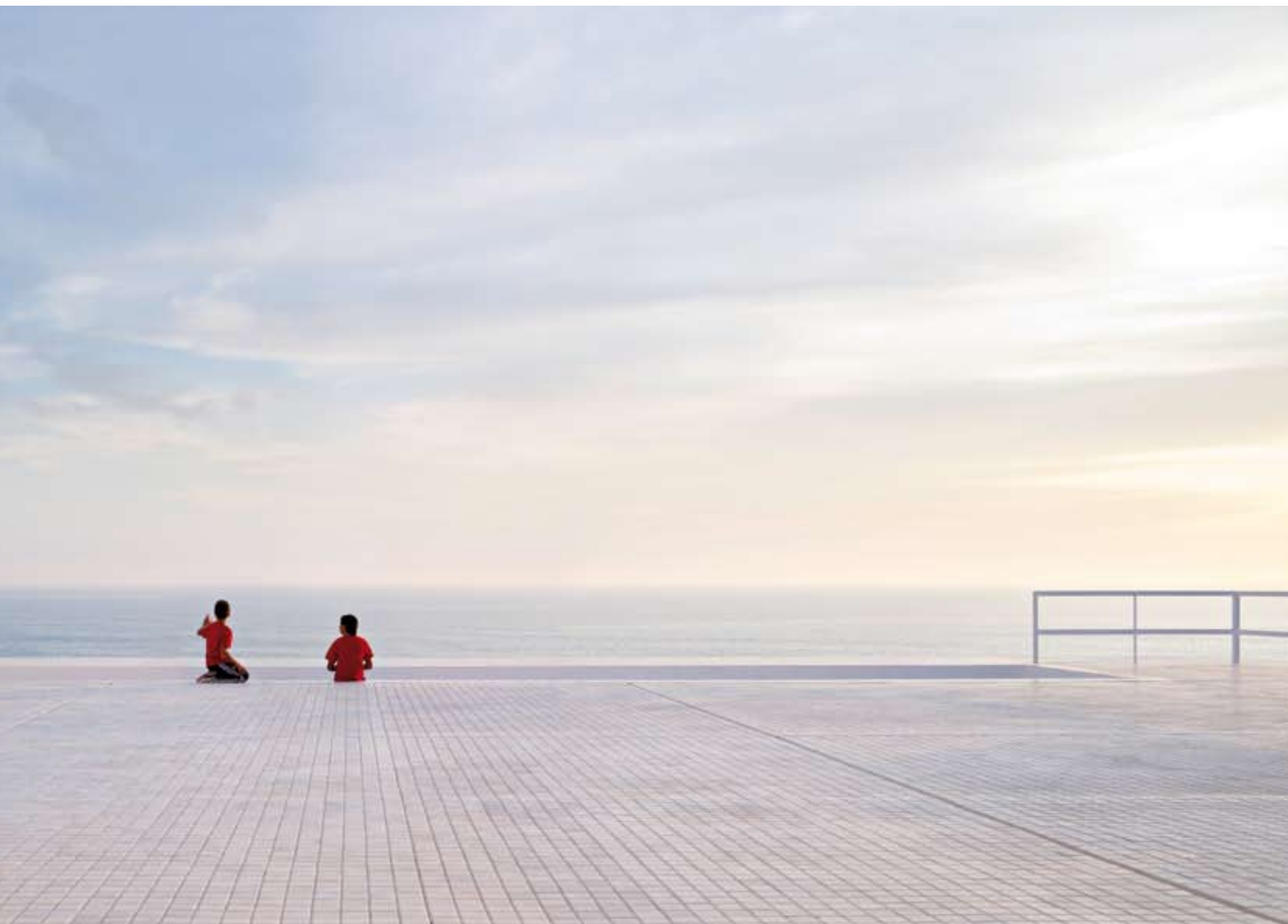


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Alberto Campo Baeza
Entre Catedrales, Cádiz, 2009
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Luisa Lambri_Ritratti allo specchio

Andrea Volpe

“Io resto un minuto ancora. Mi sembra di non aver mai visto prima d’ora i muri e i soffitti di questa casa”. Così Lyubov Andreyevna nel finale de *‘Il giardino dei ciliegi’*. Lo stupore di Ljuba nell’attimo del rimpianto; l’emozione del suo sguardo nel momento dell’addio. È questa l’immagine che Luchino Visconti cita in un articolo del 1943 per descrivere la sua idea di cinema.¹ Un frammento tradotto visivamente in manifesto poetico nella celebre scena iniziale di *“Senso”* (1954). Dando seguito ad un’intuizione avuta in un palco di prosenio alla Scala, Visconti ribalterà -mediante un lungo *travelling* della cinepresa- il significato del film, trasformandolo di fatto in un melodramma, incorniciato dall’arcoscenico: il sottile confine che permette il rovesciamento della prospettiva.

Se mai fosse possibile pensare a Visconti come ad un costruttore di spazi forse bisognerebbe riferirsi a questa liminare architettura dello sguardo. È qui che il fotogramma può divenire finestra o specchio. Chi sta assistendo alla vicenda? Chi sta davvero recitando e per chi? Il cinema di Visconti vive in quel *passage* dove l’oggettività fotografica della settima arte si fonde con l’evocazione del mito propria del rito teatrale. Seppur svincolato dalla significazione e dall’immaginario della drammaturgia classica, Michelangelo Antonioni esplora col suo cinema un analogo *limes*. Una sequenza su tutte forse si impone fra le tante memorabili della sua produzione cinematografica. In *Blow Up* (1966), nella famosa scena dell’ingrandimento delle foto scattate nel parco, Thomas passa in rassegna una dopo l’altra le stampe segnando su una di esse un dettaglio visto attraverso una lente di ingrandimento.

Dopo un altro passaggio in camera oscura, il particolare è appeso alla parete mentre la macchina da presa passa da una foto all’altra portandoci alla fine della sequenza, con uno stacco, a vedere il fotografo che osserva le immagini in cerca di un possibile nesso. Poco dopo Antonioni ripercorre quasi fedelmente la scena precedente concludendola però con un finale imprevisto, impercettibile, ma dirimpente: le foto, viste ancora una volta in soggettiva, sono ora inquadrature dalla macchina da presa accanto a Thomas, che ancora le osserva.

Antonioni con questa scelta di montaggio sembra suggerire l’esistenza di uno sguardo latente, indipendente dal soggetto, esterno ad esso.

Ancora una volta, come per Visconti, il rovesciamento/spostamento del punto di vista produce il medesimo quesito: *“Chi guarda veramente? E cosa è veramente guardato?”*.²

Luisa Lambri è una delle artiste italiane più conosciute al mondo. Premiata alla Biennale di Venezia 1999,³ Lambri fotografa e filma silenti spazi architettonici spesso frettolosamente etichettati come *‘non luoghi’*. Errore. Nel lavoro di Lambri non c’è spazio per riferimenti diretti a Marc Augé. Ad un occhio attento difatti quegli interni si rivelano al contrario parti di opere dei maestri del Movimento Moderno o di noti architetti contemporanei. Frammenti di architetture che negli scatti della fotografa si trasfigurano in una sorta di enigmatico paesaggio, illuminato da una luce mutevole, spesso diafana, alcune volte densa di oscurità.

Lambri nelle sue foto omette la figura umana, eppure questi spazi laconici non sono disabitati. Vi si avverte una presenza, un respiro che li rende paradossal-

mente simili a scene vuote di teatri dove ancora echeggiano o echeggeranno i versi e le battute della commedia; appena finita o ancora da recitare.

“L’architettura non è propriamente l’oggetto della mia ricerca [...]. Nell’architettura cerco una conferma personale, la stessa che si potrebbe avere guardandosi allo specchio. Per me l’architettura è autobiografia e i luoghi fotografati autoritratti”.⁵

E non è un vezzo né un facile trucco per sovraccaricare di significati altri un’opera che vive/abita/racconta l’architettura in modo diverso da chi l’architettura la fa, la progetta o la pubblica sulle riviste di settore sapere che Lambri ami citare fra i suoi riferimenti Cindy Sherman e Francesca Woodman. Due artiste che divengono nelle loro immagini altro da sé, rimanendo sé stesse: Divenendo opera attraverso il medium fotografico. Specialmente Woodman che letteralmente arriva a fondersi in alcune fotografie con finestre, porte. Esaltando la sua relazione con lo spazio, trasformandosi in stanza o muro.⁵

Metamorfosi di un corpo in architettura. Eredità che Lambri sembra pienamente raccogliere, raccontare, evocare nel suo lavoro attraverso una disarmante, sincera, necessità di autodescrizione.⁷ Esplorando spazi vissuti come propri, oscillando continuamente fra soggettività e oggettività; fra dentro di sé/fuori di sé; fra emozione da *pièce* checoviana e fredda astrazione à la Antonioni.

“È qualcosa che tutti i registi hanno in comune, credo, quest’abitudine di tenere un occhio aperto al di dentro e uno al di fuori di loro. A un certo punto le due visioni si avvicinano e come due immagini che si mettono a fuoco si so-

vrappongono. È da questo accordo tra occhio e cervello, tra occhio e istinto, tra occhio e coscienza che viene la spinta a far parlare, a far vedere”.⁷

I am your mirror. Così si intitola un lavoro pittorico seriale di Elke Krystufek, artista austriaca, che Lambri indica quale suo ulteriore riferimento. E come specchi (dove riconoscere il proprio sguardo sovrapposto allo sguardo di ritorno che l'architettura-corpo restituisce) sembrano parimenti funzionare le sue fotografie. Osservatori da cui l'artista si vede vedere. *Miradores* puntati sui panorami interni di Terragni, Mies, Aalto, Neutra, Schindler, Barragán, Niemayer, Johnson, Mollino, Siza, Campo Baeza, Sejima/Nishizawa che Lambri riassume costruendo un'unica, privatissima, abitazione fatta di un lungo piano sequenza. Registrando la mutazione della luce, il passare del tempo, la sua remota invariabilità. Sequenza (e non serie) è dunque la figura che governa il lavoro di Luisa Lambri.⁸ Un processo che transita per osmosi nei suoi film realizzati, al pari degli scatti fotografici, col fine di mutuare il *modus operandi* del Le Corbusier editore de *L'Esprit Nouveau*. Dove le immagini dell'architettura, elaborate e ritoccate, perdevano ogni riferimento con l'edificio reale. Divenendo manifesto poetico, *statement* concettuale o *schwelle*. Soglie aperte su spazi di apodittica purezza a cui tendere senza soluzione di continuità.

denze nei linguaggi dei media, a cura di I. Pezzini, R. Rutelli, Ets Edizioni, Pisa 2005, p.p 30-33.

³ Leone d'oro assegnato al Padiglione Italia per la migliore partecipazione nazionale (con Monica Bonvicini, Bruna Esposito, Paola Pivi, Grazia Toderi e appunto Luisa Lambri)

⁴ Da un'intervista di Massimiliano Gioni a Luisa Lambri, *Documentario sentimentale*, in *Trax*, 1998, www.trax.it/luisa_lambri.htm

⁵ E *'I am a wall'* è il titolo di una serie di fotografie scattate da Olivia, interpretata da Tea Falco, vera autrice delle foto mostrate in *'Io e te'* (2012) di Bernardo Bertolucci. Fotografie di chiaramente debitrice dell'opera della Woodman (1958-1981). Foto che riassumono perfettamente la volontà di trasformazione dei due protagonisti del film del regista parmense. Autoreclusi nello spazio limitato/infinito di una cantina di un palazzo romano per compiere al meglio un viaggio dentro di sé.

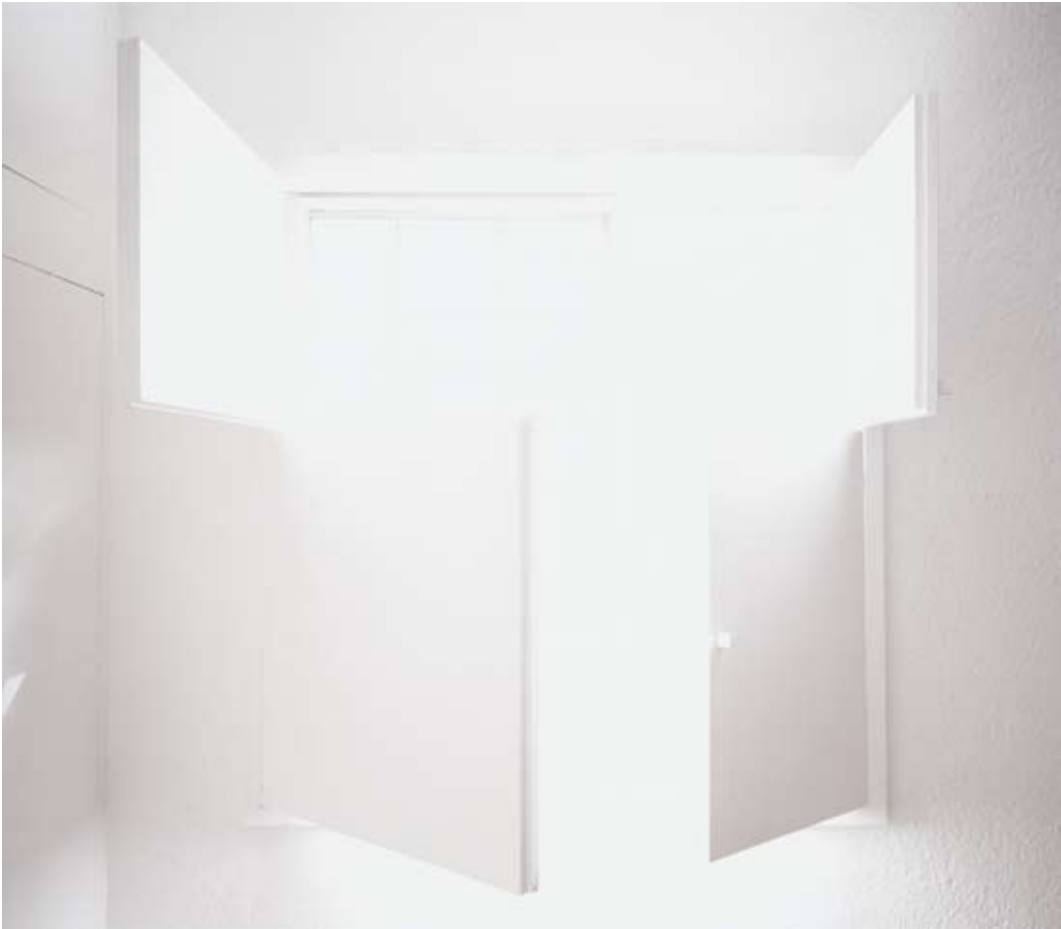
⁶ Cfr. Luisa Lambri interviewed by Hans Ulrich Obrist at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2010. Produced by The Institute for the 21st Century with support from ForYourArt, the Kayne Foundation, Brenda R. Potter, Catherine and Jeffrey Soros. Biennale channel, Architecture Biennale-Luisa Lambri (NOW Interviews) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NfKcOcdhQo>

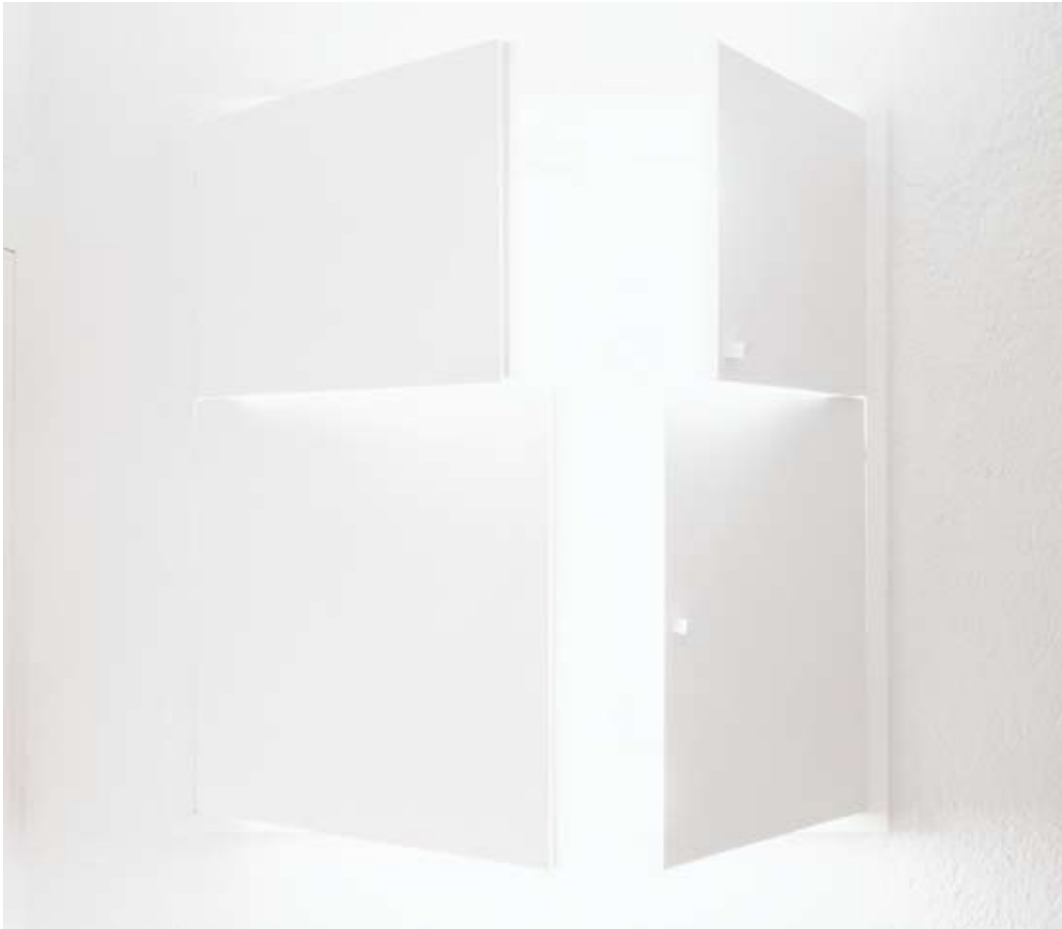
⁷ Michelangelo Antonioni, *Prefazione*, in *Sei film*, Einaudi, Torino, 1964, p. IX

⁸ “Quando vado da qualche parte, generalmente so già cosa sto cercando, così riprendo più variazioni della stessa immagine. Centinaia di fotografie. D'altronde l'elemento tempo è fondamentale per me, più che nella foto che risulta poi stampata nel processo stesso che sottende la ripresa delle immagini. Mi piace dire che lavoro in sequenza più che in serie. Penso che la parola 'sequenza' renda più forte ed intrigante il rapporto che lega un certo numero di immagini fra di loro. Le fotografie in sequenza presentano in genere un motivo comune, fotografato in condizioni quasi identiche e da un medesimo punto di vista. Sono affascinata dai cambiamenti che si registrano col passare del tempo o dalle minime variazioni di un ambiente. È una modalità di registrare la mia esperienza di questi luoghi anche nei confronti di concetti come tempo o caducità del mondo che ci circonda...” Luisa Lambri, *Autoritratto*, intervista a cura di Massimiliano Gioni, in Luisa Lambri, *Interiors*, catalogo della mostra omonima svoltasi presso Ivorypress Art+Book space I, Madrid, Ivorypress, Madrid, 2011.

¹ “Potrei fare un film davanti a un muro, se sapessi ritrovare i dati della vera umanità degli uomini posti davanti al nudo elemento scenografico: ritrovarli e raccontarli.” Luchino Visconti, *Cinema antropomorfo*, in *Cinema*, n.173-174, Settembre-Ottobre 1943, pag. 20.

² Cfr. Francesco Casetti, *Vedersi vedere*, in *Mutazioni audiovisive. Sociosemiotica, attualità e ten-*









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Pagine precedenti:

1

Untitled (Barragán House #10), 2005
Laserchrome print, 86 x 96 cm
Ed.5 + 1AP

2

Untitled (Barragán House #01), 2005
Laserchrome print, 86 x 96 cm
Ed.5 + 1AP

3

Untitled (Barragán House #06), 2005
Laserchrome print, 86 x 96 cm
Ed.5 + 1AP

4

Untitled (Barragán House #30), 2005
Laserchrome print, 86 x 96 cm
Ed.5 + 1AP

5

Untitled (Barragán House #33), 2005
Laserchrome print, 86 x 96 cm
Ed.5 + 1AP





Standing on the threshold of a building is at once standing inside the building and outside it. The threshold is the meeting point of the building and what is other than it: the other buildings, open spaces, green meadows and streets that the building exists with. This meeting is more accurately a weaving together of the indivisibility of the building in its unity and its sharing its significance with

what is other than it. The determinateness of the building, of this building, is its unity – this standing by itself – which relates itself with the other’s determinateness and includes it in itself as constitutive of its own signifying and its own being thus determined. It is at once its loneliness and its sharing itself with what is other.

This is the weaving that the threshold talks about, the weaving together of the building’s standing by itself and its including in itself the other with which it relates and without which it would not have the meaning it has.

Since its beginning, western thought has avoided thinking this weaving and has dissolved the moment of unity from the moment of inclusion of what is other. Thus dissolved, unity has been made absolute (*ab-soluta*) and seen as *the sole origin of the determinateness of what is determinate*. It alone confers on what is determinate a certain figure, a certain aspect and a certain con-formation.

The Greek word for “form” is *eidos*, that is, exactly, the aspect of what is in sight, what allows it to be in sight. The *eidos* is not the *eidolon*, the image as the thing that appears and is experienced, but what makes the image con-formed, what makes it a determinate existence – a determinate being.

To put it differently, the *eidos* is the what-is-it [whatness, *quidditas*] of the thing, its essence. As such – to Greek thought and to Western culture, which has developed from it – it allows the thing to have determinateness and be fixed in a figure.

Plato calls this essence *idea* and, it its absoluteness, thinks it as the immutable and immutably established origin of all sensible determinateness. *The unity of the idea lies at the foundation of the dimension of the many sensible determinates, the degree of whose determinateness depends on the degree of their ability to participate in that unity*. The whole of the Western philosophical tradition moves inside this pattern (which obviously does not account for the complexity of the development of traditional thought along the dual paths traced by Aristotle and Plotinus). *And it is inside this pattern that human production (as the bringing forth of things) is thought and its meaning established*.

Let us go back to Plato again. This is how he defines production in the *Symposium*: “every cause [*aitia*] due to which every thing passes from not being to being is production [*poiesis*]; accordingly, the operations depending on all techniques [*technai*] are productions and their demiurges are producers”.¹ Passing from not being to being is passing from not having a determinate configuration to having one. But production, to Plato and after him to the whole of Western thought, is not simply this passage, but the cause of this passage. It is this passage as caused, led, brought forth.

Producing is leading (*duco*) the passage by bringing forth (*pro-*) the thing which, through this passage, acquires a certain determinateness and is thus capable of being in sight. This production which leads the passage is the *téchne*, whose operation is therefore essentially “poietic” (in *Die Frage nach der Technik* Heidegger writes that the “*téchne* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*; it is something *poietic* [*Poietisches*]”).²

But how does the *téchne* lead the passage? By looking at the idea and con-forming to it the many it produces. The *téchne* wants to harmonize the passage so as to make the dimension of the many the perfect imitation of unity. It inhabits the place of the many to arrange and pattern it in conformity with the Principle (*arché*).

In this sense, according to the tradition of our culture, *production is essentially architectonic, since its téchne conforms with the arché* – it builds the harmony-to-be-inhabited by looking at the Principle-to-be-imitated (perfectly in line with this, L.B. Alberti states that the art of building is the supreme productive technique, i.e. the essence of producing).

Only if the thing is produced in conformity with the Principle – if it is composed solidly – is it beautiful. *Kalón* is precisely what is well-built, what has been made solid and solidly determinate through good construction. It is beautiful because it stands. But it stands because it is solidly produced, and it is solidly produced because it is produced in conformity with the Principle and, inscribed in its own order, appears in all its *decorum* (to the Greeks decoration was *kósmesis*, the giving of order – *kósmos* – to materials to make them stand well, i.e. to make them stand according to their appropriate correspondence with the order of the Eternal).

This is the way in which our tradition has thought the determinateness of the determinate and, in the light of it, the meaning of our bringing forth of things. And yet this way is doomed to failure. What is doomed to failure is the traditional attempt to think the determinateness of the many upon the foundation of the One and as derived from It – and, accordingly, the significance that such thinking attaches to *poiesis*. This failure gradually comes to light as the nature of the Principle as foundation is highlighted. For if to traditional thought the Principle is capable of originating the many as icons of Itself while remaining transcendent with respect to them, what gradually comes to light during the modern and contemporary ages is that *to the extent to which the Foundation is independent of the many that It originates It will always exceed them and can never translate Itself into figures;*

conversely, to the extent to which the Foundation leans towards the many there is no way It can remain transcendent with respect to them, but It will find in the many the place of Its authentic inhabitation.

On the one hand – the hand which holds steady the independence of the Principle – what is shown is the impossibility for the Principle to give Itself in the thing. *And thus the impossibility for the work of production to correspond to the One*. This is the great theme of 20th-century painting, which represents (“presents as a figure”) the Principle’s figurelessness, Its essential otherness with respect to all figures. In his blue monochromes, and even more radically in his anthropometries, what Yves Klein testifies to in the most extreme manner (even more extreme than Malevic’s, for “Malevic actually had the infinite before him [that is, he wanted to represent it] – me, I’m inside it”)³ is precisely this non-representability of the One. He does so by pushing the liberation of artistic production from the bonds of the figure as far as the limit of non-production: “To be honest, what I’m after, my future development, the solution to my problem, is getting to doing nothing at all, as quickly as possible, but consciously, warily and cautiously. I’m simply trying to ‘be’. I’ll be a painter. They’ll say of me: he’s the ‘painter’. And I’ll feel I’m a painter, a real one, because I won’t paint anything at all, or at least I’ll seem not to. The fact of ‘existing’ as a painter will be the most ‘extraordinary’ pictorial work of our times”.⁴

On the other hand – the hand which allows the One to lean towards the many – what is shown is the impossibility for the Principle to abstain from the thing. And hence the necessity for production to have no pre-established order conditioning its work, since it is through production itself that that order must be built and the world made secure and stable. Thus unchained, i.e. freed from the fetters of the divine order, the *téchne* of our time is driven by this will to make everything stable and safe.

Now, if the contemporary age is the theatre of this cleaving of the traditional pattern (but what has been said here about this cleaving is not yet the culmination of what needs to be said about it), inevitably it is at once the theatre of the cleaving of architecture, of which, as we have seen, that pattern has formed the bedrock. *If architecture wants to be a téchne it must renounce the arché and change into the engineering-functional production of “machines for inhabiting”; if it wants to be faithful to the arché it must give up being a productive téchne and inhabiting the world by taking possession of it* (in all consistency, Klein imagines an architecture of the air, which is totally immaterial and totally inhabitable). This is the drama of contemporary architecture, cutting across all its vicissitudes and movements.

Faced with it, all attempt is naïve that aims to save architecture and ward off its end by bringing it back to the traditional pattern, for it is exactly because of the rupture of this pattern that contemporary architecture is living its drama.

But the crisis of tradition opens up the possibility to think what in the course of tradition has remained hidden and unthought: the determinateness of the determinate as the weaving together of the standing by itself of its unity and its being open to what is other than it. As tradition recedes, so does the hiding it has imposed upon the most appropriate meaning of all determinateness, and there opens up the time of the thought of the weaving, which brings with it a radically different meaning of architecture. And if the threshold speaks of this weaving, will it not be apt to say that what lies in store for architecture is the time of its standing on the threshold?

¹ Plato, *Symposium*, 209 b.

² M. Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1957). For an English translation of the lecture in question (1950) see <http://72.52.202.216/~fenderse/Technology.html>. The quotation is from p. 9.

³ Y. Klein, *Verso l’imateriale nell’arte [Towards the Immaterial in Art]*, a collection of writings including some unpublished material, ed. by G. Prucca, ObarraO Pub., Milan 2009, p. 63 (our translation and emphasis). The piece containing the quotation belongs to a set of texts grouped under the title *L’Aventure monochrome*, the first part of an editorial project entitled *Mon Livre*, conceived by Klein as early as 1959 but never published.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127 (our translation). The passage quoted is from *Le Vrai devient Réalité ou Pourquoi Pas!*, the first text of *L’Aventure monochrome*.

Translation by Attilio Favaro

Luisa Lambri_Mirror portraits by Andrea Volpe

(page 22)



“I’ll sit here one more minute. It’s as if I’d never really noticed what the walls and ceilings of this house were like, and now I look at them greedily, with such tender love.” With these words, full of regrets and memories, Lyubov Andreievna Ranevskaya says her last goodbye to the family’s estate in the last act of Chekhov’s ‘*The Cherry Orchard*’. A line Luchino Visconti would quote precisely in a 1943 article to explain his ideas concerning an ‘anthropomorphic’ cinema better.

A few years later Visconti merged his passion for theatrical plays and movies perfectly, transforming the first sequence of ‘*Senso*’ (1954) into his personal poetic manifesto. Shot in Venice’s opera house, *La Fenice*, during a performance of *Il Trovatore*, this powerful scene shows literally how cinematic reality can easily be turned into melodramatic action.

Using a long travelling shot, Luchino Visconti alters the perspective of Countess Serpieri's story; from now on it will be seen from the singers' point of view. Or, to be more precise, Visconti metaphorically framed the movie through the proscenium arch: a threshold where the Apollonian and Dionysian form a dynamic balance. If we were asked to think about Visconti in terms of architecture we could define his body of work as an endless exploration of that thin border: a magic, immaterial, space where movies and plays, piazzas and Italian opera house stages blur into one another. Who is acting on the stage and who sits in the seats?

Visconti's cinema lives in such ambiguous passage, where Neorealism can meet the Classical *epos* without any contradictions.

Apparently unaffected by the influences of the past, yet nevertheless seeking a striking abstraction of reality, Michelangelo Antonioni explored a similar symbolic territory. Among many well-known features, one might think of *Blow up* (1966) as his strongest conceptual statement. In one of its most famous scenes, the protagonist Thomas (David Hemmings) looks at printed and enlarged images looking through a magnifying-glass for a revealing detail. A few minutes later, Antonioni shoots almost the same sequence, but with an unexpected ending. The photographs are still seen using a subjective shot, but this time, the sequence ends with a sudden jump cut. The photographs are now shown beside Thomas, who is still looking at them.

Through this editing choice Antonioni seems to suggest the existence of an outer gaze, independent from the subject itself. Just as in Visconti's opening scene from *Senso*, the questions remain the same: who is watching whom? Who is really seen?

Today, Luisa Lambri is one of the most famous Italian visual artists. Recognized in the 1999 Venice Biennale, Lambri takes photographs and shoots short films in silent architectural spaces which are often labeled by critics as *Non-places*. This is not correct. In Lambri's work there is no room for reference to Marc Augé's and his transient places. To a careful observer, Lambri's photographs of apparently anonymous interiors, show fragments of famous works of architecture designed by celebrated modernist *Maestros* or famous contemporary architects. Rooms, hallways and windows are transformed by Lambri into enigmatic landscapes, sometimes lit by a vaporous light, sometimes obscured by a dense darkness.

In her pictures, Lambri avoids the human figure, yet these spaces are not deserted. One can feel a presence and a breath there, like on an empty stage. Lambri's images echo the lines of the play just ended, or which is about to begin.

"Architecture is not properly the object of my interest [...]. In architecture, I try to find a personal acknowledgment. The same acknowledgment one can find in a mirror. To me architecture is autobiography and the pictures of the places are self-portraits."

Luisa Lambri doesn't experience architecture in the same way as those who design, build, or publish it in architectural magazines. She lives/inhabits/shoots pictures of architecture by simply becoming part of it. Lambri's references are, after all, clear: Cindy Sherman and Francesca Woodman, two artists who transform themselves into someone else while remaining themselves.

This is true especially for Woodman's self-portraits, where the artist literally becomes the space she experiences, such as windows or a wall. Somehow celebrating her relationship with space, reducing the distances and the borders which separates a body and its environment.

Metamorphoses of a body into architecture: this is the legacy Lambri seems to explore in her work. It is an autobiography written through hundreds and hundreds of images of rooms that have become self-portraits. Fluctuating between subjectivity and objectivity; between outer self/inner self; between Chekhovian emotions and intellectual abstraction à la Antonioni.

*"It's something that all directors have in common, I think, this habit of keeping one eye open to what's inside, and the other open to the outside world. At some point, the two kinds of vision approach one another, and, like two pictures that are set on fire, they mingle and intertwine. This is the relationship between the eye and the brain, between the eye and instinct, between the eye and a conscience which is pushed to say something, to show something"*¹

"I am your mirror". This is the title of a series of small art pieces by Elke Krystufek, an Austrian artist often cited by Luisa Lambri as the latest point of reference for her work. We could say that Lambri's images works like mirrors as well, where the artist's gaze continuously overlaps the gaze that is returned by architecture, which now is conceived as a body itself. Her photographs, like mirrors, are observers through whom the artist is seen to look.

These mirrors, or *Miradores*, are pointed towards the interior landscapes built by Terragni, Mies, Aalto, Neutra, Schindler, Barragán, Niemeyer, Johnson, Mollino, Siza, Campo Baeza, Sejima/Nishizawa. Houses that Luisa Lambri uses to build her own private, intimate, home: a building made of fragments which form a long-take in which the mutations of the light, the passing of the time, its infinite duration, are measured. It is well known how Le Corbusier used to publish his own architecture images on *L'Esprit Nouveau* magazine. All the photographs were edited and heavily post-processed in order to make them lose all relationships with the real building. These images were then used by the Swiss architect as a manifesto and a conceptual statement. In a similar way, Luisa Lambri pursues the same goal, shooting images that work like a threshold: open towards a self-reflective experience of space, telling us that we, too, can pass through the looking-glass.

¹ Michelangelo Antonioni, *Prefazione*, in *Sei film*, Einaudi, Torino, 1964, p. IX

Alberto Campo Baeza

On the threshold of beauty by Alberto Pireddu

(page 30)



"What should painting reveal? Where is the revealable authenticity?" wonders Kazimir Malevich in his famous essay *La lumière et la couleur*,¹ from his *Carnet B* (1923-1926), which was born like a collection of notes for a lesson to his *Inkhouk* students.

The authenticity of revelation, he replies, is not

an idea which lies inside or outside ourselves, but it is in a place where a "third thing" is created from the reaction between what is inside us and what is outside us. Authenticity is the revelation of this 'interregnum'.

The aim of pictorial essence is to show this idea in its integrity, beyond any figuration or attempt to represent a simple impression of things: the principle of a new form, which the painter gives back to space and time, fixing it on the canvas through an exact physical measure.

Light, colour and matter are fundamental elements of the intermediate analytical moments which bring about its revelation: the light, as a physical phenomenon – light which, through a water drop, gives life to the division of reality into colours – but also light as a metaphor, the light of knowledge; the colour, with its changeable and elusive intensity; the matter as a chemically purified substance (the pigment) which, set in an ever changing spatial relationship, engenders diversity.

But they do not represent anything and they do not exist until light has been thrown over the idea.

'To reveal' means, in Malevich's words, 'to approach' something which is far from conscience in space and time, to reach an absolute separation of the substance and an explanation of all the circumstances of reality.

To reveal the light – the painter's eternal ambition – means, therefore, to give a formal construction to phenomena, "to give back transparency to the sun and the earth", do not represent them on every ray on the canvas.

A profound nihilism is the distinctive feature of Malevich's text, which continues: "there is no light whose function is to reveal the truth; it is an impossible task to reveal its splendour, either". Nonetheless he vigorously stresses the importance of ideas in the creative process and this fundamental importance can be also found in Alberto Campo Baeza, who thinks architecture is, above all, a constructed idea.

It's a complex idea, a synthesis of real factors – the context, the function, the composition, the construction – which transforms itself into real shapes, whose measures correspond to human measures, and whose 'poetic' accuracy is set, scale, proportion and essentiality.

Shapes of an architecture that traces his fundamental themes in the gravity and light, as capable of "constructing" space and time.

Light is, for Campo Baeza, "the force of lightness", the unavoidable material with which the soul of tension can be lent onto space, creating a bond between architecture, man and time.

Its control is, once again, a matter of precision, as can be seen in the intense *chiaroscuro* of the Romanic, in the dramatic, ascending transparencies of the Gothic, or in the vibrant atmosphere of the Baroque, which are often quoted in his writings.

That precision can also be traced in the polished theories of Daniele Barbaro who, commenting on Vitruvius, detected in the *sciographia* the third component of architectonic drawing, together with the *icnographia* and the *ortographia*, instead of the too vague *scenographia*.²

The "certainty" of white is the "solid" and "valid" base of this luminous distillation: white is the place where diversity is undetectable, the symbol of an unchangeable substance which lies beyond form, time and space and in which silence, simplicity and beauty merge the one into the other.

Beauty is, after all, the ultimate goal of Alberto Campo Baeza's research who, like Plato and Saint Augustine, discovers in it "the splendour of truth" and turns Malevich's declared impossibility into the consciousness of a difficulty.

Following in the footsteps of Adriano, Bernini, Mies van der Rohe and, not least, his masters' - Alejandro de la Sota, Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oiza, Miguel Fisac e Javier Carvajal – the architect from Cadiz sets off on the dangerous, revolutionary road of beauty.

Much of the importance of his work lies in this quest, which strongly opposes the mediocrity of much of the contemporary architecture.

Between two Cathedrals

The place chosen by Campo Baeza to build this light and tectonic architecture is a void between the apse of the *Catedral Nueva* and the facade of the *Catedral Vieja* in Cadiz, on the external side of that patch which the Phoenician chose as an extreme outpost of the West.

A white platform, built on an ancient pre-existing archaeological site, defines an elevated square, which can be reached through a lateral ramp, a *mirador*, a viewpoint for the ocean and the horizon.

On it, there are the three spans of an essential shelter from the rain or the sun. Set along the *Campo del Sur* and ideally hanging on the sea, like the adjoining Basilica of *Santa Cruz sobre las aguas*, Campo Baeza's work evokes a double "in

