

## A Discussion on Temporal and Ephemeral Architecture



Gülşah Güleç<sup>1</sup>

Assoc. Prof. Dr., Gazi University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture,  
Ankara, Türkiye<sup>1</sup>

gulsahgulec@gazi.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8041-2018>

Received: 21.12.2025, Accepted: 05.05.2026

DOI: [10.17932/IAU.ARCH.2015.017/arch\\_v012i1004](https://doi.org/10.17932/IAU.ARCH.2015.017/arch_v012i1004)

**Abstract:** This paper discusses that ephemeral architecture cannot simply be associated with temporal architecture, which refers to short-lived structures, such as pavilions, exhibition spaces, and installations. In this context, the paper aims to redefine the ephemeral architecture of the twenty first century, where architectural objects are created as images using digital technologies and, most recently, artificial intelligence. It employs the method of conceptual analysis to discuss the shift from object to image in architecture. By this method, the paper reveals that image-objects now dominate the field of architecture in which objects are mostly replaced by images. There are also other replacements between space and screen, material and immaterial, physical and non-physical, appearance and disappearance. Image-objects refer to the new materiality in architecture. They are created as immaterial structures that appear and disappear within the blink of an eye. We usually experience structures through images shared on digital and social media, for only a few seconds. This is why they are described as ephemeral structures in the paper. The paper discusses conceptual shifts from object to image to distinguish temporal and ephemeral by relating the former to the physically constructed objects for events and exhibitions, and the latter to the non-physically created images for projecting onto buildings' surfaces. These ephemeral images do not even need a physical surface or structure, since they can be created and experienced without bodily presence. Therefore, the paper redefines ephemeral architecture as the design of image-objects, emphasizing the instantaneous impact of images in the twenty first century architecture. This redefinition is intended to clarify the confusion arising from the use of 'temporal' and 'ephemeral' as synonymous terms in architectural theory and design.

**Keywords:** Temporary, ephemeral, image, image-object, ephemeral architecture.

### Geçici ve Uçucu Mimari Üzerine Bir Tartışma

**Özet:** Bu makale, uçucu mimarinin sadece pavilyonlar, sergi alanları ve enstalasyonlar gibi kısa ömürlü nesnelere ilişkilendirilemeyeceğini tartışmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, makale nesnelerin dijital teknolojilerle ve son zamanlarda yapay zeka teknolojileri sayesinde hızla ve kolaylıkla oluşturulan imgelerine odaklanarak yirmi birinci yüzyılın uçucu mimarisini yeniden tanımlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Makale, mimaride nesneden imgeye doğru yaşanan değişimi tartışmak için kavramsal analiz yöntemini kullanmaktadır. Bu yöntemle, nesnelerin imgelerle yer değiştirdiği mimarlık ortamına imge-nesnelerin hakim olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca mekan ve ekran, maddesel ve maddesel olmayan, fiziksel ve fiziksel olmayan, görünme ve kaybolma arasında yaşanan yer değişimlerini de ele almaktadır. İmge-nesneler, mimaride yeni maddesellik ilişkisi olarak tartışılır. Bunlar, maddesel olmayan oluşumlardır ve göz açıp kapayıncaya kadar ortaya çıkar ve kaybolurlar. Bu oluşumları çoğunlukla dijital ve sosyal medyada paylaşılan görüntüler aracılığıyla ve birkaç saniye boyunca deneyimleriz. Bu nedenle makalede imge-nesneler geçici oluşumlar olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Makale, nesneden imgeye doğru yaşanan kavramsal değişimleri tartışırken, geçici ve uçucu olanı, ilkinin etkinlikler ve sergiler için fiziksel olarak inşa edilen nesnelere, ikincisini ise binaların yüzeylerine yansıtılan fiziksel olmayan imgelerle ilişkilendirerek birbirinden ayırmaktadır. Hatta bu uçucu imgeler, fiziksel bir yüzeye veya binaya ihtiyaç duymamakta; çünkü bedensel varlıkları olmadan ve bedensel olarak deneyimlenmeye ihtiyaç duymadan var olmaktadır. Bu nedenle makale, uçucu mimariyi imge-

nesnelerin tasarımı olarak yeniden tanımlamış, yirmi birinci yüzyılın uçucu mimarisinde imgelerin anlık etkileri olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Yeniden tanımlama, mimarlığın kuram ve tasarım alanlarında ‘geçici’ ve ‘uçucu’ terimlerinin eşanlı olarak kullanılmasından kaynaklanan karışıklığı gidermek için yapılmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Geçici, uçucu, imge, imge-nesne uçucu mimari.

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Marshall Berman's quote, 'All that is solid melts into air.', refers to the ever-changing social, cultural and technological circumstances that emerged with modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century [1]. However, the quote seems even more relevant to describe the specific atmosphere of the twenty-first century, in which everything is in a constant state of flux, including architectural norms and principles. One of them that has survived for centuries is that architecture should be permanent and last as long as possible. Accordingly, architects have designed rigid, static, permanent and monumental structures that have functioned for many years. However, architecture is not permanent, but temporary in its nature. Throughout history, people have built various spaces and structures without disciplinary knowledge. These spaces were mostly inhabited, but they had a short lifespan because nomadic living was dominant. Before the Agricultural Revolution, people tended to construct temporary structures to protect themselves from the worldly conditions. They used local, natural materials such as wood and stone for these structures and reconstructed them in the event of natural disasters, animal attacks, displacement and other expected or unexpected circumstances. Apart from their shapes, these temporary spaces and structures could be heavy or light, dense or not, and made of various materials. Nomadic culture led people to embrace temporary architecture. After the Agricultural Revolution, there was a shift in architecture from unsettled to settled living. People began to settle down and sustain their lives in built environments. This paved the way for a further shift towards permanent structures. Site-specific conditions played a crucial role in the design of these structures, ensuring they were firmly rooted in the site and would last for years.

Following the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of modernism highlighted the dichotomy between temporariness and permanence. Modern architects sought to liberate the discipline of architecture from its historical norms and principles. Consequently, they designed buildings with pilotis to cut their relationship with the site and environment. They used industrial materials such as concrete, steel and glass to make buildings look lightweight and transparent, in contrast to the solid, heavy and monumental structures of the pre-modern world. This modern structural approach, encompassing lightness, transparency, and transience, anticipates contemporary image-based architectural productions. Although modern architects embraced flexibility, dynamism, mobility and transparency to establish a new relationship between buildings and their environments, they usually produced permanent structures. But the normative principles of architecture have changed dramatically in modern times, leading architects to focus on producing inflatable, adaptable, changeable and moveable structures with new shapes and materials, such as balloons, blobs and clouds, which were considered more relevant design solutions for an unpredictable world in the second half of the twentieth century. These were labelled as temporary structures in architectural history. In the discursive environment of this paper, they are also evaluated as 'temporal' rather than 'ephemeral'. Whether short-lived or not, these structures were seen as designs with the ability to adapt to the century's new realities and dynamics, such as the increased mobility promoted by advances in transportation technology. The advent of cars, planes and high-speed trains has transformed the design of architectural spaces and structures within the re-emerging nomadic culture of the last century. In a world defined by speed and displacement, temporary architecture is most associated with pavilions, installations and flexible, inflatable and movable structures. These are usually described as ephemeral structures in architecture. However, the paper aims to redefine 'ephemeral architecture' not by simply associating it with short-lived structures such as pavilions or installations. It employs the method

of conceptual analysis to distinguish the terms 'temporal' and 'ephemeral'. This analysis encompasses a variety of structures, including primitive sheds, exhibition spaces, balloons and containers. It also includes structures that function as screens rather than spaces. The paper emphasizes the need for the redefinition of ephemeral architecture in the twenty-first century — an era characterized by the Digital Revolution and advances in information and communication technology, including the Internet, digital media, social media, and, most recently, artificial intelligence. Previous definitions of ephemeral architecture are insufficient because they are limited to objects that are both temporary and physically constructed. The paper argues that these definitions should be expanded to include ephemeral, non-physical images. In this context, ephemerality refers to an accelerated temporality based on digital images as non-physical structures. New digital technologies and new media enable architectural structures to be ephemeral in terms of their shapes, spaces, materials, meanings and messages. Ephemeral structures have ephemeral meanings for people who mostly experience them through screens rather than bodily presence. Therefore, the paper suggests that 'space' is being replaced by 'screen' in contemporary architecture. Similarly, there is a replacement between 'object' and 'image', as we experience images rather than objects and are surrounded by digital images. These images appear and disappear within seconds. Their appearance and disappearance change our spatial perception and how we experience space. The paper discusses ephemeral spaces and structures as 'image-objects', emphasizing that they exist independently of an object or structure. They are also referred to as 'objectless objects' throughout the paper. The paper's original contribution to architectural theory and design is its conceptual analysis of ephemeral architecture, which highlights the term 'image-object' as an 'objectless object'. In this respect, it also highlights conceptual shifts from 'object' to 'image', 'space' to 'screen', 'appearance' to 'disappearance', and 'material' to 'immaterial'. Through this analysis, the paper redefines ephemeral architecture as the design of an ever-changing building image with new media technologies. Ephemerality blurs the boundaries between the disciplines of art, design, media, and architecture. Architects design structures as image-objects, independent of site-specific conditions, adopting an approach similar to that of a media artist. This paves the way for architects to position their designs within an interdisciplinary context and embrace ephemeral architecture even without designing a physical structure. When architecture is no longer bound to a specific site or structure, it is liberated from its fundamental constraints, and the image becomes the new material. By focusing on this new immateriality, the paper distinguishes between ephemeral and temporal, relating ephemeral architecture to designing images, rather than objects, in contemporary architecture.

## 2. TEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

The most common examples of temporary architecture are pavilions, installations and exhibition spaces, which are built for a specific time or event. These structures are usually lightweight and moveable and are not intended to have a permanent presence. They often create a popular destination for people to gather, socialize and experience. They revitalize not only social and cultural life, but also economic life by attracting tourists to the built environment. Temporary structures have played a significant role in the history of architecture through their appearance and subsequent disappearance. The history of temporary structures stretches from primitive huts, tents, and sheds in pre-modern times to non-primitive exhibition halls and spaces such as the Crystal Palace (1851), the Barcelona Pavilion (1929) and the Serpentine Pavilion (2000–...). Whether primitive or not, any structure that exists for a limited time is usually considered an example of temporary architecture. But these structures can sometimes become permanent, or vice versa. Lifespan-based definitions can limit our understanding of temporariness. In architecture, however, temporary is commonly seen as the opposite of permanent. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to define what constitutes a temporary or permanent structure.

Philip Jodidio uses the example of the Eiffel Tower to highlight the blurred boundaries between temporary and permanent structures. The tower was originally constructed as a temporary structure for the 1889 World's Fair and was intended to be dismantled after the event. But this never happened, and the tower has become one of the most popular landmarks in Paris. This example illustrates that permanence can be interpreted through the

lens of cultural and representational aspects rather than material aspects of the structure. Jodidio refers to this phenomenon as 'temporal permanence' [2]. Cate Hill states that many buildings intended to be temporary have become permanent features of cities. He also cites the Eiffel Tower in Paris as an example. Additionally, he mentions the Serpentine Pavilions, which are dismantled and transformed into beachside restaurants, private garden follies, and marquees for theme parks after the events at their original site in Hyde Park, London [3]. In her seminal text *Architectureproduction*, Beatriz Colomina recounts the fascinating story of the Barcelona Pavilion, designed by Mies van der Rohe and constructed as a temporary pavilion in the 1920s. But it had a significant media impact, and it was rebuilt as a permanent structure in the 1950s [4]. It is therefore better not to draw strict lines between the terms 'temporary' and 'permanent' in architecture.

On the other hand, the term 'temporary architecture' has always had a specific meaning. It usually refers to a structure whose lifespan is defined not only by its short-lived purpose within a site and community, but also by the spectacle of its planned construction and deconstruction [5]. Temporary architecture is now synonymous with shipping containers, street food, music festivals and pop-ups. While these structures, situations and events appear and disappear quickly, they are designed to become embedded in a community, public space or set of ideas [3]. Thus, Aaron Betsky suggests that architecture is really going pop. According to him, obsession with eternity is ridiculous, and we should learn to live in and for the moment [6]. While pop-up architecture may have a limited function in society, it sends a broader message to architecture. But there is still a common idea that architecture should be timeless. It should rise above the vagueness of current fashion and style. It should embody permanent values. Architecture should accept the rhythms of everyday life but not be defined by them. It should last as long as possible and then become a beautiful ruin. In other words, architecture should be monumental.

However, architecture does not need to be monumental to conveying a message, creating an effect, or providing a worthwhile experience. Temporary and non-monumental buildings may also influence cities and societies, and people may be interested in exploring their interior and exterior spaces. As Hill discusses, temporary structures create spaces for experimentation, interaction and engagement [3]. These structures may be designed for specific biennales, festivals and commissions, or they may be self-initiated, do-it-yourself buildings and platforms that exemplify collective and participatory designs. Anyway, they usually provide creative spatial and structural solutions that challenge the status quo of permanent architecture.

For Jodidio, architecture is already temporary in its nature [2]. This depends on the quality of its construction and a range of other factors, from location to the vagaries of the climate. If architecture is inevitably temporary to some extent and modern lifestyles are becoming increasingly nomadic, architects should embrace this and design buildings for the present moment without considering the future. Agnieszka Mańkowska and Artur Zaguła state that the temporary nature of architecture is evidenced by the materials used, the mobility of the elements or entire structures, and designers' conscious decisions relating to achieving a particular temporary effect [7]. Indeed, temporary structures are usually designed to have an impact in their built environment. The term 'contemporary' signifies to be 'temporary'. This is why modern architects in the early twentieth century aimed to replace existing architectural principles such as permanence, monumentality, and the symbolic imagery of buildings with temporality, non-monumentality, and the everyday appearance of buildings, in line with the emphasis on contemporaneity. But they paradoxically designed buildings that looked like modern monuments and permanent structures.

In the second half of the twentieth century, designers mostly embraced pop culture, and popular and nomadic architecture. This was because earlier advances in material and construction technology, such as concrete, steel and glass, were moving towards inflatable, mobile, flexible and lightweight structures. The 1960s were a period of significant social, cultural, and political transformations that impacted all creative fields, including architecture. It was a time when a new generation of architects emerged within the counterculture of

architecture. Notably, inflatable and moveable structures liberated architectural space from the notion that architecture should be solid, static and permanent [8]. However, architecture in the twentieth century was primarily static, despite the dynamism and speed of the era. Architects, designers, and architectural groups and collectives criticized static architecture, offering dynamic designs as an alternative. One of the most notable examples of these alternatives was the utopic and dynamic designs of Archigram, which envisioned the principles of mobile and flexible architecture. These architectural designs challenged the concept of permanence with temporariness.

In the twenty first century, temporariness has become a 'trending topic', alongside the 'pop-up' culture emerging worldwide. Architecture is adapting to this relatively new situation, as building lifespans are dramatically decreasing and natural resources are at critical levels. In this context, temporary structures are considered as possible solutions [9]. But these are not the only reasons for the growing interest in temporary architecture. One of the main reasons is creating an instant effect with temporary structures. Apart from temporality, 'instantaneity' is a term that is emerging in twenty first century architecture. This term fits perfectly with the contemporary world, where our attention is reduced to just three or five seconds when viewing an image, regardless of what it represents. It is now widely accepted that images should have a shocking, instant effect to capture people's attention. Accordingly, the paper focuses on the shift from temporal to ephemeral, referring to the instant effect created by the image of an architectural object, rather than the object itself. Instantaneity points out to this effect, eliminating the need to construct an actual structure as the object. This relates to the ephemerality, rather than the temporality, of images in contemporary architecture. Mańkowska and Zaguła suggest that the temporary architecture of the twenty first century differs from the previous examples of non-permanent architecture, in that it is primarily intended to shock, surprise, provoke and fuel consumerism [7]. We experience temporary architecture by being there in person or by seeing images of it through digital technologies. The essence of temporary architecture is to shock and consume, as well as to provide space for specific events or public gatherings. One example of such a structure is the Blur Building, which was designed for the 2002 Swiss Expo. Its foggy structure shocked people and changed the way of describing the notions of form and matter. As Anastasia Karandiniou states, architecture encompasses not only the solid, material elements of space, but also the invisible, immaterial, and intangible. In this respect, he underlines the re-emergence of the notion of ephemeral in contemporary culture and architecture. For him, ephemeral architecture is related to the evolution of digital technology and media, as well as to the new ways of thinking about space and everyday situations that new media enable [10].

Although many architects, designers, critics and theorists of art and architecture use 'temporal' and 'ephemeral' as synonymous terms, the paper distinguishes between them by focusing on the shift from temporal to ephemeral in contemporary architecture. This does not mean that architects no longer design temporary structures. Instead, the paper highlights temporal and ephemeral structures, which are designed to align with the evolving dynamics and realities of digital culture. In the digital era, ephemeral structures do not need to be experienced physically. They are usually designed with new materials as images. They do not necessarily have to be built as a space or structure. Due to the nature of their images, they can be foggy, blurred, fluid, dynamic, or transient structures that do not require physical existence. This is why 'ephemeral' cannot simply be associated with 'temporal', as ephemeral refers to the design of an image, rather than an object. But the terms 'temporal' and 'ephemeral' are still used interchangeably. The paper argues that the term 'ephemeral' describes images that create a new type of immateriality in architecture.

### 3. EPHEMERAL ARCHITECTURE

In architecture, ephemerality is defined by both the material and immaterial aspects of a structure. It is defined by the use of fluid and transformable materials, as well as materials that change in terms of their shape and qualities, such as density, color, and transparency. Ephemerality is also defined by its relationship with the

immaterial, such as specific elements of a structure like sound and smell. However, it is important to distinguish ephemerality from temporality because ephemeral architecture consists of non-physical, immaterial structures. Architects cannot easily work with the immaterial, such as time, movement, sound and smell, or the other aspects of the ephemeral experience of space and structure. But new media makes it possible for architects to conceptualize space through these immaterial aspects [10].

In this context, 'ephemeral' is typically associated with 'immaterial' in the discipline of architecture. This further blur the disciplinary boundaries between art and architecture, as artists are often involved in the design of ephemeral structures. New media technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, allow us to design these structures as objects with ephemeral images and meanings in architecture. These can be either 'objects' or 'objectless objects', characterized by fluid, transformable images as new materials. At this point, ephemeral architecture distinguishes itself from temporary architecture. Ephemeral architecture is well-suited to the context of the twenty first century, which is characterized by constant flux and evolving needs, demands, desires, and experiences in creative fields. Image-based creations shift the focus from objects to images and from structures to spectacles. Consequently, there is now a common tendency to view architecture as a discipline that creates spectacular images regardless of people's actual needs.

The effective use of new media technologies by artists, designers and architects leads us to question what creativity is. They push disciplinary boundaries, making it difficult to categorize an object as either artwork or architecture. When an object is created using new media, its image and its image effect are usually ephemeral. For example, in 2025, Anadol projected images created by artificial intelligence onto the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. He transformed the building's recognizable appearance by using the images as new materials. Previously, in 1995, artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude wrapped another popular and recognizable building, the Reichstag in Berlin, in fabric, not images. They also altered the building's appearance, but in a tangible way. Therefore, the paper argues that, unlike the temporary Reichstag installation, the Guggenheim was an ephemeral projection. This is because the Guggenheim images constantly change as they are projected onto the building's surfaces. The images don't even require a surface or structure. Apart from their temporal or ephemeral aspects, these artworks introduce a new ontological perspective to architecture by questioning the existence of buildings as objects through the use of tangible (e.g., fabric) and intangible (e.g., images) materials.

Due to the rapid evolution of technology, interdisciplinary approaches have become necessary in architecture, as in many other fields [11]. In particular, the blurring of the boundaries between the fields of art and architecture has encouraged architects to use and experiment with new materials in their designs. Of course, architecture is not just about designing images. Its main purpose is to create spaces that people can use and benefit from. In this era, however, images of spaces are even more important than the spaces themselves because we use these images to define ourselves on digital and social media. We convey messages and create new identities through the images we share on social media. As Marshall McLuhan states, 'the medium is the message' [12]. When architecture is the medium, the question remains: what message do we wish to convey through it? In the digital era, architecture's message seems to rest entirely on how it is created as both an object and an experience [5]. Interestingly, spatial experiences can also become ephemeral, as new media makes it possible to experience space through screens and images. Images are fleeting, and so is our experience of space. These instant experiences epitomize the ephemerality of twenty first century architecture. Thus, 'ephemeral' differs from 'temporal' in that it refers to instantaneity rather than temporality in architecture.

Brian D. Chappel defines ephemeral architecture as a category of buildings designed to be distinguished by their impermanence and physical removal from the site. He notes that, while architects have described certain works as ephemeral, they have never done so in a consistent manner. But we live in an era of constant change and uncertainty. Cling to static perceptions of the world does not allow for a quick response to an ever-evolving

set of circumstances. And navigating this world requires flexibility and freedom. Therefore, Chappel believes that architects should attempt to envision buildings through the lens of ephemerality [13]. In this respect, Juan Alberto Almirón Cuentas and David Hugo Bernedo Moreira discuss that in a world where cities face constant challenges of development, densification, and change, the flexibility and adaptability of temporary architecture offer an innovative response to these demands [14]. As it is temporary by nature, this form of architecture allows experimentation with new ideas, forms, and functions, without the long-term commitments associated with permanent constructions. Dea Aulia Widyaevan also discusses that the term 'ephemeral' defines something as temporary, interchangeable, and adaptive. According to him, architecture no longer needs to be monumental or eternal. It should be designed to adapt to uncertain conditions [15]. Nonetheless, the terms 'ephemeral' and 'temporal' are used synonymously in these discussions. These terms are discussed in relation to others, such as flexibility, changeability, responsiveness, and adaptability. However, in contemporary architecture, ephemerality does not necessarily correspond to the adaptability or flexibility of temporary structures. At the beginning of the 2000s, the common approach was to define and discuss 'ephemeral architecture' as 'temporal architecture'. But this definition is insufficient in the context of the 2010s and 2020s. This is due to the impact that digital and social media have had on architectural perception and production. While temporary architecture is still recognized as designing lightweight, demountable, flexible, adaptable and moveable structures, ephemeral architecture is not associated with the structural, but rather the non-structural — for example, fleeting images. Thus, the paper suggests that there is a replacement between 'object' and 'image', 'structural' and 'non-structural', 'material' and 'immaterial', 'appearance' and 'disappearance', 'tangible' and 'intangible' in architecture.

As Àlex Sánchez Vidiella states, ephemeral architecture plays an important role in our society because it gives imaginative responses capable of energizing places, exciting and inspiring at the same time as offering opportunities to shine in an industry that is currently devoid of excitement and inspiration [16]. Nonetheless, ephemeral structures are associated with temporary structures built to last for a specific period until they fulfil their function. Temporary structures can sometimes meet some needs that permanent structures do not, for various reasons. This is why ephemeral architecture establishes a temporary spatial framework for artistic events such as exhibitions and installations [17]. Indeed, these structures enable us to explore new construction methods and materials and push the boundaries of architecture [18]. But 'ephemeral' and 'temporal' have different meanings in contemporary architecture. As the paper emphasizes, 'temporal' refers to the design of short-lived structures, while 'ephemeral' relates to the creation of non-fixed, fluid, and fleeting images of structures. Ephemeral structures can be temporal, appearing for a specific time or event and then disappearing. However, these structures cannot simply be defined as temporal in twenty first century architecture, which is mostly experienced through images created by artificial intelligence.

Due to artificial intelligence, building images are now created through a process called hallucination, which evokes the hallucinatory nature of images. Neil Leach refers to these image-creation processes as hallucinations [19]. They result in the immaterialization of architecture, whereby architectural objects are created as images, eliminating the necessity for physical construction. Nevertheless, Antoine Picon discusses that architecture is supposed to be the most material of all the arts [20]. Materiality designates the material dimension of a phenomenon, thing, object or system in relation to human thought and practice. Architecture is especially attuned to its visible and tangible aspects, which fall within the realm of the senses. This is why materiality is worth discussing in architecture. But twenty first century architecture seems to focus on immaterial and intangible aspects by creating images with artificial intelligence. Although it is still a highly visual practice, its visuality has a new meaning that does not require physical contact or bodily experience. This is what we call new materiality. For Lars Spuybroek, materiality refers to the physical nature of an object. In architecture, however, there are two aspects of materiality [21]. One relates to the corporeality of the body, and the other relates to the building's tectonics and technology. In this context, the paper discusses the shift from the material to the immaterial, which currently relies on the use of artificial intelligence technology.

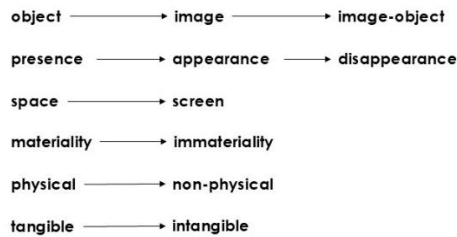
Ephemeral architecture uses computer and digital technology, and now artificial intelligence technology, to create image-objects that blur the distinctions between 'image' and 'object', 'material' and 'immaterial', and 'appearance' and 'disappearance'. Ephemerality refers to structures that appear and disappear within the blink of an eye. This can be observed when viewing their images on a digital screen, on a building's exterior, or through any other structure. It recalls Virilio's theory of the aesthetics of disappearance, in which the screen replaces space or space hides behind the screen and disappears [22]. The paper discusses this through the lens of ephemeral architecture. It emphasizes that ephemeral refers to the shifts from 'object' to 'image' and 'space' to 'screen' in architecture.

#### **4. THE CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS: REDEFINING EPHEMERAL ARCHITECTURE**

The paper conducts a conceptual analysis to reveal shifts between concepts, such as the shift from object to image. These shifts are exemplified through a variety of temporal and ephemeral spaces and structures. Examples of temporal permanence include the Eiffel Tower and the Barcelona Pavilion because they still exist although they were designed as temporary structures for specific international events and exhibitions. Others are examples of the Reichstag and the Guggenheim, the former of which is wrapped in fabric and the latter in images. Both buildings feature artistic additions that alter their appearance. The paper, however, discusses the Reichstag as a temporal installation and the Guggenheim as an ephemeral projection. The Guggenheim is rebuilt with images projected onto its surfaces, but the images do not need the building to exist. They create a constantly changing appearance for the building. The Reichstag, on the other hand, creates a static appearance that differs from the Guggenheim's new dynamic images. The paper also uses the Blur Building as an example to emphasize the differences between temporal and ephemeral architecture. The Blur Building has a foggy appearance that changes according to weather conditions. This is an example of temporal architecture, as the building is characterized by fog as a new material that can be experienced through bodily presence. Therefore, it does not exemplify immateriality related to ephemeral architecture. The paper discusses ephemeral architecture through the immateriality of images, which are not bound to bodily experience.

Examples in architectural history, such as primitive sheds, exhibition spaces, and containers, are described as temporal structures. Balloons, blobs, and clouds, which are built with new materials and technologies, are temporal structures as well. These structures present new aesthetics with their inflatable, mobile, and moveable designs, but they are still material and tangible. As discussed throughout the paper, the shift from temporal to ephemeral occurs when designing intangible and immaterial objects, such as images, in architecture. In this respect, the paper explores image-objects as examples of ephemeral architecture. These include the Guggenheim wrapped in images and the Sphere. The Sphere, in particular, exemplifies the ephemerality of architecture due to its constantly changing images, which transform the physical structure into a showcase of a non-physical spectacle. This spectacle-over-structure state fits the building site in Las Vegas, as the city itself is already a showcase for people. Thanks to digital and artificial technologies, architects can easily and quickly design images without actually building them. Although the Sphere is a built structure, it is characterized by its dynamic digital images in contemporary architecture. These images differ greatly from those exemplifying paper architecture, such as the utopic city designs of Archigram. The architects of Archigram imagined and designed on paper using their own human intelligence. Of course, architects still use their intelligence and senses today, but artificial intelligence seems to characterize designs as images rather than objects. This highlights the shift in architecture from objects to images. In this context, the paper uses image-objects created with Stable Diffusion, a popular artificial intelligence platform, to illustrate ephemeral structures. Accordingly, the paper redefines ephemeral architecture as designing image-objects within an ever-changing, dynamic context. This emphasizes the instantaneous impact of images on twenty-first-century architecture (Figure 1 and 2).





*Figure 2. The conceptual shifts followed the shift from temporal to ephemeral in contemporary architecture (Created by the author.)*

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the twenty first century, everything is in a constant state of flux, primarily due to information and communication technologies such as digital and social media and, most recently, artificial intelligence. These technologies allow us to produce, share and consume images in a matter of seconds. As Jean Baudrillard states, we are distracted by images. In fact, these are reproductions of images that he refers to as simulations [23]. They flow all around us through new media technologies. They create impressions of people, cities, spaces, events, art, design, culture and nature. We are impressed and inspired by these images. However, it is usually challenging to grasp them as they are ephemeral images. The images and the objects they represent are both perceived instantly and can therefore be defined as ephemeral, regardless of whether they are temporary or permanent. Ephemerality refers to the instantaneous nature of images and their image effects in contemporary architecture. Therefore, the paper discusses that ephemeral architecture cannot be reduced to the design of lightweight, mobile, flexible, transformable, adaptable, or demountable structures, all of which are related to temporary architecture. Instead, ephemeral architecture creates an image effect using digital technologies, new media and artificial intelligence. While temporary architecture is bound to a physical structure, ephemeral architecture can exist either physically or non-physically. Temporary architecture is usually experienced in person, whereas ephemeral architecture is typically experienced through images displayed on screens or building surfaces that act as screens.

Today, we perceive architecture and the world through the ephemerality of images displayed on screens. As McLuhan suggests, media changes the way we perceive the world [12]. It changes our everyday routines, tastes, desires, behaviors, clothing, buildings, and cities [24]. We are constantly exposed to images, particularly through new digital and social media technologies. The shocking nature of these images reinforces our daily state of distraction. Walter Benjamin discusses that buildings are truly experienced in a state of distraction rather than in a tourist-like state of concentration. He defines distraction as a condition that shapes our everyday experience of architecture. Concentration, on the other hand, leads to buildings being seen only as objects, separated from everyday life. This dichotomy between distraction and concentration remains relevant today, as distraction is often used negatively to describe people's experience of architecture and other art forms, such as film and photography, when they are distracted [25]. We are now in a state of distraction due to the constant bombardment of images on our computers, phones and screens of other smart devices. It is new media that has made us the distracted people we are today. Lev Manovich defines new media as the internet, websites, computer multimedia, and virtual reality [26]. We are distracted by these technologies. But, in this digital era, the term 'distraction' does not have the same meaning as in Benjamin's theory. In the twenty first century, distraction has paradoxically come to mean the concentration described in that theory, which refers to a tourist gaze and experimentation. We usually experience architecture through the lens of the tourist, taking pictures in front of buildings, posting them on social media, and creating memories.

That is why everything we see is a spectacle. As Guy Debord famously stated, the reality has been substituted by the spectacle [27]. The way we experience architecture is changing due to people's tendency to share every aspect of their daily lives online. Consequently, architectural objects such as buildings, spaces and structures seem to be replaced by images of architecture. Instead of experiencing the object itself, we experience an image of it. We use images to experience and share architectural spaces, consuming them without seeing them. Our memories of spaces are formed from images of these spaces seen through screens. Memories have also become as ephemeral as images. In this respect, the paper redefines ephemeral architecture as not simply temporal architecture — usually described as designing a short-lived structure — but as creating a flowing image of a structure without necessarily building it. This redefinition is intended to eliminate the confusion arising from the use of 'temporal' and 'ephemeral' as synonymous terms in the fields of architectural theory and design. The terms are used in these fields interchangeably, but the paper points out a key distinction between ephemeral and temporal. The term ephemeral has gained a new meaning with the rise of digital technology. It now refers to the design of digital images that are dynamic and instantaneous, capturing attention for at least a few seconds. These images then flow away or are replaced by others, ensuring that our attention remains focused on the screen. At this point, it is evident that 'ephemeral architecture' is more closely related to 'media architecture' than to 'temporary architecture'. Images created by digital and social media, as well as artificial intelligence, are the new materials of ephemeral architecture.

The paper argues through conceptual analysis that ephemeral architecture has its own specific framework, which includes the concepts of 'image', 'screen', 'immateriality', 'intangible' and 'non-physicality'. This framework suggests that people can experience ephemeral architecture even if it is not materially or physically constructed. It can be constituted only by images and experienced through them, either with or without bodily presence. Due to its transient nature, 'ephemeral architecture' is also related to 'screen architecture', as both refer to the instantaneous appearance and disappearance of images on screens. The paper discusses that ephemerality liberates architecture from the constraints of site, space and structure. Architecture now allows space and structure to be created as images that appear and disappear instantly in various sites and environments. This blurs the boundaries between art and architecture by imagining architectural objects as artworks, or mediaworks, that are expected to create an instant image effect, regardless of their site-specific conditions. These have become not only siteless but also objectless objects of architecture. The concept of ephemeral architecture may be challenging to fully comprehend, but it is evident that ephemeral structures enable site-specific constraints and conditions to be challenged. Artificial intelligence has increasingly led to the creation of siteless and objectless objects, or 'image-objects', which have become the real examples of ephemeral architecture. In this respect, ephemeral architecture also refers to the blurring of the boundaries between 'the real' and 'the artificial'. This implies that 'the new reality of objects', that is discussed as 'ephemerality' throughout the paper, is now created by digital technologies and artificial intelligence in contemporary architecture.

## REFERENCES

- [1] **Berman, M. (1982).** *All That is Solid Melts into Air, The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Penguin Books.
- [2] **Jodidio, P. (2011).** *Temporary Architecture Now!* Cologne: Taschen.
- [3] **Hill, C. (2016).** *This is Temporary: How Transient Projects Are Redefining Architecture*. Newcastle: RIBA Publishing.
- [4] **Colomina, B. (2002).** *Architectureproduction*. Rattenbury, K. (Ed.). *This is Not Architecture: Media Constructions* (pp. 207-221). London: Routledge.
- [5] **Coar, L. (2011).** *The Lasting Meaning in Ephemeral Architecture*. *Design Principles and Practices*. 5(6): 667-678. doi: 10.18848/1833-1874/CGP/v05i06/38252.

- [6] **Betsky, A. (2016, March 29)**. Let's hear it for temporary architecture. Dezeen. <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/03/29/aaron-betsky-opinion-temporary-pavilions-lessons-for-permanent-architecture/> (Access date: 21 December 2025).
- [7] **Mańkowska, A., Zagula, A. (2022)**. Temporary Architecture in the 21st Century as an Expression of Changes Taking Place in Contemporary Society. *Architectus*. 1(69): 1141-1150. doi:10.37190/arc220112.
- [8] **Eryilmaz, E. B. (2022)**. Revisiting the Concept of Ephemerality in the Counter-Culture Architecture of the 1960s: Inflatable Structures. *Studies in History & Theory of Architecture*. 1(10): 41-54. doi: 10.54508/sITA.10.04.
- [9] **Soylu, Ç. (2019)**. Importance of Temporary Architecture and Permanence as an Obsolete Notion. *International Journal of Structural and Civil Engineering Research*. 8(3): 253-258. doi: 10.18178/ijscer.8.3.253-258.
- [10] **Karandinou, A. (2013)**. *No Matter: Theories and Practices of the Ephemeral in Architecture*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.
- [11] **Walker, J. (2004)**. *Ephemeral Architectures: The Body and Landscape in Augmented Reality*. *Digital Creativity*. 15(2): 93-97. doi: 10.1080/14626260408520171.
- [12] **McLuhan, M. (2006)**. *The Medium is the Message*. California: Gingko Press.
- [13] **Chappel, B. D. (2020, April 04)**. *Ephemeral architecture: Towards a definition*. Scribd. <https://www.scribd.com/document/193497347/Ephemeral-Architecture>. (Access date: 21 December 2025).
- [14] **Cuentas, J. A. A., Bernedo-Moreira, D. H. (2023)**. Ephemeral Architecture as a Solution in the Evolution of Public Spaces. *Land and Architecture*. 2(51): 1-9. doi: 10.56294/la202351.
- [15] **Widyaevan, D. A. (2022)**. Ephemeral Architecture as Socio-spatial Practices in Bintaro's Modern Market Public Space. *Journal of Urban Society's Arts*. 9(1): 12-24. doi: 10.24821/jousa.v9i1.6107.
- [16] **Vidiella, A. S. (2016)**. *Ephemeral Architecture / 100 Projects 1000 Ideas*. Barcelona: Promopress,
- [17] **Janković, S., Stanković, D. (2019)**. Ephemeral Architecture: A Proposal for Interventions in Public Space. *Facta Universitatis Series Visual Arts and Music*. 5(2): 163-172. doi: 10.22190/FUVAM1902163J.
- [18] **Ványolós, E. (2022)**. The Time of Ephemeral Architecture. *Studies in History and Theory of Architecture*. 1(10): 189-198. doi: 10.54508/sITA.10.15.
- [19] **Leach, N. (2022)**. *Architecture in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: An introduction to AI for architects*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- [20] **Picon, A. (2024)**. The Materiality of Architecture: Between the Rise of the Digital Age and the Advent of the Anthropocene. *Perspectives in Architecture and Urbanism*. doi: 10.1016/j.pau.2024.100019.
- [21] **Spuybroek, L. (2019)**. *The Architecture of Continuity*. Rotterdam: V2\_Publishing.
- [22] **Virilio, P., Ruby, A. (1993)**. *Architecture in the Age of its Virtual Disappearance*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- [23] **Baudrillard, J. (1981)**. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- [24] **Junte, J. (2021, March 26)**. How media architecture is shaping our cities – and with it our lives. *Archdaily*. <https://www.archdaily.com/959178/how-media-architecture-is-shapingour-cities-nil-and-with-it-our-lives>. (Access date: 21 December 2025).
- [25] **Beasley, O. (2015)**. *In Search of Distraction: Representing Benjamin's Everyday Experience of Architecture*. University of Westminster School of Architecture and the Built Environment Major Thesis Project, Westminster.
- [26] **Manovich, L. (2001)**. *The Language of New Media*. New York: The MIT Press.
- [27] **Debord, G. (1983)**. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red.

**Gülşah GÜLEÇ, Assoc. Prof. Dr.**

She is currently a full-time academic member of the Department of Architecture at Gazi University, Ankara, Türkiye. She graduated from the Department of Architecture at Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Türkiye. She received her MA and PhD degree from the Department of Architecture at Gazi University. She has national and international publications on contemporary architecture, architectural theory and design, criticism in architecture, and architectural education.