

**Re-imaging Place: The Eidetic Image and Vancouver's Urban-
Landscape**

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BFA, Ontario College of Art and Design, 2005

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF APPLIED ART

in

Visual Arts

EMILY CARR INSTITUTE OF ART + DESIGN

2008

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Abstract

In this paper I explore the eidetic image as it relates to the rethinking and imaging of architectural and urban planning concerns. An eidetic image is produced through drawing, painting, modeling, mapping, and/or computer animation from which artists, designers and architects may conduct research into complex spatiality that challenges the passive Cartesian mode of picturing prevalent in both architecture and painting conventions. The term eidetic generally refers to mental imagery, “which are revived versions of [. . .] impressions called up by the imagination in the absence of the objects that originally stimulated them...” (Mitchell, Iconology 10). Which is not to say that all eidetic imagery must be recalled from memory. Within the context of this paper, an eidetic image is a visual model constructed by an artist, or designer. In his essay, “Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes” landscape architect James Corner calls on researchers to use this imaging methodology as a means of stimulating discourse, creative invention, and actualizing emergent realities.

In his seminal work, “The Image of the City” Kevin Lynch categorizes the contents of the imageable city into five types of architectural components: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (46). A summary of what those components are and how they function within the urban-landscape will be provided. In addition to Lynch's five categories, I address the phenomena of pictorial architecture. Pictorial architecture refers to the

ubiquitous application of two-dimensional graphic imagery onto three-dimensional architectural structures in the form of retail signage, large-format television screens, and billboards. The thesis of my proposal is that, an artist, designer or architect may use the operational language of Lynch's five architectural components, and pictorial architecture, within eidetic imagery, as a means of describing the contemporary urban-landscape.

To elaborate how architectural components may be deployed in eidetic imagery I will review the works of contemporary artists such as Zaha Hadid, Benjamin Edwards, and Julie Mehretu who specifically deal with the urban-landscape. In addition, I have constructed my own eidetic image, *Dream City: Vancouver* (2008) and will describe my methodological approach towards urban exploration and image building. In relation to the exploration of cities, the works of The Situationist International and Franz Ackermann will also be discussed.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Diyan Achjadi, Patrik Andersson, Jordan Broadworth, Neil Campbell, Patrick Chan, Benjamin Edwards, Anda Kubis, Keith Langergraber, Landon Mackenzie, and Elizabeth McIntosh for their guidance and support.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In my painting practice I explore the eidetic image as it relates to the rethinking and imaging of architectural and urban planning concerns. An eidetic image is produced through drawing, painting, modeling, mapping, and/or computer animation from which artists, designers and architects may conduct research into complex spatiality that challenges the passive Cartesian mode of picturing prevalent in both architecture and painting conventions. In his essay, "Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes" landscape architect James Corner describes the eidetic image and calls on designers to use this imaging methodology as a means of stimulating discourse, creative invention, and actualizing emergent realities.

I use the term *eidetic* here to refer to a mental conception that may be picturable but may equally be acoustic, tactile, cognitive, or intuitive. Thus, unlike the purely retinal impressions of pictures, *eidetic* images contain a broad range of ideas that lie at the core of human creativity. Consequently, how one "images" the world literally conditions how reality is both conceptualized and shaped. That representation exercises such agency and effect is precisely why images in design cannot properly be considered as mute or neutral depictions of existing or projected conditions of secondary significance to their object; on

the contrary, *eidetic* images are much more active than this, engendering, unfolding, and participating in emergent realities. (153)

The term eidetic generally refers to mental imagery or the “...*sensible forms*... which (according to Aristotle) emanate from objects and imprint themselves on the wax-like receptacles of our senses like a signet ring; the *fantasmata*, which are revived versions of those impressions called up by the imagination in the absence of the objects that originally stimulated them...” (Mitchell, Iconology 10). Which is not to say that all eidetic imagery must be recalled from memory. Within the context of this paper, an eidetic image is a visual model constructed by an artist, or designer. The resulting image is similar to those recalled from memory in that it maintains a degree of semi-abstraction. An eidetic image does not present a representational copy, as does a photograph or a traditional landscape painting. An effective image maintains a balance between the artistic and the technical, as well as the abstract and the representational (Corner 164).

According to Corner, eidetic images are intended to inspire ideation and provide new models for understanding the urban-landscape as active potential, as opposed to traditional Cartesian models of passive picturing. Distinctions between the eidetic method of imaging, and the Cartesian mode of picturing will be made.



Figure 1 Jay Gazley, *Dream City: Vancouver (in progress)*, 2008, ink, spray paint and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 56 inches.

In his seminal work, “The Image of the City” Kevin Lynch categorizes the contents of the imageable city into five types of architectural components: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (46). A summary of what those components are and how they function within the urban-landscape will be provided. In addition to Lynch’s five categories, I address the phenomena of pictorial architecture. Pictorial architecture refers to the ubiquitous application of two-dimensional graphic imagery onto three-dimensional architectural structures in the form of retail signage, large-format television screens, and billboards. By utilizing the descriptive capacity of Lynch’s five components, and pictorial

architecture, within eidetic imagery, researchers may develop an operational language capable of describing the contemporary urban-landscape.

The effectiveness of architectural components to assist urban inhabitants in navigation, and to create strong connections between different urban elements is related to the ability of inhabitants to form strong mental images of structures (Corner 9). Examples of highly imageable architectural components will be considered including those found at New York's Times Square, as well as iconic forms of architecture.

In the development of a visual language to be deployed by researchers, the geometric languages of Suprematism, Constructivism, and Neoplasticism may be used in eidetic imagery. To elaborate how the practice of painting can become eidetic I will review the works of contemporary artists such as Zaha Hadid, Benjamin Edwards, and Julie Mehretu who specifically deal with urbanism.

In addition, I have constructed my own eidetic image, *Dream City: Vancouver*, (2008). An essential component of my research is the fieldwork phase in which I explore and photograph a city's architectural-landscape. Photographs taken at this time are later used as resource material during the painting process. The departure point for the eidetic image *Dream City: Vancouver*, as well as the subsequent series of paintings, is that each painting will focus on the exploration of a particular urban-centre. The purpose of my paintings is to create visual models for the rethinking and reconfiguration of specific cities, based on a subjective logic derived from urban exploration.

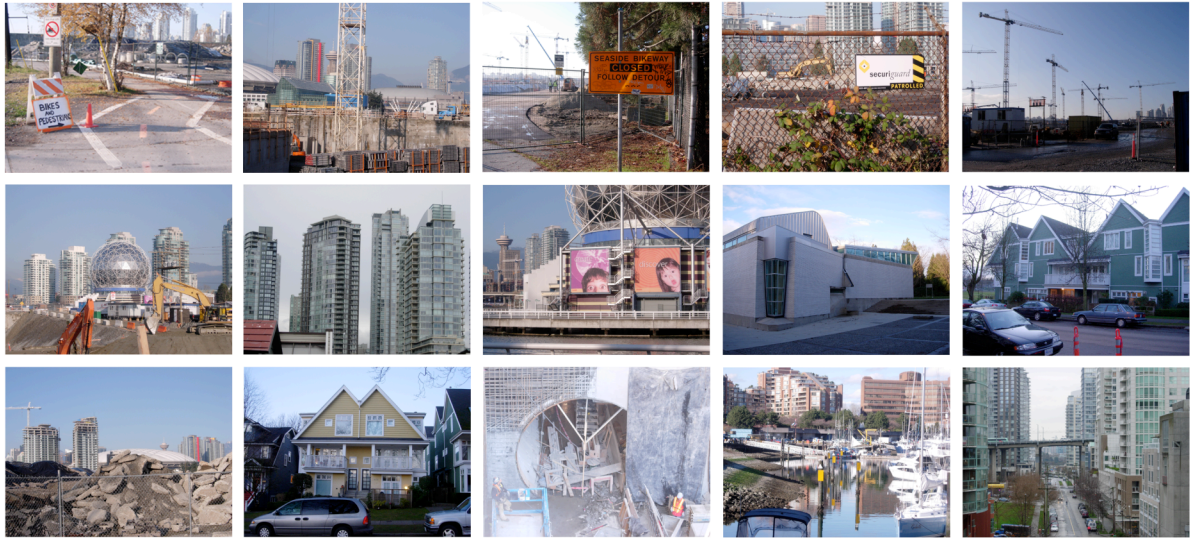


Figure 2 Jay Gazley, Vancouver, 2007-2008, digital photographs.

From a performative perspective, the act of urban exploration relates to various other forms of spatial movement. The physical acts of skateboarders, parkour acrobats, rollerbladers, and bike couriers engage the urban-landscape physically, and psychologically. In “Placing Words: Symbols, Space, and the City”, William J. Mitchell states that:

Just as Baudelaire personified the *flaneur* as a self-effacing painter slipping in and out of the Parisian crowds, then returning to his studio to jot down sketches, so the *Spiderman* movies have provided the apotheosis of the *traceur*. *Spiderman* is a kid from the suburbs, but he loves the close-packed towers of Manhattan and the vertiginous perches they provide. Underneath his spiffy spandex and mask, he is just a shy and insecure teenager who,

appealingly, yearns for the usual teenage things. But he can also become - like the dandy Baudelaire putting on his pink gloves to strut the boulevards - a confident urban performance artist who inhabits the city in a new way, and lets the rest of us imagine that we might do so too. (Mitchell, Placing 157)

By physically testing the boundaries and conventional uses of an urban-landscape, inhabitants may come to a more informed understanding of the adaptive potential of the city and its structures. In relation to spatial exploration, the works of The Situationist International and Franz Ackermann will be discussed.

The Eidetic Image

Within a contemporary context, the term landscape refers to more than Nature and is inclusive of the urban realm. Landscapes are fields composed of constantly shifting connections between temporal as well as spatial environments (Chan). In James Corner's essay, "Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes" he states:

Indeed, the development of landscape architecture as a modern profession derives, in large measure, from an impulse to reshape large areas of land according to *prior* imaging. Not only is a collective recognition of land as landscape made possible through exposure to prior images (a phenomenon central to both spectacle and tourist landscapes) but also the ability to intentionally construe and construct designed landscapes is enabled through various forms and activities of imaging. (153)

The process of architectural planning has historically taken many forms, including isometric drawings, floor plans, and aerial-perspectives. Traditionally these renderings conform to single point perspective, employ a pictorial vocabulary of representation, and convey geographically and temporally static landscapes. Contemporary techniques for landscape development may attempt to transcend pictorial representation and the objectification of landscape as a passive ingredient.

In defining eidetic imagery, a distinction can be made between depictions that follow the Cartesian mode of picturing and those of eidetic operations that focus on imaging. The Cartesian model of representation presents the urban-landscape as a passive scenographic object that may be easily deciphered and immediately intelligible (Corner 163). In contrast, the eidetic image avoids immediacy, and reductionism, and does not suppose the didactics of any definitive truth. An eidetic image presents the viewer with a complex visual puzzle or composite montage containing multiple layers of information.

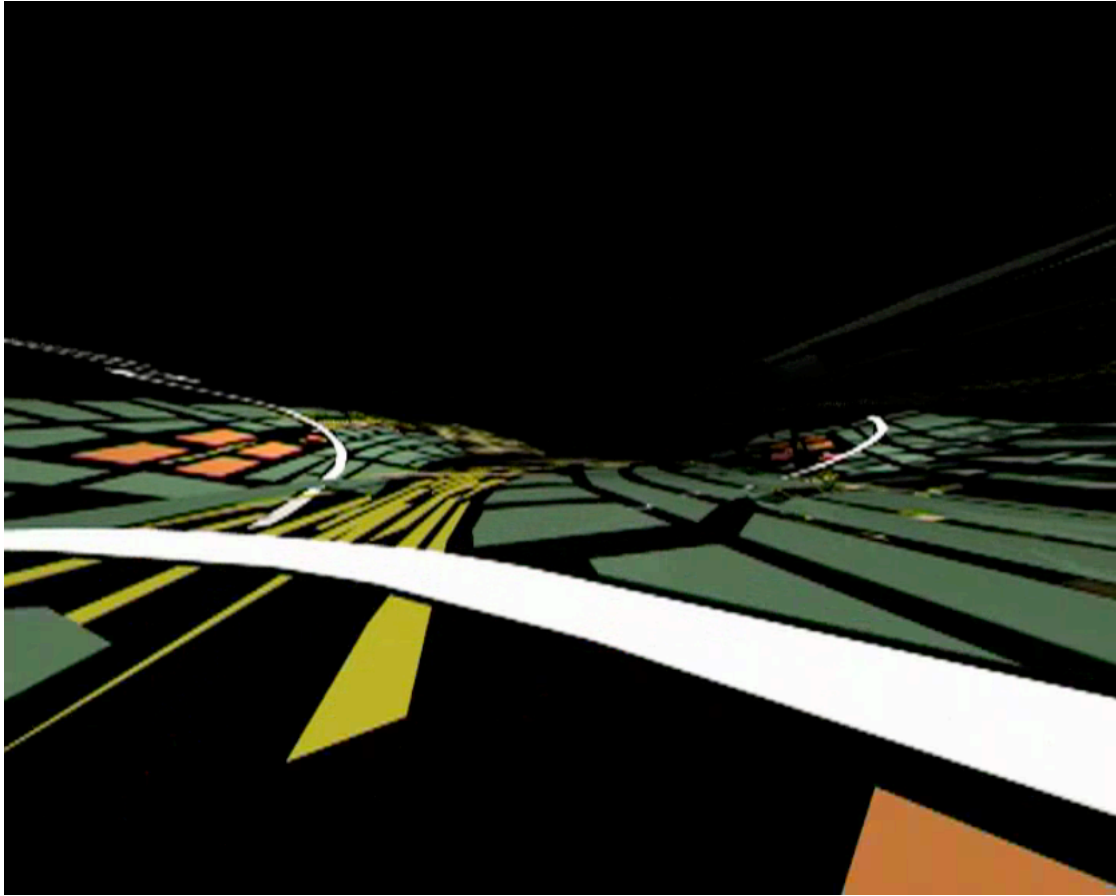


Figure 3 Zaha Hadid and Neutral, Video Painting Zaha Hadid, 1999, Computer Animation, Courtesy Neutral.

The above computer animation was created by the London based digital media collaboration Neutral, for architect Zaha Hadid. In *Video Painting Zaha Hadid*, Neutral translates the two-dimensional space of Zaha Hadid's paintings into an animated three-dimensional spatial exploration.

It is essential that the process of translating imagery maintains a degree of open-endedness and that it requires interactivity and engagement on behalf of the viewer. If the image becomes too didactic or explicit in its meaning the potential for multiple interpretations will be diminished. The viewer may engage equally with the criticism,

text, and discourse that surround eidetic imagery. The image therefore mediates the process of engagement for the viewer, and functions as a catalyst for ideation. Through a cyclical process of interactivity that involves: engagement with, and departure from the image; and engagement with criticism, text, discourse, and the urban-landscape; as well as a return to the image; the viewer's understanding of the image and the urban-landscape evolves over time.

An eidetic image may function to convey the urban-landscape as a complex and dynamic system that is in constant flux. In my eidetic painting *Dream City: Vancouver*, I have reconfigured divergent spatio-temporal architectural components from Vancouver's urban-landscape. The city can thus be viewed in terms of active potential, and this potential is expressed through the open-ended vocabulary of the image (Corner 164). In "Learning from Las Vegas", authors Venturi, Brown, and Izenour state that:

An image employed by a designer should be something very evocative,
something that does not limit by being too defined and too concrete, yet helps
the designer think of the city in physical terms. (82)

The creator of an eidetic image draws upon language, meaning, and interpretation as a catalyst for ideation relating to architectural and urban-planning concerns. To facilitate the process of imaging a city, its parts may be geometrically reduced to a series of symbols or categories of architectural components that can, in-turn, be imbued with meaning by artists, designers, and architects, as well as viewers. The stripping-down of

components into abstract notations limits the possibility of creating an over determined image of the Cartesian variety. The process of abstracting architectural components may be assisted through the use of vocabularies derived from Suprematism, Constructivism, and Neoplasticism.

The City as Image

When depicting cities, conventional rendering methods primarily focus on the exteriors and interiors of architectural components as dichotomized aspects. An eidetic image can function to visualize relationships between exteriors and interiors, as well as non-material aspects such as program, atmospheric changes, and humanly traffic. Researchers may challenge Cartesian picturing conventions by simultaneously engaging with architectural exteriors and interiors, hence disrupting the harmony of the picturesque view composed of groomed exteriors (Chan).

It is important to recognize that the city is not only composed of architectural structures, but also inhabited by organic life forms such as vegetation, domestic pets, wildlife, and of course humans. Since my work is primarily concerned with the exploration of human architectural constructs, humans will be discussed as viewers, rather than objects to be viewed. The imageable urban-landscape, as it relates to this paper, is therefore limited to architectural components.

The urban-landscape may be viewed as a grouping of images that collectively constitutes our understanding of the city. What then are the various architectural components that

form the urban-landscape? In Kevin Lynch's, "The Image of the City" he differentiates the elements of the imageable city into five types: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (46). The following is a definition of these five components:

1. Paths. Paths are streets, pedestrian walkways, cycling lanes, streetcar routes, subway lines, railway lines, canals, and bridges. These pathways create the dominant trajectory that we most often travel on in the city (47). Paths are instrumental in facilitating the unfolding of the urban-landscape. One's choice of path and mode of transportation will be an essential factor in determining the imageability of other architectural components. For example, an inhabitant's choice of path and mode of transport will not only determine their trajectory, but also the speed in which they travel. One's rate of speed consequently alters the cadence in which architectural structures pass by the viewer. Speed is therefore a determining factor in the rhythmic unfolding of imagery, in turn effecting imageability. In suburbia, for instance, the landscape is divided into functionally homogeneous zones and the distance between regions is such that an automobile is required. However, in mixed-use, high-density urban regions, pedestrian or bicycle pathways may be preferred due to the relatively short distances between destinations.

2. Edges. "Edges are the linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer" (47). Edges mark the borderline between two different fields of urban construct, or function. An edge demarcates the boundary between two zones, such as a set of railway tracks that divide an industrial park from a residential neighborhood. Edges can act to

isolate and dichotomize regions or conversely create a seam of connectivity that joins two areas. Edges may then be agents of connective as well as disconnective potential (47).

An example of a highly imageable edge is the immense grey wall of buildings that rises up along the green of Central Park on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. The close juxtaposition between the verticality of the buildings, and the horizontal expanse of the park creates a highly imageable, and memorable experience (100).

3. Districts. Districts are established when medium-to-large-scale regions of the city share recognizably common visual characteristics, such as, architectural types, and various symbolic indicators in billboards, and storefronts (47). Architectural distinctions in style, colour, and material may create visibly unique districts. In addition to architectural indicators, cultural characteristics such as language-use may signify functional or thematic continuity and homogeneity in socio-political aspects including ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class. Common forms of urban districts include financial centres, consumer districts, industrial parks, and diaspora communities (67).

4. Nodes. Nodes are focal points which inhabitants may enter spatially as well as psychologically. Entrance into a node signifies a heightened sense of clarity and arrival for the urban inhabitant (47). Nodes are destinations that constitute the nexus of urban cohesion. They are the points of gravity to which paths facilitate movement to and fro. Nodes may range in scale from a street corner, square, building, to a district, or from a

provincial or national perspective, they may be an entire city (72). A highly connected city relies on the effective weaving of connective nodes throughout the urban-landscape.

5. Landmarks. “Landmarks are another type of point-reference, but in this case the observer does not enter within them, they are external” (48). Inhabitants, therefore predominantly identify with the exteriors of landmarks. The defining physical characteristic of a landmark is that of singularity. A landmark must be distinguishable from other elements, in that it is unique and memorable (78). Examples of landmarks include iconic forms of architecture such as domes, towers, and tall buildings.

Landmarks can serve to assist in spatial navigation, as they are often visible from great distances. When this is the case, inhabitants refer to landmarks as possessing “a peculiar floating quality”. They tend to identify almost exclusively with the tops of landmarks rather than their bottoms (81). Landmarks need not be large; they can be smaller more intimate elements within a region of homogeneously large structures. The key factor in recognizing an architectural component as a landmark is visual differentiation.

It is essential to note that the classification of architectural components may be ambiguous and in flux, as many components operate on multiple levels. The status of an architectural component as a path, edge, district, node, or landmark may be interchangeable. Images may simultaneously function as more than one type of component. Taking the example of Central Park, Fifth Avenue is a path that contains

nodes, as well as an edge that demarcates the boundary between two districts (Lynch 48). Classification is also dependant on interpretation and may vary from person-to-person.

The creator of an eidetic image can further challenge the Cartesian mode of picturing by intentionally confusing relationships between Lynch's five architectural components. In doing so, the imageable city is spurred towards a rethinking instead of a reiteration of the perfect skyline (Chan).

Images in the City: Pictorial Architecture and the Spectacle

In addition to Lynch's five categories of architectural components, the urban-landscape is increasingly becoming a context for the display of pictorial imagery. While architecture has been identified as imagery, it has also become a foundation for the application of additional pictorial imagery in the form of signage, large-format television screens, and billboards. In W.J.T. Macarthur's essay, "The Image as an Architectural Material" he states that architecture "exists in the medium of space; painting, printing, photography, and film exist in the medium of images [. . .] We identify an image as such when we recognize that it supposes (but does not possess) a spatial depth" (Macarthur 676). Pictorial architecture brings attention to the spatial ambiguity that exists between three-dimensional architecture, and two-dimensional graphic imagery. From a modernist perspective, this ambiguity threatens the materiality of buildings, since architecture is considered to be a purely spatial art form. That said, my interest is not to debate the boundaries of architecture as a purely spatial art form or the legitimacy of imagery as an

architectural material. The intention is to note the increasing presence of pictorial architecture within the urban-landscape.

Of course, historically speaking, commercial buildings have always displayed some form of signage. The thesis of Macarthur's argument is that traditionally "the image has been a technique or tool of architecture, whereas now it has become a material" (Macarthur 674). This shift has occurred primarily as a result of the mercantile imperatives of contemporary consumer culture. The image dense landscapes of New York's Times Square, Shanghai's Nanjing Road, Tokyo's Akihabara Electric Town, and the Las Vegas strip are the apotheosis of this phenomena. In each case it is the competing ambitions of capitalist agenda's that fuel this development, turning segments of the city into multi-media vistas and consumer culture theme parks. These landscapes are collaged with a complex barrage of floating graphics, neon logos, electric emblems shouting with decadent vitality – the harbingers of a bloated consumer utopia.

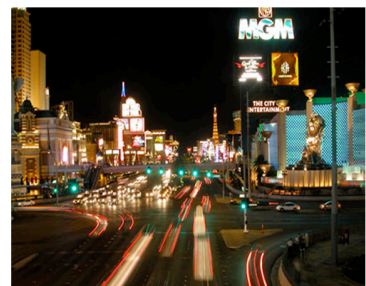
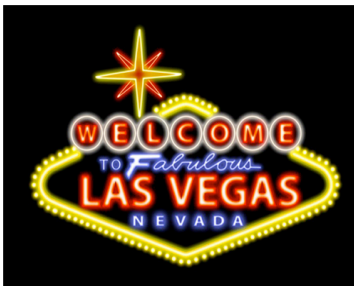


Figure 4 Times Square, New York City; Times Square, New York City; Osaka, Japan; Tokyo, Japan;
Welcome sign, Las Vegas; Las Vegas Strip.

The consumer billboard no longer indicates the availability of a particular product within a particular store. The ubiquitous placement of billboards signifies the dislocation of signage from storefronts or specific geographical loci. The commercial sign has become an a-geographical indicator as it reflects the nature of consumer culture. That is to say the products these images represent have become ever-present and readily available, resulting in a heavily saturated geography of consumerability.

The torrent of imagery currently cascading over the buildings of Times Square brings the world of the fashion magazine, the Internet, and the music video into the public architectural realm. These images do not merely signal the potential to consume a product; they are, themselves, a product for consumption. Guy Debord refers to this culture of image consumption as “the society of the spectacle.”

Debord’s analysis is based on the everyday experience of the impoverishment of life, its fragmentation into more separate spheres, and the disappearance of any unitary aspects from society. The spectacle consists in the reunification of separate aspects at the level of the image. Everything life lacks is to be found within the spectacle, conceived of as an ensemble of independent representations. (Jappo 6)

The imagery of the spectacle does not, however, satisfy the viewer's appetite for the existential amalgamation of disparate experiences. Instead, the spectacle offers a mere vicarious unification of life's segregated aspects that is insubstantial and fleeting.

Contemporary signage no longer just possesses representations of something else; in other words, they do not just sell products. Electronic signage becomes part of the architectonics of the city; they affect the city not only spatially and commercially but also psychologically. Upon interacting with signage, urban inhabitants may alter the way they think of their lives and thus indirectly affect the way they live in the city. Signage has an effect on the way urban inhabitants construct their lives (Chan).

Imageability

Through the pairing of Lynch's five components, and pictorial architecture, an artist, designer or architect may develop an operational language, within eidetic imagery, capable of describing the contemporary urban-landscape. According to Lynch, architectural components function with varying degrees of success in their ability to form memorable mental images in the minds of urban inhabitants. Lynch terms the process of image recognition as imageability:

...that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment. It might also be called *legibility*, or

perhaps *visibility* in a heightened sense, where objects are not only able to be seen, but are presented sharply and intensely to the senses. (9)

Imageability is dependant on the clarity of an image and its effectiveness in being recognized as distinct from other images. A strong image is visually unique and articulates its own individuality. Urban inhabitants should be able to recognize what type of architectural component they are observing (Lynch 8).

Once an inhabitant is able to form strong mental images of individual architectural components, they may begin to construct a mental map of portions of the city, and over time establish a subjectively intelligible mental map of the city at large. A city composed of legible imagery will enable its inhabitants to psychologically weave the urban fabric and its parts into a coherent spatial pattern. A healthy mental image of the city will eliminate geographical uncertainty and assist inhabitants in spatial navigation, as well as provide “an important sense of emotional security... establish(ing) a harmonious relationship between himself and the outside world” (Lynch, 4).

Of course most of us do not possess a complete mental map of any city; rather our understanding of cityscapes are always fragmented and incomplete. A complete or static mental map is perhaps impossible and even undesirable, as cities are dynamic systems that are always in flux, just as our mental conceptions of them are.

The image should preferably be open-ended, adaptable to change, allowing the individual to continue to investigate and organize reality: there should be blank spaces where he can extend the drawing for himself. (Lynch, 9)

Locations such as New York's Times Square, the Las Vegas strip, Tokyo's Akihabara Electric Town, and Shanghai's Nanjing Road, are examples of urban hubs that resonate en masse. These image-dense landscapes have become the destination for vast numbers of global tourists who embark on consumer pilgrimages. What is the defining characteristic that makes these urban hubs so compelling? Prior to geographical arrival most tourists have been inundated with various forms of imagery depicting these locations. The spectacle facilitates visual inundation via mediums such as television, cinema, the Internet, travel books, and post-cards. It's not just that migratory tourists intend to consume the products and services found at these locations, but also the unmediated imagery of the urban spectacle.

The phenomena of architourism is also indicative of the success of highly imageable architectural components. Here again great numbers of global pilgrims flock to visually iconic landmarks. Historical examples include, the Taj Mahal, the Egyptian Pyramids, and China's Great Wall. The consistent and defining characteristic that these structures articulate is their individuality and iconoclastic form.

Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain (1991-1997) is the contemporary exemplification of architourism. The spectacular image of Frank Gehry's museum has

captivated popular imagination and revitalized an entire city. Previous to the construction of the museum, Bilbao was primarily an industrial city known for its shipyards and steel mills. Now due to the intense imageability of a single building Bilbao has experienced extraordinary economic renewal (Jencks 7). Additional contemporary examples of iconic architecture include: Will Alsop, Ontario College of Art and Design, (Toronto 2001-2004); Norman Foster, Swiss Re Headquarters, (London 2000-2004); Zaha Hadid, Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art, (Cincinnati 1999-2003); Rem Koolhaas, Public Library, (Seattle 2000-2004); and Daniel Libeskind, Royal Ontario Museum, (Toronto 2002-2007).



Figure 5 Zaha Hadid, Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art, Cincinnati 1999-2003; Will Alsop, Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto 2001-2004; Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao 1991-1997;

Rem Koolhaas, Public Library, Seattle 2000-2004; Norman Foster, Swiss Re Headquarters, London 2000-2004; and Daniel Libeskind, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto 2002-2007.

As a consequence of the “Bilbao effect” the global architectural community has engaged in a debate regarding the ethical outcomes of such rapid transformations and the global exportation of non-indigenous forms of architectural iconography (Jencks 7). While I acknowledge the importance of this debate, for the purpose of this paper I am primarily concerned with the identification of such global landmarks as highly imageable architectural components.

The discussion thus far has focused on architecture that demonstrates the concept of imageability in a pronounced manner. It is important, however, to note that imageability is also dependant on the inter-relationships between architectural components. A large-scale urban-landscape composed exclusively of pictorial architecture or iconic forms of architecture may become visually exhausting. The effectiveness of highly imageable components relies on the spatial sequencing of components. Iconoclastic forms of architecture may be positioned within the urban-landscape at moderate intervals, amongst more subtle forms of vernacular architecture to create focal points through contrast. One may think of music as a metaphor in which tempo is established and defined through a range of sounds including pauses, and silence.

In the construction of the painting *Dream City: Vancouver*, I drew upon concepts of imageability as they relate to the sequencing of iconic forms of architecture. Accordingly, geometric notations derived from iconic architecture have been collaged over imagery taken from homogenous regions of Vancouver’s vernacular architecture, such as the

condominiums at Concorde Pacific Place. The resulting image offers the viewer a new potential for Vancouver's architectural configuration that breaks the monotony of homogenous regions through the use of highly imageable focal points.

Historical Precedents: Suprematism, Constructivism, and Neoplasticism

As stated, an eidetic image does not conform solely to representational modes of picturing, rather, the vocabulary of imaging systems maintains a degree of abstraction. Associations may be drawn between the works of contemporary artists who employ eidetic imagery: Zaha Hadid, Benjamin Edwards, and Julie Mehretu, and the works of early twentieth century artists such as Kasimir Malevich (1878-1935), El Lissitzky (1890-1941), and Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). While the works of Suprematism, Constructivism, and Neoplasticism may not adhere to all the necessary characteristics of eidetic imagery, the visual language that they invented has been instrumental to contemporary practitioners.

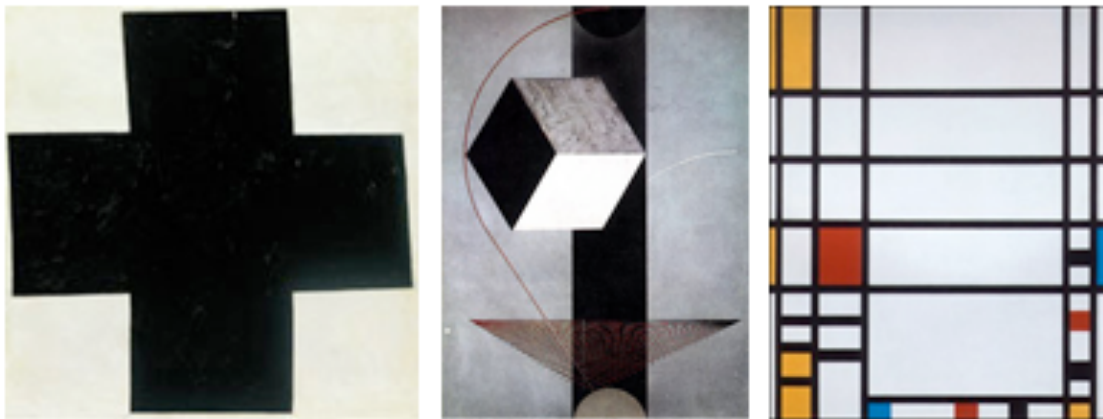


Figure 6 Kasimir Malevich, Black Cross, 1923, oil on canvas, 106 x 106.5 cm, Image public domain; El Lissitzky, Proun 99, 1924-5, water soluble and metallic paint on wood, 129 x 99 cm, Courtesy Yale

University Art Gallery; Piet Mondrian, Trafalgar Square, 1939-43, oil on canvas, 145.2 x 120 cm, Courtesy MOMA, New York.

Zaha Hadid

Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid employs an interdisciplinary approach to architectural design including the use of eidetic imagery. Hadid attended the Architectural Association of London where she participated in the task of theoretically reformulating, and deconstructing the modernist landscape that characterized the first half of the twentieth-century (Celant, Germano and Ramirez-Montagut 9).

Hadid established her own practice, Zaha Hadid Architects, in 1979, however her first major project, the Vita Fire Station in Weil am Rhein, was not built until 1994. During this fifteen-year span Hadid engaged in an experimental, interdisciplinary practice that was dominated by the creation of imagery in the form of drawings and large-format paintings (Celant, Germano and Ramirez-Montagut 9).

As early as 1976 Hadid began to use the geometric vocabulary and conceptual framework of Suprematism as a departure point for her experimentations. In *Malevich's Tektonik London*, (1976-77), Hadid appropriates designs from Malevich's, plaster model *Alpha Architekton*, (1920). In this painting Hadid hypothesizes the construction of a bridge over the Thames in the form of Malevich's *Alpha Architekton*. In turn Hadid attempts to transform the abstract tectonics of Suprematism into a concrete and utilitarian structure (Celant, Germano and Ramirez-Montagut 18).

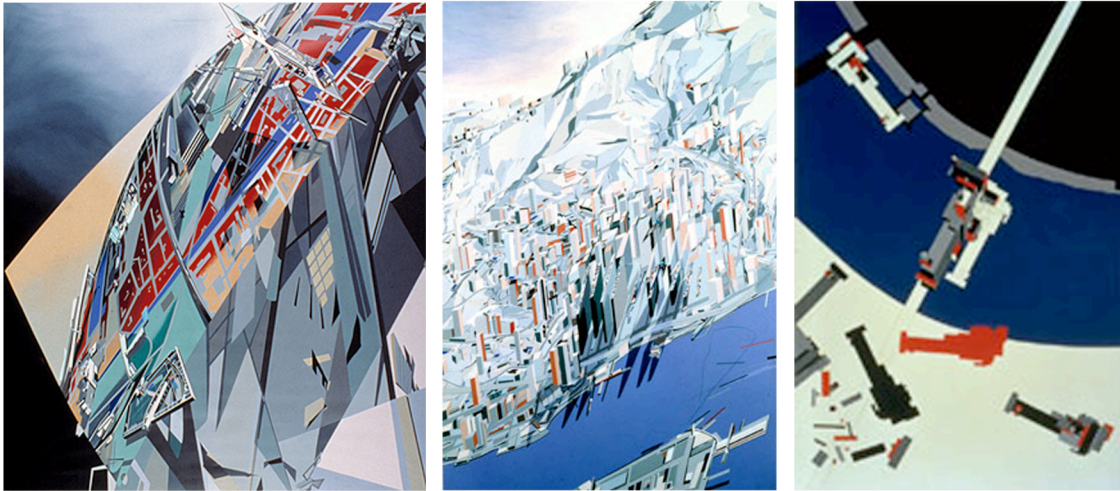


Figure 7 Zaha Hadid, *The World: 89 Degrees*, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 184 x 213 cm; Zaha Hadid, *The Peak: Hong Kong*, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 185 x 282 cm; Zaha Hadid, *Malevich's Tektonik*, 1976-1977, acrylic on canvas, Courtesy Zaha Hadid Architects.

In a 1987 interview with Alvin Boyarsky, Hadid discusses her use of experimental imagery:

The question was how to free the architectural plan in a different way than had been done in the past, how to free it to allow certain elements to operate independently, so that these elements could impose themselves more assertively on the urban condition. What may seem to be frivolous graphics has a special logic of its own. It may not be rational in the European sense, but it is logical in the way it moves people, in the way the building is used. (Celant, Germano and Ramirez-Montagut 45)

Hadid's imagery breaks free from the conventional architectural plan and offers the viewer spherical visions that both utilizes and deconstructs the elemental rectilinear vocabulary of modernist architecture. In her plans for the Vita Fire Station, (1990-94), Hadid fractures the rectangle, sending floating shards and shifting angles at the viewer. Hadid's explosive geometry reconfigures the modernist paradigm and expresses the high-speed dynamics of contemporary global culture (Celant, Germano and Ramirez-Montagut 19).

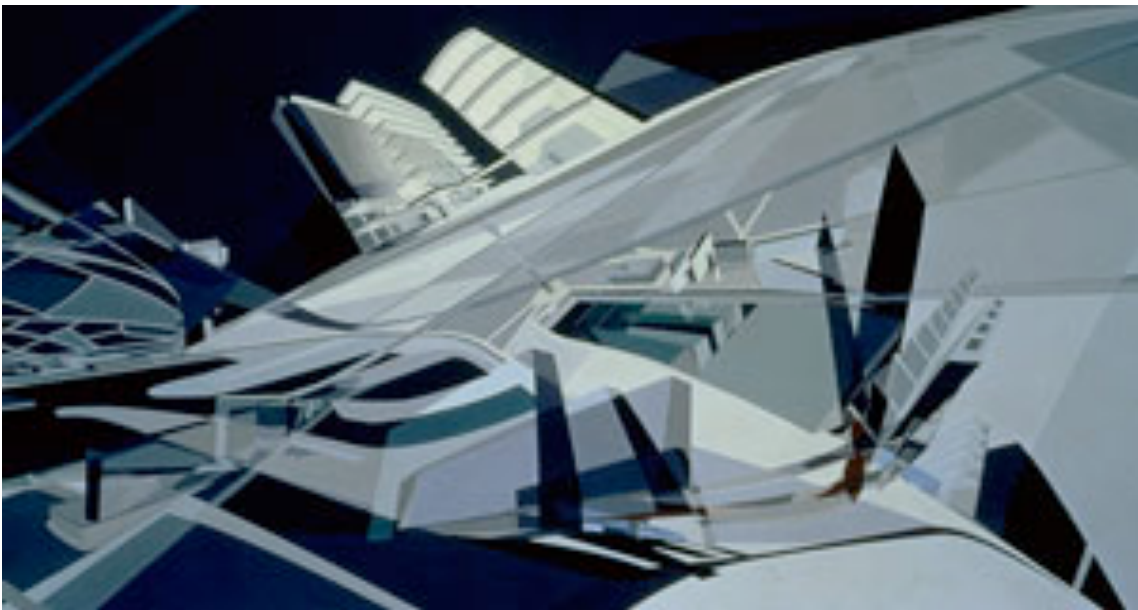


Figure 8 Zaha Hadid, *Aerial Perspective*: Painting, 1993, acrylic on canvas, Courtesy Zaha Hadid Architects.

During the development of Zollhof 3 Media Park Düsseldorf, (1989-93), Hadid composed several paintings including *Aerial Perspective*, (1993). In this work the viewer must wrestle with a vast tilting montage of transparent and opaque architectural structures seen via a multiplicity of perspectives and orientations (Celant, Germano and Ramirez-Montagut 24). Many of Hadid's large-format paintings encompass an expanse of the

urban-landscape, far beyond the local of her buildings. In turn, Hadid factors into her designs an array of architectural components that through context enforce affectivity.

The following computer animation provides the viewer with a visual simulation of the self-generative cellular growth or organic accumulation of repetitive forms. The animation was created by Neutral for Zaha Hadid and refers to her designs for the JVC hotel in Guadalajara, Mexico.

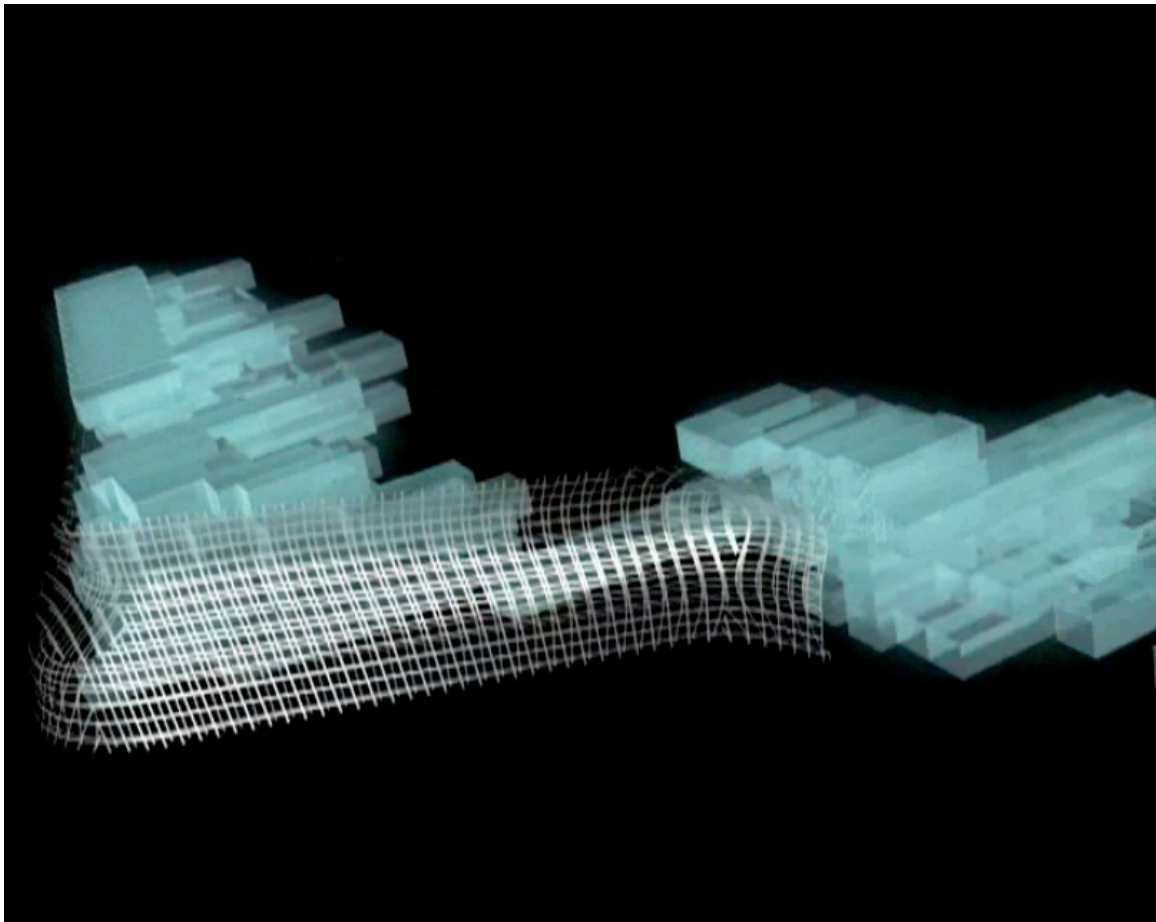


Figure 9 Zaha Hadid and Neutral, JVC Hotel, 2001, computer animation, Courtesy Neutral.

Through Hadid's nontraditional floor plans, spatial configurations open themselves up to the viewer inviting interactivity and open-ended interpretation. Hadid's eidetic imagery effectively balances the dichotomous languages of abstraction and representation through the combination of established, and unconventional techniques together with the realignment of the codes and conventions of different disciplines (Corner 164).

Benjamin Edwards

Contemporary artist Benjamin Edwards utilizes forms of eidetic imagery in his prints and large-scale paintings. Unlike Hadid, however, Edwards' work does not overtly theorize about future urban-planning developments or specific architectural projects. Edwards' paintings offer a commentary on the American consumer landscape and the many apparitions of roadside, and suburban spectacle. His vision presents a science-fiction portrayal of what unbridled consumer culture might look like in the twenty-third-century, a consumer utopia, or urban-planning and environmental dystopia, dependant on your view (Saltz).

The space that Edwards' paintings depict is essentially an a-geographical location in which the generic constructs of consumer culture – strip malls, fast-food franchises, gas stations, office buildings, and big-box stores – may be endlessly transplanted and replicated (Edwards). This form of development is indicative of a strain of architectural planning that is not concerned with context or specificity of site. From Starbucks, McDonalds, Texaco, to Wal-Mart, these are the American citadels of globalization,

specific or unique to nowhere, yet via globalization becoming everywhere, landscapes that to be poignantly traversed require an SUV.

In Edwards' painting *Convergence*, (2000-01) he depicts a phantasmagorical conglomerate of architectural types piled upon one another as though the horizontal of the suburban sprawl had been swept up into a vertical vortex of consumer mutation. The viewer is led to this mega-structure by an expansive boulevard that is layered with a complexity of geometric shapes reminiscent of Mondrian's, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (Saltz). Edwards' paintings occupy a hyperspace in which the geometric language of Suprematism is pushed to new limits through the inclusion of perspectival-space, and expansions in colour, and form.



Figure 10 Benjamin Edwards, *Convergence*, 2000-2001, 2001, acrylic, texture media, foam and spray paint on canvas, 97 x 145 inches, Courtesy Benjamin Edwards.

“Ether matter” is the term that Edwards uses to describe the atmospheric geometric material that floats in many of his paintings and prints. These abstract logos are representative of pictorial architecture and the various forms of the contemporary American consumer spectacle that manifest themselves in urban hubs, and along the American roadway (Edwards). This is the stuff of Times Square and Route 66.

Edwards employs a multifaceted approach to the development of his imagery that begins with fieldwork and online research. Images that refer to architecture and consumer culture are gathered via digital camera stills, magazines, newspapers, video games, blueprints, and online sources. These images are then transferred into computer programs such as Illustrator, PhotoShop, Sketch-Up, Flash, True Space, and 3D Studio Max. Once the geometry of the imagery has been simplified in these programs the various shapes are separated and categorized according to content, colour, and size. These shapes are then filtered through what Edwards refers to as “machines”. A “machine” is a program that uses Flash Animation to draw from the studio’s databank of architectural components to generate random sequences of shapes that may be used as compositional layers in his paintings (Edwards).



Figure 11 Benjamin Edwards, New York Ramble, 2002, acrylic, texture media and foam on canvas, 36 x 50 inches; Benjamin Edwards, The Monuments of Passaic, 2002, acrylic, texture media and foam on canvas, 59 1/4 x 49 1/2 inches, Courtesy Benjamin Edwards.

Edwards has also developed “machines” that deconstruct and reassemble the architectural ingredients of ubiquitous fast-food franchises, gas stations, office buildings, big-box stores, and condominiums (Edwards). The by-product of this re-imaging process is the random mutation of architectures’ “B-side”, the architectural equivalent of the *X-Men*. Through the use of his “machines” Edwards offers a rethinking of the contemporary urban-landscape and design methods. As Hadid fractured the rectilinear format of modernism, Edwards ‘slices and dices’, then reconstructs the vocabulary of big-box stores, and other forms of consumer architecture. Through the use of his “machines” Edwards re-images the generic structures of the American consumer landscape into, however mutant, unique, and hybrid forms.

Julie Mehretu

Julie Mehretu is a contemporary artist and colleague of Benjamin Edwards. Mehretu's large-scale paintings contain elements of architectural and gestural drawing. The architectural details in her paintings refer to blue prints, perspectival drawings, and master plans, while the gestural marks allude to organic processes such as wildfires, and human migration. Through a cyclical activity of layering, Mehretu builds up a complexity of drawing elements and then uses an over-head projector to outline, and paint geometric forms created by the artist in Adobe Illustrator (Mehretu). Some of these painted geometric shapes speak directly to Suprematism, and the abstract language of Malevich. In both, *Congress*, (2003), and *Looking Back to a Bright New Future*, (2003), Mehretu has painted Malevich's white, and black squares floating into a whirlwind of dynamic geometric activity (Mehretu).

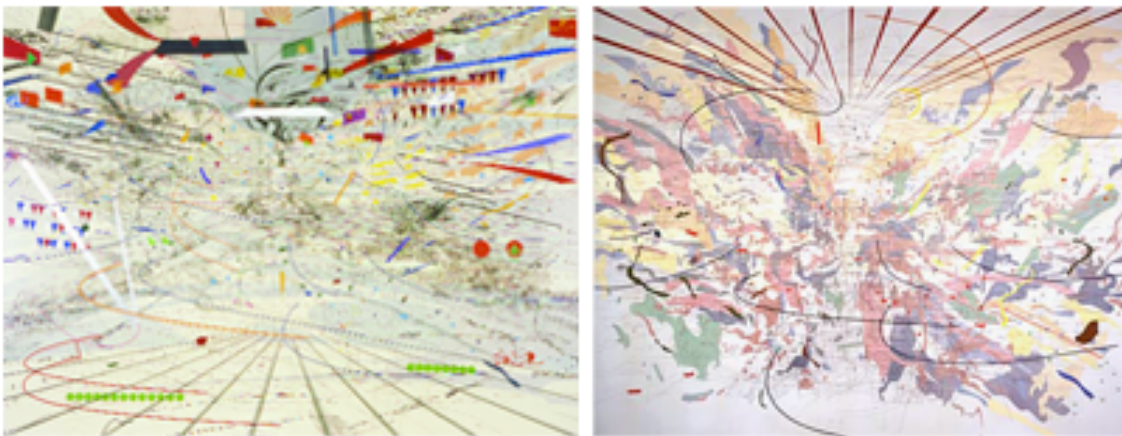


Figure 12 Julie Mehretu, *Congress*, 2003, ink and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 96 inches; Julie Mehretu, *Looking Back to a Bright New Future*, 2003, ink and acrylic on canvas, 95 x 119 inches, Courtesy Julie Mehretu.

Architecture for Mehretu is an environment for social activity, upheaval, and migration (Mehretu). As eidetic imagery, Mehretu's work asks the architect to consider the subsequent uses of their structures, not only conventional issues such as navigation, and circulation, but also society's unexpected appropriations. Mehretu's is a land of quantum events, filled with spontaneous uprisings, natural disasters, and explosions (Chau, Rabinowitz, et al. 33). For Mehretu a stadium is not only a place for sporting, or musical events but also a venue for political rallies, and potential refugee, or prison camp. In an interview, Mehretu stated:

The visionary cosmology in my work stems from a desire to put things in context. I want that to be the way people look at the painting. I'm not necessarily making them to be epic, but the scales are big and there are many things going on. You can go from one point to the other and each point has a stage of importance. It mimics the way we operate in the bigger organism of our families, our villages, our cities, our time, our history. It's about putting things in their context. (Chau, Rabinowitz, et al. 37)

Mehretu's paintings juxtapose the calculated ordering of architectural structures, and master plans, with the chaos of social use. Architecture here is an arena or theatre for social and historical events (Mehretu). Mehretu's work does not demonstrate how to make better architecture, as does Hadid's', rather she is focused on everything that happens within the context of architecture after it has been built.

Mehretu's paintings function as visual maps that reconstruct spatio-temporal histories, offering the viewer a kaleidoscopic vision of socio-political power dynamics. Rather than a traditional linear timeline, space and time merge in Mehretu's work to form a non-linear field of Spatio-temporal activity (Chau, Rabinowitz, et al. 23). Mehretu offers the viewer a glimpse of the surface of this spatio-temporal plane in which the entirety of a civilizations' history may be seen unfolding all at once. The effect is the imaging of a complex vortex of socio-political narratives, played-out within the context of architectural structures, as seen through the eye of the hurricane (Chau, Rabinowitz, et al. 33).

In Mehretu's *Stadia Series*, (2004) architectural and graphic imagery relating to sporting events are appropriated to explore issues of nationalism, and global conventions in violence control. Mehretu's use of the stadium refers not only to contemporary sporting events including the Olympics, but also reaches back historically to the Roman Coliseum. In the Roman Coliseum society's repressed fantasies of violence were enacted by athletes, and gladiators, enabling citizens to live vicariously through the competitor's actions. Such events are precursors to the contemporary spectacle. A Sporting event may act as a measure of control for defining the parameters in which a civil society and its obedient subjects may participate in, and witness, violence (Chau, Rabinowitz, et al. 12).



Figure 13 Julie Mehretu, *Stadia Series*, 2004, ink and acrylic on canvas, 108 x 144 inches (each), Courtesy Julie Mehretu.

Mehretu's paintings function as eidetic imagery by commanding the viewer to look at these environments in a new way – they are open-ended. Mehretu's drawings, and paintings are didactic, not in the sense that they attempt to catalyze a definitive outcome, but by forcing the viewer to relearn how to view, and conceptualize their landscape. The process of viewing or visually navigating oneself through the complexity of information in Mehretu's imagery is much closer to the physical experience of real-world spatial navigation than traditional forms of picturing. One might find oneself looking for a legend in one of Mehretu's paintings, but no such tool exists. Alternatively, viewers must create their own meaning through subjective interpretation. As with Hadid, and Edwards, Mehretu presents the viewer with a disorienting array of multiple perspectives, which in turn expands the images' number of potential interpretations.

It is essential to note that relative to historical urban and architectural renderings, Zaha Hadid, Benjamin Edwards, and Julie Mehretu have been developing increasingly complex imagery. This expansion in complexity may be seen through the use of multi-temporal spaces, multiple-perspectives, transparencies, and formal characteristics such as quantity and diversity of forms. By including a complex range of urban factors in their imagery, these artists have avoided contextual reductionism. This magnification of complexity is appropriate since cities are evolving away from being relatively simple arrangements, into increasingly complex systems.

Chapter 2

Reconfiguring Vancouver

The premise for the eidetic image *Dream City: Vancouver*, as well as the subsequent series of paintings, is that each painting will focus on the exploration of a particular urban-centre. As Zaha Hadid, Benjamin Edwards, and Julie Mehretu have established specific areas of conceptual interest (fracturing the rectilinear vocabulary of modernist architecture; visualizing the American consumer landscape; and mapping global socio-political dynamics, respectively), the purpose of my paintings is to create visual models for the rethinking and reconfiguration of specific cities, based on my own subjective organizational logic derived from urban exploration. The resulting imagery deals with the discrete nuances, and architectural vernacular of each city.

Urban Exploration

Each project begins with preparatory visual, and literary research. In addition, Google Image Search is used to develop a comprehensive image-library of architectural components (paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks) for each city. To date, most of the imagery gathered via Google originates from websites and blog postings by tourists, tourism interest groups, and architectural enthusiasts.

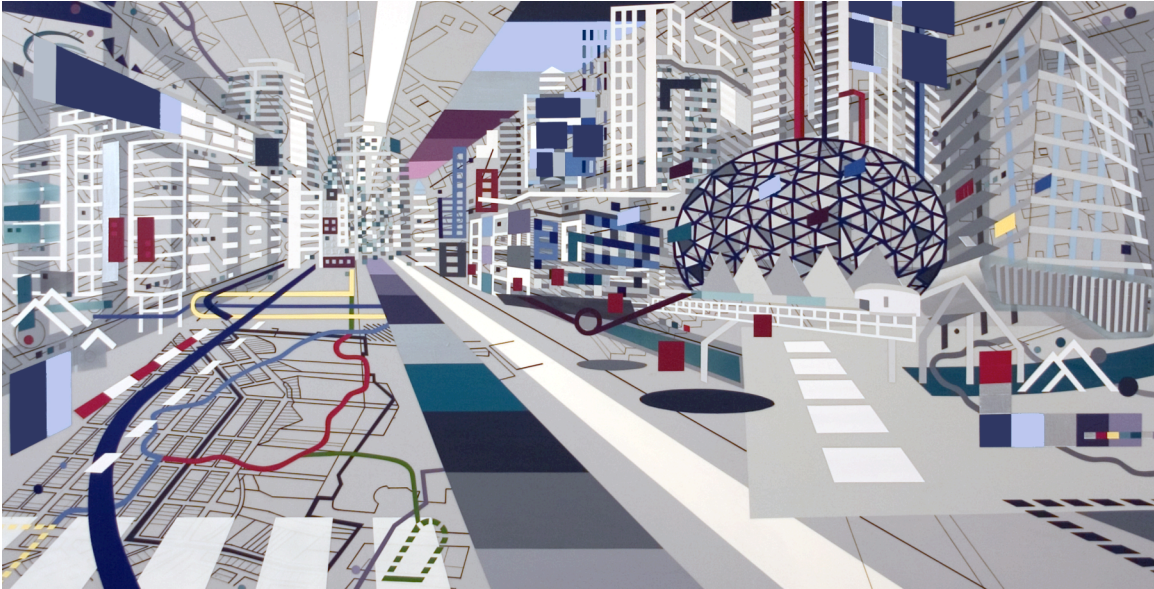


Figure 14 Jay Gazley, *Dream City: Vancouver*, detail (in progress), 2008, ink, spray paint and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 56 inches.

During the 1950's Guy Debord and The Situationist International advocated drifting, or roaming (derive is the French word used) through the streets of urban centres.

In a derive one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and encounters they find there. The element of chance is less determinant than one might think: from the derive point of view cities have a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortices which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. (Knabb 50)

Following their excursions Debord and the Situationists would create psychogeographic maps, and regroup areas of the city based on their experiences, in an attempt “to put the

spectator at ease with a city of apparent disorder, exposing the strange logic that lay beneath the surface” (Sadler 82). Psychogeographic maps break from the Cartesian mode of picturing by reconfiguring parts of the city according to a subjective logic derived from personal experience.

...Situationist cartography admitted that its overview of the city was reconstructed in the imagination, piecing together an experience of space that was actually terrestrial, fragmented, subjective, temporal, and cultural. (Sadler 82)

The Situationists developed a technique called *detournement* that describes the act of appropriating, transforming, and reconfiguring parts of the spectacle or the city (Sadler 44). Some contemporary activists have embraced *detournement* strategies of intervention, and modification in the form of billboard graffiti, ad-busting and online hacking.

...tourism in general and the vacation in particular would come to stand in for all of the ills of a materialist consumer culture that Guy Debord would anoint the society of the spectacle. (Fogle 20)

Franz Ackermann is a contemporary artist who uses urban-tourism as both a subject matter, and a methodology (Fogle 20). While on the road, Ackermann produces what he refers to as mental maps, which are small works rendered in pencil, ink, watercolour, and gouache on paper. These pictorial travelogues are produced in hotel rooms, and trace the trajectory of his walks throughout the cities that he traverses (Fogle 23). Ackermann’s

mental maps contain colourful clusters of cellular-like nodes, or chasms, crammed full of disparate architectural geographies. They are non-rational cartographic renderings of vernacular architecture that depict a vertiginous sense of location, time, space, and subjective experience (Decter 35).

Since making his first international trip to Asia in 1991 on a DAAD grant, during which he spent a year living in Hong Kong, Ackermann has evolved a "psychogeographical" aspects of travel as embodied in the figure of the tourist. (Fogle 20)

As a tourist, Ackermann explores the middle class experience of all-inclusive Club Med vacations, and contemporary forms of global leisure such as, eco-tourism, adventure-tourism and architourism (Fogle 20). The tourists reading of the city is a cursory browse that skims the mere surface of the urban-landscape – momentarily consuming a sight, then pressing on to the next guided tour, or landmark – the tourist reduces the city to a viewpoint, racing from one vista to the next, like competitors on the CBS series *The Amazing Race*. Out of this mobility, Ackermann assembles a psychedelic landscape that reflects the utopian mind-set of the tourist. Ackermann's paintings conjure an experience akin to watching episodes of *Lonely Planet*, or *Pilot Guides* on acid.



Figure 15 Franz Ackermann, Helicopter xvi (On the balcony), 2001, oil on canvas, 287 x 278 cm; Franz Ackermann, Amaryllis, 2003, oil on canvas, 235 x 325 cm, Courtesy Franz Ackermann.

A fundamental aspect of my work is the fieldwork phase in which I explore and photograph a city's architectural-landscape. This segment is significant as it allows me to experience the urban-landscape first-hand, and develop a personal relationship with the city based on psychological and physical interactivity. Cycling and walking are my preferred modes of spatial exploration as they are the most physical and have a low environmental impact. That said, a more comprehensive experience might be obtained if the entire transportation palimpsest is explored. In "The Practice of Everyday Life", Michel de Certeau describes the operations of urban walking:

...the walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on the one hand he actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours)

and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory). He thus makes a selection. (98)

Through the intuitive process of path selection I may negotiate an urban trajectory that engenders a subjective organizational logic of the city. The performative acts of skateboarders, parkour acrobats, rollerbladers, and bike couriers also engage the urban-landscape physically, and psychologically (Mitchell, Placing 157). As with the walker, these urban performers create mental maps of preferred routes throughout the city. In doing so, they generate a psychogeographical conception of the city that is composed of a selection of disparate parts, reassembled in the mind to form an evolving imaginary-geography. During the construction of my paintings, I draw upon my own psychogeographical perception of the city.

The following images were photographed during urban excursions in Vancouver, or gathered online via Google Image Search. In total over 300 photographs were taken of Vancouver.

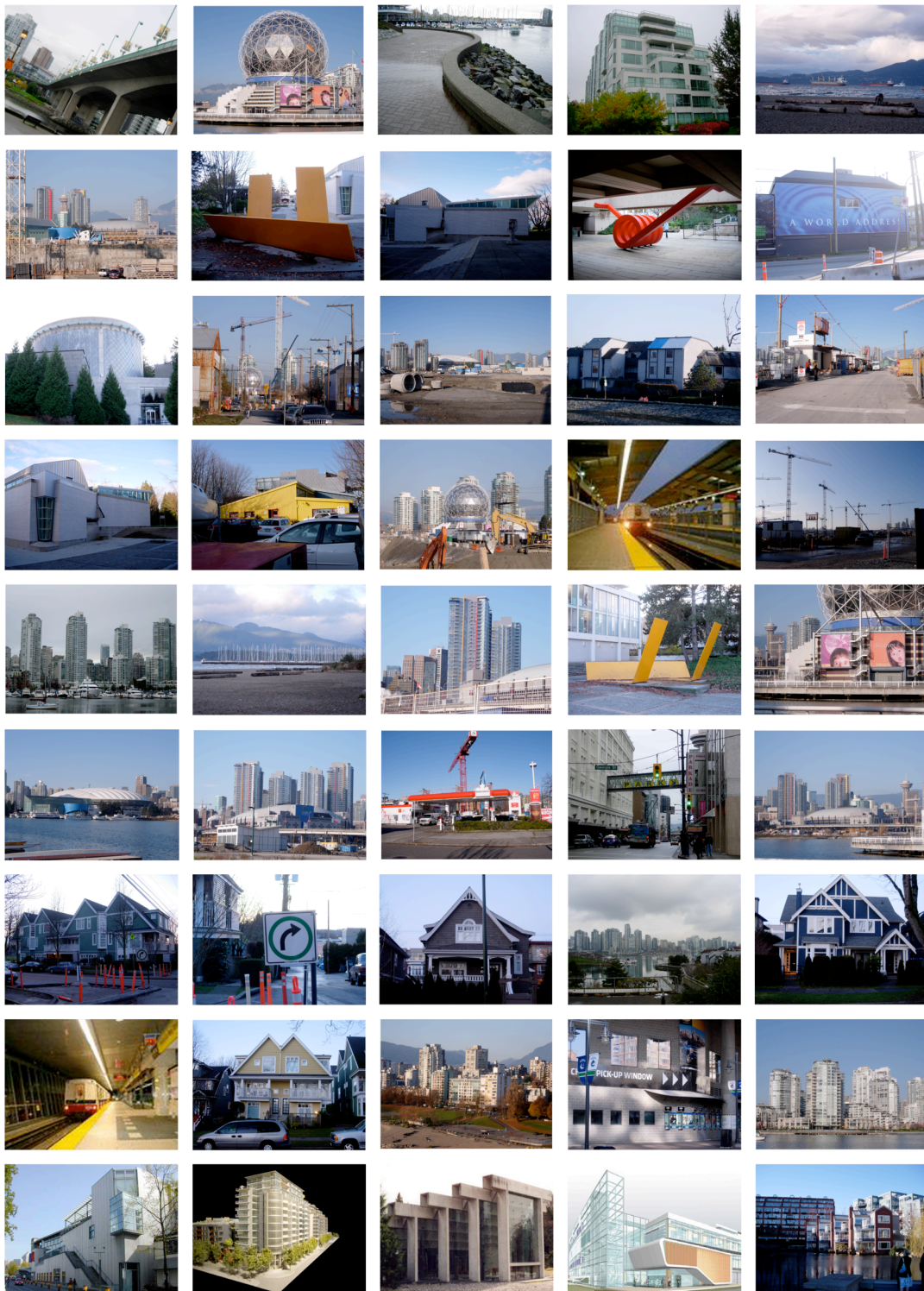


Figure 16 Jay Gazley, Vancouver, 2007-2008, digital photographs.

Painting Methodology

In the construction of *Dream City: Vancouver*, displaced urban vignettes were collaged together through a process that calls upon my photo journals, memory and imagination.

A digital projector was used to draw and paint geometric notations that refer to buildings, floor plans, master plans, models, maps, transit routes, and transportation networks. These geometric shapes parallel the descriptive language of Lynch's five architectural components (paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks), and pictorial architecture.

My approach to image building involves a process of layering successive generations of architectural components. In the case of *Dream City: Vancouver*, the driving impulse was to depict a complexity of Vancouver's architectural components with a focus on imagery taken from large-scale architectural projects such as Concorde Pacific Place, Coal Harbour, Portside, Bayshore Gardens, International Village, City Gate, and the South-East False Creek site of the 2010 Olympic Village (Berelowitz 101). Imagery from these projects has been depicted on the base layer of the painting, over which I have collaged potential generations of architectural components. The painting is, therefore, an a-temporal depiction that suggests possibilities for future layers of urban development.



Figure 17 Jay Gazley, *Dream City: Vancouver*, detail (in progress), 2008, ink, spray paint and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 56 inches.

The purpose of this project has been to physically explore Vancouver, and create a visual model for the rethinking and reconfiguration of the city's architectural-landscape. The resulting painting presents an eidetic image that is reflective of my psychogeographical conception of the city, and Vancouver's potential for future evolution. The painting *Dream City: Vancouver*, acknowledges that Vancouver is a work in progress, a complex and dynamic system in flux.

Conclusion

The project *Re-imaging Place: The Eidetic Image and Vancouver's Urban-Landscape*, constitutes an exercise in the development of a methodological approach for the exploration, and imaging of architectural concerns as they relate to specific urban-centres. Through the pairing of Lynch's five architectural components, and pictorial architecture, an artist, designer or architect may use the operational language of these components, within eidetic imagery, as a means of describing the contemporary architectural-landscape. In addition, the visual languages of Suprematism, Constructivism, and Neoplasticism, may be used in the development of a geometric language to be deployed in imagery, as established by contemporaries such as Zaha Hadid, Benjamin Edwards, and Julie Mehretu.

Through the use of eidetic imagery, a researcher may suggest future possibilities for the development of the urban-landscape, as well as stimulate discourse, and creative invention. Forms of eidetic imagery are intended to inspire ideation, and provide new models for understanding the urban-landscape as active potential. The painting *Dream City: Vancouver* inhabits a virtual space that simulates a multiplicity of spatio-temporal configurations. It presents the viewer with a kaleidoscopic vision that resists the univocal, and poses a variety of developmental narratives and perspectives – demonstrating several key characteristics of the eidetic image. The current research methodology for the exploration, and imaging of cities is a working model that will be developed further in future projects. Through the study of cities I may expand my knowledge of architectural and urban planning theories as they relate to actual environments.

The use of eidetic imagery may enable designers to move freely through ideas and forms without the traditional architectural planning constraints presented by client, economy, and policy. When constructing an eidetic image in paint, or any other medium, an artist, designer, or architect may allow the capabilities and unique properties of the chosen medium to inform the creative process. In relation to Zaha Hadid's use of unconventional materials, Joseph Giovannini has written:

The impact of a design material on design often occurred unintentionally - the process of investigation affecting subject under study inadvertently, as in Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. Through feedback loops, the mediums informed the vision. Hadid escaped the drafting table, and in acts of interdisciplinarity, she used mediums whose material logic helped her to invent an architecture that the T square and parallel rule no longer controlled. It was not what the brick wanted to be, but what drawing, watercolor, models, reliefs, storyboards, the photocopier, and most recently the computer allowed and encouraged an idea to become. (Celant, Germano and Ramirez-Montagut, 23)

It is therefore not a question of whether painting or any other medium is a legitimate vehicle for the exploration of ideas relating to architecture and urbanization. The key to creating an effective eidetic image is to allow the unique characteristics, and properties of the chosen medium (painting, drawing, modeling, mapping, and/or computer animation) to inform the creative process – to see where painting may take architecture, and conversely where architecture may take painting.

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