

Notes on the Cover Picture



Supersurface Life, Superstudio Image, Prestel, 1972.

In the contemporary and globalized world, the degradation of natural resources makes it imperative to rethink the environmental future, anticipating predictable scenarios and proposing alternative solutions. The discipline of architecture historically integrates these concerns, which manifest themselves from the ideal Renaissance cities to the twentieth century modern utopias.

Social criticism in the 1960s particularly expressed in the hippie movement and the crisis caused by the second oil shock in the beginning of the 1970s radicalized demand for alternative ways of life. The images created by the Italians of the Superstudio represent one of the most expressive manifestations of the questioning of the paths that were being followed by a consumer society and by the reflections those paths would have on the planet – metaphors on a lost sustainability.

In the picture “Supersurface Life”, the net is represented by the regular Cartesian surface, which mustn’t be interpreted in the physical sense, but as a visual metaphor for an organized distribution of resources.

“Look at the distant mountain, what do you see? Is it a place to visit? Or is it just the limit of the habitable?”¹

The Superstudio was a radical group of architects founded in 1966 by Adolfo Natalini and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia in the Italian city of Florence. Some time later, Alessandro and Roberto Magris and Piero Frassinelli joined the group. It was part of the architectural and design vanguards of the 60s. It used the collage, the photomontage, films and other techniques to imagine new spaces and forms of representation and promote the “anti-design”.

Many of its projects were originally published in the Casabella magazine and ranged from fiction to storyboard illustration and photomontage, with new forms of conceiving the spaces and through their representations formulated major political and urban criticisms, questioning the lifestyle that was produced at that time. Perhaps its most emblematic work was “Continuous Monument”.

The Superstudio abandoned the work as a group in 1978, but they continued to develop their ideas independently.

The critics are unanimous about the fact that the Superstudio’s work influenced, among others, architects like Zaha Hadid and Rem Koolhaas.

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¹ Superstudio, “I. Vida”, in: “VIDA EDUCAÇÃO CERIMÔNIA AMOR MORTE”, 1973, In: SCHAIK, Martin van e MACEL, Otakar, “Exit Utopia; Architectural Provocations 1956-76”, IHAUU-TU: Delft, 2005.