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gennaio/febbraio **2022**

**Riviste
di architettura.
Traiettorie**

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2022

Riviste di architettura. Traiettorie

a cura di

Fernanda De Maio, Anna Ghiraldini
e Michela Maguolo



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monica centanni

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edizioni@engramma.it

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+39 041 257 14 61

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The Digital Turn in Architectural Trade Literature

The Case of "The Architects' Journal", 1990-2010

Andrea Foffa

This article explores the changes in architectural trade and industry across the digital turn of the 1990s and of the 2000s in the UK through a focused analysis of "The Architects' Journal" (AJ), a weekly magazine published by EMAP Plc. Founded in 1896, the AJ is a historical and reputable source of the British architectural community, whose editorial focus is to "elucidate architecture as a process: the how as much as the what" (Greenberg 1992, 11). The AJ has occupied a specific niche within the UK-based architectural trade literature of the Twentieth and Twenty-first century, so much so that it is hard to consider direct competitors. "The Royal Institute of British Architects Journal" (RIBA), for instance, differed in its frequency of publication (monthly) and it circulated within the captive audience of members registered to the professional body. "Building Design" (BD), the other weekly trade publication launched in 1969, circulated for most of its years free of charge and eventually migrated entirely online in 2014 (Woodman 2014). The AJ has always been paid for, and owned by a public limited publishing company. Its unique positioning in the market allows to look critically at data such as its drop in circulation (from eighteen thousand copies monthly in 1992 to six thousand in 2014) and increase of annual subscription fee (from £53 in 1990 to £75 in 2000, to £150 in 2010) independently from the editorial progression of RIBA and BD, and instead by inscribing its history as a publication directly within the crisis of the publishing industry and emergence of digital media.

In order to do so, all AJ issues between 1990 and 2010 have been systematically researched, employing visual analysis of its graphic design as well as of the imagery used to substantiate architectural discourse. Focusing on the relationship between the journal's design and the imagery employed within allows to analyse the progressive move of the magazine

into the digital space in correlation with the shifting drawing practices of British architects from hand-drawn to computer-aided design (CAD). This correlation shows that the AJ's transition from a physical, paper-bound magazine to a part physical and part digital publication has taken place over the course of two decades. This article highlights different confluences of historical and technical factors around the journal in the two decades of the digital turn. Such investigation considers the editorial processes of architectural trade publications as a focal lens for the working and drawing practices of British architects. Contrary to consumers' magazines that feature mainly press images, architectural trade journals make prominent use of drawings not originally designed for the purpose of being published. In fact such drawings often originate as design proposals by architects for the consideration of clients or competitions and therefore embody the processes' negotiations, as they must appeal to whoever has final approving power. Once they appear in the journal they are extrapolated from this context, and repurposed for a different communicative scope: to visually substantiate the journal's editorial stance. Finally, this paper draws extensively from – and hopes to contribute to – analysis of mediation carried out by design historians such as Tony Fry, Guy Julier, Viviana Narotzky and summarised by Grace Lees-Maffei in her 2009 article *The Production-Consumption-Mediation Paradigm*. Maffei's work has been key to studying the Architects' Journal in two ways. Firstly, as a mediating channel at the intersection between production and consumption of architecture and as a locus "not only of historical interest but embedded in the formation of meaning" (Fry 1988, 12) for architectural culture among the professional readership. Secondly, as a purposefully designed mediating channel, whose design history mirrors the changes in architectural culture at large via its editorial, graphic and organisational "making of" processes (Lees-Maffei 2009). Other theories and concepts underpinning this research are found in the analysis of Kurt Lewin's "Gatekeeping model" applied to journals and flows of information, particularly around ideas of "newsworthiness" (Clayman, Reisner 1998), as well as the lexicon developed by Roland Barthes to elaborate on the use of images in the press and in conjuncture with information delivered in written form.

In the first issue of the year 1990, the AJ published a prescient editorial by architecture critic Martin Pawley, commenting on the upcoming challenges

of the British architect. In this piece, Pawley argued: “in recent history architects have not been seen as producers of images that people ‘like’ or ‘dislike’, any more than car designers have been seen as contributors to the greenhouse effect. In the next decade it seems that both new identities are destined to become inescapable” (Pawley, 1990). This inescapability underpinned a crisis of the British architectural profession, that had to do with its detrimental distance from the wider public and consequent lack of voice in mainstream media. In fact, it has been researched how architectural coverage as a topical category did not really exist in national papers before 1984. The event attributed to having changed the course, sprouting a prolific line of topical architectural discourse, was the unexpected attack to the British architectural profession delivered in a formal speech by Charles Prince of Wales on 30 May 1984, at the 150th-anniversary gala dinner of the Royal Institute of British Architect. Highly critical of recent developments and current architectural training and practice, Prince Charles’ remarks painted a portrait of British architects as arrogant and out of touch professionals, who “for far too long [...] have consistently ignored the feelings and wishes of the mass of ordinary people in this country” (*A Speech by HRH The Prince of Wales* 2021, para. 5).

The media debate originated from the event was unprecedented, and, after a first wave of hostile coverage, turned into “a steep rise in media and public interest in architecture and design throughout the 1990s” (Rattenbury 2002, 136) making architects suddenly very aware of their public persona, and of the importance of communicating their work to the public. Architectural historian Kester Rattenbury’s historical investigation of media coverage focuses on proving how the originating discourse provided a preferential treatment for large developers’ projects in the papers, but building on her work allows to shift the focus, in turn, to changes in architectural publications such as the *AJ*, and pinpoint their strategies to appeal to architects while at the same time providing them with solutions to profit off this mediatic turn.

The first visible change in coverage was the sudden promotion of communication specialist, a profession that had only just been allowed to cater to architects, upon initial changes to the Architects’ Code of Conduct in 1973 and further and more extensive changes in 1982 which fully

legalised the act of self-promotion (Trombley 1982). The scope of architectural public relations (PR) was never clearly defined, and in fact encompassed varied outcomes: media outreach, corporate identity, publications of printed promotional material to list a few. Various professionals such as Carolyn Larkin began their PR consultancy work in this context, specialising their businesses in architecture and construction; Larkin for instance set up her own agency in 1991, branching out of practices that employed her to work under a communications' director (C. Larkin, personal communication, 7 December 2016). Coverage on architectural PR in trade media continued well into the 1990s, as the need to communicate their work was identified as a possible survival strategy during the national recession of 1990-1991 (*Marketing for Survival*, 1992).

A 1994 AJ article titled "how to choose a PR consultant" reported: "it could be argued that architects are their own worst enemies. While not exactly shrinking violets, [...] they are still very much "gentlemen" practitioners to whom PR hustle is an almost alien concept. They believe their work speaks for itself. It doesn't" (Parkyn 1994, 38). The emergence of architectural PR professionals redefined the relationship between architect and press. The work that Philip Schlesinger, scholar in Cultural Policy, was carrying out in those years is helpful to define the dynamic between the press, source organisations, and coverage. Schlesinger's argument is based on the fact that "the press, in amplifying some voices and muting others, in distorting some messages and letting others come through loud and clear [...] does not do so on its own: groups differ in their ability to make their voices heard and to direct and shape their messages for the public" (Schlesinger 1990, 37). His position in media studies of the time was particularly important to extend the definition of source: while earlier research in the field had concentrated on institutionalised groups who enjoyed positions of influence, Schlesinger proposed a variety of groups, with different aims and degrees of media credibility, competing for coverage. Therefore, it can be argued that PR professionals too belonged to the category of "source organisations", as they were proactively intervening in the way architects appeared in the media, monitoring the production of architectural coverage.

Among the methods employed by source organisations to negotiate coverage, PR professionals operated through “information subsidy” (a term originally drawn from communication scholar Oscar Gandy): they facilitated the journalists’ acquisition of information by organising it on their behalf, which journalists would otherwise have to provide or substitute at a greater expense of time and effort (Rattenbury 1989). PR consultants tended to consider four broad areas of press interest to target: “news stories – often stories you don’t really want to talk about, such as delays on contract, vast overspends; people stories – promotions, profiles, etc.; picture stories – stunning new images of a competition winner or a new development; features” (Young 2006, 74).

Although there are many ways in which source organisations can negotiate control of coverage, including networking and lobbying, an analysis of PR professionals’ work through a material culture approach reveals that two objects in particular satisfied the definition of information subsidy: the press release, and the image. The press release was a paper document that was sent out via post to a mailing list of press contacts; it presented a story written according to the information subsidy principle, which is to say in a way that could be quickly adapted to an editorial piece or published with minimal editing as a news story. As per the image, we can look back at what Martin Pawley described as the “search for charismatic imagery” in the previously mentioned AJ article.

At the turn of the 1990s, the AJ was almost entirely a monochrome publication, with the central “building feature” being the only colour printed content. The graphic design revolved around a structure of three text columns per page, and any imagery generally sat within this grid. Fig. 1 shows an example of a double-page spread; red lines have been juxtaposed to highlight the graphic grid. The spread features visual imagery of three types: a photograph to the centre-left, technical drawings (floor plans and volumetric sketches) to the bottom right and a perspective drawing on the top right corner. The majority of the content is written text, and images are constricted in blocks a few centimetres wide, despite the fact that the information they carry could be appreciated in a larger size – in particular photograph and floor plans. The use of caption commentary reveals specific characteristics in the context of professional journals.



1 | Richard MacCormac, *Designing cities with democracy*, "The Architects' Journal", vol. 191, n. 11 (14 March 1990), 70-71. Graphic modifications by the author. Courtesy of "The Architect's Journal".

2 | Close-up of the caption box from Fig. 1.



3 | *A hard stare at Paddington*, "The Architects' Journal", vol. 191, n. 14 (4 April 1990), 26-27. Courtesy of "The Architect's Journal".

As it can be seen in Fig. 2 (a close-up of the caption text box from the previous image), the accompanying text does not provide information on the nature of the images published. Applying a Barthesian terminology, this linguistic message does not carry out the function of anchorage, which is commonly found in press photograph and advertisements (Barthes 1977). In other words, since the AJ expected its specialised readership to know how to read architectural drawings, captions rarely provided a denominative definition of the visual image (i.e. what kind of image is it?), rather they stood in a complementary relationship with the main text, and contributed to the overall narrative of the article. Images, therefore, appeared to be of secondary importance compared to the captions, which corroborated and substantiated the written article. Similarly, the central colour pages would display eye-catching architectural illustrations such as hand-drawn perspectives rather than large technical drawings, as seen in Fig. 3.

Concurrently to the emergence of architecture public relations, trade journals were also dedicating increasingly more space to Information Technology (IT), illustrating how central it was becoming to the architectural practice (*Automating Architects* 1994). AJ's journalist Barrie Evans was appointed Technical Editor to cover every UK-based industry event dedicated to computing and write an in-depth commentary on newly released software and hardware; and he did so in the "technical" section of the journal, in which multiple themes competed for space: new materials, building products, sustainability issues and anything that could be loosely defined as "technical matter" for architects. By 1996, the AJ had even installed a quarterly special titled ArchiTech, which ran as a special issue for three years before being reincorporated in the main journal as a monthly feature at the end of the 1990s. Barrie Evans progressed to become Technical Group Editor in 1998, managing a small team of editors and freelance writers (between three and five) on computing, software and 3D CAD, and managing the ArchiTech special issues.

Despite all the heavy CAD promotion at the front of the journal (news content, diary and commentary), the central features of the AJ – the design critiques, the in-depth analysis, the building studies – remained substantiated almost exclusively by hand-drawn imagery. As a matter of fact, hand-drawn renderings in colour or pencil drawings such as the one

in previous Fig. 3 were still dominating the visual landscape of the printed pages. This contradiction shows that architects whose exemplary designs and drawings were deemed worthy for publication in the AJ were not investing in CAD technologies, and it could be similarly assumed that lower profile practices which constituted the readership of the journal (but were not featured in the journal) were not either. The reason behind this fundamental reluctance can be found in the previously mentioned severe economic recession of 1990-1991, whose aftermath lingered until the late 1990s as architects employed in the public sector declined from 50% to 22% and a drastic lowering of earnings affected the private sector as well (*Recession Extends to Public Sector*, 1991).

The recession coincided with a moment of large developments being carried in the country by famed developers such as Stuart Lipton and Peter Palumbo. However, bids and competitions for these developments found British architects's procurement strategies lacking against the ones of large US practices who swept up a large portion of these jobs. Among many examples, the most notable would be the redevelopment of the financial district of Canary Wharf in London, which "represented in the most brutal way the exclusion of the English architectural profession from the most visible public project of the time. Largely American-designed for American tenants, it was also built with American materials and using American construction techniques, and underwritten by American capital" (Williams 2004, 163). What these US practices had over local architects was not only previous experience with large development projects (British developers effectively imported such models of urban developments from the US, where they conducted extensive research), but crucially a proficiency with digital photorealistic image-making CAD software – a US invention in itself – that allowed for production and dissemination (to the public, to competition juries and to planning authorities alike) of 'plausible', easily understandable, colourful and futuristic images of the building-that-will-be. This stark advantage was identified clearly in trade publications, including the AJ who in 1990 published a survey to conclude that: "over half the 3000 practices canvassed plan to buy a CAD system during the coming year. Though a darkening market may dissuade some, the advantages of competing with arriviste US practices who have access to sophisticated systems are clear" (*CAD: Every Office Should Have One* 1990, 13).

This typology of digital images – commonly denominated ‘rendering’ – has grown to become a ubiquitous presence in architecture discourse and media to this day. The AJ responded to this “rapid and dramatic transformation of the industry: in the procurement, design, and construction of buildings” by fully renovating its design (Greenberg 1993, 11). Spearheaded by Mike Lackersteen, already designer of *Blueprint* and *The Observer Magazine*, the new AJ included colour printing in every page, a more flexible grid and a less hierarchical table of content. The journal redefined its relationship with the use of imagery, as confirmed by the editorial of AJ’s MD Roy Farndon: “AJ is highly regarded as a useful publication. We all felt strongly that it had to be quite workmanlike, not distracted by the luxuries of a monthly magazine, but still strongly visual” (Williams 1992, 11). In the following two months, the AJ received 1200 new subscribers, “in the worst of times for our readers” (Greenberg 1993, 11). Probably due to positive feedback, the AJ will retain this design for the rest of the decade with only minor adjustments – until a new redesign in 2005. Through the redesign, visual content found more space in new ways; for instance, the journal began consistently employing portrait photography. Having renewed the table of content as well as the overall design, the AJ had established new recurring features, many of which covered the world of architects’ service professionals – public relation specialists being among them.

This new focus on people – rather than buildings – was not confined in a single section of the journal, but throughout the pages – in the “profile” section, or in the “practice profile” pages, the “service to architects” pages or in the “My...” weekly closing column, they each showcased a different type of professional whose expertise could be beneficial to architects. As shown in Fig. 4, 5 and 6 – three press cuttings from 1992-1993 –, portrait photography was the chosen visual medium to substantiate and accompany such content; almost never credited, often mute or very concisely captioned.

Commissioned illustration was also a new medium that the AJ began experimenting with – the kind that can be seen in Fig. 7, which is a cutting from the “Technical” column. Despite the fact that the article is not referring to a design or to a building in particular, but simply providing general information, a quarter of the page is taken up by a coloured illustration commissioned to illustrator Darrel Rees. Previous versions of the journal rarely included images in technical pieces, unless they had immediate relevance to the topic discussed; here, imagery fulfils a purely aesthetic function.

The AJ’s new structure therefore relied on visuals, whose purpose transcended the connotation of the written piece, but took into account aesthetics in order to be appealing and catch the reader’s eye. And in the mid-1990s, when the increase in the use of imagery progressed to establish a correlation of at least one image per article, renderings began appearing consistently in the AJ. The section of the journal where this progressive visualisation process was most notable was the “news” pages, which commonly used captions to summarise news items in a concise, clever way. In 1993, the AJ introduced “news in pictures” – a double-page spread mostly taken up by updates on new schemes, competition and shortlisted bids. A visual comparison between Fig. 8 (a news double-page from 1990) and Fig. 9 (a “news in pictures” from 1996) clearly shows that not only the 1996 news pages prominently include renderings, but the text-to-image ratio had been visibly overturned in the span of six years. The evolution of the AJ as a designed object was therefore justified by a critical moment for the architectural profession, but effectively it materialised and was substantiated by a much wider usage of images, and specifically of computer-drawn images. Making space in the journal – for instance by removing the strict geometric grid – to accommodate this new proliferation of imagery was the first moment of ‘digitisation’ of the journal, despite remaining a strictly paper-bound publication.

The first decade of the Twenty-first century has seen such technological advancements in the field of CGI (computer-generated imagery) to become known as the “golden age” of rendering (Maner 2009). The commodification of digital image-making via mainstream software (such as 3d Studio Max, Photoshop, or V-ray) brought about a wider presence of digital renderings in architectural discourse and therefore media, including

the AJ. By then, the journal had maintained its post-1992 graphic design. The usual organisation of editorial content presented a first section of roughly twenty pages of news and readers' letters, followed by a central section dedicated to main features and architectural critique. Core elements of the central section were three recurring main features: the "building study", in which review editors analysed and critiqued existing buildings (34 features out of 47 weekly issues in 2000); followed by the "working detail", in which one selected construction detail was selected and analysed in construction, form and material through technical drawings (40 features out of 47 issues in 2000); and a "technical and practice" section covering a variety of topics, from new materials to roofing and cladding, from legal matters to computing (45 features out of 47 issues in 2000). Other features appeared either less frequently (i.e. "Interiors", 9 features out of 47, "small projects", 2 features annually) or as a one-off (i.e. "landscape special").

Despite the positive feedback received on the 1992 redesign, subscriptions to the journal diminished significantly over the course of few years: from 17,028 in 2000 to 13,491 in 2005. According to then art director Sarah Douglas, the AJ had found its position undermined by "the growth of free, controlled-circulation competitors and [by] the rise of the Internet" (Esterson 2006, para. 14). In terms of online presence the AJ actually launched the website ajplus.co.uk in January 2000, well ahead of most architectural publications in the UK (Allen, 2000). However, this website was originally designed only to complement the paper magazine with selected online content and remained behind the subscription paywall, therefore its traffic could not compare to the ones of independent influential architectural websites that had been emerging since 2005. In this period, the AJ was also diversifying its feature list to include advertorials, corporate ads and company profiles. In 2004, the annual feature list included one "advertisement feature", profile features on building companies, two "Brick Bulletins", three "Concrete Quarterly" and four "Metalworks". Concurrently, the core features previously outlined reduced in number, especially the "Working Detail" pages which in 2004 only featured in 24 out of the 47 issues. Kieran Long, who became editor of the AJ in 2008 until 2011, confirmed that feature to be the most expensive to produce, because it required accurate drawings to be commissioned from qualified architects (K. Long, personal communication,

19 January 2017). Instead, news pages kept occupying steadily the front of the journal, taking up an average of two extra pages, yet providing the same content that could have been sourced either in competitors' journals or online. The AJ was thus reducing its unique content while conforming to other journals' offer, and therefore putting itself in a position of commercial risk.

In 2005, the journal went through a radical redesign, carried out by art editor Sarah Douglas in collaboration with Emma Thomas and Kirsty Carter, directors of the graphic studio, A Practice For Everyday LIFE (APFEL). The aim was to "present the editorial content with a clarity and simplicity that it had previously lacked" (*Architects' Journal Identity Redesign*, para. 1). Editorially, it is evident that there had been discussions on the role of imagery, because a declared aim was to bring back consistent coverage on architecture (i.e. "Building Studies" and "Working Details") through the means of commissioned photography in all living phases of the building: under construction, completed, or in use (Allen, 2005). To achieve this, the majority of news pages, including events, competitions and job ads were moved online – redefining the role of the AJ website as both news portal and archive (Slavid, 2005). Circulation data, previously published in fine print, disappeared from the table of content; because of this, there is no quantitative information available on the readership in the immediate years after the redesign. However we can find an indication of the redesign's success in its critical acclaim, and subsequent nomination in 2006 for the D&AD Best Redesign award in Magazine and Newspaper Design. But by 2008, emergence of digital media and the global financial crisis had had a critical impact on the business model of most publishing houses, which were reliant almost entirely on advertising. In a moment of significant lack of financial resources across all sectors, company advertising budgets were among the first to be cut. The publishing house EMAP went through a challenging time, and when that same year they appointed Kieran Long as editor of both their business-to-business architectural publications (the weekly AJ and the monthly "Architectural Review") it was done by taking into account that a single editor for both positions amounted to only one senior salary (K. Long, personal communication, 19 January 2017). In this difficult climate, Kieran Long pursued a new redesign of the journal and, together with art editor Cecilia Lindgren, he was able to deliver it quickly, three months into

his appointment. While he showed appreciation for the graphic aesthetics of the 2005 redesign, Long believed that the magazine “was missing that ability to engage politically with the issues of the day” (K. Long, personal communication, 19 January 2017). Through the new design, Long was not just looking for a larger audience, but attempting to restore the journal’s authoritative voice in order to address the issues that the architectural profession was experiencing throughout the global crisis. To accomplish this, he believed in the need to reinstate a focus on comment pieces and news, which he did by employing three people on the news team, as opposed to the single sub-editor of previous years (K. Long, personal communication, 19 January 2017). Clearly, imagery was recognised as instrumental to deliver such focus, as he introduced the redesigned AJ to its readers, offering “more depth, more critique, more information and more images” (Long, 2007). In regard to building studies and technical coverage, Long employed Felix Mara, a qualified architect, as a part-time technical editor, to cover more technical content without necessarily having the AJ producing expensive “working details” consistently. Overall, the AJ became a larger operation, with the number of sub-editors increasing from 17 in 2007 to 22 in 2009.

It is difficult to measure the success of this redesign – according to the average net circulation per issue provided in information media packs to advertisers, by 2008-2009 it had kept decreasing to 9,088 copies, with architects constituting 52% of the total readership. However, the reason for this cannot be attributed exclusively to the AJ, but has to be placed in the broader context of the architectural media landscape, which was radically changing. Specifically, the decade saw a proliferation of architectural media online, which endangered the position of traditional publishing, while at the same time amplifying architectural discourse and circulation of imagery. Architectural websites such as Dezeen and Contemporist provided daily coverage of architectural news, and, since their inception, had always been based on visual content rather than written pieces; in this sense, they provided the same information that the AJ increasingly allocated in its front section (news and comments), but did so faster, more frequently and free of charge for the user. Websites such as Architizer, launched in 2008 by Mark Kushner to provide a platform of promotion and networking among architects during the financial crisis, were conceived as both news sources and working databases of designs and products that

could be openly consulted. A third category of websites such as BLDGBLOG originated from academic contexts, either hosted on university's domains or managed by scholars, and provided critiques and long reads. The proliferation of media also caused the correlated industry of public relations to speed up and amplify its activities. Long, who had been working as a reporter and architecture journalist since 1999, confirmed that only in the mid to late 2000s he "really started to feel the weight of PR in architecture", and that, by the time he became editor of the AJ, "every architect either had or was considering having a PR consultant" (K. Long, personal communication, 19 January, 2017). But, more critically, it was the ways in which PR professionals were able to distribute information and made their presence (and their clients') known to editors and media producers that changed considerably. When Long was at the start of his career as a reporter for Building Design in 1999, he recalls being in contact with a handful of specialist PR agents, and receiving paper press releases, sent mostly by product manufacturers to his work address. By 2008, he was "deluged by both email correspondence and physical presence [of press releases]". What had changed, then, was the materiality of press releases (or digital immateriality), which remained the primary object of communication between the two parties: emergence of digital service for mass e-mailing and access to subscription based media databases allowed for press releases to be drafted and sent to a large number of people as quickly as never before.

Fig. 10 shows an example of a digitally produced and distributed press release from Carolyn Larkin's agency (*Press Release* 2016). It promotes a new project from an architectural practice, explaining what is the concept of the design and construction timeplan. The visuals substantiating the narrative on the new design are digital renderings, despite the fact that construction had already begun, with plans and other drawings finalised and available, and the building site available to photography. Due to the increased visual nature of architectural media, imagery became a fundamental part of the "information subsidy" provided by source organisations.



Press Release
15 November 2016

Studio RHE unveils designs for Republic, as work commences on site



Architects Studio RHE have unveiled their designs for Republic, a dynamic collaborative campus focused on well-being, connectivity, creativity and flexibility.

Working with Trilogy Property and LaSalle Investment Management, Studio plans transform the 1990s post-modern office complex at East India Dock, London.

The first phase of work on Building R1 started on-site in October 2016, and the building updated with the re-cladding and extension of the facades at ground level.

The design is centred around well-being at work with increased daylight, better levels of ventilation, direct connections with nature and planting in the biodiverse central gardens. A plan layout encourages the use of the carefully placed central staircase over the first three floors, with extensive undercover local cycle parking, a large gym and extensive planted roof terraces.

Collaborative working is encouraged through the provision of shared work and meeting space inside the atrium at ground floor level, which connects directly to the external communal terraces and water gardens.

Designed to appeal to the next generation of creative and tech businesses, Republic will create an attractive work and leisure environment, becoming a new neighbourhood in this previously overlooked corner of London's Docklands.



For more press information or images please contact Caro Communications
E: philip@carocommunications.com / estelle@carocommunications.com

A 10,000 sq ft co-working space, event space and rooftop bar on the 9th Floor is set to launch in January 2017. Off-Quay, a temporary cultural hub and Quilombero, a restaurant launched by East End food stars Missy Flynn and Gabriel Poyce, are already operating on site.

Completing in phases over the next five years, the development is expected to compete on price with key locations in the South East and major UK regional centres, coming in at half the price of current occupational costs in Shoreditch and just one third of the West End. The first building is set to complete in October 2017.

The campus will eventually provide 650,000 sq ft of low-cost high-quality affordable workplace, a wide range of amenities, generous public realm and extensive green spaces around the existing lake.



commented:

...in a 1990s office complex into a dynamic generation of varied flexible working spaces, facilities, combined with extensive new new working neighbourhood."

erty added:

RHE following the success we shared at Shoreditch to Tower Hamlets has been a next generation of offices bringing new placemaking. Our aim is to create a place at occupational costs comparable to

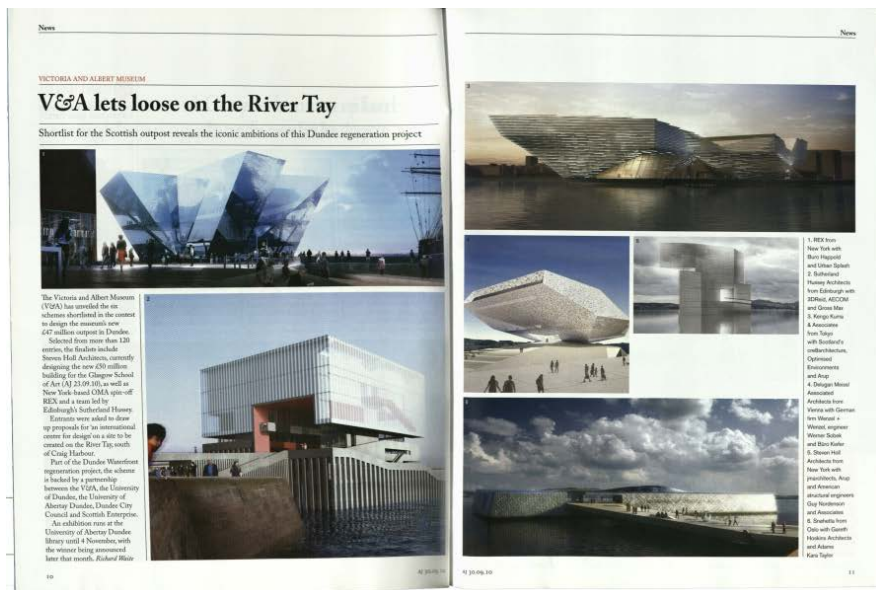
...t by Studio RHE, and follows the success was fully let at completion in 2015, and

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10 | Press Release, digital pdf. Courtesy of Caro Communications.

With the exponentially greater circulation of the newly digital press release, imagery was employed primarily to catch the recipient's attention; editor and reporters, now "deluged" by digital press releases, sorted through them much quicker than in the past. The rendering embodied both needs for information subsidy and for compelling, versatile imagery which could be included in press releases. This explains why, as editor in chief of the AJ, Long confirms to have perceived an increased amount of digital renderings in his daily editorial activities.

The faster and wider circulation of information (both in terms of press releases and emergence of online media) generated new forms of competitive news-based journalism. In the 1990s announcements of new schemes and designs were shared generally by developers, while in the 2000s updates on new designs or competitions became far more commonly promoted by architects (or their PR consultants) and by competition organisers. News concerning the development of an architectural design proliferated long before it entered construction, and usually included the presentation of a competition; the announcement of shortlisted practices; the 'unveiling' of the final scheme; the application for planning permissions; the granting of planning permission; the beginning of the construction phase. Each of these pieces of news was issued at the appropriate time via a dedicated press release, and each press release included the same renderings to visualise the announcement. Therefore, the design of Long's AJ "News pages", an example of which can be seen in Fig. 11, was assembled through a combination of reporting and press releases. Having now become a process of competitive journalism based on images, editors recognised the inherent value of a never-seen-before digital rendering, as confirmed by Long: "There would be projects you'd know about, and you'd be keen to get the first picture of – and sometimes it didn't matter that the picture wasn't a great picture, as long as you were the first [to publish it]" (K. Long, personal communication, 19 January 2017).



11 | News: V&A lets loose on the River Tay, "The Architects' Journal", vol. 232, n.11 (30 September 2010), 10-11. Courtesy of "The Architect's Journal".

12 | AJ100, The Architects' Journal, vol. 231, n.19 (20 May 2010), 78-79. Courtesy of "The Architect's Journal".

However, as a pictorial representation of architecture, editors also recognised the aesthetic value of the rendering: “there was also a factor of the [news] section being drawn by quality image, as in striking image, that stops the reader and makes the reader want to read the page” (K. Long, personal communication, 19 January 2017).

But it was not solely in the news pages in the front of the AJ that the rendering proliferated. The decrease of technical content met with the continued increase of more speculative features on architectural practices and company profiles. There are many examples of this, but perhaps the most remarkable is in the annual feature AJ100, in which a hundred UK based practices were ranked and featured with commentary, interviews and imagery. This kind of content did not necessarily focus on the built environment, but on the wider portfolio of architects, and as such photography and digital renderings were equally used to showcase the work of the practice. Fig. 12 shows an example from a 2010 AJ issue 100: the practice Aedas is presented in the journal only through CGI.

Because renderings are among the first polished images to be produced for a competition or for a development, they exist and circulate years in advance of the construction phase (if the design gets to be built at all), and therefore constitute the main visual employed by architectural media to cover news updates. Technical drawings such as plans not only are not easily readable by the public, but change and evolve throughout all stages of competitions, and are often only officially released when construction has begun, therefore do not make for the best news-based press releases. Renderings are instead visually versatile, as they can be shared and published, in print and online, in varying formats and still remain readable. It is only once the design is built that architectural media generates critical commentary on the design, employing photography and technical drawings (i.e. the “building feature” for the AJ).

In addition to their proliferation in press releases, we can look at the coverage of the new US embassy in London in the AJ between 2008 and 2015 to show how renderings also get consistently republished and reiterated throughout the news cycle of an architectural design, and how this feeds into wider issues of dissemination of these images.



13 | Press cuttings from "The Architects' Journal" of the US Embassy renderings from 2010 to 2012. Courtesy of "The Architect's Journal".

The design competition was first published in October 2008, when the US State Department released a press statement to announce the signing of a conditional agreement to acquire a site at Nine Elms in Wandsworth for the construction of a new embassy. By 2 January 2009, the Department of State had received thirty-seven submissions to the first round of the competition, nine of which were shortlisted to progress to phase two. The panel of judges invited four out of those nine to submit formal designs, and several months later, on 23 February 2010, the Philadelphia-based practice KieranTimberlake was announced as the winner. This is when a suite of renderings of the design was first released to the public. Planning permission was granted in 2012, and construction began in 2014, to be completed in late 2017. Fig. 13 is a collection of press cuttings from 2010 to 2012, to illustrate the frequency of use of the same renderings produced by StudioAMD (the visualisation studio commissioned by KieranTimberlake) in press cuttings from the AJ. At the top, cuttings from from the main feature of Thursday 25 February 2010 (Fulcher 2010).

In the middle, cuttings from the “competition & news” single spread, for two-thirds covered by renderings of the US embassy design produced in 2010, substantiating the news that the design had gone for planning permission and was awaiting a response (Fulcher 2012). In another article from a week later, the same rendering is used by sustainability editor Hattie Hartman to discuss the energy-efficient technology planned for the building (Hartman 2012). Two more press cuttings at the bottom show the same rendering used for interview piece published in 2014 to mark the start of building construction, and from a short news piece from 2015 about a minor construction setback; even then, in advanced construction phase, and to address news concerning the building site, the same rendering is used – as opposed to a photograph of the building site: a visual that would have been more expensive to source as accordingly commissioned. Just the same was happening online, where the same rendering has been used to accompany a series of news pieces between 2010 and 2015 on the AJ’s website, as seen in Fig. 14.

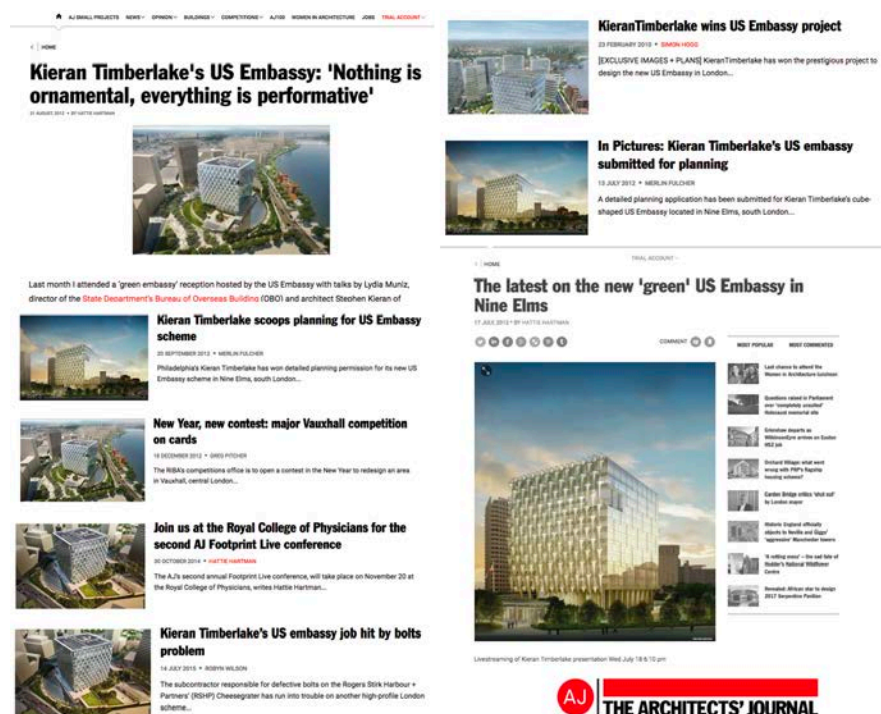
Conclusion

The reiteration and versatility that has thus characterised the digital rendering across the 2000s, enacts a second phase of digitisation of the architectural publication, in which architectural media exist to this day.

Substantiated through this digitally-native image, the AJ itself has become fully embedded in the ecosystem of “culture software” (Manovich 2014): authored by software (or a series of software) that could create cultural artefacts containing representations, ideas, beliefs and aesthetic values; accessed, appended, shared and remixed online through publishing software (i.e. attached it in a WordPress website, or browsed through Internet Explorer); shared and commented (appearing in digital articles, or including a link to the image’s URL in a tweet); communicated with other people in emails, messages, social networking features (i.e. wall posting). Understanding the shift of current architectural discourse to the digital sphere by way of its materiality and visual practices opens up many avenues of further research. At present, this field is under-researched by scholars and mainly discussed within current journalistic or critics’ writings. Reliable data and other means of quantitative evaluation of success and popularity of current architectural digital media are often inaccessible and unpublished. However, shifting the focus toward architectural drawing practices such as rendering production and its ways of dissemination in media can allow for further speculation on a progressive ‘spectacularization’ of architecture in the media, possibly to detriment of specialised content for architecture professionals. Similarly, this analysis could be expanded by investigating renderings’ intended agency within the architectural competition, and those organisations that design competition briefs and assist in evaluating design proposals as part of a jury. Assessing how competitions’ regulations may have changed in reaction to the emergence of digital renderings, if and which standards have been established (officially or unofficially), can provide in turn a different lens to look at their proliferation in digital media.

The evolution of architectural media from physical to digital cannot be studied without considering the role played by digitally-native imagery such as renderings. In fact, this paper has shown that the design of the AJ itself followed the evolution of architectural practices since CAD technology came into use. The journal’s design responded in the first instance to the arrival of this technology against the odds of an economic crisis in the 1990s; then it responded once more – even more radically – during the “rendering revolution” of the 2000s. Today, as critics and editors begin to address a ‘rendering saturation’ in both media and practice, architectural critique is turning to the concept of the “post-digital

drawing", which rejects photorealism and glossy CGI (Jacob 2017). The times are mature, perhaps, for a closer historical evaluation of the past three decades of digitisation of architectural media, and to open up further strands of research around criticality and accessibility of architectural information and discourse.



14 | Digital press cuttings from <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/>.

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English abstract

"The Architects' Journal" (AJ) was founded in 1896, and it is one of the oldest and most respected specialist publications for architects in the United Kingdom. A weekly magazine whose editorial stance is to "elucidate architecture as a process: the how as much as the what", AJ filled a unique niche for the architectural profession and never had direct competitors. Despite this, its circulation across the twenty years of the digital turn dropped from eighteen thousand copies in 1992 to six thousand in 2014. When Information Technology (IT) and Computer-Aided Design (CAD) entered the market of architectural practices in the 1990s, AJ became the site of a radical transformation for the mediation of architectural knowledge. This paper explores the confluence of historical and technical factors within the design of the publication, integral to the change in wider historical conditions around architecture and media relationships. To do so, it focuses on two key moments of the digital turn. First, the emergence of digital drawings and renderings as a new visual medium of the journal, which caused a redefinition of format and content in the mid-1990s. Second, the full redesign of the journal to accompany the launch of the first AJ online portal in the mid-2000s and the design of new interactions between the two. The paper builds from the production-mediation-consumption paradigm outlined by design historian Grace Lees-Maffei, framing the journal as both a mediator and designed object in its own right. Using a combination of visual analysis, historical analysis of other relevant printed sources, and oral histories of former editors who oversaw the redesign of AJ, the paper will shed light on the new professional framework that puts media and public perception at the heart of contemporary architectural practices.

Keywords | Architectural Media; Digital Visualisation; Rendering; Mediation.

The editors of Engramma are grateful to their colleagues – friends and scholars – who, following the double-blind peer-review procedure, have read, reviewed and evaluated this essay.

(see Albo dei referee di Engramma)

"Terreno Comune"

Una conversazione sul progetto

Laura Camerlingo, Alessia Sala, Cesare Sartori



"Terreno Comune" 1 (gennaio 2020), *La strada*. Busta in formato A4 in carta kraft e borsa del Senato degli Studenti.

"Terreno Comune" è un progetto editoriale nato nel 2019 su iniziativa di alcuni rappresentanti del Senato degli Studenti dell'Università luav di Venezia. La proposta ha avuto origine dall'urgenza di costruire uno spazio di confronto tra pari e di dialogo tra le diverse discipline del progetto, un grande assente all'interno della comunità studentesca. "Terreno Comune" si può quindi meglio definire come una piattaforma che si è declinata in una rivista nel momento in cui questa esigenza ha incontrato la curiosità nei confronti del mondo dell'editoria. Il progetto ricerca nei temi del contemporaneo i pretesti per lo sviluppo di ciascuna pubblicazione, il cui



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