Computing in Architecture
Re-Thinking the Discourse

The Second International Conference of the
Arab Society for Computer Aided Architectural Design
(ASCAAD 2006)

Editors
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Zaki Mallasi

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
25-27 April, 2006
[Say: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition]. [Al-Zomor, 39, Verse 9, The Holy Qura'n]
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Jamal Al-Qawasmi & Zaki Mallasi, editors
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1. architectural design
2. design computing

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................. v  
Organizing Committee ........................................... vi  
International Review Committee .............................. vi  
ASCAAD Board of Directors .................................... vii  
Table of Contents ................................................ i  
Editor’s Preface ................................................... xiv

## SECTION I: DIGITAL DESIGN EDUCATION

“Not Every new Monday...”: on using computer-games technology in architectural design education
*Frank Petzold and Jan Frohburg*
*Bauhaus University Weimar, Germany*

The Significant Role of an Electronic Gallery to the Education Experience and Learning Environment
*E. Amir Sharji and A. R. Mohd. Eshaq*
*Multimedia University, Malaysia*

Adapting Digital Technologies to Architectural Education Need
*Andreas Luesche and Salim Elwazani*
*Bowling Green State University, USA*

Evolution or Revolution: is digital conceptual design the way forward for Architects?
*Tahar Kouider*
*University of Aberdeen, UK*

A Collaborative Digital Design Workshop: an ANN-based paradigm approach
*Shang Yuan Chen*
*National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan*
SECTION II: COMPUTER APPLICATIONS AND FUTURE ARCHITECTURE

Design Informatics: a case based investigation into parametric design scripting and CNC based manufacturing techniques  
Nimish Biloria, Kas Oosterhus, and Cas Aalbers  
Technical University of Delft and ONL Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Designing with Machines: solving architectural layout planning problems by the use of a constraint programming language and scheduling algorithms  
Thorsten M. Loemker  
Technische Universität Dresden, Germany

An Analysis of the Applications of Rapid Prototyping in Architecture  
Sajid Abdullah, Ramesh Marasini and Munir Ahmad  
University of Teesside, UK

Integrating Mass Customization with Prefabricated Housing  
Joseph, C. H. Huang, Robert J. Krawczyk and George Schipposreit  
Illinois Institute of Technology, USA

Sensor-based Aware Environment  
Mohammad Babsail and Andy Dong  
The University of Sydney, Australia

SECTION III: THEORY AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

Redemptive Technologies II: the sequel (A Decade Later)  
Michael Stanton  
The American University of Beirut, Lebanon
The Autopoiesis and Mimesis of Architecture  
George Katodrytis  
American University of Sharjah, UAE

Plan is Dead: to BIM or not to BIM, that is the question  
Michael A. Ambrose  
University of Maryland, USA

Future of Communicating Digital Design in Architecture: overcoming the divisive power of Computer Aided Design  
Florian Teichel  
University of Sharjah, UAE

Critical Environmentalism and the Practice of Re-Construction  
Craig Anz and Akel Ismail Kahera  
South Illinois University, and Prairie View A&M, USA

Musing Heideggerian Cyberspace  
Jon Daniel Davey  
Southern Illinois University, USA

SECTION IV: CONCEPTUAL DESIGN AND DIGITAL DESIGN PROCESS

A Comparative Study of Digital and Traditional Tools for Participative Design  
Rashidah AB. Rahman and Alan Day  
University of Bath, UK

An Approach to 3D Conceptual Modelling  
Chie-Chieh Huang  
National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Architectural Design as a reflective Conversation: an</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agent facilitated system to support collaborative conceptual design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Arjun and J. Plume</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of New South Wales, Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Digital Design Process: reflections on architectural design</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positions on complexity and CAAD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Chougui</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ferhat Abba, Algeria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Relations Between Design Idea Emergence and Design Solution</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction: digital media use in mass exploration of architectural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wael A. Abdelhameed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Valley University, Egypt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTION V: DIGITAL VISUALIZATION AND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECONSTRUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Performance Modelling in Architectural Design Education</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Lonnman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American University of Sharjah, UAE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Architecture and Digital Databases</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rasha Ali</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Paris, France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Rectified Imagery: a survey method for design and</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservation projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Lerma and Salim A. Elwazani</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polytechnic University of Valencia; Bowling Green State University,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adaptive Generative Patterns: design and construction of Prague Biennale pavilion
Giorgos Artopoulos, Stanislav Roudavski and Francois Penz
Cambridge University, UK

I³-Eye-Cube: interactive intuitive mixed reality interface for virtual architecture
Stephen K. Wittkopf, Sze Lee Teo, and Zhou ZhiYing
National University of Singapore, Singapore

SECTION VI: ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY MODELLING AND EVALUATION

Using Space Syntax Software in Explaining Crime
Linda N. Nubani
The American University in Dubai, UAE

Visualization Management and Inspection for Plumbing Construction Quality Control
Naai-Jung Shih and Pin-Hung Wang
National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

Evaluation of a Higher Education Self-learning Interface
A. Benaadj and A. Bellakhal
The Robert Gordon University, UK and Institut d’Architecture, Universite Mohammed Khider, Algeria

A Real-Time Simulation Tool for Fault Detection and Diagnosis of HVAC Systems
Yue Ma and Mohammed Zaheeruddin
Concordia University, Canada
Editors' Preface

The influence of computing and information technology on architectural design education and practice is increasingly evident. Architectural design, practice, fabrication and construction are increasingly aided by and dependent on computing and digital technology. Digital technology has reconditioned the design process and how we operate as architects, and established new processes and techniques of fabrication. New computerized studios such as the paperless studio and the virtual design studio have been introduced in many architectural schools as new ways of practicing and teaching architectural design.

In the last decade or so, there is a continuous demand to deliver new skills in digital media and to rethink architectural design education and practice in the light of the new developments in digital technology. The proliferation of computers and telecomputing in design education and practice has resulted in a major paradigm shift and a reorientation in theoretical and conceptual assumptions considered to be central to traditional paradigm(s) of designing, practicing, and producing architecture.

The pervasiveness in the use of digital technology in architecture has given rise to a discourse and debate on the relationship between computing, digital technology and architecture. Topics in the debate are continuously changing in light of developments in the use of the digital technology. Current debates are focusing on a wide range of related issues among which virtualization of design education, digital design methods and pedagogies, future architecture with digital design, web-based design, computer-mediated collaborative design, virtual reality and design, virtual design studio, paperless studio, digital studio, design support environments, digital thinking, digital practice, digital production/fabrication, and digital visualization. Despite the extensive literature on the subject, the impact of digital technology on how we design, practice, teach, fabricate and produce architecture has not been sufficiently examined. Furthermore, architectural discourse is still dominated by the prevailing traditional analogue paradigm which puts great constraints on our understanding of recent developments in teaching, designing and practicing design.

Our goal in formulating the Call for Papers was to encourage discussion of these and other issues. The theme of the 2006 conference is “Computing in Architecture: Re-Thinking the Discourse”. This captures the role of the conference as a forum to debate and reconsider current understandings of the way we design, practice, and produce architecture. The conference aimed to provide the participants an occasion to share and exchange experiences and research findings, and to stimulate more ideas and useful insights regarding how computing and digital media affects the design, production and evaluation of the built environment. More than eighty people from a diverse
community of researchers responded with abstracts, and sixty nine authors submitted papers for blind review. The thirty papers selected for presentation at this conference have the potential to broaden our knowledge and understanding of how digital technology is developing and applied to architectural education and practice. The papers are organized in the book under six sections or categories that correspond and match the sessions in the conference program. The sections are: digital design education, computer applications and future architecture, theory and critical evaluation, conceptual design and digital design process, digital visualization and reconstruction, environmental quality modelling and evaluation.