

## **The architectural project in Michael Wesely's pictures**

The concept of space and time are human constructions, of which the morphological data, beyond the representation of their natural dimension, imply their social evaluation. In that context, there has been established a vocabulary which should be used by the creator, in order for his work to be decoded. Any declination from the already defined language indicates the birth of a new mechanism of perception. The creative act of the Architect and the Photographer, while the first delimit the edifice and the other the image, constitutes always a statement that is more or less socialized.

Michael Wesely questions the existing structure of the image and by using architecture as a medium on which he may experiment photographically, attempts to discover the truth of photography. By the lengthening of exposure time, he forms a context in which architecture may be defined according to people and the city, and he creates a condition that will record the 'birth of a new building' as a poetic moment. Wesely's pictures serve as a stimulant so that the viewer may focus on the real essence of the architectural project, rather than its morphological aesthetic.

Architecture tries, in many different ways, to organize time, through the design process, by proposing its spatial management. The architectural project starts as an idea, which is designed based on the absence of the human body, and is completed only when has been inhabited by the subject. In Wesely's work, the presence of the human is rejected the same moment that the concept of 'long exposure' is captured, as we know from the beginning that will not be recorded. His photographs 'contain' human presence, rather than present it.

In the same time, the architectural work is being understood as an organism that is constituted from the absence as well as from the presence in the urban environment, where its image, in a duration of time, will become part of the already existing structures of the city. Time doesn't only appear on the building itself but also in the process that renders the building to be a part of the urban environment. In the same picture that the birth of a building is captured, we are also capable to read the death of another, through its phantom that implies a previous presence. Wesely's pictures indicate a sequence of urban procedures that are defined by time and become memorable because he decided to capture them in that particular period. A procedure, that calls for a critical reading and wouldn't have been observable in any other way, (or wouldn't have been considered so important so as to be recorded).

In that context, Wesely's pictures, except from referring to different layers of time, introduce also different layers of presence: from the human body to the urban environment, which together form a social structure.

In the same way that he introduces a new perception of time upon the constructed project and its image, introduces as well, a new time that concerns the reading of the photograph. The layers are revealed to the viewer according to the time he spends in front of the image. 'The details are the essential things that tell the story, and for that reason it is important to look closely', stresses Wesely. The architectural image becomes hard to read and becomes, in a sense, a 'time-consuming' procedure, as 'time-consuming' is for someone to walk and become an embodied viewer, in order to understand the architectural project in its real essence, instead of just perceiving it as a shape and a aesthetic total of its faces. For Wesely, the reading process is important, as it indicates a point of redefining the gaze and a motive for the viewer to look beyond the image.

Someone may support that such an approach is more real to the architectural idea and its meanings, than photographing architectural faces which seems a reflexive reaction.

Wesely creates an image where potentially anybody may be part of it. In a society that moves in frantic pace, the redefinition of (exposure) time seems anything but coincidence. Thereby, the depth of time and space in the photographic image creates a new dimension in the photograph and comes, maybe, a little closer to the real essence of architecture. Wesely's act of photographing aims towards the excess of the medium, with the purpose to renegotiate the relationship with the viewer and everything that surrounds the picture, by viewing photography as a process and not a single act.

The deviation from the result, as an autonomous object, allows him to work on the process, which apart from the interesting aesthetic result, as a concurrent capture of different moments of the architectural project, presents also what Wesely calls 'anthropological approach' within his pictures: As he points out:

Through the scale of the exposure time, the context of human history is added, and we are looking at the big geopolitical and economic changes that manifested also in the reconstruction of the divided city, the divided country, the divided world, the end of socialism. Economic changes usually express in architecture.

Finally, Wesely's pictures, manage to re-define architecture, to indicate social and political structures, to present urban changes and to approach 'the man who builds and transform the/(his) city', by proving that the act of photographing constitutes an active process which is accompanied by meanings, statements and critical thought. 'Although the camera is an observation station, the act of photographing is more than passive observation', states Susan Sontag.

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