Reviews

Jorge Llopis Verdú

Dibujo y arquitectura en la era digital. Reflexiones sobre el dibujo arquitectónico contemporáneo

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Jorge Llopis Verdú's book begins with a Hadot and Heiddeger's quote, defying the reader to recognize the usefulness in the useless, so that he could keep pursuing this useful exercise boldly. This reflection on drawing starts from an investigation into its own usefulness and its historical role as a privileged scientific language. It has indeed been used as a powerful tool to record the travel experiences–since the first explorations–ending up generating the computer graphics and some of the new visual arts. This is the reason why the present book is particularly appropriate for the times: it proposes an updated report of the issues related to the architectural representation and how to teach it, based on the analysis of previous studies that define the bibliographic *pantheon* of our academic field.

The first section of the book contains a few considerations about drawing as a language that allow us to analyse the surrounding reality so to directly address the design process. Then the author observes how the conceptual and perception related aspects of architectural drawing are taking a great advantage of the most recent contributions coming from the Neurological and Education Sciences. Having the chance to diagram the visual process of our principal tool–our brain, which is analytical and digital at once–will lead us to make new assumptions about the generation of our personal perception of the physical world surrounding us (this reflection could be extended to the creative process later on).

The second section is dedicated to drawing seen as a tool to understand the world and the space, therefore, the reader is taken back to the origin of this art. Drawing let us observe, see past the tangible and understand more than just the architectural space. Then we move on to the, initially ostracized, 'new' digital techniques, which contributed greatly to ignite our imaginary and to increase our graphic experience (even though they still require some time for us to really understand their full potential and the possible technical impacts). The digital era is so revolutionary that it has been equated with same of the fundamental moments that characterized the history of drawing, such as the introduction of perspective and the codification and dissemination of descriptive geometry, as stated by Chías and Cardone (cited by Llopis Verdú on pages 5 and 177).

The third section deals with the impacts of the infographic representation on drawing and architectural design, stressing two specific aspects: on one hand, there is the established reality of the new graphic models, in the way they have been transformed by the so called digital drawing; on the other hand, there are all the outstanding issues related to the impending necessity to see the digital imagery more as a–maybe virtual–simulation than as a

representation in itself. Despite this, the author confirms that hand drawing can still be useful nowadays; so, although it could look like a paradox, his aim is to point out that the very action of drawing leads to the definition of thought and the segmentation of space, other than being directly linked to the attention span. In conclusion, this section contains an invitation to reconsider the amount of the time necessary to understand the physical world around us, due to the mediation of drawing between the world and our hands. The author follows and exhaustive and constructive path from the past to the future. He quotes Zygmunt Baumant more than once to remark that it is impossible to foresee the future, because of the uncertainties of the modern world and the vocational crisis in the architectural and civil engineering fields, therefore it is advisable to rely on the modern culture, which urges us to constantly reinvent ourselves, while still looking for the usefulness even in the apparent useless.

Eventually, let us not forget some of the author's personal reflections. Llopis Verdú takes stock of his academic experience, his didactic activities–characterized by the change in the graphic means–and above all the importance of sharing with our employers, the students, as they were often referred by Vito Cardone.

It appears that Llopis Verdú wants the drawing community to make a self-assessment based on the actual scenarios and the past cautious response to the digital innovation; we could find the basis of this discussion in a 2011 Edoardo Carazo's article (cited on page 394) about the so called "digital issue" and how it is dealt with at the EGA International Conferences and in the EGA journal edited by Ángela García Codoñer. As stated, the digital revolution was initially withheld, opposite to a strenuous defence of the analogical drawing, to the point that, at the apex of this debate, it was even declared the *muerte del dibujo* (death of drawing). We are specifically referring to the initial considerations about the implementation of the digital techniques as just a practical mean to systematize and standardize the outputs, while the scientific world was sceptical, almost funeral, about really making the "digital model" part of the design process. All these considerations were quantitative than qualitative and probably due to a misunderstanding, which was later sorted out by the deep methodological, cognitive and professional implications of the digital drawing found out during the early 21th century.

The author clarifies that even though the main intent of this book is to defend the ongoing utility of the hand drawing, it is equally necessary to stress its importance within the digital field; the ones, which agree about giving a new role to analogical drawing, are indeed the same that work with computer drawing. We actually need to answer to the urge of our students, the so-called digital natives, by rearranging the courses of study in order to take into account all the types of representation, being it manual digital or even physical, and for it to become a decisive part of the formal processes adopted to comprehend, conceive and transmit architecture. The message here is not to follow the contemporary path of considering a model useful only if it is profitable and immediate; we should instated direct our curricula to the hard core of Drawing, as a way to overcome the residual resistances and embrace the novelties that are inevitably yet to come. We hope that the architects and engineers will continue to oversee the design process, instead of losing their power to, maybe useful, software developers. Perhaps, this could represent the first step to develop our new curricula, that could even include a reading of *The usefulness of useless*, a book by Nuccio Ordine, which is quoted by Jorge Llopis Verdú already on page 13 "[…] the usefulness of useless knowledge is radically opposed to the dominant usefulness that, in the name of exclusively economic interest, is steadily killing the memory of the memory of the past, the classical disciplines and the languages, education, free research, imagination, art, critical thinking, and the civil horizon that ought to inspire all human activity". By concluding his introduction in the said way, Llopis Verdú is maybe pushing us to take new responsibilities in our university classrooms.

Salvatore Barba and Massimo Leserri

Authors

Salvatore Barba, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Salerno, sbarba@unisa.it
Massimo Leserri, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Salerno, mleserri@unisa.it