

# The Reasons of Drawing as Narration

Pilar Chías Navarro

The 38° *Convegno internazionale dei docenti delle discipline della Rappresentazione* took place in September 2016 in Florence. It focused on the subject *The reasons of Drawing*, and particularly on the new ways of thinking, shaping, and managing new complexities, which are possible thanks to contemporary graphical and technical media and resources.

Focus 4 dealt with *The reasons of drawing as narration*, and developed their discussions around the possibilities that drawing brings when considering its qualities as a metalanguage, its limits, and its ability to set an instrumental basis to various different scientific fields to be used by architects, designers, and urban planners. All contributions coincided with the fact that graphic sign is mainly used to commu-

nicate a message, but that it also permits to follow the paths of the tracer's memory and will: "*je peux me déplacer devant lui, commencer par le haut, par le bas, parfois même aller autour*" [1].

The ability to explore the qualities and capacities of drawing as a narration has an ideal limit, which is the topic that Focus 4 intended to analyse. Although we kept in mind the traditional role of drawing as a representation tool, other possibilities introducing variables as real time and virtual reality, were not discounted.

The first approach to these limits affected to the ancient mankind's ambition about opening a dialog with the urban, architectural and territorial reality surrounding them. This dialog has been performed directly upon their environ-

\* *Articolo a invito per inquadramento del tema del focus, non sottoposto a revisione anonima, pubblicato con responsabilità della direzione.*

ment, but also by means of its representation, aiming to show the daily life as well as their personal or collective achievements [Docci, Maestri 1992, p. 17]. Technical limitations reduced for centuries these expressions to handmade models and drawings, but since photography was discovered, new ways to depict this reality were applied exponentially.

*“Nos Beaux-Arts ont été institués, et leurs types comme leurs usages fixés, dans un temps bien distinct du nôtre, par des hommes dont le pouvoir d'action sur les choses était insignifiant auprès de celui qui nous possédons. [...] Ni la matière, ni l'espace, ni le temps ne sont depuis vingt ans ce qu'ils étaient depuis toujours. Il faut s'attendre que de si grandes nouveautés transforment toute la technique des arts, agissent par là sur l'invention elle-même, aillent peut-être jusqu'à modifier merveilleusement la notion même de l'art”* [2].

As a consequence, the traditional graphical methods and procedures currently coexist and complement each other with digital 3D models, by means of photogrammetric imagery and 3D printing [Chías, Cardone 2016]. The declared willingness to document the existing heritage, or just the personal concern to increase awareness [Cardone 2014, p. 11] were the traditional motivations for describing architecture through drawing. Such a valuable historic legacy is now irreplaceable before setting up the previous stages of a rigorous research on the built heritage.

Some contributions to the *Convegno* stressed the importance of the original drawings when a deep knowledge of a particular building is needed.

At the same time, they gave value to the use of modern techniques and digital tools serving to survey purposes, that opened new perspectives and approaches to the knowledge of the architecture and, by extension, to the city, the landscape and the territory. Virtual reconstructions with mapped photogrammetric images, as well as computer animations are already well-established techniques in our area of expertise.

Thanks to 3D printers, to information and communication technologies—TICs,—to apps developed for augmented reality, and even to the new diffusion tools in Internet, some wider research scopes were recently opened.

However, the ultimate intentions that lie behind the researcher's mind are never faded, for the same way that each historical period has developed its own graphic style and symbology [Docci, Maestri 1993, p. 243], its interest lie on *“non è quello affatto obiettivo della macchina, ma quello critico di uno studioso”* [Vagnetti 1980, pp. 541-542].

According to this research line, the use of drawing to rebuild the architecture or its image was developed by some interesting contributions that focused on the subject at different scales, from ornamental detail to territory.

In *Reconstruction phase architectural survey*, Adriana Arena brought to light an unpublished set of drawings about the reconstruction of the Cathedral of Messina, which were produced after the 1908 earthquake, referring both to details and to the whole building, and to measuring and colour.

Also at the architectural scale, Paola Quattrini dealt with Adalberto Libera and *“The start of a new speech”* for the architectural design. The Airone cinema in Rome, working on the example of the Cinema Airone built by Adalberto Libera in Rome. She explained the scientific recovering of the original image of a highly demeaned architecture, that was used for other functions other than the former ones. Other means as architectural plans and models dated four thousand years ago, helped Adriana Rossi in her *The House of Abraham* to explore the increasing levels of reading and interpretation of historical architectures throughout an evolution ending in the 3D digital models.

The urban scale was the main actor in Giuseppe di Gregorio's research titled *Design and dimension of the reconstructed city. Building types of the Street Crociferi in Catania, that focused in Catania* and developed an accurate urban analysis including the architectural typologies along Via dei Crociferi, which was based on exhaustive documentation and field work processes.

Following the research line on urban spaces, Alessandro Merlo, Gaia Lavoratti and Andrea Aliperta studied the Mercati delle Vettovaglie in Florence, by exposing an interesting proposal about urban modelling as a contribution to recover the historical memory of the town.

Also working at the urban scale, Lia Maria Papa and Giuseppe Antuono developed the essential subject of *The design, between knowledge and use. The Santa Maria dell'Incoronata Church in Naples*, dealing with the case study of the church of Santa Maria dell'Incoronata in Naples. They highlighted the importance of knowledge and experience of the urban layout, but also of modern techniques as 3D models, as together become essential to disentangle the particular values of the site and its historical memory.

Working at various scales, Michele Cornieti's *Towards an Appennine architecture* dealt with the transition from the drawings that are kept in the archives to the digital construction tools as an interesting analysis method.

As a case study, he proposed the graphic language of Cesare Spighi as a way to rebuild the Medieval landscape and architecture of the Apennine Mountains. At a territorial scale, maps are proved to be an essential mean of knowledge.

Currently they are complemented by modern cartographic techniques, by aerial photogrammetry, by remote sensing images, and by digital terrain models (DTM). Among their main uses can be cited the study of visual boundaries and intervisibility.

Just talking about that, *The representation themes of territory* and urban landscape proposed by Carolina Capitanio, constituted a bridge between the urban scale and its surrounding territories, stressing the ability of drawing to identify and register the tracks of the successive civilisations on the territory, and to propose respectful actions for the *genius loci*.

Enrico Cicalò dealt with *Virtual Landscape Sciences* and the rigorous representation of landscape from the tradition of the cartographic production to the possibilities that currently bring the Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the Digital Terrain Models, and their mapping with aerial photographs, in order to develop virtual tours and to study visual boundaries.

Going one step further in the territorial researches, Francesca Fatta and Manuela Bassetta recovered the capabilities of drawing and cartography to relate the various scales, and even distant architectures in time, in their proposal titled *The graphic narrative in the map of the time*. The importance of using both traditional hand drawing and modern TICs, was stressed.

In turn, the transdisciplinary team composed by Jorge Llopis, Jose Luis Higón, Javier Pérez, Pedro Cabezos, F. Hidalgo, J. Torres, J. Serra, R.E. Martín Tolosa and Jorge Martínez, recovered the interesting *Landscape surroundings of San Francisco de Borja at Fontilles. A case study on Heritage Landscape*. They explored the effects that an isolation hospital introduced in the territory, as well as the possibilities that bring a restoration plan of such a singular architectural heritage, by means of drawing and modern immersive display systems. A second approach to the use of drawing as a narration, involved its usage as an interesting option or complement to word-based approaches. It is the case of graphic narratives appealing to allegories, metaphors, depictions or diagrams [Chías 2016a].

The proposal of an alternative narrative was defended by Alessandro Luigini in its *Virtual Storytelling*, where he

explored some examples where words were not enough and drawing became an attractive choice towards verbal transmission of knowledge. A similar path explored Rosario Marrocco in his study about metalanguages titled *The drawing of the space in the literary and theatrical storytelling*. Relationships between space, drawing, and literature were evidenced through the comparison of the mental spaces designed by Pirandello and the physical spaces produced by Eduardo De Filippo. The tradition of drawing as a complement to verbal expression reached high quality standards in the *reportages*, where notebooks and travel logs combined both means of expression for more than five centuries [Cardone 2005, pp. 7-14].

Two contemporary urban sketchers as Hugo Barros and Marianna Calia contributed to reinforce this idea that can be expressed as the "passion for drawing". A third proposal due to Mariya Komarova looked back to the 19th century tradition.

Among the spontaneous drawings by the *urban sketchers*, Hugo Barros displayed his experience in New York city in his notebooks where he explored, by means of a great variety of drawing techniques, the expressiveness and subjective impressions of the city life.

Marianna Calia followed a similar path in her *Chinese architecture and landscapes in the drawings of travel sketchbook*, where she proved to be a good observer along a set of drawings and written remarks, whose main value is the ability for studying and analysing the various building systems and architectural typologies.

Mariya Komarova in *The image of the Russian Empire in the traveller's drawings* remembered that drawing is not at all innocent, and described how it can help to create the image of the Russian towns, that were still unknown in western Europe in the 18th century.

Thanks to their ability to perceive and communicate what was being experienced, travellers throughout time took up an outstanding place in graphic narrative and power of persuasion. But they were not alone in this endeavour. Some proposals presented at the *Convegno* explored these graphic qualities by analysing the masters' drawings, but also by focusing to other aspects more related to communication as propaganda or public information.

The support of drawing in parallel discourses involving the time factor as cinema, video, or more recently virtual reality animations, became essential to travel around imaginary places. Masters' drawings are full of content and intention, and show some kind of fidelity to their concernings.

This is the point of view exposed by Carlos Montes and Marta Alonso in *Influences of the Engravings of Louis Lozowick upon Drawings by Louis I. Kahn*, where concerns even affect the exploration of the graphical techniques.

A more theoretical approach related to reading and interpretation of masters' drawings was the subject developed by Paula Lomonaco in *The Graphical representation of Significant representations*, where drawing is concerned with the reinterpretation of reality from highly subjective parameters.

Drawing is frequently at the service of propaganda, as Antonino Frenda remembered in *Representation of agricultural landscape in Chinese propaganda posters*, where the author dealt with the changes in the agricultural landscape as it drifts towards industrial landscapes, when photomontages build a new identity for old places.

Along the same line, Manuela Piscitelli focused in *The Soviet posters of the October Revolution*, by studying the way an illiterate population becomes fully aware of the new ideas through the analysis of the composition and use of both symbols and narrative codes.

Closely related with this capability for manipulation that shows the narrative drawing, are those examples where it is used for public information.

Elena Ippoliti intended to demonstrate this interesting facet in *Useful drawing and forms of Visual Language. Experiments with Visual Products in Public Communication Campaigns*, by exploring the various effective resources of visual communication strategies if applied to public information campaigns.

If previously we evidenced the efficacy of the use of parallel graphic and written discourses, the integration of movement and cinema entailed a big step in exploring the limits of imagination by means of drawing.

Kinetic sign as an element to be integrated into the strategies of architectural design was analysed by Starlight Vattano in *Hermeneutic of kinetic sign. Drawing and dance*, where relationships between drawing and dance evidenced the importance of movement in the architectural project.

Maria Grazia Cianci and Daniele Calisi dealt with the problem to narrate the unreal. *The invisible cities reled by* means of multiple languages at the limit of their parallel discourses, à propos of the *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino and Miyazaki.

Going further down this track, Rosella Salerno introduced in the graphic narrative the time factor in her *A tale by Images and texts: Reasons for Drawings and Digital repre-*

*sentation*, where the study of the interesting subject of the graphic sequences was supported by the long-term use of resources as handbooks and treatises, that are currently updated as storyboards and graphic itineraries.

This line of research led directly into the new phenomena that arose as a part of the communication strategies in architecture, as the use of web sites or blogs. Daniele Villa's proposal *Evolving Role of Drawing in Times of Architectural Web-Broadcasting*, focused on the permanent stream of information and the possibilities of interaction.

As the fourth dimension is increasingly taken into consideration, drawing permits multiple spacetime readings. On the other hand, interaction with virtual images is already possible as evidenced by animations and mobile applets—apps—that bring the user closer to virtual reality and to smart cities.

According to these new paradigms, *Drawing, 3D reconstruction and virtual navigation. The tale about the interrupted utopia of Ferdinandopoli* is the subject proposed by Valeria Cera, Elisa Mariarosaria Farella and Domenico Iovane, whose "constructive modelling" was applied to the urban utopy of Ferdinandopoli by means of a travel round a 3D model that was mapped using photogrammetric techniques.

As a concise example, Giulia Pettoello studied the *Role of Representation in a Digital Communication System* and paid a special attention to digital processes in cultural heritage communication, by analysing the different stages and a wide range of possible alternatives to be applied to the case study of the archaeological park of Vulci in Tuscany.

Focus 4 would not be complete without studying the outstanding potential of drawing when applied to depict the various quantitative and qualitative aspects of architecture, as for instance, its capability to simulate and define stages and settings from the perspective of "contamination between arts".

Cristiana Bartolomei and Alfonso Ippolito chose the film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* as an example of how to show the reality by means of illusion. They made evident the existing contradictions between the space represented and the space built for the cinema, and opposed the possible tours along the real space and the ideal spaces of fiction.

Perspective is considered as an intellectual polysemic artifice used in retorics of audiovisual design of spaces. This was the point of view of Enrica Bistagnino in *Perspective as a "rhetorical form" in the contemporary audiovisual product*, where she proposed a renewal of the genre by questioning if it is just elitist or is really for-all.

Nazarena Bruno and Andrea Zerbi dealt also with the most theoretical aspects of the cinematographic narrative in *Drawing as a theoretical model for the cinema: from Piranesi to Éjzenstejn, from Escher to Nolan*, looking for the limits of the transgression of the rules in the search of graphic concernings in cinema.

To unveil what is imagined or designed, but not built, there is another challenge of narrative drawing that opens the door to graphic conjectures. Fabrizio Avella in *Alost opportunity: the Eden Biondo's Theatre by Ernesto Basile* followed the processes that lead from the traditional hand made cartography to 3D models, while speculated about what architecture could be and was not. He also dealt with other images of the city that bring other ways of interpretation and analysis going far beyond the possibilities of the traditional cartographic documents. A parallel discourse about the changes of paradigm of drawings in the interwar period was studied by Matteo Ballarin in *Raffaello Bibbiani and the Project of La Spezia Theater (1926-1933)*, where all possible solutions were explored, offering at the same time an interesting overview of the changes of taste. To use drawing as a mean for innovating in architecture, or to look for the possible relationships to be established between contemporary art and architecture, are also interesting subjects that were explored in Focus 4. *Another Species of Space* was the suggestive title of Marta Magagnini's contribution, where the author analysed the integration of graphic methods and techniques through the experience of the exhibition space *Foundation Volume!* The complexity of relationships between drawing and typography evidences the aesthetic component of lettering from the Ancient times until the 20th century *Avant-garde* [Chías 2016b]. This facet was studied by Paolo Belardi in *Monk: From the medieval scriptorium to the digital alphabet, where he develo-*

*ped the Medieval filiations of Monk*, a contemporary digital alphabet with deep roots in the tradition of the scriptoria. Modern languages as cartoons, comic strips and other kind of illustrations in the press are particularly interesting due to their narrative qualities.

Michela De Domenico in *New languages for the architectural design* studied the limits and possibilities of the new graphic languages as the "archi-comics"—architectural comics,— and the computer aided comics, stressing the elements and the grammatical artifices and their relations with the original graphic codes.

In *The forgotten sign. A story told through images*, Massimiliano Lo Turco and Alessio Tommasetti related drawings and texts in comic and graphic novels by introducing interesting concernings in cinema, where images even may replace the text. Just on the verge of narrated reality, drawing can be seen as an end in itself.

Marcello Scalzo in *Visionary and paper architecture* studied the thought-provoking subject of paper architectures, discovering the architectural thinking underlying in the drawings of Michelucci, Maestro, Savioli and Natalini. The practical utility of drawing as an essential tool for acquiring knowledge is opposed to this unreal ludic perspective. An outstanding example is its use for disabled people, as Alessandra Meschini and Filippo Sicuranza stressed in *For "Sensible" Representation: Communicating the Form for Haptic Perception*. They showed the evolution from drawing to 3D models produced by 3D printers, that help the visually impaired people to know about architecture and the city, as shown in the blind museums.

Finally, paraphrasing Adolfo Natalini [2015, p. 78], architecture can not be conceived without images, but the variety of displays, purposes, and uses that drawing shows, become particularly evident in its narrative abilities.

## Notes

[1] "I can move in front of it, starting on top, on the ground, sometimes even spin around it": Derrida 1978, p. 61 (translation by the author).

[2] "Our Beaux Arts are established, while their uses and types are fixed at a distant time by men whose capacity for action on things was insignifi-

cant with respect of what we have [...] Neither matter, nor space or time are now what they were just twenty years ago. It can be now expected that if such a great breakthrough could transform all the arts techniques, it can also act on the transformation itself, and change in a wonderful way the concept of art": Valéry 1928, p. 3 (translation by the author).

## Author

Pilar Chías Navarro, School of Architecture, University of Alcalá, pilar.chias@uah.es

## References

(2015) Adolfo Natalini "Quattro quaderni". *Dal Superstudio alle città dei Natalini Architetti*. Firenze: FormA.

Cardone, V. (2005). Presentazione. In Barba, S., Messina, B. (ed.), *Il disegno dei viaggiatori*. pp. 7-14. Salerno: Cues.

Cardone, V. (2014). *Viaggiatori d'architettura in Italia. Da Brunelleschi a Charles Garnier*. Salerno: Università degli Studi di Salerno.

Chías, P. (2016a). La iconografía del Monasterio de El Escorial: tradición e innovación en cuatro siglos de imágenes impresas. In *Revista EGA*, No. 21, pp. 32-43.

Chías, P. (2016b). Arte y edición: Malerei Photographie Film de László Moholy-Nagy. En *Revista Arte y parte*, No. 123, pp. 101-132.

Chías, P., Cardone, V. (2016). *Dibujo y arquitectura. 1986-2016, treinta años*

*de investigación / Disegno e architettura. 1986-2016, trent'anni di ricerca / Drawing and Architecture. 1986-2016, Thirty Years of Research*. Alcalá de Henares, Salerno: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alcalá, Università di Salerno, FCC.

Derrida, J. (1978). *La vérité en peinture*. Paris: Flammarion.

Docci, M., Maestri, D. (1992). *Il rilevamento architettonico. Storia, metodi e disegno*. Bari: Editori Laterza.

Docci, M., Maestri, D. (1993). *Storia del rilevamento architettonico e urbano*. Roma, Bari: Editori Laterza.

Vagnetti, L. (1980). *L'architetto nella storia di occidente*. Padova: CEDAM.

Valéry, P. (1928). *La conquête de l'ubiquité. De la musique avant toute chose*. Paris: Éditions du Tambourinaire, pp. 3-5.