Reviews

Laura Farroni, Manuela Incerti, Alessandra Pagliano (a cura di)

Misurare il tempo. Strumenti e tecniche tra storia e contemporaneità

libreriauniversitaria.it
Limena (Padova) 2023
388 pp.
ISBN 978-88-3359-675-4

This valuable volume is part of the editorial series Architecture, Geometry, and Astronomy, edited by the same editors [1]. It documents the outcomes of the second international studies day: *Representing Time. Architecture, Geometry, Astronomy*, held at palazzo Gravina on the premises of the Department of Architecture, University of Naples Federico II on June 9, 2023.

Already from the title, one can sense the interdisciplinary reach inherent in the published contributions –and admitted following a double-blinded review process– which convenes three knowledge macro areas seemingly distant. Yet, their synergistic relationship since antiquity has embraced drawing as the preferential language suitable for describing its essence. As for the time factor, on the other hand, the need to measure it has always fueled advances in astronomical knowledge, in veritable assaults on the sky driven by the perfection of instruments essential to unravel its mysteries.

But even before the invention of optical devices, drawing and geometry founded rules and interpretive models of light, restoring architectural masterpieces, environments, and urban artifacts whose gnomonic dependence mirrored the cultures of a specific time, ascribable to the individual place and the "latitude in which the shading phenomenon occurred for measurement" [p. 13]. Differently, the modern imposition of the Western political clock has standardized the rhythms of life and work of subjectivities, prompting them to embrace the dictates of a colonizing mass operation.

As Alessandra Pagliano keenly observes in her introductory essay, the transition from the Sun's true time to the conventionally adopted civilian meantime "has made its measurement objective and increasingly minutely punctuated by the increasing reliability of its measuring instruments" [p. 14].

More broadly, in the becoming of a reciprocity founded on being, living, and inhabiting, the metaphor of the shadow has been charged with the valences of its illuminating dependence, in debates that stimulate a research worthy of positioning itself in the liminal lines, of separation or acceptance, between art practices and scientific postulates. After all, the concept of 'representation' combines the interpretive narratives of credible staging with the opinionable universalizing rules of drawing. Hence, the first focus of the volume brings together evidence of research focused precisely on the concept of measurement, linked to cosmology and its scientific foundations, to be traced in artistic experiments that actualize gnomonic by making the shadow a dynamic matter of creating works, in ephemeral architectures and installations that make us reflect on how we relate the tangible dimension of physical space to the immaterial dimension of the divine entity.

The second focus is devoted to the

tools and techniques of measuring time, to delineate the trajectories of a history that Edgar Morin defined as an expression of earthly identity [2] because in the transition from the planetary era to the mundialization era, we have immersed ourselves in such complexity that its intelligibility is stifled, atrophying the human capacity to contextualize and globalize. In this direction, Laura Farroni stresses the importance of rereading the multiplicities and long times of the past, reflecting on the voraciousness of the present to frame the labile future probabilities. According to this perspective, "studying the time measure, through the history of artifacts, implies the identification of the local in the global in a planetary dimension, through the continuous change of light" [p. 20]. Then let light be shed on our responsibilities to act, through actions that stimulate processes of ecological consciousness assisted by today's knowledge investigations.

The third focus is devoted to this specific aspect, calling in digital technologies for the surveying, analyzing, and communicating cultural heritages –tangible and intangible– all to be rediscovered. Case studies range from numerical data acquisition and digital reconstructions: of the Farnese Globe, housed in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples; of the solar clock with filtering hat in the former convent of La Baumette in Angers; of the sundial of San Michele in Bosco in Bologna; of the light simulation in digital models with astronomical value; and of statistical approaches useful in studying the alignment of Egyptian pyramids.

All the research collected and argued in the volume substantiates its very high quality, embracing Manuela Incerti's thought when she states: "it is precisely the scientific publication that, through the description of methods, processes, and languages used, can make the difference in a field such as the communication of cultural heritage that is increasingly devoted to spectacular and emotional aspects" [p. 22]. Therefore, I would like to thank all the authors who were a pleasure to listen to –in the sessions that articulated the study day– and, above all, to read.

Finally, we take this opportunity to announce the third edition of this unfailing event, which will take place in Ferrara on May 23, 2025, entitled: *Crossing the Time*.

The call for paper, soon to be published, aims to continue to reflect on that large portion of the cultural heritage through the three major themes of Architecture, Astronomy, and Geometry, to bring the debates back into the context of Drawing disciplines. Special attention will be paid to the impacts of digital technologies involved in process innovation and in a research result that always invites us to look to the sky.

Massimiliano Ciammaichella

Note

[1] The book can be downloaded in open access, at the publisher's web site: <https://edizioni.libreriauniversitaria.it/libro/misurare-il-tempo> (accessed May 23, 2024).

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