

*Landscapes of Care: Photography, Film, Modern Architecture  
and Landscape Heritage*



**SOPHIA**  
SCOPIO EDITIONS

volume 8, issue 1 | publication year: 2023  
issn: 2183-8976 [print] 2183-9468 [online]  
isbn: 978-989-53640-5-3  
doi 10.24840/2183-8976\_2023-0008\_0001\_2  
homepage: <https://www.up.pt/index.php/sophia>

©SCOPIO EDITIONS



## Types

### **Evidence of the Typical**

*Hugh Campbell, Teresa Ferreira*

The pieces in this section share an interest in the typical and in the ways in which photography can be used to provide evidence of that very typicality. Photography's capacity to record evidence has been central to its practice and theory from the outset, founded on the premise (and the promise) of an indexical relationship between the thing recorded and the record made. Of course that relationship could always be distorted, manipulated or fabricated by technical means – with increasing ease and regularity in the digital era – but even such distortions would only serve to point up the dominant assumption of fidelity, of the photograph simply recording and conveying the facts. This is not to say, however, that such photographs would lack aesthetic quality or conceptual interest. Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan's seminal 1977 publication 'Evidence' enduringly demonstrated this through a careful selection and sequencing of photographs culled from numerous government agencies and research institutions. Nominally objective, the pictures were unflinchingly strange, sometimes surreal, sometimes disturbing and often forlorn. These were, as Sandra S. Phillips notes in her essay for the revised edition, 'photographs made for the purpose of record', but by virtue of what they deemed worthy of recording, and how that record was composed and framed, much was revealed, both about the unavoidably expressive capacities of the medium and about the prevalence of scientific and technical development which typified the era.<sup>1</sup>

Photographic evidence operates in distinct but related ways in each of these four pieces. There is a shared affirmation that the making of photographs serves to confer significance and value on something hitherto overlooked, ignored or misunderstood. In Jasna Galjer's carefully considered essay, she traces how the Kravica Children's Health Resort in Croatia – a striking piece of socialist-era architecture by Rikard Marasovic – is being reframed in terms of its cultural meaning and value through photographic and filmic projects. Despite, or perhaps because of, being neglected and in disrepair, the complex demands to be incorporated into the collective consciousness, to allow its past to be reconciled with a potential future. This is as much to do with its overt formal properties as its layered history in use, both of which are captured in the photographic and filmic projects which Galjer discusses.

<sup>1</sup> Sandra S. Phillips, A History of the Evidence, in Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan, Evidence, New York: D.A.P., 2017 (first published 1977)

For Birgit Schilke-Hammer and Leonie Bunte, working in a more active mode 'in the field', photography is pressed into service to bring into view buildings within the urban landscape which were hitherto almost invisible, although quite ubiquitous. The almost-anonymous architecture of the 1980s is thus made available to analysis and critical re-evaluation. The project of photographic recording is understood as a necessary step in a journey towards securing viable futures for these buildings. The exploration thus connects to the larger imperative for adaptive reuse to supplant abandonment and demolition as the underpinning of urban development. In order to retain something, we must understand its value, but in order to understand its value, we must first see it. That evidence is vital.

The small, street-facing, urban gardens of Milan, a common motif in post-WWII middle-class housing blocks, can hardly be said to be neglected or undervalued, but they are perhaps not as carefully noticed or studied as the blocks themselves. The photographic essay by Natalia Voroshilova and Giulio Galasso is notable for the way in which it draws attention to the special qualities of these typical places – what they term 'Oases in the grid'. And through that attentiveness comes a fresh awareness of the shared urban values which produced and shaped those spaces in the first place, as well as their potential as templates for future development.

Julia Maria Bezerra de Mello Fabbriani also explores housing typologies, in this case Oscar Niemeyer's Centro De Barra project in Rio De Janeiro. Intended as a paradisiac low-cost settlement away from the density of the city, the project was never finished, with Tower H becoming an emblem of that unfulfilled potential and general air of abandonment. The tower now serves as both setting and apparatus for photographic recording, with the shells of apartment rooms transformed into camera obscura, the moving image of the surrounding city emblazoned on the erected cloth screens. The building witnesses a life it never had, most poignantly in the projected ghost of the neighbouring, occupied tower: its thriving twin.

This complete commingling of the recorded subject and the means of recording vividly reveals the continuing potency of photographic evidence in drawing attention to the value of the built environment. This is especially the case with buildings and landscapes which are seen as typical. Ubiquity can very rapidly lead to a fading from the collective imaginary of a city or country. Our ability not to see what is in front of us everyday is remarkable. This was partly what prompted Thomas Struth's epic series of urban portraits, *Unconscious Places*: a determination simply to look, to register and to bring to consciousness, urban landscapes which might otherwise disappear from view. Buildings often just need to be seen.