The Digital Now: Architecture and Intersectionality

Call for Applicants
14 September 2020

The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) is launching a collaborative, multidisciplinary research project that explores the intersectional dimensions of digital design.

Intersectionality entails a way of seeing and navigating a world with differential forms of justice. Pioneered by intellectuals and activists in the 1970s, from Kimberlé Crenshaw to the Combahee River Collective, it is rooted in gendered and racialized experiences of capitalism. Within the architecture discipline, an intersectional approach may foreground the under-acknowledged impacts the built environment has on, for example, Black or Indigenous peoples across the full spectrum of their lived experiences. In this regard, the CCA conceives of the digital as a shared space of critique that demands intersectional points of articulation for new media technologies and the projection of futures.

Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Architecture, Urbanism, and the Humanities Initiative, The Digital Now will focus on how digital design intersects with the simultaneous relations between race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality. The project will bring together a multidisciplinary team of scholars, curators, practitioners, and technologists to question the ways in which digital architectural production and social identity formation are intertwined.

The CCA invites proposals that can collectively assemble an intersectional discourse on digital design in our contemporary moment that attends to racialized, classed, and other justice-driven dimensions. This project will build on the CCA's commitment to a conception of architecture that exceeds a singular paradigm and that rather places emphasis on a broad conception of design that privileges its complex social milieu.

The team's collective work will focus on and interrogate digital design using methods and concepts from intersectional theory and practice. Participants could imagine digital architectural practices in relation to past and present conceptions of labour, equitable and sustainable infrastructures, or racial justice across an array of geographies.

The CCA has a long-standing investment in questioning the relationships between new media and architectural culture. In 2013, the CCA launched a multi-year research project, Archaeology of the Digital, that investigated the foundations of digital architecture in the 1980s. Through a series of linked exhibitions, publications, and critical research programs, the CCA developed its institutional expertise surrounding how novel digital tools motivated experiment-driven architecture well into the 1990s. At the same time, Archaeology of the Digital initiated a major investment in the acquisition of, preservation of, and access to born-digital material. The CCA now holds a unique collection of digital design projects and has helped originate archival methods for engagement with obsolete software. The Digital Now will extend this line of investigation by focusing on new methods, approaches, and perspectives that build on and exceed these projects and their principal actors.

The CCA is seeking team members interested in studying digital architectural praxis through in-depth research, whether reliant on fieldwork, archives, or other sites of investigation. Sharing expertise and creative practices, a final group of eight participants will be guided by a multidisciplinary ethos of collaboration and mutual support. This team will be expected to co-create a collective project that furthers the scope of how intersectionality articulates architecture as a broad field of practice, scholarship, and public concern that has both historically responded and will in the future respond to evolving definitions and manifestations of the digital.

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cca.qc.ca/thedigitalnow

Application

The collaborative and multidisciplinary research project directed by the CCA is open to researchers and cultural producers at all career levels, including doctoral students. Those interested should submit their proposal through our application portal by 14 September 2020. Applications, in either English or French, must include a 750-word project outline, a 300-word synopsis situating the proposed research in relation to digital design and their articulation of intersectionality , an annotated bibliography of key literature and of pertinent holdings in the CCA Collection or in other archives (2 pages maximum), a CV (5 pages maximum), and a short bio of no more than 300 words highlighting the applicant's engagement with the area of research.

CCA-Mellon Seminar

The Digital Now will unfold in two phases. First, the CCA will invite sixteen shortlisted applicants to participate in a multi-day Mellon Seminar, which will take place in Montréal in late fall 2020 (pending COVID-19-related restrictions). Seminar participants will share their individual projects in order to set the terms of the project and establish a common state of the field. All sixteen shortlisted applicants will receive an honorarium to cover time and travel to attend the CCA-Mellon Seminar. Following a peer-review process, eight applicants will be selected to return for the second phase of the project and participate in the Mellon Multidisciplinary Research Project. The spirit of the CCA-Mellon Seminar is one of supporting and sharing in the production of knowledge.

Mellon Multidisciplinary Research Project

The eight selected Mellon Researchers will reconvene in early winter 2021 to begin the eighteen-month Mellon Research Project on The Digital Now and will continue the work through the spring of 2022. Each Mellon Researcher will receive a stipend of USD 12,000 for their eighteen-month engagement, a research allowance of USD 3,500, and funded travel to support their participation in three multi-day Mellon workshops and seminars. Mellon Researchers will contribute to various objectives and outcomes of the research project by producing individual projects in conversation with the group and with the CCA, by contributing to a shared collective project conceived by the group as a whole, and by critically engaging the CCA Collection and library holdings.

CCA-Mellon Multidisciplinary Research Project Convenors

- Giovanna Borasi, Director, CCA
- Rafico Ruiz, Associate Director, Research, CCA

External advisors

- Samia Henni, Cornell University
- David Theodore, McGill University
- Molly Wright Steenson, Carnegie Mellon University

This is the CCA's fifth Mellon Multidisciplinary Research Project; please consult our past projects.

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