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EDITORIAL

Anna Petrou, Brittany Weidemann and Harrison Brooks

In design and architecture, the elusive attribute of *original* is continually sought after, and often viewed as a marker of success. *Inflection* vol. 6: *Originals* explores the contentious notion of originality and authorship in an increasingly digital society. How can architects and designers redefine their relationship with originality to enrich and inform their work?

A preoccupation with originality has become ubiquitous in the design fields; however, historically, this has not always been the case. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, architecture was created from a catalogue of formalised techniques, associated with Classicism and Gothic. The advent of Modern Architecture in the 20th-century heralded a shift and originality became an essential constituent of 'good design.' Throughout the 20th-century, architects accepted this idea as fundamental. Contemporary technology, however, has disrupted these assumptions. As replication and copying become ever more commonplace due to emerging digital techniques and production, originality becomes ultimately meaningless.

Much of the work in vol. 6 is indebted to the writing of theorist Walter Benjamin. His text *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* noted the significant impact that technologies of reproduction have on art and culture.[1] Benjamin's theory continues to be affirmed as digital reproduction becomes increasingly accessible and normalised. Philosopher Jean Beaudrillard expanded upon Benjamin's theory in his seminal work *Simulacra and Simulation*. This book informs authors, artists and architects as they grapple with the proliferation of digital imagery in society today.[2] Deniz Balik Lokce introduces the theories of both Benjamin and Beaudrillard. Focusing on the work of architectural firm BIG, she explains how mechanical reproduction results in simulacra and simulation as design work is cast adrift from its original context.

The phenomenon of Chinese copycat cities is critiqued by Betsabea Bussi and Zeynep Tulumen. The authors analyse the nature of 'simulacrascapes;' cities that begin as copies but over time develop their unique characteristics that reflect local environments. These copycat cities reveal the tension between what may be deemed true originals or replicas. While our relationship with originality is fraught with tension, Hannah Wood and Olympia Nouska are optimistic that the development of digital fabrication technology is reconnecting the architect with the act of making. Although this technology can ostensibly be used to create copies, it also allows for the easy construction of bespoke elements and architectural solutions.

Copying can also be leveraged as a representational technique in the form of collage, as described in John Paul Rysavy and Jonathan Scelsa's piece, 'Still Lifelike.' Rysavy and Scelsa understand that the contingency of objects placed on a field generate a dialectic between the given objects and thereby form commentary. The ability to collage objects that could never exist together in the physical world is unique to collage as a creative medium. Through art, we can create new realities. On deeper inspection, our contemporary understanding of originality is closely engaged with an understanding of what constitutes reality. The value of manufactured or 'fake' images is that they describe realities that surpass the merely physical. Anna Kilpatrick's thesis project, 'Unfinished Palazzo,' demonstrates a reality constructed of history and culture as she delves into the heritage of Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, a building that was never completed.

If architecture is composed of more than merely physical elements, original theoretical sources are essential to architectural production. In *X-Ray Architecture*, Beatriz Colomina reframes Modernism through the lens of illness.[3]

In conversation with *Inflection* editors, Colomina discusses the importance of interrogating original sources rather than accepting conventional readings.

In our global society, technology has inevitably unhinged architecture from its context. Architectural imagery is disseminated with ease online and through print media. Sean Godsell is wary of an increasing homogeneity in architecture and describes instead an architecture that is sensitive to the history and landscape of Australia. While he acknowledges the importance of references and sources, he also warns of the dangers of referencing types and forms that bear no relevance to their context.

Mixed Reality technology offers the possibility of an entirely immersive type of copying as virtual worlds and visualisations are created. In Dominic On's piece, 'A Point Cloud Darkly,' we are introduced to a speculative future where the image and experience of Hong Kong is heavily augmented through digital technology. While the digital landscape may be used as an apparatus of repression, On also offers the optimistic prospect of resistance through community-led construction of alternative virtual spaces.

As we shape our public space through Mixed Reality technology, we also shape our bodies and personal identities. Adam Peacock's work elucidates that technology is changing our culture without critical intention. As we manipulate our self-image through digital technology, physical manipulation through medical and genetic intervention is becoming ever more accessible. Rather than letting the possibilities of technology shape our cultural dialogue, Peacock uses speculative design to critique and hopefully shape our social future. In contrast to speculative futures, current architecture and design is saturated with reproduction, copying and referencing.

To look back is unavoidable, but it must be undertaken with care. Lachlan Welsh's piece, 'HyperStyle,' critiques 'paper-thin' stylistic referencing and endorses a more critical reading of the past.

By nature, architectural publications can only describe architecture in a two-dimensional manner. By creating images of buildings, vast swaths of the information held by three-dimensional lived and experienced objects are inevitably lost. The cover of vol. 6 expresses this conflict by depicting a well-known image—the fantasy castle. This type of castle is an embodiment of simulacrum, perpetuated by constant retelling in culture. The silhouette of a Disney castle is modified with architectural references, transposed onto a partially fictionalised Germanic landscape, in reference to Neuschwanstein Castle and the landscape of fairytale. The content of *Inflection* vol. 6 reveals that architecture and design is unavoidably entrenched in context. Through critical engagement with notions of originality, architects and designers can begin to produce work that is distinct, intelligent and provocative.

01 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969.)
02 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. S. F. Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994).
03 Beatriz Colomina, *X-Ray Architecture* (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2019).

THE REAL DEAL

REPLICATING AN AUTHENTIC DAY IN DENMARK

Deniz Balik Lokce

Located on top of large rocks at Langelinie, a pier in Copenhagen Harbor, sits the bronze Little Mermaid Statue, cast by the Danish sculptor Edvard Eriksen in 1913. As a unique work of art, it became a national symbol of Denmark and one of the most significant and photographed landmarks in the city. At the same time, it has received extensive media coverage due to frequent vandalism since the early 1960s. Its status as an icon makes it a continuous target, having been covered with a variety of colourful paints, decapitated thrice, her body damaged and her arm cut off once. For Jørgen Nash, the artist who claims to have decapitated the statue in 1964, these events of vandalism show that the Little Mermaid statue has broken with tradition and entered a new era for modern and industrialised culture.[1]

After every attempt to damage the sculpture, its surface has been restored. While destroyed parts have been recast from the original plaster mould, damaged ones have been re-attached to the body. Chemical or physical analysis could reveal which parts of the statue were recast after the completion of the original, which was cast in one piece. Cultural critic Walter Benjamin noted that the uniqueness of a work of art is derived from its authenticity. This becomes problematic for the fragmented body of the Little Mermaid statue, as it is no longer the single piece of material that Eriksen cast in 1913.

The history of the statue is a starting point to probe the borders of original and copy. It serves to spotlight Benjamin's concept of aura and to explore the limits of hyperreal spatial experiences and atmospheres produced through this dialectic, drawing from the theories of Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco. Exploring two collaborative projects by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), namely the Danish Pavilion and the Superkilen Urban Park, it becomes evident that BIG uses 'copy and paste' as a design manoeuvre to produce replicas that offer more than the original object itself.

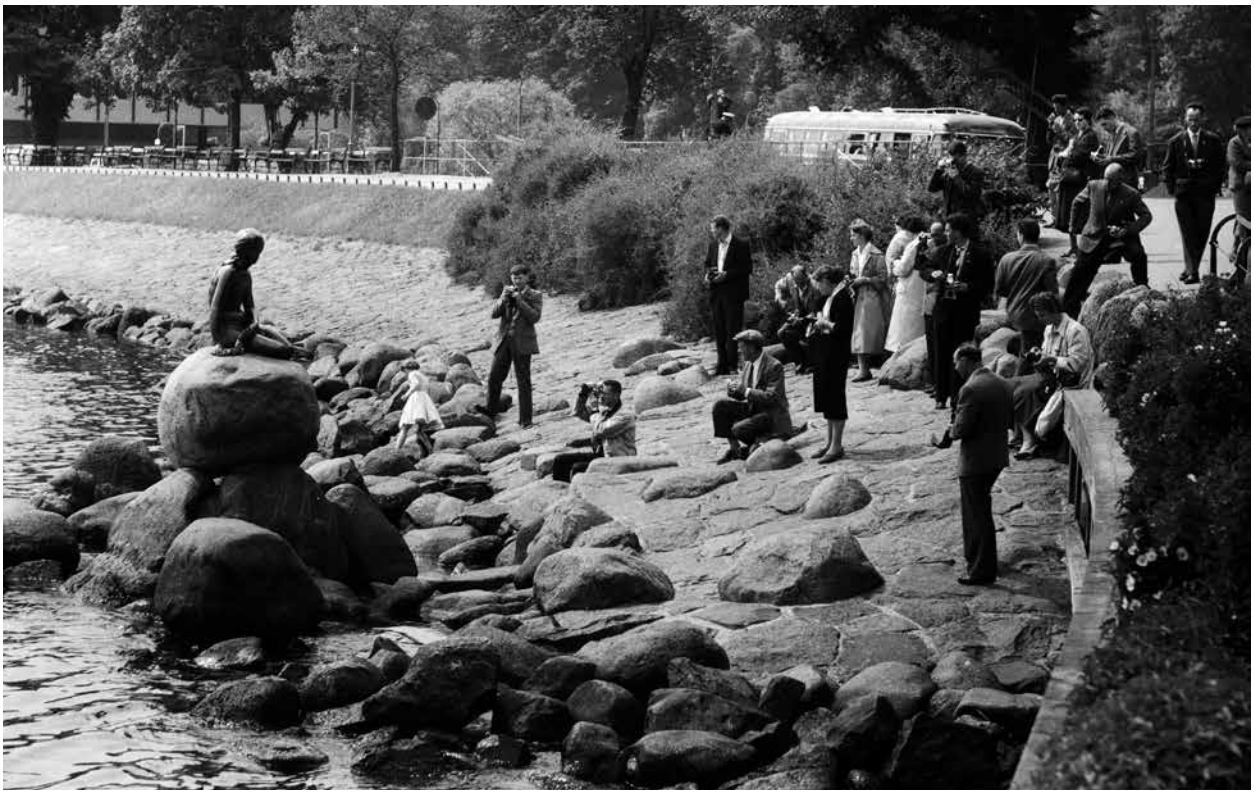
According to Benjamin, the quality of aura is deeply rooted in a traditional work of art. Defined as a unique atmosphere of contemplation, Benjamin grasps aura as an intangible distance between a spectator and a gazed object. The earliest artworks were created for ritualistic and religious praxis, produced as ceremonial objects. With advanced mechanical reproduction, the work of art sheds its ceremonial value and instead achieves exhibition value. It becomes reproducible, leading to the loss of its uniqueness and authenticity, or the "decay of the aura."[2]

Philosopher Jean Baudrillard's concept of aura shifts, as he notes that aura has survived the Industrial Revolution by being reinvented within the context of pure visuality, commodity, and superficiality over meaning, value, and content.[3] This paradigm shift in the concept of aura traces the cultural move from exhibition value to communicative value, from contemplation and self-reflection to spectacle, fame, and advertising. In the seminal work, *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard explores his ideas on copy, simulation, and hyperreality. According to Baudrillard, a simulacrum is an image that simulates reality and is classified into three orders as counterfeit, production, and simulation.

The first order, counterfeit, is based on the image as a copy and obvious theatrical illusion; the image is distinguishable as a counterfeit when compared to the authentic version. The second order, production, is materialised by mass-production, blurring the boundaries of reality and representation with a well-made mechanical reproduction. The first two orders

Opposite: Hans Gerber, The Little Mermaid Statue, 1958, Langelinie, Copenhagen. Image courtesy of ETH-Bibliothek Zürich.





operate at the level of form, rather than relations and structures, and value the success of the replica by comparing it to the original. The third order, simulation, replaces the authentic with an indistinguishable representation; this is termed 'hyperreality.'[4] Links to the original source are no longer drawn. Like Baudrillard, Umberto Eco questions the previously-well-defined borders of the original and the copy. For Eco, the objective of hyperreal reproductions is to provide people with satisfaction, ensuring they do not feel the need to acquire the original. Hyperreality, or the "absolute fake," take place of the original and becomes its substitute.[5]

Baudrillard and Eco describe the loss of distinction between the original and the copy, resulting in equal representations in terms of reality. In hyperreality, the ability to reproduce the original an indefinite number of times becomes possible.[6] This results in a copy of a copy, or an image of an image. As will be elaborated below, the interpretation of hyperreality by Baudrillard and Eco decimates the intangible distance between spectator and the object, as the original and the copy become interchangeable.

Originals in China, Replicas in Copenhagen: The Little Mermaid Statue

"Don't you think China already has its share of copies?"[7] These words belong to architect Bjarke Ingels, who proposed exhibiting the original Little Mermaid statue at the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai. Visitors would view "not a copy, but the real thing."[8] Walking around the European area of the site, visitors observed the Danish Pavilion with its white-painted fluid form, which curved around and crossed itself. Designed in collaboration with the engineering office Arup and the interior and exhibition design agency 2+1, the pavilion rose 12 meters and allowed people to walk through and over. Its double loop form dictated a continuous linear ramp that oriented visitors, both pedestrians and bikers, from the entrance to the roof terrace, where they could have a full view of the World Expo site. A courtyard pool was constructed at the centre of the ground level as a representation of a traditional Copenhagen harbour bath. Central to this pool, the Little Mermaid statue was located as an attraction point.

Hans Gerber, The Little Mermaid Statue, 1958, Langelinie, Copenhagen. Image courtesy of ETH-Bibliothek Zürich.



Resonating in media and discussed by the government and public, BIG's proposal to ship the statue to be temporarily displayed in Shanghai caused a huge controversy.[9] For the first time in its history, the Little Mermaid Statue would leave its home. While the statue was away in China, a copy cast by Eriksen was placed in Copenhagen, culminating in discussions of the uniqueness of the original statue at Langelinie.[10] Eco argues that the attribution of fake is perplexing within the context of sculpture, be it a plaster cast or a bronze recasting, if specific technical modes of production are employed.[11]

There would be no physical distinction between the original cast and the recasting. However, Benjamin believes that the authentic qualities of an original artwork are attributed to its aura and its specific presence in time, evoked by the marks of aging and weathering. Therefore, the technique of reproduction cannot define an original or a copy, as a traditional work of art is singular and therefore, cannot be mechanically reproduced.[12] Although reproduced from the original mould, the copy of the Little Mermaid statue did not testify to history. It was not exposed to vandalism or the close attention of the original. The appearance and the material of the original at Langelinie were merely replicated.

As a mobile work of art like a painting or photograph, the statue managed to captivate spectators in Shanghai. However, its new context of a simulated harbour in a sterile, white container, triggered a shift in its aura and atmosphere. At Langelinie, the statue is a public artwork for the gaze of the masses, however, as a national symbol, or inanimate celebrity figure, the statue has not acquired exhibition value. Masses consume the statue over a short period, as a spectacle without concentration or contemplation, be it in Copenhagen or Shanghai. In our image-laden culture, its celebrity character is reproduced to create spectacle, fame, and desire. The original aura of the statue is lost.

The Little Mermaid Statue at the courtyard pool of the Danish Pavilion, World Expo 2010 Shanghai. All following images courtesy of author.





An Ordinary Day in Denmark as Hyperreality

Publicised with the phrase, "Try out how life is lived in Denmark" in an early poster, the Danish Pavilion sought to present a compact version of a sustainable Danish city.[13] Ingels claimed that expo pavilions traditionally introduce and display countries and their culture via superficial images and words. In response, the architects of the Danish Pavilion in Shanghai would "deliver the real deal."[14] BIG not only transported the Little Mermaid statue but also shipped one million litres of water from Copenhagen Harbour to the courtyard pool in Shanghai, allowing visitors to experience the sensation of swimming in the clean harbour water of Copenhagen.

The roof terrace supported various activities, including bicycle parking, family picnics, playing in sprinkling water from the fountain, enjoying the roof bar and relaxing on a bench, simulating Danish recreational areas on a sunny day. Following the looping ramp, which simulated the blue bicycle lanes on the streets of Copenhagen, visitors could ride a bike.

Beyond viewing the exhibitions as mere spectacle, Ingels expected people to picture imaginary situations in their minds to trigger excitement and amusement during the activity: "Visitors could feel the thrill of riding a bike through the city rather than sitting in a traffic jam, or looking endlessly for a parking spot."[15] Recalling Baudrillard, the pavilion emerges as a fusion of simulation, imagination, and reality, created by original objects transported abroad for its visitors to experience an ordinary day in Denmark.

Mediated by the third order of simulacra, the Danish Pavilion publicised itself as a hyperreal Denmark experience. The visitors in Shanghai might never have been to Denmark, but through the amusements that were replicated in the pavilion, they had an opportunity to simulate the sustainable Copenhagen lifestyle. However, some of the activities were not suitable to be directly copied from Denmark to China. For example, the difference between the Chinese and Danish bicycle mechanisms caused complications and accidents on bicycle lanes, which resulted in the temporary closure of the biking activity. Moreover, due to concerns surrounding the swimming ability of potential visitors, the simulation of swimming in the harbour water was cancelled before the Expo opened.[16] These complications caused a clash in the simulacra and affected the hyperreal experience of Danish life, rendering visitors as spectators rather than participants.

Opposite: Bicycle lane and parking at the roof terrace of the Danish Pavilion, World Expo 2010, Shanghai.

Fountain simulating a playground at the roof terrace of the Danish Pavilion, World Expo 2010, Shanghai.

Copies as 'Better' Objects Than Originals

Superkilen Urban Park in Copenhagen is another copy and paste manoeuvre BIG in collaboration with landscape architecture office Topotek1 and artist group Superflex. Constructed in 2012 in a derelict area, the park occupies an area of three hectares with a length of 750 metres.[17] It is situated in the dense residential neighbourhood of Nørrebro, an ethnically diverse district of Copenhagen with more than 60 nationalities.[18] The the park was split into three zones, each with a different colour, acknowledging the coexisting multicultural society. The Red Square, which is most suitable for sports and cultural activities, is overwhelmingly covered in red and pink shades. Undulating white stripes on the black asphalt ground of The Black Market, the middle section of which is designed for social activities and plays. The most extensive section, The Green Park, is organised to accommodate sport and picnics.

Throughout the park, the designers installed and displayed more than a hundred pieces of original and replica urban furniture. Each item is inspired by the 60 nationalities in Nørrebro: Benches, tables, rubbish bins, trees and plants, murals, fitness equipment, sports fields, playground structures, and lighting elements. Some of these objects were purchased from catalogues or transported from their countries of origin. Other objects were recreated from photographs or redesigned in Copenhagen.[19] Martin Rein-Cano from Topotek1 compares Superkilen with the traditional praxis of copy and paste in the 17th-century English Romantic gardens, which re-contextualised structures and elements from divergent cultures.[20]

Not all of the objects are authentic, and it is challenging to differentiate the replicas from the originals. Some of the items were transported directly from their country of origin, including soil from Palestine and a double chair from Mexico. Others were reconstructed on-site, such as the Octopus Slide from Japan.[21] As Ingels notes, 30 objects were redesigned from documents out of necessity.[22] For example, a slide from Chernobyl, the original inaccessible due to radio activity, and a swing from Afghanistan are exact replicas reconstructed from archival photographs.[23] The designers of Superkilen playfully reported that they went and caught the metal bull from Spain, insinuating that they installed the original one at Superkilen. However, in reality, they had created a one to three scaled-down replica to be installed at the park.[24]

Gyldholm Møller from BIG admits to 'necessary' modifications and transformations made to some objects, such as the swing bench from Iraq and fitness equipment from Turkey, to ensure they complied with Danish standards and safety regulations.[25]

The designers claim that the redesigned version for some objects were equipped with enhanced capacity or achieved better quality than the originals, as in the case of the Landi bench from Switzerland and a neon sign from Qatar.[26]
For Benjamin, manual reproduction is easily described as counterfeit, since the authority of the original maintains its presence. Technical reproduction goes beyond the dialectics of original and copy by introducing variations. The ability to reterritorialise fixed objects or structure becomes possible and to see images and movements that are missed by the naked eye or invisible to human perception.[27] From the perspective of Benjamin, the method of reproduction at Superkilen was deployed as an instrument of experimentation, to test for improved appearance, enhanced function, and safer usage. These features would be impossible to achieve with the original pieces alone.

Superkilen as a Theme Park
Artist Rasmus Nielsen from Superflex compares Superkilen to a fun park, particularly the original vision of Epcot Center, a theme park at the Walt Disney World Resort, which was to have been a high-tech and efficiently planned city for people to inhabit, work, and play.[28] The definition of themed space refers to simulating a different time, culture, and alternative way of living.

A theme park offers its visitors singular and personal experiences in artificially-created environments and atmospheres.[29] Produced as commodities, the Disney Corporation theme parks integrate entertainment, illusion, fantasy, and desire. For Baudrillard, they are much more than mere representations of imagination. They are capable of substituting reality for a much more perfect, irresistible, and credible appearance.[30] Eco evaluates Disneyland as a mythical representation of daily life and authentic copy, which is newer and more fulfilling than real life.[31]

Looking to Superkilen, the replicated objects cannot be differentiated from the originals. According to Eco, simulacra assimilate reality and produce hyperreality in the appearance of a themed urban park. Mediated by the third order of simulacra, the environment of Superkilen intends to make users feel as if they are at home. By installing familiar urban furniture from the home country of locals, the designers transform dreams and hopes into a mixture of reality, spectacle, and commodity. These replicas and copies produce a more vivid environment, with more accessible objects from all around the world in a safer atmosphere. As a result, original objects become forgotten memories, as the interpretation and perception of the replicas replace that of the original objects

The Danish Pavilion and the Superkilen Urban Park make use of a combination of originals and copies to generate hyperreal atmospheres. The intention is to replicate the authenticity of daily life, the feeling of strolling in Denmark or ones home country in the case of Supkerkilen. The strategy of transporting originals to the artificial environment of the Danish Pavilion was to simulate the sustainable Danish city life. In comparison, at Superkilen the technique of reproduction and replication was used to improve aesthetics and enhance function for safer usage. To achieve these intentions would be challenging without BIG's exploitation of copy and paste as a design manoeuvre.

While it is difficult to differentiate replicas from originals, objects displayed as public collage become exhibits rather than authentic, immersive experiences. The act of decontextualisation and replication does not result in success at all times. Unanticipated complications can cause a clash in the simulacra and affect the hyperreal experience of an authentic day in Denmark. Regardless, the hyperreal environments created at the Danish Pavilion and Superkilen blur the distinct and clear borders of original and copy. They substitute reality for a much more fulfilling, credible, and newer artificial appearance in favour of spectacle, dream, and desire.

Opposite: Turkish fitness equipment and Thai boxing ring in The Red Square of Superkilen Urban Park.

Iraqi swing bench and Chilean stencil in The Red Square of Superkilen Urban Park.







01 Finn Hauberg Mortensen, "The Little Mermaid: Icon and Disneyfication," *Scandinavian Studies* 80, no. 4 (2008): 442.

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Opposite: Tunisian bench and Armenian picnic tables in The Green Park of Superkilen Urban Park.

Above: Belgian bench, Mexican double chair and Japanese Octopus slide in The Black Market of Superkilen Urban Park.