

## react/review, vol 5: From Ephemeral to Obsolete: The Vanishing Historical Object

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react/review, vol. 5: Special Issue, "From Ephemeral to Obsolete: The Vanishing Historical Object".

Scholars have recently begun examining the implications of ephemerality in visual and material culture. From the cyclically rebuilt wooden shinto shrines of Ise to the reusable infrastructure of Joyous Entries and royal festivals in early modern Europe, temporary ceremonial objects and sites gave rhythm and meaning to everyday life (Taws 2013; Oechslin and Buschow 1984). Art and architectural historians of the modern period have interpreted the global proliferation of fleeting ephemera as an ironic result of the entrenchment of capitalism (Bauer and Murgia 2021; Ziegler 2018). Ephemerality is now a key analytic for how contemporary artists, architects, and historians understand the contemporary landscape, from street art and informal structures to the politics of the construction industry (Dharia 2022; Trumper 2016; Mehrota and Vera 2016; Karandinou 2016). As Felipe Vera and Rahul Mehrota write, the city is becoming "malleable, fluid, and more open to change" with the rapid development of building technologies (Vera and Mehrota 2015). New urban layers anticipate contingency, bracing for accelerating growth and social upheaval (Abramson 2016). Yet, in planning for impermanence, designers of infrastructures, objects, and images must also embrace their creations' eventual destruction (Chattopadhyay 2019). Planned or unplanned, obsolescence is the fate of our ephemeral surroundings.

Ephemerality and obsolescence refer to both materiality and conditions of production. Baudelaire's conceptualization of modernity as "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" informs Walter Benjamin's reflections on Paris's nineteenth-century arcades, which were quickly rendered obsolete by capitalism's incessant push for novelty (Benjamin 1969; Baudelaire 1965). Ephemerality is thus a structural condition of modernity in which not even the most durable elements of the designed environment can endure for long. The sturdiest structures become obsolete when the tides of capital recede in one city and rise in another, or when they impede frenzies of new development and speculation (Smith 1984). In the twenty-first century, we are experiencing an accelerated drive toward obsolescence in art, architecture, and visual and material culture. Despite a common axiom that "the internet is forever," rapid technological supersession challenges the conceptual relevance of art production and the preservation of new media and digital art (Mattern 2017).

The editors of react/review—a peer review, open-access digital journal dedicated to research by emerging scholars—seek articles, reviews, and research "Spotlight" essays for Volume 5 that consider the themes of ephemerality and obsolescence in art, architecture, and related fields. We seek contributions that explore the production and afterlives of ephemeral material culture, planned and unplanned obsolescence in art and architectural production, and/or the ephemeral

turn in art and architectural history. What are the temporal horizons of ephemeral objects? How do creators imagine the futurity of their creations? How do conservators prepare for objects' decay and disappearance? How does materiality, or the lack thereof in the case of digital artifacts, inform the types of claims that makers, users, or viewers read into the object?

We invite scholarship on any historical period and geographical focus that considers the vanishing historical object. The journal is open to all submissions from fields related to art history, architectural history, urban studies, museum studies, and visual studies, but we prioritize articles by advanced graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and early career contingent scholars. We are particularly interested in receiving submissions for our "spotlight" category.

The journal is currently open to submissions for all categories (see descriptions below). For feature and spotlight articles, please submit a manuscript, cover sheet, and 150-word bio to the journal's page on eScholarship using the submit function, located at: <https://escholarship.org/uc/reactreview>. Please remove any identifying information from manuscripts, as submissions will be evaluated through a double-blind review process. We kindly ask that you provide a separate cover sheet with the title, author's name, contact information, institutional affiliation, and a short bio.

Questions can be directed to the journal co-managing editors, Taylor Van Doorne & Ben Jameson-Ellsmore, at: [reactreviewjournal@gmail.com](mailto:reactreviewjournal@gmail.com).

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- (Anti)monumentality
- World's fairs, olympics, and other global exhibitions
- Material permanence and impermanence
- Planned and unplanned obsolescence
- Time-based media art
- Digital art
- Decay
- Mobility in art, architecture, and planning
- Archives, histories, and records of the ephemeral
- Graffiti and street art
- Protests and guerilla street interventions
- Subcultural and countercultural media, spaces, and style
- The media city
- Ephemerality and identity (class, race, gender, sexuality)
- Crises in historic preservation and conservation
- Gentrification and the flight of capital
- Informal settlements
- DIY urbanism

Article categories available to open submission:

- Feature articles (3,500-4,500 words): Features are research essays focusing on the theme of the call for papers. Feature articles are accompanied by brief responses from members of the editorial staff in order to create a conversation and make connections across research specialties.

- Spotlight articles (1,500-2,000 words): Spotlight articles are open-ended pieces that discuss new research findings, speculate on pressing research questions, or address methodological issues encountered in fieldwork or archival work. They differ from the more formal feature writing in that spotlight pieces are more exploratory and flexible in nature. Spotlight articles provide space for researchers to share works-in-progress, make connections between research and current events, or reflect on methodologies or the experience of conducting research or fieldwork. This section is also open to new translations of art and architecture related texts accompanied by a brief translator note.

- Book/exhibition reviews (750 words): Reviews on recent exhibitions, public art projects, or publications should touch on the theme of the current issue. To pitch a review, please send a ca.150-word pitch and CV to co-managing editors, Taylor Van Doorne & Ben Jameson-Ellsmore, at [reactreviewjournal@gmail.com](mailto:reactreviewjournal@gmail.com) by August 9, 2024.

#### Works cited.

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