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CROSSING BORDERS, SHIFTING BOUNDARIES – PHOTOGRAPHY AND ARCHITECTURE

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## INTRODUCTION

*Written by Pedro Leão Neto*

I am very pleased to introduce the 2nd number of Sophia<sup>1</sup> from the series Crossing Borders, Shifting Boundaries, with the theme "Photography and Architecture" coming from our 4th edition of the international conference On the Surface, being the Guest Editor for this number Iñaki Bergera.

This international conference has proved to be an important forum for debate and reflection about Photography and Architecture, whose work can be accessed through the platform [onthesurface.net](http://onthesurface.net) and in scopio Editions publications as scopio Magazine, Cityzines, Debates, or the catalogue On the Surface: Public Space and Architectural Images in Debate.

SCOPIO Editions had already integrated and given support to several congresses and it is the official publisher of the 4th edition of On the Surface: Photography and Architecture, publishing 3 selected reviewed papers and two articles of invited authors on this 2nd number of Sophia Journal.

The 4th edition of this international congress aimed to promote a global critical analysis around the theme of Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries, 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. On the other hand, in what ways image and photography are used as critical instruments to understand how architecture is transformed, how it reflects different hybrid cultural identities in many countries, regions or places and how all of this interacts with and affects our cities.

We believe that this congress has contributed for a growing interest awareness and reflection upon Architecture, Art and Image (AAI) and specifically to Documentary and Artistic Photography in regards to its conception as an instrument to question Architecture, City and Territory. This means, understanding Architecture as an extended discipline and

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<sup>1</sup> The etymology of the word "sophia" is closely linked to the concepts of sapience and wisdom: (Greek Σοφία, "sofia") it is what the "wise person" has, and this word is also derived from philo+sophia ("love of wisdom").

practice with an interest, on one side, in the physical 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. Then, likewise understanding the potential of both the documentary and artistic universe of photography for building a critical and innovative view of contemporary and past architecture. As well as believing that the worlds of architecture and photography are enriched if photography is not just focused on objectivating and documenting buildings and spaces, as as a direct emanation from the real, but also on creating a new understanding and reality based on a subjective artistic gaze.

Iñaki Bergera the Guest Editor and coordinator of the panel on Photography and Architecture of the 4th edition of On the Surface has written brilliantly in the Editorial of this Sophia about Paolo Rosselli and Mariela Apollonio, as well as their texts: "Photography keeps an Eye on the Photographer" written by Paolo and "Architectural photography as a resumption. Reflections on the medium" written by Mariela.

I will be briefly presenting the three major peer-reviewed essays that are herein published and will start with the essay written by Carlos Machado e Moura "Architecture Photo Sequences: when photography tells a story", being Carlos a promising young architect and researcher within the universe of Photography on Architecture and also an Editor in these fields. Carlos writes a magnificent text that focuses on the importance of narrative sequences through images used in the sixties and early seventies in diverse architectural publications. It mainly points out examples of photography narratives in several publishing media of those times consubstantiating significant countercultural ideas and positions on architecture. This meant, besides other things, non-mainstream critical content trying to, for example, re-define concepts of categories as health, welfare, education and others within architecture as happened with Manplan series of The Architectural Review published between 1969 and 1970. Carlos specifically explores how the visual narrative strategies are used to express ideas as, for example, in the content of the three Fotoromanzi produced by the Italian radical group Strum in which text and photos in a comics like sequence were used to disseminate ideas on housing problems. An essay which is critical in our times of uncritical imagery in order to challenge photography's instantaneousness and to better understand the importance and impact of architectural photography sequences as a structure that may inherit the construction of novels, comics or the language of cinema and become an arena for visual innovation and conveying ideas that go beyond the mainstream and other compromised positions.

Sebastiano Raimondo is an architect and researcher with a keen interest in exploring how photography can create a sense of place and convey how people appropriate and live architectural spaces. He lives at present in Lisbon where he progresses his studies to resolve a PhD degree with a thesis focused on the Architecture of Contemporary Metropolitan Territories in ISCE- IUL. Sebastiano's essay "CRIL. Under the light of the sun also the sounds shine. Photography, a mode of inhabiting the world" is a significant text which makes us better comprehend how photography can be a critical territory which reads in new ways urban spaces, architecture and the contingency of people's lives. Sebastiano has as object of study the experience of perceiving diverse urban fragments, located in the internal ring road of Lisbon, from the perspective of the driver and using photography as an instrument of

research for building diverse sequences of this experience. By doing so, he is able to expand on how our experience and sense about an urban space can change by the act of photographing it and, in this way, gives the possibility to create a new critical distance from the real, opening it to discussion.

Finally, Angelo Maggi, architect, fulltime associate professor at Università IUAV di Venezia, writes an essay "Re-interpreting Kidder Smith's Italy Buildings: crossovers between photography and architecture" which is based in his research work focused on the study of architectural photography, analysing themes relative to representation understood as a tool of history investigations. His essay shows a perspective on the wake of the success between architectural photography and personal architecture criticism as a new creative processes, which brought to light new ways of understanding both fields. Focusing on George Everard Kidder Smith's book *Italy Builds: Its modern architecture and native inheritance* (1955), Angelo makes us aware of how Kidder Smith used the camera as a tool of analysis and memory and as a result created a collection of astonishing architectural photographs, data and critical comment upon the traditional and modern architecture.

In the upcoming 3rd number of *Sophia*, which is *Crossing Borders, Shifting Boundaries: Image, Body and Territory*, we would like to push further and go beyond these notions perceiving how they are critically inscribed in the works of architecture and art themselves. We are especially interested in unfolding the processes of thought present in photographic, filmic, or other works engaged with image and image making, that explore the notions of Body and Territory or use them as their own expressive matters.

Body and Territory frequently appear intertwined, sometimes even suggesting metaphorical uses: the city as a body (in the multiple acceptations: political, social, cultural, etc.), the body as an experimental territory (on debates around issues of identity and gender, works involving artistic and aesthetic experimentations, works for anthropological documentation and recording), the landscape in the absence of the body, as Cézanne named it, establishing a direct link between the painted landscape (the image) and our sensitive perception.

Our magazine is now accepting abstracts within these fundamental themes that may try to unveil how an image, a photograph or a series, critically and poetically build their own narratives and thoughts about different territories, and how they contribute to the understanding and appear engaged with contemporary dynamics of urban change.