

# PREFACE

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"Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking about them."

This quote by the famous mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead implies that a threshold moment in evolution can be surpassed only once humans have been able to automate increasingly complex tasks. This quote is also the motto of IBM's new perspective on the state of information technology: *the Grand Challenge* (cf. Dagan Gilat in this volume).

IBM believes that we are at this very threshold right now in computing. We believe that we are at this very threshold right now in thinking, too - in thinking the postmechanical paradigm "Net." We live in the Age of the Global Net, whether or not we are inclined to accept it. Living in the Global Net means living in dynamic open spaces. There is a permanent draught. If we don't perpetually keep on the move, it can get pretty cold. That's why living in the Global Net calls for permanent activity - interactivity. A net only makes sense if there are many nets simultaneously. At its heart, a net is an ambivalent entity. In a net, a) everything is intertwined - 1; b) a net is empty - 0. In a word, a net is a mixed-reality environment, dominated by *liquid logic*; a place which "is nowhere in particular but everywhere at once"; a space which "is fundamentally and pro-

foundly antispatial" [1]. In the ultimate limit, there will be no other choice but to go to quantum parallelism in which 1 and 0 are literally present at once.

If we do not harness and automate the liquid logic of quantum parallelism, running 1 and 0 at once, we will, in the long run, be incapable of taming the exponentially increasing complexity of the Global Net and thus of surpassing the next threshold moment in evolution. That way we will be incapable of keeping up with computing in the future, notably with next-generation quantum computing, based just upon 1 and 0 at once, which will increase computational power by astronomical amounts. There is a menace, then, that our thinking will be sucked into the black hole of networked complexity, while computing will not. So the basic question we face today is the same that was raised by Félix Guattari about a decade ago: "How to produce, tap, enrich, and permanently reinvent our subjectivity in order to make it compatible with the Universe of changing values?" [2] - or with the Multiverse, as we will say in this volume (cf. David Deutsch in this volume).

We believe that a new kind of architecture - *heterarchitecture* -, conceived as a hybrid, mixed-reality environment, could help accelerate the process of our automating liquid logic in much the same way as IBM's vision of autonomic computing could help manage the increasing system complexity of high performance information technology application environments, which will be largely self-managing, self-diagnostic and transparent to the user.

The contributions to this volume share a common assumption in that each is an attempt to stretch our awareness of this problem as well as to outline an approach both in designing and constructing a new kind of authentic architecture of the digi-

tal era and in organizing the architectural practice as well. Of course, it takes much more than a new kind of architecture to solve the problem. However, architecture has always been a multi-layered discipline, playing a catalytic role within society: architecture as representation. This is why we, non-architects, have decided to discuss the interplay between society and technology on the playing field of contemporary architecture. To be sure, it will be a home game for architects to be playing *Disappearing Architecture* with us, and probably easy enough for them to win. But in any case, playing this game can help extend "the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking about them."

The book *Disappearing Architecture: From Real to Virtual to Quantum*, based on the principle of shared research interests, has its origins in the international conference *IT WORKS OR IT NETWORKS - Development of Real and Virtual Space in the Age of the Global Net* held at the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia, in September 2003. The conference, which was developed and hosted by mind(21)-factory for Knowledge Engineering and Knowledge Design Stuttgart, Frankfurt/M, Berlin in cooperation with SPECTRA Center of Excellence at the Faculty of Architecture, STU Bratislava, was made possible through initial organizational efforts by Maros Finka and Nada Hraszkova, both of them members of the Faculty of Architecture STU Bratislava, and Georg Flachbart, mind(21)factory Stuttgart.

On this occasion, we would like to extend our special thanks to all conference speakers for coming to Bratislava to share their knowledge; and to the Institute for Visual Media at ZKM Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany, for presenting their much-acclaimed interactive multimedia artwork *Web of Life*, created by Michael

Gleich and Jeffrey Shaw, as an integral part of the conference.

Special thanks go also to all the contributors to this volume, notably to all "new-comers" who did not attend the conference, for their positive reactions to our invitation to cooperate in making this book happen; and to David Deutsch for suggesting the subtitle of the book.

Thanks also to explicit ffm for actively supporting the design process. Lastly, we would like to thank the publisher, Birkhäuser - Publishers for Architecture, and Ulrich Schmidt, chief editor in architecture and design, and Ulrike Ruh, editor, for believing in the idea of this book.

And now, let's start playing *Disappearing Architecture* - a home game for architects and an away game for us.

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Georg Flachbart and Peter Weibel

### References

- [1] William J. Mitchell, "City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn," MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1995, p. 8.
- [2] Félix Guattari, "Chaosmosis: An Ethical-Aesthetic Paradigm," Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1995, p. 124.