for digital born-artefacts, as they become integrated with an audience so closely intertwined within a networked system that affects every facet of their daily lives. However, without digital immediacy, it is an objectivity removed from the subjectivity of social connectedness. It's this connectedness in itself that defines digital aesthetics in a contemporary setting, more so than any other time in the history of the digital, because the network and the aesthetic are one of the same, not one from the other nor one of another, and so forth. If these comparisons are visually understood, then the collective reasoning for digital aesthetics creates a structure of reason for an audience tightly integrated within a network within itself. How can digital aesthetics survive when such close integration of its audience depends on an amalgam of branding and social collectiveness, when the participants of such consider themselves a brand within the identity of ethnographic groups, sharing little differences between the subjectivity of human agency and objective artefacts speculative to branding as a digital data binary necessity? There could be no separation in this association for the viewer, as it leaves little in the way taking into account the sustainability of the image. If collective branding in an uncontrollable networked space renders the authenticity of digital aesthetics in a perpetual state of multiplicity, then how can such multiplicity have an authenticity relative to universal truth, or at least, a speculative truth? If such truth via digital aesthetics is merely a brand hierarchy governed by identity within a network system, then this, of course, brings about a consideration for digital aesthetics that is no different to the dilemmas of, say, the printing press during the early Gutenberg years, when handwritten manuscripts gave way to mass produced printed books. The market for the sale of books, which we can term an analogue network, heavily

influenced the stylistic determinism of writing, which would quickly become commodified in what we now know as genres, which are, in its purest forms, a classification or indeterminably, a formalism shaped and influenced by branding. When artworks were reproduced in the same way as books, we saw the identical effect come into play through genres manifested within western art, which also acted as predetermined values conceived, produced, and consumed by audiences. In relation to digital aesthetics, technological advances in the 2000s and 2010s had a direct impact on what these aesthetics looked like, but also on how we feel about these forms in the way they intersect with our daily lives thanks to the networks of mass deliverance.

AFTER AESTHETICS

Another consideration for digital aesthetics is what comes after the subject when its relevance is rendered defunct? In many academic and cultural fields, there is an assumption that digital aesthetics of screen content are an ongoing continuum, when little contribution has been made to what to do, when aesthetics no longer can function in the way they have done so over the last several thousand years. Up until now, that thought has either been arbitrary or a matter of science fiction. However, the scale and efficiency of artificial intelligence make digital aesthetics susceptible to a short trajectory, as it is anything remotely connected to human-made born digital artefacts. If there is one area envisaged as a threat to digital aesthetics, it is the networks created to support its existence and nature. This is the only way to impose branding proliferation, so that humans will move beyond human-controlled or human-made objects, and relinquish full and total control to artificial intelligence, who in time will do a better job than we can. This nightmare scenario essentially renders digital aesthetics no longer possible, because in its purest form, this article argues that digital aesthetics must be inextricably connected to human interaction in some shape or form. When this interaction is thus removed, the convergence between artificial intelligence creating artefacts for humans to enjoy and consume is also a short lived communication, where the aesthetics of the future will be made by artificial intelligence for other artificial intelligences, where the market itself will essentially exclude humans from its network altogether. In this envisage, the human born digital artefact will be redundant, because it is no longer needed for humans to engage in networks that they themselves profit from. Perhaps a more dangerous prospect is the future, where artificial intelligence will interact through an even bigger gigascale market, which will eventually overshadow current human digital networks, essentially making human involvement of anything to do with aesthetics a less efficient way of producing images. This will purposely exclude human contact from a market made to bolster profit, and artificial intelligence networks will control other artificial intelligences to administer dominance of market presence. We can already see this happening with rogue AI creating images not intended by their code and form. If one looked at this paradoxically, I most certainly argue Pandora's box is well and truly open for the markets we have created, as an after-human technology will soon surpass human inefficiencies to create its own markets, and code that will create better images more efficiently and instantaneously for the consumption of other currencies within a branded automated ecosphere. When this occurs, aesthetics will no longer function, because logic from the communication subject involves at some stage a human subjectivity. Humans have always been engaged with the aesthetics

that we have made by hand, and also by born digital. Yet we've always been in control of the production, distribution, and consumption of aesthetics. Now digital aesthetics consume more information and instantaneous creation than all images that have come before the 21st century put together. At any given point, Google image search, YouTube, and other global search engines consume aesthetics faster than we can supply. While the current global population is around 8 billion people, this number is certainly also shadowed by the sheer scale of images produced and stored on digital networks. This system, as I have argued, is the determinant factor in shaping digital aesthetics, but also adding to its own extinction. We see this in the natural world, where species become extinct at exponential rates due to human activity and overconsumption of resources. And this has certainly drawn similarities to what I will now refer to as 'super aesthetics', which have nothing to do with the human factor, where the human involvement of digital aesthetics will now also succumb to extinction, much like the natural world has done so and will continue to do through the domains of human activity.

One might argue that artificial intelligence will do to us what we have done to the natural world based on two assumptions: first, scales of industry provide the mechanism for overwhelming power, and secondly, the networks and market forces dominated by greed and psychopathic desires for extreme totality are the same kinds of totality that artificial intelligence functions in creating its own markets. Human interaction of aesthetics has only a short time before the principles of aesthetics are not made for us, nor are they made by us in the same respect. As this scenario is indeed difficult to comprehend, it is still a reality that human society will face as artificial intelligence continues to improve its scalability, which will determine if human-made aesthetics will continue. It is also inconceivable to think that such an event was likely in the pre-digital age, which has evolved in mechanisms such as social media, where digital aesthetics has accelerated its presence within our everyday lives. From the phones we use to the streaming platforms we watch, and the images we witness and experience, there are no distinct parameters now which safeguard human interaction, which are not necessarily in a post-human context or even a post-humanism pretext. The question we need to ask is how can digital aesthetics survive without humans because it has already started? One such thought is that digital aesthetics, taken as exclusively humanly connected, will continue its trajectory along human cultural and society-driven demands alongside its autonomous other, which will inadvertently exclude collaborative measures or, in opposition, embrace them. But the dilemma in either of these scenarios is that digital aesthetics do not exist just because they do. It is a simplistic and mono-tonal assumption that just because digital aesthetics function within a digital realm doesn't necessarily mean it will be there forever. The only reason it exists is because human cultural tendencies interpret their agency through a critical engagement and structure based on communications for human society. Therefore, we, as humans, must acknowledge that autonomous others in aesthetics now exist, and more so, have a role to play within 21st century images. One might argue that digital aesthetics are recognised because we invented the term and considerations to explain about images created in the digital realm, as it didn't necessarily just pop up out of nowhere and inform human interaction that it was ready to begin its long interaction with the way we experience digital forms. Digital aesthetics are exclusively human. But they cannot exist when an autonomous other excludes human activity. The technology that will ultimately decide this fate will, as we understand, make judgments based on code and binary form, which infuses and

deliberate autonomous interaction based on the efficiency of pathways in scenario-based schemas. But while digital aesthetics is in the hands of human experience, authenticity and meaningfulness in aesthetics remain subjective. When branding and distribution attempts to circumvent such qualities, they instead encourage transactions inextricably linked within an aesthetic, whether this be an NFT artwork, physical artwork, visual design, advertising device or otherwise. This leads to what this article defines as an 'after aesthetics'.

Whether speculative or objective, digital aesthetics gives contextual, mechanical, and structural considerations as to the way a digitalness subjugates the analogue none the most prominent as we have seen in crypto markets since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Irrespective of criticisms related to the authenticity of NFT artwork, compared to more traditional forms of digital and or physical form outside the crypto lens, the fallacy for these kinds of objections negates the role of demand and market network consumption to that as previously unseen in the collectables market. They would of course need to be immune from the financial systems backing digital aesthetics as a combination of fiat and digital currencies transacting on exchanges where artwork has never been able to infiltrate to the likes it has through blockchains. In fact, without these access points, crypto art would still be a niche sector, unable to compete with the analogue trading of traditional art auction systems. Digital aesthetics in this regard must come to terms with the crippling of democratisation for the image, which is in turn the trade off for the democratisation of choice and AI code to initiate global transactions from an auction based epistemology. There would have to be no other occurrence in the history of financial transactions to change what digital aesthetics look like in a tradable commodity. This inherently disables artists' ability to respond through traditional visual means of aesthetic development, when humans actively seek algorithms to create what is now termed AI Art. We find some evidence in Greek philosophy, especially through the work of Plato, when we talk about memes as an expansion of aesthetics. When placed into a digital realm, we have an association built where we require a distribution network to interpret the memes (Couture) by right of access, while simultaneously having a sense of matter that we bring to these particular images to assess their meaning. It comes as no surprise that when memes rely on a system of distribution, the network becomes a meme, literally taking over human-made images, and the digital other of aesthetics cannot proceed any further due to what we know as the limitations of modernity.

Modernity as a set of principles is uniquely human, built entirely for a quest to improve ways of the former by refinement of the new, no different than the exit point of the death of history (Jenkins, Marx, Hegel) and its subsequent reentry as the death of the death of history. An example of such would be the sense that postmodernism - and also a posthistory (Belting) - was drawing to a close in the 1990s and early 2000s. The search for meaning acknowledged a metamodern affect (Gibbons) concerned more with the feelings of people that the culture of postmodernism did not embrace or even acknowledge through the mainstays of irony or relativism. Such a dramatic shift within only a matter of decades has destabilised the singularity of modernity to now exist as a metamodernity. But a sense of this stabilising, which is at the core of metamodernism, and especially through a structure of feeling, indicates that global disruptions and challenges of and for the power structures of modernity are well in place, and have been in a form that might be thought of as turning away from modernity itself. This article argues that modernity could not move forward once its

space of relativism had to embrace feelings as a creditable oscillation of affect. Whether this be termed new sincerity or simply metamodern, modernity as we have known can be argued as defunct by the questioning of reason that the pillars of singularity have stood for at both a governance and assurance level, well placed and even ingrained in the fabrics of society and the systems of governance it subsequently ordered.

Structures of metamodernity are different than even a postmodernity, because it allows the advancement of an autonomous other as an oscillation between human-made-awareness and manufactured awareness. Where postmodern arguments questioned, and in post-human dialogue, warned against artificial intelligence, in particular the conversations from 1991 of the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement, as an opposition to artificial intelligence, metamodernism embraces it as part of an oscillation independent of influence or dominance. And that's the point which has never happened before in critical theory - we have allowed a transition period to live with autonomous others as part of human agency, instead of maintaining a singularity as opposition against it. This is why metamodernity is unlike any other facet of modernity, thus before by which human society has integrated within its communication logic. Metamodernity brings with it the metamodern acceptance of awareness other than human consciousness coexisting alongside autonomous logic, but that by which we understand as the amalgam of technology and images together as a cultural interface surmounted as a digital aesthetic. Because of these various power structures of and from modernity, they are becoming more and more deductive. An example of such would be the mainstream tolerance of sexual and gender equality at the forefront of debate, where even the most robust identity shifts, such as the inclusion and normalisation of gay marriage in the 2020s, would have been impossible to establish even 30 years before hand, signifying a rapid change in how human society has detached itself from traditional values within modernity now considered a progression of human tolerance - a structure of feeling - towards each other. It would otherwise take centuries or longer to slowly transition to the same scale of global magnitude. As a cultural interface, metamodernity is prone to more accelerated shifts that leave digital aesthetics in a unique position - there's not just humans in the conversation anymore. An autonomous other has awareness, and aesthetics are the litmus test of where this will develop and how. An example of such is Jason M. Allen's *Théâtre D'opéra Spatial* (2022), an AI generated image that won a blue ribbon prize at the Colorado State Fair in 2022, much to the opposition of artists and social media commentators. Like the decries about photography in the 19th century as 'not of art' and the same for video art in the 1960s, autonomous awareness may receive disdain about 'cheating' in art (Roose), but the fact is, this 'other' in art and of screens is not going away any time soon.

Moreover, the progression of digital aesthetics has come from this starting point and arrived at a disruption in a very short amount of time. But this progression in our society will not simply stop at the conclusion of our current pandemic. We are in a rapidly expansive state of reevaluating ourselves as a society and our place within the world, even more subjective than what Heidegger would crystallise through his work on being. This is not to say the digital aesthetics will vanish. It is simply that its role was created by and for humans, and this will continue as long as humans create images and embrace the digital, and embrace the aesthetics of the digital through participatory and experiential means. What it does for aesthetics is that we simply do

not know where this will lead, because of the disruptions of technological advances around it. We don't know where digital aesthetics will arrive in twenty years, because it remains to be seen what it will grow into, or if its rapid progression will slow down, or simply decline. Slowness in this regard becomes a reductive balance, or, in other words, a 'drift' (Jaffe). One might argue that AI, using a drift towards non-human subjectivity on and for screens, could completely replace human activity, or whatever technology it will intersect with autonomous beings in the future. AI and even the analogue digital could decline into something less influential and impactful, thus preserving human dominance over visual formalism. Digital aesthetics in this regard have not yet been completely written off, but they are changing from a monopoly to a competitive space. Artificial intelligence is one such contender. There is also room to say that whatever it creates could replace itself, just as automated code has replaced many human tasks. But we take for granted the evidenced integrations we already live with that are not decided from human awareness - vending machines, video streaming recommendations, air travel, traffic management, email automations, and image-based software such as Photoshop. An 'after aesthetics' is certainly possible, but this will depend on several factors of how we become more integrated as a society in the years ahead by using automation of algorithms to regulate tasks in our daily lives.

THE COMPETITION

Let us return to the idea that automation will replace digital aesthetics. There's been much work over the years, especially in the 2010s, that explores the role of the apocalypse. We've seen this in movies, books, and even in social media. But in contemporary times, the apocalypse has begun to be framed as climate change, the rapid spread of alternative facts, and the collapse of capitalism. If we examine any point in a conceptual view of history (Nemishalyan), there has been fascination with the action of demise, except for which we have the scientific proof through statistical data that ecosystems and societies are in decline (Buztzer). But what of digital aesthetics? Is the human-made image also in crisis? To play out by example, the robust nature of images has withstood multiplicity, starting with the printing press and ending with the cut and paste function introduced into personal computing in the 1970s. If, say, I cut and pasted an image or even copied a digital image file infinitely many times and stored it on my personal computer without distributing it, there would be no known impact for aesthetics, as the files would only be on my computer and therefore not affect the original image. But images change when they're distributed en masse (Hansen) because they enter collective consciousness. This is when mass distribution changes aesthetics through an image, and likewise an image changes aesthetics.

An example of such is that, when we think of the imagery from World War Two, much of the technology was distributed through black and white images and film. To see a colourised picture from World War Two might seem odd, because our collective memory of this era signifies a collective consciousness as black and white. But if we move forward 25 years into the Vietnam War era, we think of this period in colour because of the media aesthetics we have since consumed. We know that Pixar movies, for example, have brightly coloured moving images, because this is what digital aesthetics has told us in the visual data available to assess Pixar movies. We would not have known any of these instances if it was not from mass distribution of image

markets, where the volume of scale is just as important as the content from scale. If we draw these comparisons together, then the assumptions of what digital aesthetics tell us are imprinted to our memory for access later in time. Yet what happens when these aesthetics are taken out of human control? Such thinking about a replacement for digital aesthetics would be a counterproductive exercise, simply because aesthetics can't be replaced when audiences react to images in ways that impact their sense of meaning and define how they consume media. If there was a competitor for digital aesthetics, it would certainly not be artificial intelligence, because as already stated, both awarenesses exist in parallel to what metamodernism recognises as oscillation. Rather, the competition for digital aesthetics is within ourselves.

If we return to the idea that human society rejects power and pillars of establishment exponentially, then our methods in questioning these structures can destabilise any form of system on the proviso we all collectively agree with it. So for example, if we suddenly decide to reject the digital and return to an analogue world, we will not only disassemble the digital systems we have built, but also simply ignore them outright. And if this happens, digital aesthetics lay dormant as long as humans remain inactive through spectatorship. An AI functioning on its own accord could still be in operation for millennia. However, in one sense, the key issue of boredom among human society determines digital aesthetics, as it's one of the driving factors, apart from laziness and greed, that determine how we integrate images and aesthetics into domestic and professional spaces.

As human society becomes more interconnected within individual communities, connectivity would not be possible without the digital, and the digital could not survive through popularity without a digital aesthetic. Imagine, for example, the internet without pictures or moving images, where what remains is a collective of words and numbers. Web pages would no longer have visual and audio ploys to capture attention and keep the audience entertained for a considerable amount of time. This type of internet would instead be delegated to threads and code, with no visualisation processes whatsoever. Transactions of information would alternatively be more scientifically and statistically consumed. As in the early 1980s, computational code may have been useful for functions within industries and data collection, but it is simply not a satisfying impact factor on domestic spaces, which ultimately drive and consume a modern internet. Digital aesthetics is what brings together communities and groups to form opinions, experiences, and decisions based on analogue versions of the same thing. In doing so, aesthetics can also exacerbate a sense of crisis that counters a structure of reason to be subverted by rumour, hearsay, and factually-baseless claims that shape herd reasoning in full effect.

But those coveted apocalyptic moments that over saturate entertainment media add a terminus in how we react to changes around us in the mindset of crisis and urgent attention. Whether these are - or not - overstatements of factualities, this article argues that there is little hesitation in accepting that digital aesthetics will be defunct anytime soon, as long as we have the demand to engage with its mechanics that define cultural modalities for social domains. But it also must be said that digital aesthetics can be defunct quickly based on what we do with it and how we consider it for our own use and consumption. From philosophy to fine arts, and from design to digital media, the predominant use of digital aesthetics is just one such mechanism in the advancement of human society. We use aesthetics to be inclusive of change, inasmuch as we use

them for stability and accessibility to knowledge. What can be concluded from this perspective is that digital aesthetics are an interface between the subject, the context and the audience. However, the communication logic of understanding audiences manifests a branding of collectiveness, which impacts on the way imagery is contextualised through the virtues of form, and from this, a formalism. One might argue that digital aesthetics has made a transformative integration into a networked collective that yields a definition beyond the artefact itself, and into a mirror that reflects who we are as a society, our strengths and insecurities, and the predetermined anxieties which can erode and abate the sustainability of the image in both triumphs of data proliferation and the mono-textual failures of socio-emotional fragility.

This article is an expanded version of a shorter essay in the exhibition catalogue 'Digital Aesthetics' from the exhibition 'Digital: how artists use the 'digital' to talk about being human', curated by Sue Beyer, Sandbox Studios, Melbourne, Australia 3-14 December 2022.

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