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PHOTOCREATION AS A PROPELLER TO UPCOMING NEW URBAN AND SPATIAL UTOPIAS

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Abstract

From its invention to nowadays, the act of drawing regarding architecture, has mostly played the role of strictly describing spaces. The arrangement of rigorous lines in order to describe a space just as exact as it can be, so its outcome walks the closest to what was envisioned by the artist.

Thus, a parallel between the way the drawing, understood as a tool, sets the overly pragmatic frame within the production of space expresses itself today, and the contemporary paralysis regarding the hypothetical upcoming of new utopias.

Therefore, the essay proposes the architectural drawing, mainly through the photo creation technique, in other words the combination of photography with graphic edition, also as a possible tool to propel to a state of creative design process, establishing relations with the work of Rossi, Piranesi, De Chirico, the Archigram group and others, and highlights the necessity of upcoming new urban and spatial utopias to the constant development of the discipline, just as it may be observed throughout its history.

Keywords: utopia, photography, drawing, urban, theory

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Written by Klauss Borges

Introduction

Taking a look at architectural history it is possible to realise that the most effervescent and developing periods of the discipline are mostly the ones in which architecture had opened itself to deal and think through the transformations society had to face and which by consequence, not always have been limited to the perfect drawn contour of its professional field. Since the simple decision of settling down on the territory rather than the nomad logic, or the pursue of expressing the divine instance through construction of diverse buildings that could hold rites, or even the advent of the automobile vehicle, those were examples of how architecture and the act of planning the territory have built the form of concrete expression, ideas, abstract values of society and society itself, though construction of the artificial habitat for mankind. Therefore, the most powerful experiences in architectural field happened in circumstances when the combination of these social transformation were capable of leading to the dawn of new utopias. The utopian mental state society acquires in these kind of periods works as the principle gear for cathartic creativity and concrete transformation of the fields of arts, architecture and even the whole structure of society, just as well as many other field of knowledge, standing crystal clear its impact and importance to architecture and urbanism but also to the whole development of human environment.

1. Invention and history of the drawing; Its role in the profession

In the contemporary scenario it can be a little hard to imagine architectural production disconnected from the act of drawing, however it was not always like this. Perhaps during the Santa Maria Del Fiore construction, in Florence, this notion had been observed for the first time, under responsibility of the architect Filippo Brunelleschi. The separation between conception and construction of the architectural object was something extremely determinative of architecture's course, and so would last until today. From this rupture on, the entire notion of construction planning was created, in other words the concept of design, taking the drawing as a tool. Thus the drawing resulted as a way of documenting that was supposed to record all relevant information regarding the construction of a building, that is, to fully represent in order to foresee its outcome and avoid inconvenient surprises or the necessity of making abrupt decisions in the construction site, a complete fracture between the ones who thinks or design, and the ones that make or build. e notion of design in architecture did delegate a new dimension of creativity freedom to architects, and so have let them conceive not only ideas of buildings or spaces but also complex social and urban utopias through artistic impulses, not necessarily obsessively aware of all essential pragmatic procedures required to its concrete construction.

This was indispensable to the creation of more innovative and bold urban topologies just as complex as society's demands, pushing forward the development not only in architecture and urbanism fields but also regarding the entire web of agents and knowledges that converge into the dimension of territory production.

However, it is important to realise that the drawing as a tool also have brought some limitations within itself, mainly about how to describe spaces, forms and complex architectural and territorial dynamics. Not always the tools or other available technologies did follow the pace of all complex ideas that were boiling in these artistic minded architects' heads, and so in a long-term timeframe much of the benefit acquired from the breakup between design and construction began to fade, and the rigour of the technique ended up leading architectural production to a state of vicious stagnation in which its development, nowadays, finds itself very decelerated.

Despite that, every now and then in temporal gaps, some architects and also some artists whose oeuvres were intimately linked to architecture were able to display absolutely provocative and even disturbing perspectives in the horizon and so, in that sense, made successful efforts towards awakening the discipline from its lethargy, stimulating the dawn of new utopias that would contribute to rewrite or draw the variety of possible futures of architectural and urbanistic agendas.

This is the case of some memorable architects such as Le Corbusier, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Aldo Rossi, the Archigram team and artists such as Giorgio de Chirico and Piranesi for example.

The social/urban/infrastructural/architectural utopias of Le Corbusier and Hilberseimer speak to us through their very fertile drawings which although are not entirely clear do find a way out of its confusing mystic vibe, to synthesise and inform all their brainstorming process and anxieties through the visual dimension, that in this case are capable of unleashing cathartic reactions in its interlocutors in a way that is not rationally intelligible yet due to the dimension of sentiment and the incompleteness. There is in their work a clear desire of a society whose concrete form is to innovatively complex that intrigues us about what would be the means to achieve it. It is not only about the transformation or reformulation of architecture and urban morphology, but the way of thinking of society, by consequence its form and everything that comes along with it.

When it comes to Rossi and de Chirico, for example, their works share the same palette tones in some way. Both pieces of work are playful of some subtle distortion of reality, in which they paint their urban artifacts of melancholic and nostalgic nuances, communicating the state of anxiety and conflict between tradition and innovation in which these two Italian men found themselves within modernist period, avant-garde movement whose ethical agenda did severely break up with the notion of tradition, mostly in de Chirico's time, and alongside with that did displace all certainties and canons not only in architectural and artistic but also in social realm, and afterwards did fail mainly in post-war first decades, what had a huge contribution on the melancholy and nostalgia toned Rossi's work. Thus, both powerful oeuvres focused their efforts onto provoking a revision of the way of thinking regarding cities pre-existences, their history and iconography, what ends up recovering the meaning of urban memory in order to design new artificial topologies.

It is also possible to observe the utopian potency in Archigram team's collages, in what is evident the aspiration for movement and form freedom alongside with the profusion of uncertainties and anxieties about the impacts a society endowed with extremely advanced technology and a fast paced lifestyle could have over architecture and urbanism in post-war era.

2. Double dimension of image

It is important to recognise the existence of two parallel dimensions through one can categorise an image, in these cases: the representation and the expression. The dimension of representation consists of the pragmatic and scientific function of descriptively communicate an information just as objectively as possible and therefore, being in charge of the completeness of information the drawing has the capacity to provide and control. There is a documentary commitment, delegated to the representative drawing, of transmitting the information just as exact as possible so that the construction of the object, regardless its scale, walks the closest to its planning.

When it comes to the dimension of expression the drawing does not have the responsibility to inform anything exactly or scientifically but yet to provoke the individual and subjective interpretation of its interlocutor. Only the fertile incompleteness of an image it is possible to populate one's imagination of what is or may be new, because only through the tension before the unknown can the sublime potency capable of stimulating the cathartic effect of formulation a new utopia emerge. ese two concepts, one being the drawing as a scientific tool and the other as an artistic impulse, are extremely important to acknowledge how the act of drawing has impact on architectural and urban planning practices and how certain habits of practice can also affect the act of drawing back, in other words how this simple act is firmly related to the form of society, at a bigger scale.

3. Contemporary condition of architecture and the absence of utopia

The contemporary circumstance of architecture and urbanism is run through widely diverse and diffuse issues, what tends to be a specifically complex scenario in which it can be hard to emerge a new, central and suitable for everyone utopia. In a society that is more polarised and populated with non-linear micro-dynamics and logics each day that passes, today it is, by consequence, possible to observe the decrease of public realm direct involvement in the transformations of urban environments' features, leaving this responsibility mostly to private initiative, either in full or partial and hybrid regimes, a phenomena already observed and developed in the last decades. is modality does allow that the city, understood mainly as form but also as phenomena, to be manipulated by sectors whose interests lie in other fields of knowledge, such as economics, and so let the aspects of territory o be measured by numbers, quantities and a absolute and pragmatic rationality , what is extremely harmful to the quality of public spaces we inhabit.

Alongside with that, the gradual sedimentation of the meaning of drawing as a merely representative tool, that can be observed from the second half of last century until now, was a determinant factor of the process towards architecture becoming a repetitive and mechanical media but also to disassemble architects class and keep them from their most powerful weapon: imagination. With no room left for artistic expression it condemns the meaning of the strong built agendas of past century to fade away in a dark and humid memories buried underground.

This contemporary scenario contributes to the construction of spaces, buildings and cities as products of merely rational and logical operations, financial asset and therefore the drawing that once meant freedom for the creative conceptual process for the architect today does bind to

notions and objectives just as mechanical, or even more, than the construction of these buildings. It all together helps to create a process of alienation that generates a blindfolded field in which is hard to think and even look outside of the box.

It is due to the fact that contemporary life happens in a rhythm even more accelerated than what was ever expected by all past thinkers to be and this is the reason why people cannot afford the time to think through and reformulate these obsessively pragmatic and technocratic canons.

4. Photocreation as a propeller

In contrast with the unstoppable modernisation process of society and its technologies, it is also possible to observe the consequent increasing access to technological devices such as cameras, mobile phones, tablets, laptop computers and to the internet. This transformation has led us through a path of increasing volume of visual documentation regarding our cities and their architectures to the point where we are now, where this is abundant and under reach of most social layers via many virtual platforms and social networks. In this new virtual context, together with the development of increasingly intelligent and efficient software, there is a new possibility of graphic expression that carries within itself what can be a portal of access to a utopian dimension pertinent to our time, the photocreation technique. The technique consists of an updated version of the collage, adapted to the digital reality and enhanced by new attributes of the image.



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Dystopian Porto
photocreation by the author, 2019

This is the combination of capturing images that serve as a base, through photography - which is also expanded by the use of drones - and the subsequent manipulation of these photographs through software specialized in image editing. The ease of photographic capture, search in websites and the availability of an arsenal of effects and commands capable of transforming an image makes this technique the most updated and powerful version that the old collage has ever achieved. Its features begin to appear nowadays mainly through virtual platforms and other social networks, in which it is already possible to observe a certain desire to express new spatial and social aspirations of cities and their architectures, through images whose priorities do not appear among the completeness of information or compliance with the discipline's canons. The effervescence of this movement emerges in clear response to the supremacy of the photorealistic spatial representation that has led the front line of space production since the advent of digital modeling and rendering software.

This phenomenon allows us to observe a hypothesis of appropriation of the concepts of representation and expression for digital media, in which the rigidity of the manipulation and the commitment to the reality of digital modeling software and renderers are a direct result of the desire to represent an information previously conceived and controlled about an object, while the artistic fluidity of photography coupled with its manipulation quite artisanal, although in a digital interface, configure the desire of expression of emotion, an incompleteness that is able to populate the imagination precisely by the absence control over it.

In addition to the offer of new features that are updating the possibilities of the collage tool, this technique carries with it another aspect that is extremely relevant in order to create fertile ground for the reflections on architecture and urbanism these days. When observing a global

transition from the origin of the resources for infrastructure investment in the urban space from the public sphere to the private sector, it is possible to understand in the economic sphere the decay of more extensive models of urbanization as it was possible to observe during the development of utopia modernist.

The weakening of the role of the state in the infrastructural construction of the city combined with the strong criticism elaborated in the postmodern movement to the modernist indifference with respect to the context, collaborate for a new culture of urban thought that finds value in the pre-existences of the territory and seeks to potentialise its virtues through interventions attentive to these qualities. It is in this context that perhaps the most relevant aspect about the photocreacion tool is able to express itself, since the premise of the technique consists in the editing of a photograph of something concrete, which captures a frame of reality, not an abstract drawing in a blank paper.

The fact that the technique is absolutely dependent on a photograph that captures some fragment of a concrete reality, conditions that its result, however avant-garde and provocative it may be, is the product of an overlap of an idea about that object captured by the lens, either be it a building, the public space or the city. Therefore, photocreacion presents itself as a powerful technique for expressing urban, architectural, artistic, and even contemporary political thinking by combining a new set of technological facilities with a form of work that conditions the format of reflections to the pre-existences of cities and societies. is aspect, which consequently is consonant with the contemporary tendency of thought about the production of space and territory brings to the horizon the possibility of exploring a utopian dimension that is compatible with this new agenda.



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Dystopian Porto
photocreacion by the author, 2019

Conclusion

It is of crucial importance that one can clearly see the direct effect that visual production in architecture and urbanism has on the materialization of these spaces and, on the other hand, to what extent the spaces that are being constructed are responsible for feeding this form of strictly pragmatic visual documentation. This combination contributes to the apathetic scene of rumination of urban and architectural solutions investigated in the not so distant past and, above all, that do not even serve us anymore.

It is this lack of an ethical agenda that serves the contemporary context, obviously allied to a certain engaging of the gears between the agents of the production of space, that prevents the phenomenon of the city, the architectures of its public spaces and buildings, to progress. In addition, through the power of drawing, capable of containing and expressing a seminal idea, it is possible to contribute to the genesis of the cathartic process of this transformation, promoting reflection and posteriorly transformation of the structures of thought and territorial management, as it has always been along of all the history of architecture and urbanism.

In this way, the photocreación technique presents itself as a potent and pertinent tool due to its enormous capacity to rethink the limits of the disciplines that govern man's artificial habitat production, and for this reason it should be more carefully investigated and encouraged. However, other visual and artistic exploration techniques can and should also be encouraged, as well as new technological possibilities that allow greater interaction with space in its three-dimensional nature, and consequently, its manipulation.

For independent of the separation between digital and analogic media, both deal with the virtual reality of a projected and not concrete world. One only has to take care that the possibilities arising from the other techniques do not disperse in diffuse artistic pleasures only to promote the reinvention of the drawing itself and are oriented in a direction capable of transforming the discipline of architecture into its true dimension, space.

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