

EDITORIAL

ISSUE 08 APRIL 2023

Imaging and Imagery in Architecture

Alessandro Luigini

Free University of Bozen

Faculty of Education

alessandro.luigini@unibz.it

The language of representing architecture is composed of drawings and images, and already in the first treatises of the 15th century—although it is in the preceding centuries that architectural drawing takes on the connotation of a discipline—it is clear that the act of drawing coincides with the action of designing. Leon Battista Alberti called it '*designare*'. He indicated the skilful use of the graphic medium to define how the parts of the building could be arranged to meet the demands of Renaissance beauty. To design, from this point on, means to imagine and image architecture, to construct imaginaries of architecture. The post-World War II years—which this issue investigates—is ideally the period from which, with the continuity of a social development that no longer saw catastrophic global events,

>

the foundations were laid for what in the following decades would be the evolution of expressive modes in representing and designing architecture up to the present day. Post-war reconstruction, economic development, the growing awareness of the unsustainability of our impact on the planet, and the succession of new visions of the future have, from time to time, given drive to the development of new architectural languages and, therefore, new graphic languages to express –before describing and communicating– architecture.

As various scholars have observed, the continuity of this symbiosis between drawing and design, between manual action and conception –magnified in its perspective elaboration– continued undisturbed until the last decades of the 20th century, when the computer paradigm joined the analogue paradigm. The symbiosis between thinking and drawing was bound –certainly not replaced– by a triad in which the computer medium became a mediation between hand and mind, substantially modifying the conceptual process that was thus able to explore new conceptual paradigms.

The path of hermeneutic circularity that characterises the design process –which descends from the general to the particular and then back to the general– is enriched by an information subject that from time to time influences the result and thus the process of self-understanding that the drawer-designer carries out, and so the circular path becomes a spiral path.

In addition, digital representation has profoundly altered graphic processing procedures, definitively

influencing conceptual elaboration processes as well: innovative methods for defining forms have radically expanded the imaginative possibilities previously developed within the domain of descriptive geometry. Between the 1990s and the early 2000s, this innovation made possible a heroic season in which several architects explored experimental and unusual eidetic processes. The drawing of architecture and its digital representation has once again established a phase of explicit symbiosis in which it is impossible to distinguish the design phase from the representational stage. As in manual drawing and computer-aided drawing, the paths of the creative process and the final technical representation are substantially distinct and represent two ways of proceeding with drawings and images –information and visual models– that start, develop and complete the process of architectural design and communication. This inescapable character of architecture is as valid in the eidetic process of design as it is in the archaeological process of the survey and graphic analysis of architecture: drawing and image, mediated by computer models, remain the primary way in which architecture is designed, studied and communicated, both to a specialist and a generalist audience. As anticipated, this paradigm flanks the analogue paradigm but only partially replaces it because some peculiarities of analogue design seem irreplaceable. As much as neuroplasticity allows adaptation to any tool, the greater the mediation phase between mind and product, the more demanding it is. Thus adapting to a mouse and keyboard –and operating with them once our brain has adapted– is undoubtedly more challenging than adapting to a more

basic pencil, besides the fact that the adaptation phase to this elementary tool takes place at a stage of our lives when neuroplasticity is much faster and therefore generates a more in-depth result. The success of touch interfaces also depends in part on the natural need for the reduction of the mediation phase, and in drawing, the use of digital pens has certainly reduced this gap, albeit with some limitations. But the fact remains that many architects continue to use traditional drawing tools for the elaboration and design phases. This establishes a line of continuity that, from the legacy of the Modern Movement fostered in the 1950s and 1960s, develops into postmodernism between the 1970s and 1980s and into the long tradition of Italian drawing, which in those years saw a flourishing production of 'drawn architectures' that found their *raison d'être* in their graphic elaboration. It is a world of drawings and images that speak of the evolution of thinking in architecture, its diversity, and the myriad possibilities of using graphic and visual languages to work out architectural space.

The contributions collected through the call for papers develop some points of view that can arise from this context. The digital paradigm in architecture is investigated by Domenico Mediati, presenting some of the expressive possibilities that some architects at the turn of the 1990s and early 2000s were able to develop thanks to innovative computer tools. Asma Mehan emphasises how visual representation can document and trigger urban changes through bottom-up participatory processes. Fabio Colonnese presents a study of a museum project by James Stirling through the analysis of the designer's drawings –with particular

attention to the recurring use of axonometry— and through his drawings. Pieter Greyvensteijn analyses the representation of architecture, which, like every other field that passes through the image, undergoes remediation due to the proliferation of social networks and declines the previous triad hand-mind-pencil into hand-mind-smartphone. Gaia Leandri tells us about the expressive possibilities of the representation of architecture for communication, where the draughtsman is a professional figure distinct from the designer, and how there are preferential graphic languages in certain circumstances. Roberto Gigliotti presents a field experiment of staging and disseminating the design elaborations presented at ar/ge kunst in Bolzano, containing an exploration of the architectural imaginary. Anna Sanseverino, Victoria Ferraris, and Carla Ferreyra offer some critical reflections arising from the didactic activity of international cooperation between Italy and South Africa, with which, together with the students, they investigated the possible declinations of the language of communication in contemporary architecture. Salvatore Damiano presents a commentary of six drawings by one of the great masters of Italian design of the second half of the 20th century: Vico Magistretti. Michela De Domenico, Paola Raffa and Fabio Testaì investigate the representation of architecture and three major cities in contemporary comics. Michela Rossi and Luca Armellino explore the eidetic possibilities of digital tools, especially in the composition of visual images that allude to architectonic spaces. While for the composite section, Giancarlo Gola investigates an innovative field of intersection between research

in the visual field and the field of education: VRMs (Visual Research Methods) make it possible to make visible what is not visible and thus allow educational and social access to more significant parts of our experience, Sandro Parrinello, Justyna Borucka, Jakub Szczepański, and Francesca Picchio show some outcomes of a European project aimed at the development of innovative methodologies for the knowledge of the urban environment and historical heritage. Also, for the composite section.

