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**Architecture and Image:
Between Process and Communication**

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Extended Abstract

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Introduction

The current dissertation arises from a personal concern about the professional practice of architecture that is dazzled by its power of seduction, valuing its image in a context where the mediatization of architecture is stimulated by a digital culture based on aesthetic and capitalist promotion.

Taking into account the reality of the growing devaluation of the reflection and content of architecture, it is intended to study the positive and negative impact of the image as a tool of communication process in the development of the architectural project.

Hence, this dissertation intends to analyze the urgent problem, previously mentioned, in the light of the constant developments of digital technology, and to reflect on the relationship of architecture with its images, focusing on contemporary concerns and history.

In order to understand the relationship between image and architecture, here is proposed a critical interpretation of image production as a process and as a communication device of the project. This analysis is further supported by case studies of five influential ateliers: Superstudio; OMA/Rem Koolhaas; Zaha Hadid; OFFICE KGDVS and Fala.

1. Image

1.1 Thought and Communication

Image as Thought

Despite the strong tradition of discrediting image and imagination as authentic and operative ingredients of human consciousness, memory and thought, some philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Gaston Bachelard, Edward S. Casey and Richard Kearney, have developed compelling philosophies of image and imagination.¹

These philosophical perspectives also shed light on phenomena in the arts and architecture, which often tend to be presented as irrational or mystical. Despite the historical suppression of images in the dominant theories of thought, the recognition of images and imagination are not absolutely new. "The soul never thinks without an image," as Aristotle thought.

However, our culture shows a deficiency in understanding and tolerating inherently autonomous and indeterminate phenomena, such as human emotions or imagination and mental images. This is also one of the reasons why our creative abilities and acts, imprecise by nature, are generally undervalued.

Image as Communication

Every image has the purpose of being communicated, the image is a message. Based on Jacques Amount's theory, an image's mode of communication is divided into three.



Fig.1 Ingmar Bergman, *Persona*, 1966.

1. PALLASMAA, J., *The Embodied Image. Imagination and Imagery in Architecture*, 2011

First, the symbolic mode, where its function is to convey the most diverse values, for example, democracy, progress, freedom, and many others of significant validity. Next, the epistemic mode, in which the image has an informative function, and is able to provide visual information about the world, so that it can be known and recognized. Finally, the aesthetic mode, in which the image is intended to please its viewer, promoting specific sensations.²

For Ave Appiano, the image is a process of reconstruction of reality, it is a reorganization of the subject's sensitive experience.³

1.2 Historical Approach

The development of the image merges with History and the development of humanity itself. Its importance is closely linked to the historical, social, political and economic context, being able to express the values and identity of an era.

In the Renaissance, the invention of the perspective comes to highlight the importance of the human being and his intellectual capacity, revealing the individual's conception of the world, through geometric and mathematical rules that enable the approximation with reality.

The image revolution was once again given a major boost in the mid-19th century. With the invention of photography, the image loses its religious or symbolic function, and starts to have an informative and documental character. This is because, due to the long exposure times and the little malleability of chemicals, the immobility of the photographed object was indispensable.

Starting in the 20th century, allied to the technological advances in photography, the image sees its universe significantly expanded. Consequently, advertising and propaganda turned the image into a privileged instrument of communication with the outside world, fast, efficient and sophisticated.

With the press, the image acquires a highly manipulative and sagacious character, capable of operating changes in behavior, habits and customs in society.

In the late 20th century and early 21st century, postmodern man lives in a predominantly visual society, which ostensibly uses the image as a means of communication, culture, and power.

The era of digitalization and massification of information has largely contributed to the spread of the image, which has come to influence man's customs, behavior, and social character.

1.3 Image Society

The Hegemony of the Image

Today, information circulates predominantly through images at a highly accelerated pace. For infinitely different purposes, informational, educational, entertainment, as well as for ideological and political commercial manipulation or artistic expression.

Images have gained a strong presence and prominence in the private and social life of society. For Paulo Barroso, the iconocracy,

2. AMOUNT, J., *The Image*, pp.80-81, 1990.

3. APPIANO, A., *Comunicazione visiva: apparenza, realtà, rappresentazione*, p.2, 1996



Fig.2 Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, *View from the Window at Le Gras*, 1826.

4. BARROSO, P., *A imagem como ausência*, 2017.

5. Ibid

the power of images has never been so evident, stating that images, in our daily lives, even impose what must be seen.⁴

Gilles Deleuze used the term "image civilization" to try to describe a society held hostage and manipulated by the mass-media. For Deleuze, this image civilization is a "civilization of cliché," where iconic inflation that relies on redundancy and concealment, distortion, or manipulation.⁵

Social Networks

Social networks have become indispensable to everyday social life in the 21st century, with the main focus on the youngest layers of society. The number of users has been increasing steadily and is expected to continue to grow.

Social networks, as the name implies, seek to promote online interaction and sharing between individuals.

Moreover, these platforms are beginning to play more diverse and structural roles in the lives of individuals, both in how they perceive the world and how they relate to it.

Digital platforms have fallen into a capitalist model where maximum yield and profit are sought, thus beginning the war for attention and seduction, where images are vehicles of commercial manipulation and influence over users.



Fig.3 Pol Kurucz, *Glam Jail*, 2017.

The New Reality

Digital dissemination tools, responsible for the majority of information dissemination, mainly provide fast, isolated and fragmented information, giving rise to the experience of a discontinuous and limited world.

Richard Kearney argues, therefore, that the current role of the image is radically different from what it had before, "now the image precedes the reality it is supposed to represent [...], and that has become a pale reflection of the image."⁶

The virtual world is already beginning to replace the real world, video games or reality simulators have become places of interpersonal relationships. From a philosophical point of view, the very concept of "reality" has never been as ambiguous as it is today, Juhani Pallasmaa argues.⁷

6. In: ROBINS, K., *Into the Image: Culture and politics in the field of vision*, p.19, 1996

7. PALLASMAA, J., *The Embodied Image. Imagination and Imagery in Architecture*, 2011

2. Image and Architecture

2.1. Process and Communication

Image as process

Architecture is a highly complex discipline, its methodology is a research-argumentation approach, a practical reflection, in which arguments are both an idea and an analytical and typological formalization.⁸

As a research process tool, images are used at several different moments in the architectural project: for analytical; conceptual and detailing studies. Thus, architects use images to

look for textures and materials, to verify scales and proportions, and to study mechanisms or technical details.

The image translates and questions the architect's reasoning.

Image as Communication

Architectural design is undoubtedly a multi-phase and multidisciplinary process. In this way, image reveals itself effective in the transmission of technical, theoretical and conceptual information, essential for the elaboration and collaboration of an architectural project.

Thus, the representation of the project becomes crucial to its communication and understanding. Images such as axonometries, photomontages, perspectives, infographics or any other simulation complement the project's determinations, capable of announcing new themes of the developed project. These representations can translate the theoretical and conceptual conceptions as well as the volumetric and material reality of the project.⁹

2.2 Historical Approach

It was from the Renaissance that architectural representation came to be considered as an art that could be theorized and, therefore, could be studied and applied following rules to correctly represent the buildings to be built.

Years later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, in the Baroque period, architectural drawing acquired a more preponderant role in education leading to dictionaries, courses, theories, and other reflections that rationalized drawing as a means of representation.⁹

The second half of the 18th century was marked by empirical and rational thinking as well as knowledge driven by the industrial revolution, which motivated changes and reforms, both economic and political, leading architecture to play a key role in thinking and building a new ideal society.¹⁰ Design became an essential tool for the creation of a new architecture completely outside the reality and constructive capacity of its time.

Then, in the 19th century, the contribution of Gaspard Monge, Descriptive Geometry, was a determining factor, as a scientific and mathematical basis for architectural design was established. Architectural drawing becomes aware of its technical and artistic value, combining rigor with aesthetics.

The 20th century is highly marked by the development of photography and, consequently, of the press and consumption.

Accompanying this change, architecture also appropriated the image for the diffusion of political ideals, questioning the practices and customs of its time.

Finally, in the late 20th century and early 21st century we witnessed phenomena such as globalization, digitalization, and hyper-consumption. In this context, architecture was faced with the introduction of new, highly efficient digital tools that provide a fully immersive visualization, operating in three-dimensional environments.

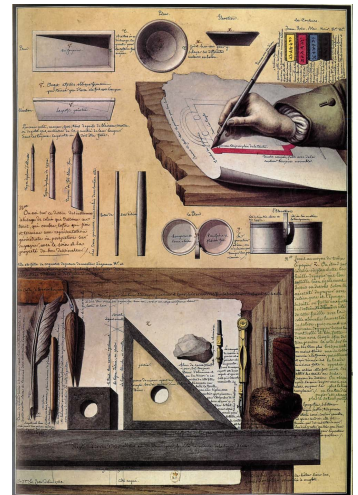


Fig.4 Jean-Jacques Lequeu, *Les eines del dibuixant*, 1782.

8. PETER, G., *Process/ Material and Representation in Architecture*, 2011.

9. COSME, A., *El proyecto de arquitectura: Concepto, proceso y representación*, 2016

10. MILHAU, X., *El fotomuntatge arquitectònic*, Tese de Doutoramento, 2010

11. ARANTES, P., *Arquitetura na era digital-financeira: desenho, canteiro e renda da forma*, 2010

Digital images, calculated and produced by computers have achieved a realism very similar to photography. Hence, architects seek aesthetic/photogenic and capital validation of their own images.¹¹

2.3 Image Architecture

12. VESELY, D., *Architecture in the age of divided representation: the of criativity in the shadow of production*, 2004

13. DEBORD, G., *The society of spectacle*, 1967

Contemporary architecture seeks the idea of product and brand identification. Like the great empires of history, which marked their territories with distinctive architecture in order to display their power and dominance, globalized corporate offices now aspire to express their unmistakable brand. Architecture becomes conditioned by the market economy on a global scale.

Dalibor Vesely states that the state of contemporary architecture is largely defined by the general fragmentation of our culture.¹²

Allied to this, the digitization and online distribution of information have created a deluge of content. Internet platforms compete with each other in contention for views and attention grabbing. This way, architecture, built or not, presented mostly through images, finds itself hostage of this battle, which is a sign and consequence of a "society of spectacle".¹³

Furthermore, buildings become self-centered with no intention of establishing relationships with their surroundings. Their scale, material, and form are manifestly self-centered. They become more and more independent artifacts that belong nowhere.

Today's architecture has a problem of content. In an era marked by substantial change, it continues to promote the aestheticization of buildings and to hide behind formal issues and images.



Fig.5 Frank Ghery. *LUMA Arles*, 2021 (Photograph)

3. Case Studies

3.1. Analysis

Superstudio

The Superstudio collective, formed in 1966 in Florence, had as its main concern the analysis of the effects of mass production and hyper-consumption of its time, applied to a vision of Architecture.

This studio used photomontage to build seductive and captivating images, loaded with a strong visual impact. The collages gained strong prominence for their highly symbolic value, sometimes with an ironic and festive look thanks to the use of figures and decorations designed to give veracity to futuristic urban and territorial visions.

Superstudio's involvement was overtly didactic: "to analyze and annihilate the discipline of architecture using popular means of illustration and consumer literature."¹⁴

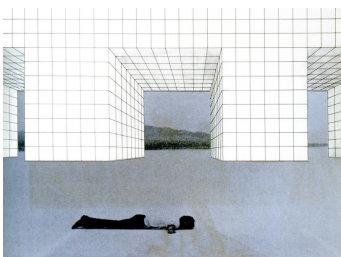


Fig.6 Superstudio, *The Continuous Monument*, 1969

14. Adolfo Natalini, *On Drawing*, <https://drawingmatter.org/adolfo-natalini-on-drawing/>, 2016, Accessed Jan 2021

OMA/Rem Koolhaas

Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), founded in 1975, is an unusual office, with highly critical bases, willing to understand and evaluate the existing reality and the contemporary social, political and cultural needs of its time, so that architecture serves as a response to these instances. Thus, images become, for the studio, a tool for organizing and exposing the extensive and complex analysis of the world, in order to clarify the arguments and justify the architect's thinking.

OMA's images point to a narrative construction or thought process, similar to a storyboard, a graphic organization capable of supporting the theoretical narrative. Together they inform the process and argument construction, offering a greater understanding of the political, economic, social and cultural context that shapes its architecture.¹⁵

OMA does not establish an image signature or a style of its own, each object is unique in its own right and are exclusive to the respective project, giving creative freedom to the author who aims to keep up with the contemporary context as it changes, and so Koolhaas' understanding and development of architecture adapts and keeps up with permanent change.

Zaha Hadid

The architect stands out for her creative freedom and will to progress, easily observable in her works and architectural projects.

Inspired by the ethereal paintings of Kazimir Malevich, the canvas and the brush became drawing tools and locus of spatial invention. She adopted isometric and perspective drawing techniques, commonly used by suprematist artists, to achieve irrational and seemingly deformed spaces that provoked reality with ideas of fragmentation and superposition.¹⁶

Hadid transformed traditional drawing conventions, introduced several techniques and points of view in the same multidimensional frame, layered drawings made on transparent acrylic sheets, seeking to create visual narratives that showed several spatial strata simultaneously. The architect developed an aesthetic that seemed to challenge the inertia of material reality, through the application of dynamic forms subject to visual acceleration and a sense of deconstruction.

With her success, Zaha Hadid established parametrization as a new design paradigm. Therefore, by adopting the possibilities of successive technological innovations she applied the concepts and principles she pursued in her paintings to the new digital tools.

OFFICE KGDVS

The critical spirit of office KGDVS (Kersten Geers and David Van Severen) is reflected in its emblematic digital representations. Like the vanguardists, Kersten and David use collages to create intense and highly figurative narratives. Roberto Gargiani, professor and architecture critic, says that thanks to KGDVS collage has become a privileged 21st century medium to affirm the conception

15. GARGIANI R., *Rem Koolhaas/OMA:the construction of marveilles*, 2008

16. BETSY, A., HADID, Z., *The Complete Buildings & Projects*, 1998

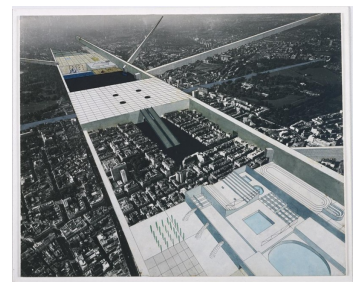


Fig.7 Rem Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp e Zoe Zenghelis, *The Strip*, 1972



Fig.8 Zaha Hadid, *Hafenstrasse Development*, 1989 (Pintura)

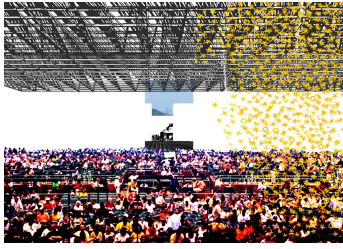


Fig.9 OFFICE, *A Grammar for the City*, 2005

17. GARGIANI R., *The first digital collage OFFICE - Kersten Geers David Van Severen: narrative intentions of the twenty-first century eclectic visionaries*, Plan B, Vol.4 n°2, 2019

18. Ibid



Fig.10 Fala, *Batalha*, 2015 (Colagem)

19. VADOT, C., *How 3 Young Architects Founded a Firm at 25 Years Old*, Entrevista, <https://architizer.com/blog/practice/materials/fala-atelier/>, Consultado em Mar 2021

20. BANDEIRA, P., *Post-Possible Architecture*, 2G, n°80, 2019

of architecture as a cultural and critical position, as it was in the sixties and seventies.¹⁷

The representations of architecture, aspire to a figurative and theoretical dimension capable of reactivating the universe of "discourses through images", which spread the radical architecture of the seventies.¹⁸

Increasingly adding and diversifying their references, the architects aim to demonstrate the possible variations of an architecture that intends to ascend to a manifesto of cultural attitude and that can include all kinds of references.

OFFICE does not intend to limit digital collage to the end of the project or the illustration of a utopian vision, but to make it one of the main instruments for the transformation of cultural intentions in architectural creation.

Fala

The Fala atelier proudly describes itself as a "naive" architectural practice. This naivety, according to the studio, refers to the way they approach each project. The studio applies the same optimism and liveliness to all projects, from territories to birdhouses. For Fala, the projects are,, "a mix of formal languages, references, quotations and themes, regulated only by an obsession for clarity. The architecture produced is intuitive and rhetorical."¹⁹

However, Fala stands out for graphic persistence and representational coherence. Representation has become, for the studio, an autonomous discourse, independent of the work. Pedro Bandeira goes as far as to say that the image is the "end-game," or final goal. "The images of Fala are not codified drawings, they are not vehicles that lead to the materiality of the work, they are a place of their own, and it is the work that meets the images, it is the work that dematerializes itself to become an image by imitating its lightness."²⁰

Thus, beyond the intentional proximity between the images and the architects' built work, the ultimate intention is for the work to become the image, which in a naive way criticizes the "idea of perfection" promoted by the accuracy of digital technology and the visual architectural culture that comes from it.

3.2 Discussion

This work intend to present an overview of the analysis of the five case studies, based on the study of the studios in question.

This way, it became pertinent to compare and identify the similarities and differences between the ateliers, in order to draw conclusions from the work done.

Thus, the influence of painters was evident in an adoption of the same working methods and techniques, as seen in the case of OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Zaha Hadid, or even in the appropriation and literal use of the language and correspondence of meaning of the painters' work, verified in the case of Fala and OFFICE. The influence of painters in the work of architects may also be related to

the high degree of importance given to image and sense of composition. Therefore, the question remains as to the origin of this relationship, whether the importance is given by the influence or whether the influence is born from the importance given to the images.

It is also pertinent to note that the studios that share references and use the same image production tools exhibit a clear graphic affinity.

Additionally, Superstudio and OMA/Rem Koolhaas present themselves as the most critical studios, using images as a vehicle for political, economic and cultural criticism, both studios also rely on written texts that support their opinions, raising questions about the communicative effectiveness of their images. This more radical trait can be further derived from influential characters like Mario Tronti and Salvador Dalí. The theoretical and graphic affinity of these ateliers is obviously a consequence of Rem Koolhaas' admiration for Superstudio. In the same way, OFFICE KGDVS, uses the image to build a discourse that supports and communicates the decisions made for the architectural project.

3.3. Critical Review

The detailed research led to a clearer view of the relationship between the image and the production and communication processes of the architectural project. This sub-chapter challenged us to answer several questions that arose along the way. This way it was possible to draw several conclusions.

The investigation of the case studies, more than illustrating the relationships previously established, allowed us to understand the strategies and directives that lead the studios and induce their results. The case studies describe the arguments for the strategies adopted, in the production of images of architecture, and extend the understanding of the role of images in their practice.

Perhaps the fundamental question is not the verifiability of this relationship, but rather, the validation of the goals and conditions that guide it.

Thus, confirmed by the previous research, today we witness the competition for attention that results in architectural projects with highly complex and dazzling forms but devoid of content, intention and/or purpose.

The tools of image production seem to promote and feed this condition. However, the value of architecture is not defined by the medium in which it is produced, but by its material, spatial and theoretical qualities. In this way, it is up to the architect to establish these qualities through the available tools, searching for the most effective one, thus there is no "right" tool to design architecture.

It is also concluded that *image-projects* are capable of stimulating the debate between architecture and society, appealing to the progress and development of the human being itself as a community, only possible due to the scope that images are capable of having.

4. Conclusions

The present dissertation arises from the author's personal inquietudes and from a critical opinion regarding the use of the image in architecture, in the current context.

Throughout the work it was possible to corroborate this opinion, in sites, magazines and exhibitions, that the image is subject to a use of instant consumption: the image, when presented in an isolated way, that is, not accompanied by other images that complement or explicit it, has the ability to create impact but often fails by its lack of content and message.

The research carried out by the author proves, however, a radically contrary opinion. In-depth case studies prove that the use of image in architectural projects has the ability to be a critical and profound vehicle of communication.

This dissertation thus allows us to conclude the importance of the relationship between the production of images and the practice of architecture, having been able to know the conditions that motivate this same relationship.

The case studies are proof that architecture has the ability to promote dialogue and critical ideas that actively contribute to the development and growth of society. In this sense, the image reveals itself as a tool that, when properly used, allows the creation of shrewd inquietudes capable of intervening in individuals' behaviors.

More than questioning what types of representation and tools we will have at our disposal, in the future of architecture image production, we should debate and question which values and which character we intend to attribute to them.

The architect must stand out for an integral and responsible position when producing images of architecture, not subjugating himself to the current tendency of the desire for mediatization and even fame.

It is concluded that the image can become an important tool in the process and communication of architecture.

Thus, it is the author's opinion that it is necessary to be more demanding in teaching by showing the responsibility, vastness and richness that this tool makes possible when correctly used. Therefore, the relevance of reflecting on the production of images of architecture in today's teaching practices is highlighted. Learning, understanding and exploring the image, is today a requirement of architecture schools. Today, more than ever, architecture schools, have the responsibility to teach how to think and communicate through images.

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