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CROSSING BORDERS, SHIFTING BOUNDARIES – THE AURA OF THE IMAGE

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INTRODUCTION

Written by Pedro Leão Neto

As Head of the Editorial and Advisory Board of Sophia¹, a peer reviewed Journal published by scopio EDITIONS² and specifically designed to address theoretical work on Image and Architecture, I am very pleased to be writing this introduction to our first number that has as title Crossing Borders, Shifting Boundaries and sub-title The Aura of the Image, being its Scientific Coordinators Susana Ventura – Editor – and Edward Dimendberg – the Invited Editor for this number. Sophia collection is specifically designed to address theoretical work, and it aims to be the publishing medium for a set of exploratory and critical texts on image in the broad sense, i.e. comprehending the worlds of design, photography, film, video, television and new media. The objective is to challenge different artists and creators to publish in book format original articles, reviews and other texts of interest and value. We are interested in making Sophia a mentis instrumental capable of extending our critical knowledge and questioning the universe of image in innovative ways. The published set of theoretical and critical texts on image can either be taken from sections of scopio magazine, or from our International Conference On the Surface: Photography and Architecture, or submitted by new authors and other R&D national and international centers, through our call for abstract submissions. The title Crossing Borders, Shifting Boundaries defines the global theme for this present cycle of Sophia and conveys the interest in promoting a critical analysis around this theme, exploring how image is a medium that, on the one hand, can cross borders and shift boundaries between different subjects and disciplines where image and photography are present in a significant way and, on the other hand, in how image and photography can be used as critical instruments to better understand the real and its different realities, always questioning the universe of image in an innovative way. This is to say, besides other things, that we are very interested to see photography as a practice and discipline that is able to explore different boundaries – boundaries between nations, between text and images, between different visual genres, forms of work and ways of thinking.

¹ The etymology of the word "sophia" is closely linked to the concepts of sapience and wisdom: (Greek Σ ο φ ι α , "sofia") it is what the "wise person" has, and this word is also derived from philo+sophia ("love of wisdom").

² The editorial responsibility for this project belongs to the research group CCRE integrated in R&D of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP) called Centro de Estudos de Arquitectura e Urbanismo (CEAU).

The sub-title The Aura of the Image ensures the specificity of Sophia's present number and marks the editorial work made by its Editors, being thus no surprise to read, on the one hand, in Susana Ventura's text, besides other authors, the reference to Walter Benjamin and to his concept of "the aura" used by him for explaining how photography has transformed the relation between the image and its beholder. Then, on the other hand, in Edward Dimendberg's text the reference to Benjamin's idea of "the tiny spark of contingency" inherent in photography, which Benjamin expressed in his essay "little history of photography" (1931). Finally, it can be said we believe that Sophia will help to globally promote the awareness and reflection upon Architecture, Art and Image (AAI) and specifically to Image in regards to its conception as an instrument to question Art and Architecture, which is understood as an extended discipline and practice with an interest, on one side, in the real space and its experiences, exploring new spatial forms and architectural codes, and on the other side, on how architecture operates within larger systems: socio-cultural, technical, and historical. Sophia is a biannual International Peer Reviewed Journal and can publish in five languages: English, Portuguese, Spanish, French and Italian.