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THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY AND IMAGE  
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## EDITORIAL | ABOUT THE 4TH NUMBER OF SOPHIA, VISUAL SPACES OF CHANGE: UNVEILING THE PUBLICNESS OF URBAN SPACE THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY AND IMAGE

*Written by Iñaki Bergera*

If we take for granted the idea of being in the so-called post-photographic era, the genre that can surely suffer its consequences and show its manifestations is that of architectural photography. Architectural photography no longer documents given that the veracity of what is represented is systematically under suspicion. It is assumed that what is photographed is, at best, an interpretation. Urban photography has lost the fascination it had at the time of the optimistic and utopian configuration of the modern city. Definitely overshadowed that enthusiasm, the exploration of the urban slides towards the transitional territories and the places in transit, where neither the city is a city nor the landscape a landscape. The non-places, the generic city or the third landscape, whatever we may name it, is where the scenery portrays a different ecosystem open to new conceptual and visual narratives that allow us to return to the consolidated city in order to discover something new, hidden behind its prejudices, their stereotypes and their history. In the bland is the substance.

We could argue nowadays that what least interest architectural photography is architecture itself. The built object is not an end but a means: a visual resource to talk about its context and its sociological, political and cultural identity. The more critical and conceptual this approach is, the more artistic it becomes in practice. If the gaze is not innocuous and aseptic then it turns out to be truly personal: the author's questioning look prevails over the distant gaze of the pure depiction. It's where the emotion and the critical discourse arise. In the contradiction and chaos, the visual artist finds a new order to explain the notion of what was built and that city in transit, tired of its expansion at the rate of speculation and which seeks to withdraw and redefine itself from within, from its consolidated identity.

Indeed, architecture photography, empowered by its leaning and artistic grounding, is more interesting when we understand it as a projective tool of an interdisciplinary nature. When the gaze at architecture and the urban is cross-sectional and polyhedral it is when it is certainly useful and effective. Photography becomes an instrument of research and analysis.

To understand the complexity of the city and the role architecture plays in it, one must learn how to look at it with a, let's say, educated and sensible gaze. And we don't look at it in order to understand it but to transform it. Architectural photography is not an active document but a reactive one; it is the effective instrument of the gaze committed to change. Architecture and the city need to be placed in front of their own visual mirror, in order to feel, listen and recognize each other.

The theoretical aims of the 4th number of Sophia and the 5th International Conference On the Surface, "Visual Spaces of Change: Unveiling the Transformation of Publicness" tackle these preliminary insights. On the one hand, the meeting explored the inalienable digital nature of the contemporary image of the city that precisely transgresses its own identity through its manipulation and transformation. Some experiences of that border between the documentary and the artistic, between the phenomenological and perceptual and the mapping of that constellation of images that reify the city were also reviewed on a second set of papers, while on the last panel the conference still refused to take a disciplinary look at the historical account to find conceptual handles for a quite uncertain future. The experiences and case studies reported in the congress, and that this special issue of Sophia Journal includes, do not provide the answers to the uncertainties and challenges that this ongoing debate breeds. On the contrary, they continue to raise new questions. Fortunately, this open condition of the debate around the city and its representation is what allows us to fortunately continue with our eyes open.