we have produced so far, and so on.

It has to do with unavoidable questions but implying a new culture, a new analytical capacity and new instruments, a new lightness that can be excavated in the artificious complications of mediatic and productive mechanisms that seem to have been made on purpose in order to take architecture away from common sense, to face again the real questions, at any scale that they may manifest themselves, with the same type of effort and passion, under the protection of a renewed conviction of the need for architecture in our time, also restoring, in this way, the balance of the image-matter relationship, exploiting the potentialities instead of stressing the deviations. m

NOTES

(1) Note from the editor: Andrea Di Pietro della Gondola was born in Padua and settled in Vicenza when he was sixteen years old, where his mentor (Gian Giorgio Trissino) gave him the name with which he would make his career: Palladio.

About the cultural success of the iconic building and the disciplinar resistance

Hugo Mondragón López

The association between architecture and image enjoys today as much prestige among the mass public, as discredit among the architectural intelligenzia.

While the so-called "iconic buildings" are simply irresistible for the architecture culture (composed of politicians interested in management of the territory, real estate promoters, pseudo-specialized journalists and anonymous consumers of all types of images), for the architectural intelligenzia (mainly formed by university professors, artists and followers of every type of countercultural movement), they are almost always disgusting. Between the sensitivity of some and of others, there is a gigantic rift.

Recently, the cultural value of iconic buildings has increased exponentially from the most "spectacular" result obtained by the building of the Guggenheim Museum: placing Bilbao on the touristic circuits of Europe. For a politician looking for votes, for an investor interested in making history, for a journalist in search of a piece of news, for all those who feel they know the latest architectural fashion trends, and above all, for the image consumer educated in a society that celebrates the show, the effectiveness of the image-building is undebatable.

At the same time, in many disciplinary circles and especially in academic circles, there is a reaction regarding the icon-building which is morally charged. It is distrusted, it is censored and it is labeled as the architectural manifestation of the annoyance of our culture. In this context, in disciplinary circles, it is customary to point at photography and architecture magazines as the messengers of the iconic building and responsible for reducing architecture to mere images.

What is the origin and how can we explain the distrust of these disciplinary groups towards the image? Are photographs and architecture magazines responsible for the spectacularization of architecture and its reduction to a mere image? Is iconic architecture and the relationship between architecture and image an exclusive contemporary phenomenon?

Image and project

The role of architecture as a communication tool is as old as its own origin. The same stone used in the construction of walls and pillars of the architecture of the past, was used as a support to write, carve and sculpt on it all types of myths, messages, deeds, and so on. I am thinking, for example, of the hieroglyphs carved on the pillars located in the hipostolic[1] chamber of an Egyptian temple; in the sculpted friezes of the doric temples; in the reliefs of the gates of the romanic and gothic

churches that narrated passages of the gospels to an illiterate society; or in the sculptures and paintings of saints in some strategic niches of renaissance and baroque chapels.

If one is aware of this, it only needs to be stated that architecture and image have walked together along the same road forever.

There is also a narrow relationship between architecture and image in the modern concept of the architectural project. The drawings that anticipate the work, that is, what we call "The Project", are images in which we learn to see architectural characteristics while we train as architects. When the uneducated eye looks at a plan, it sees only a handful of lines that intersect one another on a sheet of paper. Architects, on the other hand, see doors, windows, walls, depths, changes of level, double heights, rythms, structural strengths, materials, and so on. For the architect, plans are images loaded with architectural contents.

Between the Lower Middle Age and the First Renaissance a set of orthogonal projections was developed that we still use today to envisage and represent architectural projects. I mean the floor plan, cuts and elevations. Between 1416 and 1420, Brunelleschi invented perspective, and in doing so, he not only added a new system to representation techniques but also stimulated the architect's spatial imagination. Perspective was not only a new graphic tool useful to make a record of buildings already constructed or to draft projects. Perspective changed the way in which architecture was conceived, from the

15th century on, it opened the way for space to establish itself in the center of the architect's project concerns.

Since the Renaissance, the first attempts to systematize architectural thinking and practice were condensed in Treatises, foundation texts of our discipline in which the words were accompanied by illustrations of plans, cuts and elevations.

Towards the 18th Century, with the appearance of the first Academies that taught architecture, these images began to take root as the main techniques for the conception of a project. This practice was consolidated as the Ecole de Beaux Arts and the polytechnics started the process of replacing the teaching model based on the master-apprentice relationship, replacing it by another more in tune with the growing specialization of the scientific world (the trade which was developed by just one person before, it is now separated into three specialized professions: the architect, the engineer and the constructor) and complying with the illustration ideal of systematizing a knowledge that could be taught to the largest number of people.

Image as discourse. Architecture photography

Towards the end of the 19th century, the authorship of "Classical Project" was beginning to be debated; architecture magazines came to replace, in a certain way, the place that Treatises had occupied since the Renaissance and the invention of photography promised the emergence of a new experimentation field for the representation of architecture.

At the beginning, photography was used as an efficient tool to record,

but above all, to spread architecture (therefore its perfect marriage with magazines). However, it did not seem to increase the project tools. To a certain extent, space and design (thought of regarding perspective, floor plan, cut and elevation) continued to be the center of the architecture's project concerns. Photography, in particular aerial photography of the city, was used as a record to support the elaboration of more precise and "scientific" diagnosis, but it also began to be used as a support that could be intervened (photoshop).

However, in the first decades of the 20th century, particularly in architecture magazines, photography was dealt with basically as a para-discourse tool, used with ideological and propagandistic purposes. The sentence "an image is worth one thousand words" expresses with great precision the discursive role of photography. I should like to propose the following idea: in vanguard magazines of the beginning of the 20th century, photography competed against words more than against any other image formats. Even texts (short and provocative phrases written with new typography) were used as images.

The substitution of text by photography would be similar to the likeness of the cinema and hieroglyphs that Abel Gance thought he could sense: «And this is how we have gone back, by virtue of a wonderful return to the past, to the expressive level of the Egyptians (...) The language of images has not reached maturity yet because our eyes are not yet at their level (...) There is not enough attention yet, enough cult to what is expressed in that language» *(cited by Benjamin, 2011).*

Authors like Sarah W. Goldhagen, Mark Wigley, Beatriz Colomina, among others, have shown how the rules of what we nowadays call "modern architecture" might have been constructed, starting from the repetition of a relatively limited number of photographs taken of a well known group of buidings constructed between 1919 and 1933, published over and over again in magazines like L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU[(2)], D'STIJL[(3)], MODERNE BAUFORMEN[(4)], etc., and in architecture books like The Modern Functional Building *(Behne [1926]),* Towards an architecture *(Le Corbusier [1923]),* International Style *(Hitchcock and Johnson [1932],* Bauen in Frankreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton *(Giedion [1928]), and so on. In my opinion, this would show the discursive role of photography quite clearly.*

It is quite probable that as the use of photography in architecture magazines became popular, architects interested in the diffusion of their works might have begun to incorporate into their project decisions, some considerations meant to create certain "effects", deliberately thought for the photography session that would follow the completion of the work. Many works that critics and historians celebrate today as masterpieces of modern architecture, already belong to this family.

In fact, architects like Le Corbusier, Mies or Gropius enthusiastically submitted themselves to photography sessions of some of their works, participated in the definition of framing and furniture to be used and even, in some cases, posed like actors, as we saw in the famous photograph of Mies van der Rohe taken at the "Crown Hall" *of the IIT which has*

been subject to exhaustive work done by Ricardo Daza.

I think that the discursive use of photography in architecture reached one of its peaks in the frame of the Case Study Houses *programme, began around the mid 1940s by John Entenza, director of the Californian publication ARTS & ARCHITECTURE. In a few words, the series of photographs of home scenes published in the magazine, profusely and enthusiastically spread (at least in Latinamerican publications), and successfully constructed the American domestic way of life emerging after the Second World War.*

Extravagant architecture or the dictatorship of the public

Despite the effort made on diffusion, for a long time the general public rejected the "abstract menu" prepared by the modern masters and regurgitated it over and over again. Modern architecture (like modern art) was not popular. From its origins it was thought of as the activity of an elite for another elite. That is why, according to what Ortega y Gasset said in 1925, the upset mass rejected it.

Very early Baudelaire, and a few years later Benjamin, announced the end of this caste of priest-artists and the loss of the "aura" of the work of art (and of architecture). As it is known, this prophecy was fully fulfilled in "the society of spectacle" that emerged in the second half of the 20th century. In the scenic art, the "happening" came to crystallize the will to break with the separation between the actors and the public. In the plastic arts, the "installations" and their emphasis on the event and what was transitory tried to conjure the

reproducibility of painting and sculpture. Publicity appropriated many techniques developed by the artistic vanguard movements and used them to provoke consumers restlessly.

Since the beginning of the 1950s, renouncing the modern masters and works for being elitist became a commonplace in architecture. The other side of the coin was that some architects tried to base their practice on approaching the public, trying to take their needs and wishes into account. It is in this context that the programme As Found, of the Independent Group[(5)], *or the claim of the Smithson[(6)] in favour of the design of housing developments that do not ignore the identity of families and individuals will take place. This same context fostered the birth of the culturalist proposal of Aldo Van Eyck and of other followers of the so-called "Team X". The first experiences of participative design were thought up at that time.*

At the same time, in the field of diffusion, architecture was divided between the one that was "news" and had the capacity to provoke the media and the other that did not. And as Georg Simmel (2002) rightly noted, in an environment more crammed with things, objects and images, all the time, one of the forms used to stand out is extravagance.

In the world of the second postwar, characterized by the extraordinary offer of images and an increasingly fierce competition in the market of symbolic goods, the speed and brevity of our encounters with things and images (including the fast and brief encounters of the general public with iconic buildings, as well as the zapping architects often

do with photographs and videos of architecture rooms), it would be a culture medium for the emergence of an ideology of extravagance, of the over-elaborated work, that desperately wants to stand out and distinguish itself above the others.

The cultural success of the extravagant building is measured by the number of tourists crowded in front of it, snapping their cameras with great delight. Most of the times the encounter is brief and fast and people almost always express the anxiety caused by the visit in two ways. First, they have a picture taken with the building in the background as proof that they have been there. Then, they find a frame which is none other than "the frame" of the photograph that they saw before visiting the building and the reason for their pilgrimage. Once this photograph of the building has been taken, all interest is generally lost. The task has been done.

The success of the extravagant building on the general public is explained, partly, because in front of it people do not feel ignorant. They understand it, they know they are in front of a piece that shouts out its originality and singularity and they can recognize it. While in order to perceive more subtle differences an educated eye is required of a great natural talent, in front of the extravagant building everyone feels an expert: "look at such height, such brightness, such novelty". The general public likes extravagant architecture because they think they can recognize difference and novelty in it. And this, as it is well known, enjoys great prestige in our culture.

Reading critically

It seems to me that in order to be consequent it is important to recognize that the distrust and the lack of prestige that images have in certain disciplinary groups have their origin necessarily in the Protestant Reform (which, as it is known, proscribed the use of images in christian temples and promoted the notion of God as an idea or concept) or, later, in the purification of pictorial language that certain vanguard movements that promoted abstract art wanted to implement. In both cases, we are in front of attempts to found a new religion.

Since their shared origin, architecture and image have been and continue to be together. An architecture that appeals to its value as an image or as support for other images, or diffused as an image, would not necessarily have to be disciplinarily censored. The history of architecture is full of examples of iconic buildings that are appreciated by the general public as well as by specialists. I mean the Sydney Opera House, the Güell Park, the Eiffel Tower, Saint Peter's in the Vatican, Santa María del Fiore in Florence, the towers in cities of Northern Italy, Notre Dame in Paris, The Coliseum, among so many others.

I think that disciplinary uneasiness lies in the use that pseudo specialized politicians, investors and journalists seek to make of the icon building. Some, to obtain votes; others, to make more money and the last ones, to pose as specialists and choose themselves as the guides and light of good architectural taste for the general public. But, has it ever not been like that? Were the great works that made the Paris of Haussmann we like so much, for example,

never the object of a housing operation on a grand scale designed to come out of an economic crisis?

On the other hand, it seems inappropriate to qualify an invention like photography as "good" or "bad". Was it bad to have invented perspective? That perspective has allowed architects to explore the architectural space with more awareness has undoubtedly been a great possibility for our discipline. And photography? Can it be blamed, together with magazines, for reducing architecture to its merely visual conditions? I do not think this statement makes much sense. Perspective is also a way of representation that only communicates merely visual conditions of a piece of work. I think that the mistake (and the trick at the same time) consists in trying to compare the representation of a work with the actual visit to the work itself. Nothing can replace this experience and in front of it, any system of representation (even video or digital animation) results insufficient.

I would be more willing to accept that we have to distrust architecture photography, not because it intends to simulate reality, (I believe that nowadays nobody has that confusion) but because it is not innocent, because it is a simple way to record and, on the other hand, it is loaded with messages.

In a real world, one would visit, measure and draw all the works of the history of architecture worth seeing, but reality is less perfect. For generations, architecture photographs and magazines have allowed us getting in touch with a number of works which would otherwise remain unknown to us. Moreover, nowadays, when certain buildings

have already been demolished, their photographs constitute a very valuable historic document.

In democratic societies, massified like ours, architecture photographs and magazines are, potentially, powerful instruments for the teaching of architecture. But as it happens to many parents with television, instead of forbidding them, they have to be read critically because they are not innocent, they are loaded with ideology. m

NOTES

(1) Note from the editor: a room for the Egyptian aristocracy, whose roof was supported by columns.

(2) Note from the editor: Le Corbusier and Paul Dermée founded L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU in 1920.

(3) Note from the editor: DE STIJL was published by Theo van Doesburg between 1917 and 1927.

(4) Note from the editor: MODERNE BAUFORMEN, published by Julius Hoffmann since 1901, became a promoter of nazi architecture.

(5) Note from the editor: This group, active in London between 1952 and 1955, aimed at overcoming the modernist approach to culture.

(6) Note from the editor: Alice and Peter Smithson were a married couple of British architects. They were part of the Independent Group.

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Sinergies between design models and their after images in the practice of UNstudio

Luis Etchegorry

Concepts

UNStudio (United Network Studio), led by Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos, is presented from the beginning as one of the few internationally renowned offices which sustains its entire production on a projective, critical, experimental and rigorous analysis that challenges the status of our profession.

UNStudio developed its discourse mainly at the beginning of the 1990s, in clear opposition to the linguistic rhetoric coming from the latest years of de-constructivism.

UNStudio considers matter and image in an inseparable, indivisible way. Image and matter are two synergic forces that fluctuate complementing each other. Van Berkel, in two of his last public lectures (entitled "Trained Judgment" and "A New Understanding")enunciates some features of our profession: a contemporary architect behaviour is very different from what it used to be; the image of the architect as a self-sufficient professional is

declining; the architect, as the sole actor in the expanded field of the profession, does not find a fixed and central place anymore. Permeated by new parameters and influences, the current architect's role is oscillating.

The starting point for both conferences is the concept of "expansion of the profession", a whole new approach carried out by UNStudio during its last years of practice. According to van Berkel, since the modern movement, architecture has fluctuated between function and aesthetics in a very restricted and asphyxiating way. It is practically impossible to assimilate and endorse this relationship today. Van Berkel proposes expanding the limits of these two pillars asserting that, nowadays, the function is complemented and influenced by numerous external agents (global and local regulations, specialists collaboration, new functional programs coming from new market demands, etc.). Van Berkel applies the same expansion strategy to aesthetics. Art, fashion and industrial design increase the current aesthetic horizon. In this new scene, where architecture deals with so many parameters, it is possible to ask what the new role of the architect is and how he or she should take a position in this expanded field.

Here UNStudio presents the notion of "trained judgment". For them, the architect is a "scientific being" crossed by an infinity of knowledge. In this sense, there are two fundamental questions in order to understand the expansion of the profession: How do we generate and disseminate knowledge? And how is knowledge controlled and managed? Through a new critical