

Shared concerns – Inquietudes compartidas

Victoria Collar Ocampo



Diptych of the Duchess and Duke of Urbino, Piero della Francesca, 1472.

Prologue

This is a fictitious conversation between two “confrères” sharing their opinion about the contemporary relations between architects.

By establishing a conversation about the current ways we behave and relate to each other, we might then understand the importance of processes, of valuing the information we deal with and of always trying to go beyond image. One could maybe go as far as to conclude that one’s attitudes towards similar situations we, architects, are faced with, could act as the new common guidelines to follow.

Dialogue

@arch88: Do you think that the relations between architects still exist at all? And by relation I mean the will to really see and understand each other, to truly collaborate, etc.

@iamnotanartist74: Nowadays there does not seem to be a direct relation between architects, at least, not as we understood it in the past. Apparently, the straight lines that we used to follow throughout the last decades turned into more complex architectural approaches. There is not just a one “truth” anymore. In fact, there are so many lines that we no longer meet to discuss future guidelines, as we used to. We do not establish the basis for the way to proceed. There are no CIAM, manifestos, rules or styles anymore.

@arch88: But then, do you think that there no longer is a common way of thinking? We are still dealing with similar elements and often use common procedures or find similar solutions. Where then, do architects diverge? Why do they differ? Where is the inflection point?

@iamnotanartist74: I guess the answer could be related to the new media. Today we receive much more information than a few years ago. Until now, when we needed a reference we had to search for it, whereas today we have an overdose of information, which comes to us even if we make no effort whatsoever to reach it. Social networks, blogs and so on have a lot to do with this situation. The risk with this volume of information and images is that there is no filter applied; no attention is paid upon what lies behind it.

@arch88: I see your point. However, I find it more relevant to say that architects have an increasingly multidisciplinary behavior and as we open broader fields, we receive and produce even more information.

@iamnotanartist74: Certainly, this is very important. The tools that we use for working nowadays such as computer programs, parametrical design, 3d printing and modeling machines are increasing in number and complexity. We have access to much more resources than a few years ago, mainly thanks to the Internet providing us a huge database, blogs or sharing platforms. As you said, we are getting into a much more multidis-



1 Hydraulic tile, Mosaic del Sur.



2 Dying textiles in Japan.



3 Dying textiles in Morocco.



4 Cross rail underground infrastructure in London.



5 Metropolitan Opera House in Taichung, Toyo Ito.

ciplinary system; one in which different “professions” mix up and limits get blurry. We can no longer get a satisfying result simply by applying direct rules. We need to try to understand the different processes and similitudes between different disciplines in order to interiorize them.

@arch88: As Balenciaga used to say: “A couturier must be an architect for design, a sculptor for shape, a painter for color, a musician for harmony, and a philosopher for temperance”. Likewise, architecture covers several fields: sociology, politics, cinema, photography, design, etc.

@iamnotanartist74: So then, could we say that the process is as important as the result? When somebody explains the process behind an image, much like the concept of the project, we start to give more value to the object. By knowing and understanding these processes, we discover new interests in formerly unknown topics and thereon widen our scopes.

@arch88: Therefore, it is worth when sharing an image to describe why it attracts our attention as well as to reveal the processes behind the object or the concept itself.

@iamnotanartist74: I agree with you, and would even argue that, for instance we should not only be amazed by a hydraulic floor tile because we find it “beautiful” but rather because we have understood its process of fabrication and have interiorized the value of its craftsmanship.¹ This critical thought could be applied to textile as well. For instance, we like to touch a fabric, we like its texture and its color but only when we have truly understood the complexities of the process, can we really admire the product.^{2,3}

@arch88: Exactly. Another example could be the way we find relations and similarities in the proceedings of very different projects such as an architectural project like the Metropolitan Opera House in Taichung and an engineering one, like the Cross rail underground infrastructure in London. It is often in the details or even the anomalies that we discover the intricacies of a project. But we should be mindful to share our findings with care; instead of sharing our ideas as absolute truth, we should emphasize on our interests or concerns.^{4,5}

@iamnotanartist74: Then we both agree that there is still a line, a common relation.

@arch88: Well, is this not just a way of behaving towards different situations? This way of observing should be considered not solely towards different processes, objects or images, as mentioned before but as a lifestyle by developing our critical minds as architects and making decisions by analyzing what is behind what we see. Perhaps we do not need more rules. Perhaps this could be the relation between architects: sharing concerns.

Victoria Collar Ocampo graduated as an architect at the University of Barcelona ETSAB, having also studied at the ETH Zürich. She currently works at “Herzog & de Meuron” in Basel after various experiences in offices in Barcelona and Zürich. In 2014 she founded a blog called “Ochentaydoskilometros” (82km.tumblr.com) with Jon Garbizu Etxaide in which they share their various concerns, following the line stated in this dialogue.

Images:

2 Image from Tectonicablog

3 Image from Tectonicablog

4 Image from 82km

5 Image from 82km