PICTURING CITIES

The Photobook as Urban Narrative

edited by
Davide Deriu and Angelo Maggi

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INTRODUCTION

Davide Deriu and Angelo Maggi

'The combination of remarkable images and good design in a book that is beautiful to open and pleasurable to leaf through is an ideal way of conveying a photographer's ideas and statements'.[1]

What is a photobook? And what is its historical and cultural relevance for the representation of urban environments? 'Photographic book' and 'picture book' are terms that are used to refer to various illustrated publications, with or without text, in which photographic images carry the leading role. Often resulting from the collaboration between photographers, editors and graphic designers, they are typically intended to build visual narratives on specific themes or subjects. In the introduction to the first of their three-volume set, *The Photobook: A History* (2004–2014), historian Gerry Badger and photographer-cum-collector Martin Parr chart the development of this specific medium, as opposed to other illustrated books, by emphasising its 'ability to move and provoke in a way unintended by its makers – that is to say, [...] the capacity to display a distinctive *photographic* or *book* voice'.[2] That voice resonates through a number of books that have cities as their subjects, and their capacity to inform – and provoke – the public is arguably more significant than ever in our urban age.

The term 'photobook' itself emerged between the two world wars within the avant-garde movement known as New Vision, and counted the Hungarian artist László Moholy-Nagy among its pioneers. Spreading out from the experimental hub of the Bauhaus, it became an increasingly popular genre of publication that took on different forms throughout the twentieth century. In fact, the photobook has a longer history that predates its modernist heyday. Between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, a number of photographers published compilations of pictures that were often conceived – at least initially – as rough sketches. These publications were similar to travel and portrait albums in which original prints were bound together. New photographic and printing processes were gradually applied to illustrate a range of scientific books, manuals and periodicals, a growing field of publications that included architectural surveys. In the early part of the twentieth century, the photobook became integral to the construction of urban narratives. As the city image was reconfigured in 'the age of mechanical reproducibility',[3] this medium began to replace the traditional illustrated book and photographers took up the authorship of visual narratives that were autonomous from the written text. The function of writing within the photobook became a complementary, if not a completely marginal, one.

How can we map the shifting nature and function of photobooks onto the history of urban representation? This particular form of publication displays a vari-

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ety of aesthetic attitudes as well as analytical approaches to the city. Its versatile format has allowed photographers and editors, often working together, to document, imagine and reflect upon urban environments in widely different ways. There is a long cultural and artistic history of photobooks spanning over a century that awaits comparative research. A tentative list should include famous examples ranging from the works of Alvin Langdon Coburn, inspired by Japanese landscape painters (*London* 1909; *Edinburgh* 1909; *New York* 1910), to groundbreaking publications by interwar photographer such as Brassaï (*Paris de nuit* 1932), Berenice Abbott (*Changing New York* 1939) and Horacio Coppola (*Buenos Aires* 1936). The city photobook cemented its popularity in the post-war period, as attested by influential works by artists such as William Klein (*New York* 1956; *Roma* 1959). Between the 1950s and the 1970s, in particular, it established itself as a tool to support new and multidisciplinary methods of urban analysis. In Europe, these years saw the rise of experimental plans for the recovery of historic cities, for the development of tourism and for the environmental protection of landscapes. In this context, the photographer often acted as a 'visual designer' who not only configured the image of the city through technical procedures, but defined and assigned cultural meanings and values to it. For example, Josef Sudek in his emblematic collection of views of Prague taken with a Panoram Kodak camera (*Praha Panoramaticka* 1959) identified the functional elements of the urban fabric and extracted them from the context through a series of narrative as well as technical operations. His authorial voice was no longer subordinate to a humanistic culture that had long privileged the textual over the visual content of city books. As the photographer took on a higher intellectual profile, the photobook showed its capacity to overturn this hierarchy by virtue of its disruptive visual force.

This history is further enriched by the work of photographers who, having trained as architects or urban planners, used the camera to investigate specific qualities of places: notable in this regard are Norman Carver and Gabriele Basilico, whose visions of cities around the world were the subject of carefully curated volumes. Above and beyond the most renowned examples, however, there are a number of lesser-known authors and publications that deserve attention. By addressing a series of marginal cases, alongside well-established photobooks that are revisited in critical fashion, this edited volume aims to contribute to the growing debate on a subject that cuts across architecture, urbanism, photography and media studies. More broadly, it seeks to inform a history of urban photographic perception that is still largely to be written. A significant contribution to this history was made by Russet Lederman and Olga Yastskevich in their edited volume *What They Saw: Historical Photobooks by Women 1843-1999*, which provides a cross-historical appraisal of the role of women in the production of photobooks.[4] This comprehensive anthology includes works by female photographers who depicted cities, such as Henriette Grindant's photobook, *Lausanne* (1952), Evelyn Hofer's consecutive works, *The Evidence of Washington* (1966) and *Dublin: A Portrait* (1967), as well as Laura Quilici's *Pasos por Buenos Aires* (1959). Acknowledging the long-neglected work of these photographers enables us to recast the history of the photobook and its specific place in the representation of cities.

In recent decades, photobooks have been increasingly recognised for their ability to record urban transformations over long periods. Among the myriads of uses illustrated by Badger and Parr in their aforementioned survey, this medium was taken up by artists, historians, architects and designers for an array of urban representation and documentation projects dictated by different strategies. The relationship between photography (as medium), the book (as form), and the city (as object) was tackled by Susana Martins and Anne Reverseau in the edited volume, *Paper Cities: Urban Portraits in Photographic Books*, which underlines the specificity of the photographic book 'as a crucial agent in the historic processes of city representation'.[5] Laying emphasis on the interaction between texts and images that play out across the pages of such books, the authors coined the term 'paper cities' to describe the particular genre that consists of portraying urban subjects in illustrated publications. While the wide-ranging collection of essays edited by Martins and Reverseau has broadened our understanding of the discursive and visual strategies that underlie the 'paper cities' genre, our volume focuses on the photobook itself as a distinct medium which has reconfigured the image of cities and their imagination. The title evokes the double meaning of 'picture': intended both as a process of image-making (representing cities in photobooks) and also, in a wider sense, as the multifaceted ways in which cities are described, imagined and understood through this form of publication.

Furthermore, our decision to issue the book in open access recognises the plurality of formats and publics that have emerged in recent times, since the publishing world has been profoundly affected by the digital revolution. A case in point is *Piazze [In]visibili*, the photobook that was published at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic when online communication replaced many of the physical interactions that were interrupted by the global health emergency – including access to bookshops and libraries.[6] With a nod to Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities,* the digital volume (curated by Marco Delogu) brings together a series of images of empty squares taken by a number of photographers across Italian cities during the first lockdown in 2020, along with short texts by writers who reflect on the paradox of public spaces temporarily devoid of people. By giving a novel interpretation to the time-honoured interplay between text and image, this photobook exemplifies how digital formats can be mobilised in situations that demand creative and rapid responses. While *Piazze [In]visibili* arose out of a unique condition, amid a pandemic that severely hit Italy in its early stages, it also suggests new directions for the production of what might be called 'instant photobooks'; a means of addressing the transient states of cities and their populations. This highlights the critical aspect of temporality, which has received increasing attention by scholars in recenty years and is also central to the present volume.[7]

Other salient topics that call for further reflection concern the technical and compositional aspects of the photobook (not only as the result of a meticulous process of editing a sequence of images but also with respect to the text); the relationship with the historical layers of the city it represents (how photography conveys urban change in relation to collective memory); and the political aspects that

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are inherent in a broad range of editorial projects that embrace this medium as an instrument of social observation and critique. Without any claim to comprehensiveness, our volume presents a series of discrete cases which evince a variety of critical and methodological approaches. On the whole, these perspectives reveal the extreme fluidity of the photobook in relation to the city and open up new interpretive hypotheses.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The volume is organised into four parts, loosely framed in thematic categories. The opening section ('Framing Modernities') considers the relationship between photobooks and cities in the interwar period, when this medium emerged with prominence amid the boom of illustrated publications. Focusing on the transformation of Berlin in the 1920s, Birgit Schillak-Hammers discusses how the photobook became an innovative tool for the dissemination of ideas about the modern metropolis. Her essay shows how the role of the photographer was inextricably bound up with that of the editor, as well as the architects who wrote accompanying texts: their collaborations were instrumental in providing elaborate depictions of the German capital. Besides the representation of architectural subjects, ranging from modern housing to industrial buildings, this medium enabled its makers to convey a new type of urban experience. In the following chapter, Ellen Handy revisits Berenice Abbott's now-classic photobook, *Changing New York*, and sheds light on how it distilled the idea of the modern city as a place of relentless transformation. Unlike other photographers of the 1930s, Abbott pictured the metropolis in a state of flux, caught between past and future. Eschewing a simplified reading of this work as a nostalgic lament for lost places, Handy highlights the sense of civic responsibility that animated Abbott's project, a critical documentation of New York whose enduring legacy continues to this day. Lastly, Catalina Fara examines the work of German-Argentinian photographer and graphic designer Grete Stern, whose depictions of Buenos Aires drew out the city's modern aspirations. Focusing on two photobooks published twenty years apart, from the mid-1930s and the mid-1950s, this chapter revisits a multifaceted figure who contributed in shaping the imaginary of Argentina's capital amid the vibrant artistic scene of the twentieth-century avant-garde. Through various photographic techniques, Stern developed a distinct visual language that matched the modernisation of the city at a time of intense social and spatial transformation.

The three essays in the second section ('Urban Imaginaries') illustrate how historical cities such as Florence, Venice and London became the subjects of photobooks that did not simply merge literature and photography, but enhanced and complemented these two forms of expression. According to the first contributor, Roger Crum, the atmosphere of a unified Italy created an ideal backdrop for monumental architectural propaganda as a 'photobook unbound'. The essay provides evidence of a visual history running in parallel with the reshaping of a perceivable national identity on the walls of the main hall at Santa Maria Novella railway station. Here the Italian *vedute* collectively form a kind of architectural frieze, one that is

not carved by traditional means but depicted through photographs instead. The next chapter, by Letizia Goretti, takes the reader into the world of the English artist Ralph Rumney who, in the late 1950s, followed a personal itinerary traversing the Venetian lagoon resulting in a photobook that uses the graphic layout of a *fotoromanzo* (a photo-story magazine genre that was very popular in Italy at the time). Goretti focuses on the fluid relationship between literature and photography in Rumney's 'psychogeographical' piece, whose photo-collage technique and flowing text reinforce the book's texture. Another urban imaginary is examined by Andrew Higgott in his essay on London as a 'dream city'. This wide-ranging survey brings together the work of several photographers who, historically, have adopted the photobook as their preferred medium. As Higgott points out, different aesthetic strategies were deployed by those artists to make sense of the British capital, yet they all contributed to reveal its unique *genius loci*. Even if looking at different cities, the contributors to this section elucidate how picturing the urban experience means not only showing the atmospheric and material conditions as perceived by the human eye, but forging a new imagination of cities through conceptual as well as perceptual means.

In the third section ('Visual Journeys'), five authors follow different methodologies for interacting with the urban environment by combining visual perception and space awareness. The four essays are devoted to photobooks in which various professional and amateur photographers observe the city by walking with a camera. Using a wealth of primary documents, Barbara Boifava introduces the reader to the 'Linnean' lens of landscape and urban designer Lawrence Halprin. Focusing on Halprin's photographic and visual perceptions, the author uncovers a legacy that is only beginning to receive appropriate attention within architectural historiography. The following chapter, by Lilyana Karadjova, examines an influential project by the American photographer Ed Ruscha, based on a Los Angeles streetscape, as a body of diachronic and sequential images. The author shows how photographs can render the passage of time and still reveal a flattened-out 'strip' with its endless procession of commercial store-fronts, residential buildings, parked and passing vehicles representing the experience of a living city. The flow of time is a theme that recurs also in Angelo Maggi's chapter, which looks at the *Visual Metamorphosis* of Venice. The photobooks discussed provide insight into the poetry and lyricism of one of the most photographed cities in the world, while also capturing the enigmatically blurred landscapes and disorientating close-ups that identify the destruction of its physical heritage. Lastly, in their jointly authored essay, Maria Pia Fontana and Miguel Mayorga examine the work of the architectural photographer Leonardo Finotti, whose 'immersive cartography' project offers a sophisticated reading of Brazilian architecture and its relationship to Latin American cities and landscape. All contributions in this section develop a recurrent theme in photobooks of cities, whereby a personal visual survey is composed as or through a journey through places. These essays discuss creative art projects that, unlike documentary photobooks, extend the discourse on cities by engaging with aesthetic and theoretical perspectives.

The final section ('Politics of Representation') addresses multiple ways in which

photobooks have been deployed to explore the social and political aspects of contemporary urbanism. Alexandra Tommasini investigates three projects by Gabriele Basilico which have been instrumental in promoting Italian civic narratives. The photobook was the favourite means of expression of this urban landscape photographer, and Tommasini discusses his influential work – often commissioned by municipalities and other public institutions – in relation to issues of cultural memory. With reference to the context of Italian landscape photography, the chapter argues that Basilico's documentary approach might be understood as a means of engendering a 'progressive citizenship'. A different ethos animates the photobook discussed by Davide Deriu, which stems from the present-day 'urban exploration' movement. With a focus on London, this chapter reflects on how the photobook has been embraced by a group photographer-cum-explorers intent on reclaiming the vertical city at a time of rampant neoliberal development. Drawing out the element of play that underlies their expeditions, which involve scaling tall buildings and sundry urban structures, the author calls attention to an alternative use of the photobook as a means of picturing urban change. Lastly, Wes Aelbrecht looks at the contested process of urban renewal that has transformed the city of Detroit, and appraises a series of photobooks which, since the 1990s, have adopted diverse narratives in order to depict this phenomenon. The surge in the production of photobooks attests to the significant role of photographers in constructing and challenging the image of Detroit. Drawing on film studies, Aelbrecht deconstructs the key strategies that were deployed in order to represent the spatial and social implications of downtown renaissance: by countering the predominant views of the city's ruination, the photobook becomes a powerful medium for imagining new sites of possibility.

Taken as a whole, this anthology focuses on the photobook as a form of urban narrative: a tool that has been variously deployed to read, analyse and interpret cities through curated sequences of images, often in conjunction with literary or critical texts. It stems from a double session we chaired at the ninth conference of the Italian Association of Urban History (AISU), which took place in Bologna in 2019. The large number of proposals we received pointed to a fecund area of research that cuts across architectural, urban and visual cultures. Although the scope of the case studies is limited to Europe and the Americas (with an emphasis on Italian cities), it can foster a wider discussion about the roles of various figures involved in the production, dissemination and reception of photobooks – not only photographers but also writers, editors, curators and publishers. The conference session underscored how the publication of urban photobooks historically developed in step with the dissemination of illustrated magazines, photography no longer having didactic or decorative functions but rather being increasingly employed for narrative purposes. That debate spurred us to edit this volume, in the hope that it will prompt the further expansion of this field of research to include a broader set of historical, geographical and cultural areas.

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NOTES

1   Martin Parr, 'Preface', in Martin Parr and Harry Badger, eds., *The Photobook: A History*, vol. 1 (London: Phaidon, 2004), 4.

2   Ivi, 9.

3   Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1935)', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1999), 211–244.

4   Russet Lederman and Olga Yastskevich, eds., *What They Saw: Historical Photobooks by Women 1843-1999* (New York: 10x10 Photobooks, 2021).

5   Susana S. Martins and Anne Reverseau, 'Paper Cities: Notes on a Photo-Textual Genre', introduction to Paper Cities: Urban Portraits in Photographic Books, eds. Susana S. Martins and Anne Reverseau (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016), 7–17; 8.

6   Marco Delogu, ed., *Le Piazze [In]visibili* (Rome: Punctum, 2020). Texts in English and Italian.

7   For an analysis of how the temporality of city photobooks relates to strategies of 'urban imagineering', see Alexa Färber, 'Traces of the Future: Urban Transformation and the Promissory Multiplicity of Photobooks', *Candide,* no 12 (2021): 9–22.

FRAMING MODERNITIES

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VISUALISING MODERN BERLIN: THE CITY IMAGE IN PHOTOBOOKS OF THE 1920s

Birgit Schillak-Hammers

In the past century, Berlin underwent major changes due to two World Wars and the many different political regimes that ruled the city. In the 1920s, the young Weimar Republic was attempting to get over the Imperial Era and become a modern state. The urban development of Berlin played an important role regarding the city's ambitious goal to become a cosmopolitan metropolis that could measure up to Paris, London or New York. Photography was essential to document the rapid transitions in the visual appearance of the city and the lives of its inhabitants. The pictures were published in magazines, newspapers, city guides, architectural guides and, of course, high-quality photobooks. Photobooks in general, and especially those focused on city photography, were very popular at the time: almost every publishing house brought out a series about famous metropolises such as Paris, Vienna or Prague.[1]

Most of the photobooks of cities from the 1920s followed a similar format. They were prefaced with an introduction by a well-known author, followed by short captions about the illustrations before the pictures themselves. Sometimes the books contained translations in English and French to emphasise their international significance. Unlike the photographic albums that were published around 1900, which often happened to be compilations of pictures from different sources, the publishers now hired one photographer to document each city. Thus, the books were given a more homogenous appearance and the aesthetic aspiration was accentuated.[2] Despite this attempt, however, the books still contained conventional pictures showing traditional sights of the city in question.

Books about Berlin were no exception.[3] In fact, there were other publications with a more pronounced modern impact, especially in the late 1920s, such as the large-format photobook *Berlin* published in 1928 by Albertus as part of the series *Das Gesicht der Städte* (The Face of Cities).[4] The 256 pictures were mostly taken by Mario von Bucovich and the preface was written by Alfred Döblin who, the following year, would write the epochal novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. In 1931, Wilhelm Lotz, editor of the Werkbund magazine *Die Form*, pointed out the correlation between modern photography and the quantity of photobooks released since the late 1920s.[5] Two of them embody the spirit of the modern city photobook and thus stand out from the mass of publications from that time: *Berlin in Bildern* by Sasha Stone and *100xBerlin* by László Willinger. Both books were released in 1929, the year the important Werkbund exhibition '*Film und Foto*' took place in Stuttgart and the avant-garde movement, involving *Neues Sehen* ('New Vision') as well as *Neue*

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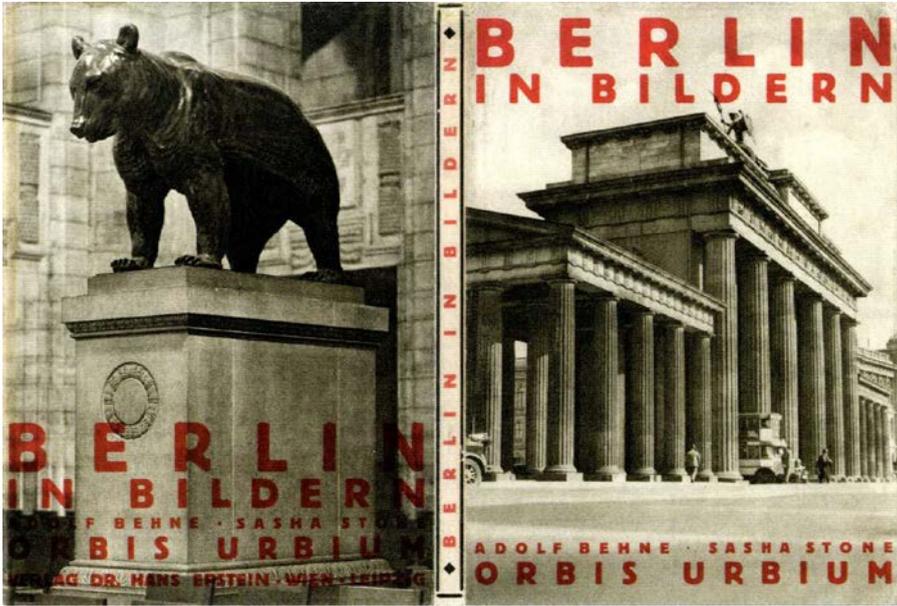
FIG. 1.1 - Sasha Stone and Adolf Behne, *Berlin in Bildern (Orbis urbium)*, 1929, dustcover

Sachlichkeit ('New Objectivity'), reached its climax. As the following analysis of these books and the people involved will show, they are closely linked to the modern photography movement and the development of the city of Berlin.

The publishers: Hans Epstein and O.C. Recht

Berlin in Bildern is today one of the best-known city books about Berlin from the 1920s.[6] It was brought out in 1929 as the fifth volume of the *Orbis Urbium* series by the Viennese publishing house Hans Epstein, which was only founded in 1927. Epstein was probably inspired by the great success of the similar *Orbis terrarum* series by Berlin publisher Ernst Wasmuth.[7] Moreover, he wanted to present a less expensive alternative to the elaborately produced series *Das Gesicht der Städte*. Because the publishing house was located in Vienna, the *Orbis Urbium* series kicked off in 1927 with *Wien in Bildern* ('Vienna in Pictures') followed by Venice, Budapest, Prague, Berlin and Dresden.[8] The 96 pictures of *Berlin in Bildern* were an exception to all other issues, which contained quite conventional city photography without focussing on 1920s city life or urban development.[9] It was published in a first edition of 6,000 copies in high-quality photogravure printing. The modern illustrated dust cover shows the *Brandenburger Tor* (Brandenburg Gate) on the front and the *Bärensaal* (Bear Hall) on the back (Fig. 1.1). Its modern effect was emphasised by the use of sans serif fonts throughout the whole book, which was unusual at the time.
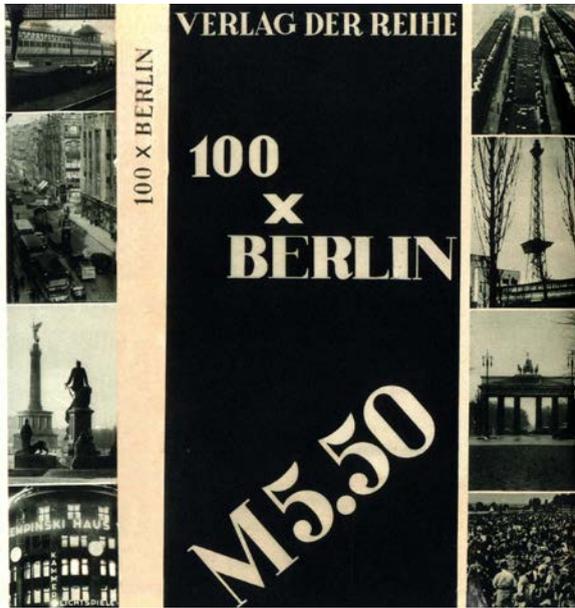
FIG. 1.2 - László Willinger, *100xBerlin (Reihe der Hundert)*, 1929, dustcover

In May 1929, *100xBerlin* was brought out as the second volume of *Die Reihe der Hundert* (The Hundred Series) by Verlag der Reihe. The Berlin-based publisher was founded in 1929 by Oskar Camillus Recht awfter he left Albertus, which was struggling with financial problems.[10] Recht also worked as an editor for the Hundred Series using his alias C. O. Justh. In addition to *100xBerlin*, he released two further editions in 1929: *100xParis*, with pictures by Germaine Krull, and *100xMünchen*.[11] Recht was experienced in the field of photobooks as he had been responsible for the *Gesicht der Städte* series at Albertus before. Moreover, he wrote the preface for one of the first monographs about Eugène Atget, edited by Berenice Abbott and published in 1930.[12] Atget's oeuvre had been discovered by the photographic avant-garde in France and Germany shortly before his death in 1927 and was amongst others displayed at the *Film und Foto* exhibition.[13] His countless pictures of Paris had a great impact on city photography at that time.

In keeping with the title, *100xBerlin* contains one hundred pictures printed in photogravure. It has a dust cover too, but instead of a single prestigious Berlin sight, the featured pictures visualise a film strip (Fig. 1.2). The reasonable price of 5.50 Reichsmarks (around 20 euros today) was also printed on the dust cover. This was indeed very unusual and indicates the modern marketing strategy for this series.[14] In contrast to *Berlin in Bildern,* not only were the picture titles translated into English and French, so were the foreword and captions, indicating the publisher's plan to

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market the book internationally. In contrast to its modern appearance on the outside, the book's inside pages were conventionally printed using a serif font with italicised captions. Although *100xBerlin* is mentioned several times in the context of 1920s city books, it has – surprisingly – not yet been analysed in detail.

The authors: Adolf Behne and Karl Vetter

Many topics and places referred to in the two books were part of the public debate on urban planning in 1920s Berlin. Given the people involved, it is very clear that this connection was more than intended. The architect Adolf Behne, a well-known critic and enthusiastic supporter of Neues Bauen ('New Objectivity' or 'New Building'), wrote the preface to *Berlin in Bildern* and also acted as editor. Together with Martin Wagner, head of the Municipal Planning and Building Control Office in Berlin from 1926 to 1933, Behne edited the ground-breaking magazine *Das Neue Berlin: Großstadtprobleme* ('New Berlin: Problems of a Metropolis') in 1929. In this publication Wagner and Behne illustrated why Berlin needed new urban structures and modern architecture. They propagated the utopian idea of a modern metropolis, for which a lot of the historic building stock would have to be sacrificed. Numerous photographs, many taken by Sasha Stone, illustrated the 12 issues of this magazine. Some of them were published in *Berlin in Bildern* as well, which indicates a close connection between the two publications.[15] Accordingly, *Berlin in Bildern* was dedicated to Martin Wagner 'the representative of a new spirit of building in Berlin'.[16]

In the preface, Behne sharply criticised the failures in urban development made by the German Emperors which, in his opinion, culminated in the Baroque Berlin Palace. On the contrary, he praised the possibilities that the newly founded Republic opened up for building a New Berlin. This modern city was embodied by buildings like the AEG turbine factory designed by Peter Behrens, the Wertheim department store by Alfred Messel, and modern housing estates by Bruno Taut. All the places and buildings Behne refers to in his foreword are indeed displayed in the book. Given this close connection between text and pictures, it is most likely that Behne had an influence on the picture selection for *Berlin in Bildern*. This hypothesis is substantiated by the archival material found in 1990 in an envelope addressed to Epstein and most likely sent by Behne. It contained 78 photographs, mostly taken by Stone, including a draft of the dust cover. Most of the prints bear visible signs of use, which provide information about the process of the book's creation. For example, some prints were creased to see if they would work better in a horizontal or vertical format, while others have instructions for the retoucher written directly on the print. In the end, not all of the image motifs sent to Epstein were incorporated in the final book.

Unfortunately, there is not much surviving information about *100xBerlin*. It is not known whether the author of the foreword, Karl Vetter, was acquainted with O. C. Recht or László Willinger. Unlike Behne, Vetter did not edit the book himself. He was a renowned journalist, editor at the publishing house Mosse, and

a politician, who worked together with Kurt Tucholsky in the early 1920s.[17] Since 1925, he functioned as an advertising director of the Exhibition, Fair and Tourism Office of Berlin and was thus involved in discussions about the city's development. Indeed, tourism played a significant role in promoting the amenities of Berlin and in presenting the city as a modern metropolis. Vetter was among those responsible for organising the marketing campaign *Jeder einmal in Berlin* (a slogan meaning everyone should visit Berlin at least once) that was launched in 1927 as well as for the advertising fair *Internationale Reklame Schau* in August 1929, a fact that must be seen in close connection to the publication of *100xBerlin*.[18] In the preface, Vetter, like Behne, anticipates the creation of a new city and reasserts the importance of modern urban planning and architecture. He praises many achievements of New Berlin, but singles out the Radio Tower and trade fair grounds in particular, as both were key landmarks in marketing the city.[19] According to Vetter, the outskirts with modern housing estates and innovative industrial complexes were the most striking examples of this new, dynamic and democratic spirit.

The photographers: Sasha Stone and László Willinger

It was avant-garde photographer Sasha Stone who took the pictures for *Berlin in Bildern*. It is not recorded how Stone received the commission, but there is proof that he knew Epstein and Behne personally, showing that the latter was probably key to the collaboration.[20] The Atelier Stone, a flourishing studio which Sasha ran together with his partner Cami, met the demand in almost every field of photography: reportage, advertising, portrait, theatre, dance, architecture, industry and city life. The Stones were both very experienced in the field of city photography as this genre constituted the greater part of their known oeuvre.[21] Among others they provided pictures for a small city guide about Paris written by Paul Cohen-Portheim in 1930 and for a photobook about Ghent in 1936.[22] Sasha probably started portraying the city of Berlin when he was still living in Paris in 1921, but the majority of pictures for *Berlin in Bildern* were taken in 1927 and 1928.[23] In this period Stone also produced five montages titled *If Berlin was...* in which he combined sights of Berlin with those of other famous cities such as Biarritz, Innsbruck, Venice and Constantinople. Expressing Berlin's wish to develop into a true metropolis, these works must be seen in the context of Behne's preface.[24] Considering this as well as Stone's expertise in city photography, one can assume that Stone eventually participated in selecting the pictures for *Berlin in Bildern*. It is indeed quite remarkable that his name is written on the dust cover in the same size and next to the name of Adolf Behne. This was quite unusual as most contemporary photobooks did not mention the photographer's name on the cover.[25]

The pictures for *100xBerlin* were taken by László Willinger, who was only 20 years old when the book came out. Compared to Stone, not much is known about Willinger, especially when it comes to his early years.[26] His parents, Wilhelm and Margarete Willinger, were also photographers who owned studios in Berlin, Paris and Vienna, and László learned to handle a camera at a very young age. After his fa-

ther relocated to his Viennese atelier, László and his mother ran the Berlin studio together from 1927 to 1930, before László moved to Paris.[27] Despite his young age, Willinger published pictures in well-known magazines and newspapers between 1927 and 1934, for example *Uhu, Scherl's Magazin, Revue des Monats* and *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*.[28] Most of the pictures published were common reportage photography. Leading to his later profession as a celebrity photographer in Hollywood, Willinger already portrayed famous stars, documented revues of Berlin nightlife and even took some nudes. There are also examples of city photography, mainly quite conventional views of city life in Berlin. For example, Willinger provided pictures for two photo essays which compared the amenities of Berlin to other cities and thus are linked to Stone's *If Berlin was…* montages as well as to *100xBerlin*.[29]

Willinger's city photography was much in demand. Even pictures used in *100xBerlin* were reused by Willinger indicating that he did not necessarily assign the copyright to the publishers.[30] On the dust cover of *100xMünchen,* two further books on London and New York were announced but never published. The London book should have been illustrated with pictures by Willinger.[31] In fact Willinger, or more precisely, the Willinger Studio, was much sought-after at the time. As the pictures are mostly captioned as 'Phot. Willinger' or just 'Willinger', it often is not clear if they were taken by him or by his mother Margarete.[32] Indeed, she would not be the first female photographer whose achievements have been subsequently attributed to a male relative.[33]

Conception and composition

What differentiates the modern photobooks from previous forms of photographic city portraits, besides the aesthetic approach of a single photographer and the text-image-correlation, is the conscious and comprehensive composition of the books. In *Berlin in Bildern* as well as *100xBerlin* double-page spreads always feature either two horizontal or two vertical formats. As a result the reader does not have to turn the book around to capture both pictures at the same time, and the correlation between the two images – either in their form or their content – becomes more obvious. The pictures in *Berlin in Bildern* are almost the same size and thus appear harmonious, but also a little uniform. In *100xBerlin* on the contrary, the pictures are visibly different in size. The consistent proportion of the picture itself was more important than the harmony of the overall impression of the book.

However, the innovative character of both books is revealed from the outset. Traditional city books usually opened with a famous landmark and, in the case of Berlin, this was often the Brandenburg Gate. Although both books examined here feature the monument on the dust jacket, the chronology of illustrations starts with symbols of the New Berlin. *100xBerlin* opens with the Ullstein building: built in 1927 by Eugen Schmohl it was, at the time, the tallest building in Berlin. It is followed by two other publishing houses and examples of *Neues Bauen* ('New Objectivity' or 'New Building'): the Scherlhaus by Otto Kohtz and the Mossehaus, rebuilt by Erich Mendelsohn. This opening definitely underlines the importance of

FIG. 1.3 - László Willinger, *100xBerlin (Reihe der Hundert)*, 1929, book spread: 'Broadcasting Tower', and 'Platz der Republik'

the press during the time of the Weimar Republic.[34] *Berlin in Bildern* opens with the smokestacks of the Klingenberg power station in Berlin-Rummelsburg followed by a double-page spread showing a full view of the complex combined with an aerial view of a housing estate by Bruno Taut.[35] The power station was a major urban development project and a very popular subject to promote the German industry. It was praised by officials as the biggest and most modern power station in Europe and was published in countless photo essays.[36] Moreover, smoke stacks were a frequent subject in modern photography, as evidenced by authors as diverse as Albert Renger-Patzsch and Emil Otto Hoppé. But instead of using extreme perspectives or contortions, Stone shows a classic front view of the building complex, which suggests that the socio-cultural context might have been more important than the aesthetics of the picture.

After starting with topics of contemporary Berlin, the two editors choose different ways to guide the reader around the city. *Berlin in Bildern* draws back to the oldest, most picturesque parts of Berlin before throwing the reader back into twentieth-century Berlin starting with the Volksbühne at Bülow Square.[37] Stone leads the reader from the boulevard Unter den Linden to the Wilhelmine Ring with its urban traffic and faster pace, before entering the more relaxed atmosphere of the Tiergarten via the Brandenburg Gate. In the following pages, one dives into
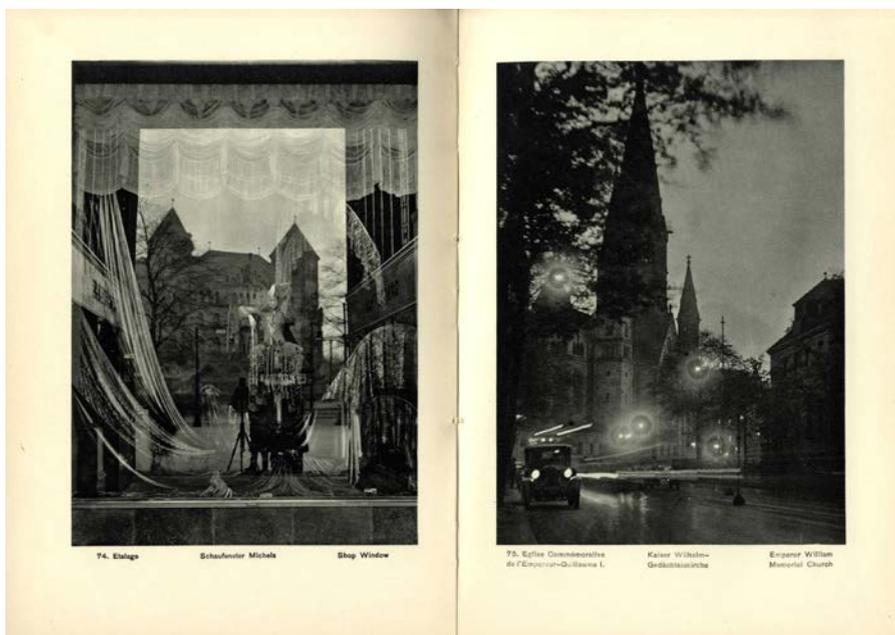
FIG. 1.4 - Sasha Stone and Adolf Behne, *Berlin in Bildern (Orbis urbium)*, 1929, book spread: 'Shop window' and 'Emperor William Memorial Church'

the vivid world of consumption and entertainment around Kurfürstendamm, passes Charlottenburg castle and the radio tower to finally end up in the arcadian surroundings of Potsdam. On his way, Stone not only pays attention to the famous sights and historic monuments, but to scenes of everyday life.[38] Thus, the book simulates a flâneur's walk through the city echoing the writings of Walter Benjamin and Franz Hessel.[39] The pictures are not just strung together in an unconnected manner, but intertwine along the narrative thread given in the foreword.

100xBerlin on the contrary doesn't follow any specific route as the sequencing of the pictures is generally not attached to geographic positions. The double-page spreads alternate between old and new sites. For instance, a view of the old town opposite a picture of Siemensstadt or a modern housing estate facing a historic site such as the Charlottenburg Palace. Others pair up related topics, for example students in a lecture hall with people watching a boxing match or a crowd at Wannsee with the audience at Großes Schauspielhaus (Great Theatre). Sometimes the spreads feature pictures which do not correspond in terms of content but regarding formal elements, such as the vaults of a post office and the arches of an iron bridge, the victory column and the radio tower (Fig. 1.3) or the curves of the housing estate in Britz and the stands of Deutsches Stadion. *Berlin in Bildern* occasionally operates with formal pairing as well, for example the asphalt of the Avus with the water surface of

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Stößensee or the reflections of a shop window with street lights at night (Fig. 1.4).[40] Taken as a whole, *100xBerlin* appears more like a series of spotlights than a stroll around the city. This squares with the fact that the book contains several interior views, such as theatres and cinemas, or an indoor aquatic centre where you can't just 'pass by' on a walk.[41] Because of this, the flow of reading is constantly disrupted and the reader's capacity to switch their train of thoughts is constantly challenged.

Overall, the structure of both books, with the interplay of pictures on double-page spreads, has striking parallels with the world of film at the time. While the cascade of impressions in *100xBerlin* evokes the montage-like sequences of László Moholy-Nagy's experimental short films, *Berlin in Bildern* has slower and faster parts, perhaps more analogous to films like Walther Ruttman's 1927 *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis) for which Stone shot some advertising montages.[42] But compared to a film, the photobook enables readers to intervene in the creative process.[43] They benefit from the possibility of flipping through the pages, thus creating their own walk through the city.

Tracing the 'New Berlin'

In line with the prefaces written by Behne and Vetter, the main topics of Berlin's urban development also appear in the books' pictures. The public transport system was an important way to promote technological progress as well as meet the challenges of a fast-paced modern city. Many magazines published photographs from inside subway stations and *Berlin in Bildern* includes an interior view of the underground station at Inselbrücke.[44] *100xBerlin* also contains several pictures of stations or trains and even one picture of Tempelhof airport, which is surprisingly missing in *Berlin in Bildern*. Actually, one of the most important and most discussed projects was the reorganisation of Alexanderplatz. According to Wagner, it should become a 'Weltstadtplatz' (world city square) which is why a whole new traffic junction was built.[45] Willinger and Stone must have known that this site would change decisively in the following years. Thus, *100xBerlin* shows the actual situation at Alexanderplatz including the building site of the subway and scaffolding on the buildings behind. Stone, on the contrary, choses a slightly different angle of Alexanderstraße so that the building site itself is almost completely out of focus. It seems like the ongoing building process was blocked out intentionally, probably at the publisher's request. In fact, Stone took several pictures of the square showing the building site very clearly, which were sent to Epstein by Behne. Instead, Stone's pictures were used to create a photomontage that exaggerated the vibrant conditions at Alexanderplatz and was published right in the beginning of *Das neue Berlin*.[46]

Another outstanding symbol of Berlin traffic was the Potsdamer Platz, where the first German traffic light was installed in 1924. The traffic light was indeed a very popular subject for the city's marketing campaigns, because heavy traffic was considered to be one of the most important characteristics of a modern metropolis. In Stone's version of the Potsdamer Platz the traffic light is almost completely hidden behind the trees. There is no big hustle and bustle going on, instead everything

seems quite relaxed. Willinger on the other hand shows a vivid urban place and focuses on the entertainment facilities like the Pschorr Haus and the cinema. Again, both photographers must have been aware of the coming changes as Wagner was planning to tear down most of the historic buildings and raise new ones.[47] Surprisingly, neither *Berlin in Bildern* nor *100xBerlin* addressed the modern buildings that were built in Potsdamer Platz at that time.

Overall, the contemporary architecture of the 1920s seems to be more present in *100xBerlin*. Willinger captured some icons of the 'Neues Bauen' like the Hufeisensiedlung in Britz by Wagner and Taut's Waldsiedlung Zehlendorf as well as several buildings by Erich Mendelsohn. The book also contains photographs of Leo Nachtlicht's Haus Gourmenia and Hans Poelzig's Haus am Zoo. This was most likely at the behest of the editor, O.C. Recht, who was obviously highly interested in contemporary architecture as he was involved in at least two relevant publications on this subject.[48] In *Berlin in Bildern* some of these sites were included as well, but without putting the focus on modern architecture. For instance, Poelzig's façade of the Haus am Zoo is hidden by a huge piece of scenery from a movie that was playing at the Capitol. Sometimes the accompanying text even provides information about an almost invisible building, for example the Lenz-Haus by Heinrich Straumer which is almost entirely hidden by the trees. Only two examples of the 'Neues Bauen' are presented from a standard frontal view: the Mossehaus and again the houses by Taut in Zehlendorf.

The near absence of modern architecture was due to Stone not taking suitable pictures. He was a successful architectural photographer at that time who shot numerous buildings by renowned architects like Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Bruno Taut and Erich Mendelsohn.[49] As already stated above, some of these pictures were published in *Das neue Berlin*. Behne must have known about Stone's capabilities, so it seems most likely that Epstein was responsible for the lack of contemporary architecture in the book.

A new kind of city photography?

Further evidence of Epstein's influence lies in the reluctant use of modern photography in *Berlin in Bildern*. It is proven that Stone participated actively in the avant-garde movement in the 1920s and experimented with new trends in photography.[50] At the *Film und Foto* exhibition in 1929, Sasha and Cami provided most of the work in addition to László Moholy-Nagy himself. Their works were published in the accompanying publications about how to use the new techniques.[51] Surprisingly, many of the pictures of *Berlin in Bildern* blend in with common city photography of that time, for example the book by Mario von Bucovich mentioned earlier.[52] However, the unpublished photographs which Behne and Stone sent to Epstein give an impression of what the book could have looked like. These pictures often didn't have a high recognition value, but greater aesthetic qualities like a backlit shot of the Belvedere at Sanssouci Park, a detailed view of a roofscape or an interior view of the ballet school at the Sportforum. Some subjects were covered by a number of different images, with usually, although not always, the most pleasing

included in the book. If a suitable one was not found, a picture by another photographer was used. Instead of using Stone's submission of Andreas Schlüter's equestrian statue, the editor chose a picture from the Staatliche Bildstelle which had been taken in the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, there are also examples that correspond to the formal principles of the New Vision: serial structures, dynamic perspectives, detailed views and mirror imaging (Fig. 4). For example, the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche is hardly visible as it is hidden behind the trees and the light of the street lamps and passing cars. Due to a longer exposure time, the lights partly appear as lines giving the picture a dynamic quality. Obviously, this was a very common motif at the time as Willinger published a very similar picture in 1931.[53] Despite the pictures, which are more or less innovative, the modernity of *Berlin in Bildern* lies in Behne's overall concept for the book. The chronology of pictures follows and illustrates Behne's remarks on the development of Berlin. Foreword, captions and pictures work together in their message and function, providing a critical commentary on urban planning of the time.

Unlike Stone, nothing is known about a connection between László Willinger and the avant-garde. He is not listed in the index of the *Film and Foto* exhibition nor were his works part of popular publications on modern photography. He contributed pictures for an issue of *Neue Foto-Kunst Kalender* in 1932 which were modern in character and provided high quality photography.[54] For example, the *Kriminal-Magazin* published a series of portraits entitled 'Gesichter der Großstadt' ('Faces of a Metropolis') in 1930–1931. The pictures show different types of Berlin inhabitants like a carpenter, a flower seller or a junk dealer. Although the so-called 'photo-studies' present different professions like August Sander did, the visual language of the portraits is more comparable to works by Lotte Jacobi, Germaine Krull or even Helmar Lerski. In contrast to the rare evidence of modern photography in Willinger's known oeuvre, the pictures in *100xBerlin* seem fresher and more current than in *Berlin in Bildern*. He uses low angle shots, backlit shots and dynamic lines. Often there are objects placed in the foreground disturbing the reader's field of view, for example a lantern, trees, a sculpture or even a Mercedes-Benz hood ornament. In 'Armoury and Cathedral' a massive, shadowed column, that probably belongs to the Kronprinzenpalais, is placed right in the middle of the composition hiding parts of the armoury. This is comparable to Stone's approach when he frames the facade of Berlin Palace with two shadowed columns belonging to the Altes Museum by Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

What is most appealing when flipping through *100xBerlin*, and the key to its modern appearance, is the choice of image sections. Many pictures just show a very narrow segment of a building or a street scene. Sometimes the objects are cut off and partly hidden by another element or the actual centre of a building or interior is moved to the side, like the cupola of Charlottenburg Palace. There are even close-ups of facades that cover the whole image, such as Berlin balconies. Thus, a more precise focus is set and a denser atmosphere is created. The combination of a modern visual language with the haphazard chronology makes *100xBerlin* one of the most innovative city photobooks of that time, maybe comparable to Moi Ver's pioneering photobooks from 1931.[55]

Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, both photobooks examined in this essay were a great success at their time. *Berlin in Bildern* received many enthusiastic reviews: above all for Stone's pictures, but also for presenting a new kind of city portrait.[56] In fact, there were quite a few successors published. In 1938, for example, the Berlin publisher Scherl released a photobook also named *Berlin in Bildern*,[57] and the tradition of photobooks about the changing faces of the city of Berlin is still alive today.[58]

As mentioned above, neither *Berlin in Bildern* nor *100xBerlin* focus on common tourist sights. Instead, they address topics related to everyday life in the city and give an inside view of its inhabitants creating an image of 1920s Berlin which is still relevant today. The books are not a realistic reflection of the state of the city, but a commentary on the ongoing debate in urban planning. Berlin is shown as how it should appear rather than what it actually looked like. Many sites were disregarded; others were paid more attention than they deserved in reality. The books give an idea of how Berlin could have developed if the utopian ideal of a modern, democratic metropolis had not been usurped by National Socialism and if the Second World War had not destroyed many of the achievements of modern architecture and infrastructure development. Furthermore, the history of their invention gives us an insight into how the cultural scene of the Weimar Republic operated. The protagonists were often involved in several fields: photography, architecture, urban planning or editing.

In general, the two photobooks embody a new kind of city portrait as each part of the book is deliberately composed and linked to a general message that stands above everything else. The cinematic approach as well as the effects of modern photography enhance their progressive aesthetic. These books are not merely sources of information but individual artworks that enabled a new kind of experience of Berlin.

NOTES

1   Roland Jaeger, 'Orbis Terrarum und Das Gesicht der Städte: Moderne Photobücher über Länder und Metropolen', in *Blickfang: Bucheinbände und Schutzumschläge. Berliner Verlage 1919-1933. 1000 Beispiele, illustriert und dokumentiert*, ed. Jürgen Holstein (Berlin: Self-published, 2005), 417-18.

2   Burcu Dogramaci, 'Metropolen im Buch: Großstadtfotografie in den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren' in *Großstadt: Motor der Künste in der Moderne*, ed. Burcu Dogramaci (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 2010), 207-8; Jaeger, 'Orbis Terrarum', 418.

3   See Franz Lederer, *Berlin und Umgebung, Terramare-Reisebücher*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Neue Verlagsanstalt, 1925).

4   Mario von Bucovich, *Berlin: Das Gesicht der Städte*, preface by Alfred Döblin (Berlin: Albertus, 1928).

5   Wilhelm Lotz, 'Fotobücher' in *Die Form: Zeitschrift für Gestaltende Arbeit*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1 January 1931): 28-9.

6   Birgit Hammers, *Sasha Stone sieht noch mehr: Ein Fotograf zwischen Kunst und Kommerz* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2014), 61-80; Roland Jaeger, 'Schöne Städte in schönen Bildern: Die Reihe Orbis Urbium im Verlag Dr. Hans Epstein, Wien' in *Autopsie: Deutschsprachige Fotobüch-*

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er 1918 bis 1945, vol. 2, eds. Manfred Heiting and Roland Jaeger (Göttingen: Steidl, 2014), 220-22; Dogramaci, *Metropolen im Buch*, 212-5; Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 190-202.

7   Jaeger, 'Orbis Terrarum', 419-22.

8   Issues about Paris, Florence, Copenhagen, Salzburg and Munich were planned, but never realised. Jaeger, *Schöne Städte in schönen Bildern*, 222.

9   Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 77; Jaeger, *Schöne Städte,* 219-20.

10 Roland Jaeger, 'O.C. Recht = C.O. Justh = Camille Recht: Pseudonyme Beiträge zum Fotobuch', in *Autopsie: Deutschsprachige Fotobücher 1918 bis 1945*. vol. 2, eds. Manfred Heiting and Roland Jaeger (Göttingen: Steidl, 2014), 374.

11 The Munich book contained pictures by Ludwig Preiss which, compared to Krull's and Willinger's, are quite conservative. Cf. Roland Jaeger, 'Das billige Städtebuch von hoher Qualität: Die Reihe der Hundert im Verlag der Reihe Berlin', in *Autopsie: Deutschsprachige Fotobücher 1918 bis 1945*, vol. 1, eds. Manfred Heiting and Roland Jaeger (Göttingen: Steidl, 2012), 222.

12 Eugène Atget, *E. Atget: Lichtbilder*. Preface by Camille Recht (Paris/Leipzig: Jonquières, 1930).

13 Karl Steinorth, *Internationale Ausstellung des Deutschen Werkbundes Film und Foto Stuttgart 1929* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1979), 51.

14 In 1930, the remaining issues of *100xBerlin* were sold to the newly opened Karstadt department store at Hermannplatz. Karstadt added a double-page spread with pictures of the store and used it for self-promotion. See Thomas Wiegand, *Deutschland im Fotobuch: 287 Fotobücher zum Thema Deutschland aus der Zeit von 1925 bis 2009*, ed. Manfred Heiting (Göttingen: Steidl, 2011), 315.

15 Martin Wagner and Adolf Behne, eds. *Das neue Berlin: Großstadtprobleme (Deutsche Bauzeitung),* reprint (Basel/Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1988, 1929), 149, 93; Sasha Stone, *Berlin in Bildern*, text by Adolf Behne (Wien/Leipzig: Dr. Hans Epstein, 1929), figs. 72, 74.

16 Adolf Behne, in Stone, *Berlin in Bildern*, 5.

17 Walter Kiaulehn, *Berlin: Schicksal einer Weltstadt* (München/Berlin: Biederstein, 1958), 503; Michael Hepp, *Kurt Tucholsky: Biographische Annäherungen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1993), 234-35, 462.

18 Wagner, *Das neue Berlin,* 149; Eckhardt Köhn, *1000xBerlin 'Schöpfer des Gesichts einer Weltstadt' – Der Fotograf Albert Vennemann*, Foto-Fälle, vol. 2 (Engelrod/Vogelsberg: Edition Luchs, 2015), 44-7; Birgit Schillak-Hammers, 'Pictures of Berlin: Construction and Conservation of a 1920s Metropolis' in *Candide: Journal for Architectural Knowledge,* vol. 12 (January 2021): 108-12.

19 Kiaulehn, *Berlin*, 30.

20 Behne and Stone most likely knew each other since the early 1920s. Both were members of the November group and part of the avant-garde circle around the 'G' Group led by Hans Richter. See Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 62, 79.

21 Ibid.

22 Paul Cohen-Portheim, *Paris Mit 16 Tafeln im Tiefdruck* (Berlin: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1930); Paul Colin, ed., *Gand* (Brussels: Nouvelle société d'éditions, 1936).

23 Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 61ff.

24 Ivi, 84-87.

25 Exceptions are a version of *Paris* by Mario von Bucovich or a design for the dust cover of *100xParis* by Germaine Krull. See Roland Jaeger, 'Ein Bildkompendium aller Weltstädte: Die Reihe Das Gesicht der Städte im Albertus-Verlag Berlin', in *Autopsie. Deutschsprachige Fotobücher 1918 bis 1945*, vol. 1, ed. Manfred Heiting and Roland Jaeger (Göttingen: Steidl, 2012), 205; Jaeger, 'Das billige Städtebuch', 219.

26 The most reliable sources about the time before his emigration to the US in 1937-38 seem to be László Willinger, 'Erfolgreiche Lichtbildner erzählen', in *Der Lichtbildner: Die Zeitschrift des Photoamateurs*, vol. 1 (1936), 307; Milena Greif, 'Die Geschichte der Fotoagentur Willinger und ihr verschwundener Bestand', in *Rundbrief Fotografie: Analoge und Digitale Bildmedien in Archiven und Sammlungen*, NF 43 (2004), 37-40; and Anton Holzer, *Rasende Reporter: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Fotojournalismus* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2014), 234, 251, 481.

27 Greif, 'Die Geschichte', 39; Klaus Honnef and Frank Weyres, eds., *Und sie haben Deutschland verlassen... müssen: Fotografen und ihre Bilder 1928-1997* (Köln: PROAG 1997), 493.

28 Willinger, *100xBerlin*, reprint with a postscript by Helmut Geisert (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1997), 6.

29 Cf. Hubert Miketta, 'Warum in die Ferne schweifen...? Ratschläge für Daheimgebliebene' in *Revue des Monats*, vol. 1, no. 10 (August 1927): 1020-24; Paulus Schotte, 'Regenbogen Berlin: Mit acht Photos von Willinger', in *Das Leben*, vol. 7, no. 1 (July 1929): 15-20.

30 A detail of Gleisdreick was published in *Scherl's Magazin* in January 1930, captioned 'Phot. Willinger – New York Times' and wrongly labelled as *Potsdamer Bahnhof*, cf. *Scherl's Magazin*, vol. 6, no.1 (1930): 89; László Willinger, *100xBerlin,* preface by Karl Vetter, ed. C.O. Justh (Oskar Camillus Recht) (Berlin: Verlag der Reihe, 1929), 69.

31 Greif, 'Die Geschichte', 39.

32 Ibid.

33 Others include Lucia Moholy, Irene Bayer and Cami Stone.

34 *Berlin in Bildern* surprisingly does not include the Ullstein building, but a corresponding photograph, dated May 1928, can be found in Sasha and Camis estate.

35 Stone, *Berlin*, Figs. 1-3.

36 Wilhelm Lotz, 'Zu den Aufnahmen aus dem Großkraftwerk Klingenberg bei Berlin' in *Die Form: Zeitschrift* für *Gestaltende Arbeit*, vol. 4, no. 9 (1 May 1929): 218–24, 219-24; Elisabeth Hajós and Leopold Zahn, eds., *Berliner Architektur der Nachkriegszeit*, preface by Erwin Redslob (Berlin: Albertus, 1928), Figs. 89-92; Emil Otto Hoppé, *Deutsche Arbeit: Bilder vom Wiederaufstieg Deutschlands*, preface by Bruno H. Bürgel (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930): 37; Roland Jaeger, 'Unterwegs zur Moderne: Die deutschsprachigen Fotobücher von Emil Otto Hoppé', in *Autopsie: Deutschsprachige Fotobücher 1918 bis 1945*, vol. 1, eds. Manfred Heiting and Roland Jaeger (Göttingen: Steidl, 2012), 240.

37 Stone, *Berlin*, Figs. 18-9, 20-1.

38 Ivi, Figs. 21, 24, 37, 59, 61, 71, 77.

39 Stone was close friends with Benjamin, cf. Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 180-82. Franz Hessel's *Spazieren in Berlin* (Strolling through Berlin) was published in 1929 by Epstein as well.

40 Stone, *Berlin*, 74-5, 86-7.

41 *Berlin in Bildern* displays only one interior: Stone, *Berlin*, Fig. 32.

42 Stone was very interested in film and experimented with the new media himself, see Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 57-9.

43 Hanne Bergius, 'Die neue visuelle Realität: Das Fotobuch der 20er Jahre', in *Deutsche Fotografie: Macht eines Mediums 1870–1970*, ed. Volker Albus (Köln: DuMont, 1997), 88-102, 88; Jaeger, *Moderne Photobücher*, 418.

44 Stone, *Berlin*, Fig. 23.

45 Wagner and Behne, *Das neue Berlin,* 33-41.

46 Made by Stone and Umbo (Otto Umbehr). See Wagner and Behne, *Das neue Berlin,* 2.

47 Cf. Wagner and Behne, *Das neue Berlin,* 33.

48 Hajós, *Berliner Architektur*; Maurice Casteels, *Die Sachlichkeit in der modernen Kunst*, preface by Henry van de Velde (Paris/Leipzig: Jonquières, 1930). About the latter see Jaeger, *O.C. Recht*, 374, 377.

49 Hammers, *Sasha Stone*, 109-125.

50 Ivi, 44-59.

51 Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold, eds., *Foto-auge: Oeil et photo, photo-eye* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Dr. Fritz Wedekind, 1929); Werner Gräff, *Es kommt der neue Fotograf!* (Berlin: Hermann Reckendorf, 1929).

52 An Paenhuysen, 'Berlin in Pictures: Weimar City and the loss of landscape' in *New German Critique*, vol. 37, no. 109 (January 2010): 1-25, 15.

53 See *Das Leben*, vol. 9, no.6 (1931-32), 28.

54 Roland Jaeger, 'Wechselnde Bilder: Kalender als Medium der gedruckten Fotografie' in *Autopsie*, vol. 2: 76-99, 80.

55 Moses Vorobeichic (Moi Ver), *Ein Ghetto im Osten: Wilna*, preface by Salman Chnénour, ed. Emil Schaeffer (Zürich: Orell Füssli, 1931); Moses Vorobeichic (Moi Ver), *Paris*, preface by Fernand Léger, (Paris: Éditions Jeanne Walter, 1931).

56 Paul Westheim, 'Berlin in Bildern', in *Das Kunstblatt*, vol. 12, no. 12 (1928): 382; Fritz Hellweg, 'Berlin in Bildern', *Die Form: Zeitschrift* für *Gestaltende Arbeit*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1 January 1929): 24.

57 Robert von Wahlert, *Berlin in Bildern,* preface by Julius Lippert (Berlin: Scherl, 1938). Scherl then belonged to Franz Eher Verlag, the publishing company of the Nazi Party. Despite some analogies to *Berlin in Bildern*, it has to be seen in context of national-socialist propaganda.

58 For different examples, especially after World War II, see Wiegand, *Deutschland*, 306-59.

2

PICTURING NEW YORK IN PHOTOBOOKS, 1930-1940: BERENICE ABBOTT AND CHANGE

Ellen Handy

Although capturing New York City with a camera and putting it between the covers of a book was a challenging task, it was a common aspiration during the 1930s. Today, the best-known attempt is Berenice Abbott's celebrated *Changing New York* (Fig. 2.1). But there were numerous New York photobooks prior to and contemporaneous with Abbott's (Fig. 2.2). They presented the city topographically, monumentally, anecdotally, idiosyncratically or commercially. Abbott proclaimed that 'Everything in the city is properly part of its story – its physical body of brick, stone, steel, glass, wood, its lifeblood of living, breathing men and women'.[1] Rem Koolhaas later analysed the ways that the city itself revised expectations about its key sites, stating that 'Beyond a certain critical mass each structure becomes a monument, or at least raises that expectation through its size alone, even if the sum or the nature of the individual activities it accommodates does not deserve a monumental expression'.[2] Abbott's photographic portrayal of the city turned each structure, however obscure or quotidian, into the kind of 'monument' he described.

Abbott distinguished between 'documentary' and mere 'record' photographs, but a kind of dialectic was working through the documentary photography of the 1930s by means of which direct records became material from which artistic results could be achieved. A photographer might lay claim at once to the titles of documentarian and artist without acknowledging contradiction, and a commercial publisher might assemble views of the city for popular audiences, yet include images of distinction. This essay explores *Changing New York* in the context of numerous other New York photobooks of its day. By examining Abbott's work in relation to other New York photobooks, we can re-read the canon of twentieth-century photography and explore the confounded variables of documentary, art, fact, urban development and image politics.

Rather than narrate stories, map the city topographically, or chronicle it historically, Abbott produced an abstraction of the idea of city as change. As with much high modernist art, the artist herself becomes the subject, and her experience of change as the essence of New York ultimately excludes most of the famous sights, historic landmarks and anecdotal subjects other city books of the period included. *Changing New York* established a cogent argument about the city rather than cataloguing the city's structures as an archive. Abbott's statements about her goals for the project represented changing nuances and alliances, largely in accordance with the possibilities for influential critical support or financial patronage, and often drew upon the rhetoric of the progressive politics of the day and the nascent discipline of urban planning.
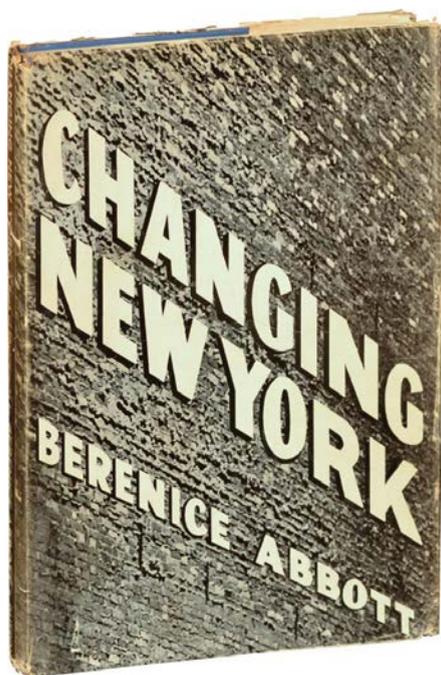
FIG. 2.1 - Berenice Abbott, *Changing New York* cover, 1939

Comprised of 97 exterior views of buildings photographed between 1935 and 1939, *Changing New York* presented the city as 'peculiarly a phenomenon of the modern world'.[3] 307 officially completed images from the project and their associated files are today in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York, while the New York Public Library houses a trove of approximately 2,200 alternate views and duplicates. The selection of images for the book was not Abbott's alone and, later in life, she issued a number of portfolios, often including different or additional images of the city. Some of the photographs of the skyscraper city indelibly associated with her name, including her night-time views of lower Manhattan, were only published in these later portfolios. Her complete exclusion of the newly completed Empire State Building – already a symbol of New York – is striking, while her omission of the Hooverville shanties, which appeared at three different sites in the city during the years immediately following the crash of 1929, is less surprising given the patronage of the Federal Arts Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration for her project.

'Fortieth Street Between Sixth and Seventh Avenues' typifies Abbott's emphasis on the city's dynamism and urban space. Rather than choosing a famous skyscraper, she identified a block within the urban grid as her location and composed with more attention to the void between the setbacks of a large, modern building and older,

FIG. 2.2 - *New York City photographic books*, author's image

lower structures in front of it. Together they shape the interior space of the block which resembles the stalactite forms of muqarnas. Abbott's training as a sculptor is evident in her interest in the plasticity of space between urban structures. The relationship of modern structures to existing urban fabric is essential to her invention and deployment of an abstract language of form in service to the theme of urban transformation. *Changing New York* is most decidedly *not* a guidebook or a map of the city unlike most other photobooks of the 1930s. All great cities impress visitors with their scale and energy, but New York, as the paradigmatic modern city of the twentieth century, did so with unparalleled verve and emphasis. This is celebrated by the exploding energies of the now-classic stage musical of 1944 'On the Town', which chronicled the adventures of singing, dancing, romancing sailors and civilians they encounter 'in just one day'.[4] Its device of requiring its protagonists to encompass the whole city in twenty-four hours is a neat analog to Abbott's challenge of fitting it into a photobook.

Changing New York would have been virtually useless as a Baedeker to those sailors, but they might have been able to use *This is New York* (1934) by Gilbert Seldes, which aspired 'to show New York as it is, without, we hope, any false glamor' and included a dozen of Abbott's New York views.[5] Photographs were used as supporting evidence for a view of the city as raucous, energetic and highly anecdotal ra-

ther than as the view itself. Seldes described an assemblage of ten million New Yorks, 'one for every human being who lives in the city or comes to it' and he invited the readers to join in: 'Well, we'll give you New York'.[6]

Another relevant book published in the same year is Agnes Rogers and Frederick Lewis Allen's *Metropolis: An American City in Photographs* (1934), which included copious photographs by Edward M. Weyer. Larger and more ambitious than *This is New York*, it characterises the city as the 'most spectacular and most complex of American cities' but also emphasises 'those qualities which are common to large American cities' presenting 'the complexion of human life in a metropolis'.[7] In a cycle from morning to evening, it shows 'the endless variety of individual lives lived in it and of the contrasts it presents; of the nuclei in it of commuters and class and groups bound together by various interests; and of the way in which it functions as a huge organism'.[8]   .

This is New York and *Metropolis* are organised like photojournalistic features on the city while Samuel Freedman's *Illustrated Souvenir of New York* (1935) and Constance Phillips' *So You Want to See New York!* (1938) could actually serve as working guidebooks. The *Souvenir* is thin and light and would be easy to carry around town. It presents 'a visible story of New York and a view guide of what there is best to see'.[9] Like all true tourist literature, it presents what you *will* see (future tense) in terms of the memories you will later have of it (past tense). Some of the landmarks Freedman included – and Abbott did not – are the Statue of Liberty, the Zoo, City Hall, the newly completed Holland Tunnel, museums and Central Park. And *So You Want to See New York!* combines a guidebook and collection of the author's casual snapshots with platitudes about the city, such as: 'New York is truly the melting pot of America. The varied groups of nationalities lend a fascinating atmosphere to the city's daily existence'.[10]

The Works Progress Administration's *New York Panorama* (1938) was too weighty and didactic a volume to carry about the city. As one reviewer noted: 'Nothing is left out of this literal strip tease of the life of a great city, pulsing and vibrant with people and activities'.[11] Personal narratives and memoirs also could be adapted to photographic portraits of the city. A striking example is *Cecil Beaton's New York* (1938). 'A catalog of impressions, mostly visual, of a place that I know little about', it was assembled primarily from photographs by others procured for him by artist Joseph Cornell.[12] It is less a description of the personality of the city than of the city experienced by a sparkling personality. Hulburt Footner's *New York, City of Cities* is also an individual's portrait of the city in writing accompanied by forty-one geographically organised photographs by John J. Flaherty – like a hybrid of the WPA's *Panorama* and *Beaton's New York*.[13]

These photobooks varied in genre, physical size, relation of image to text, consistency of vision and authorial tone. Some presented the city as an archetype, others as an idiosyncratic entity. The city could be made up of buildings, landmark sights, individuals or crowds. Alone among them, Abbott selected a motif to pursue through the city as she photographed and gave importance to individual compositions rather than to narrative, or to clusters of juxtaposed images. Abbott's collaborator

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and life-partner Elizabeth McCausland articulated its emphasis best: 'Pictures of the changing world, thus may [...] Berenice Abbott's photographs be described. To use this phrase and to write this sentence at once suggests the direction of her creative endeavor [that] it is a world in flux which fascinates her as an artist'.[14]

Abbott assumed that the value of her project was documentary and didactic: 'the future should be able to examine extinct sites and learn what they are like, how progress altered them'. But her portrait of the city is today valued more in its own right than as data about the city's past.[15] She firmly distinguished between 'documentary' and mere 'record' photographs, just as her friend and supporter, Beaumont Newhall argued for artistry in documentation.[16] A productive contradiction emerged within the category of documentary photography in the 1930s, in which direct records became material from which artistic results were achieved.

As Janine A. Mileaf put it, 'Even the most articulate observers of the medium found it difficult to categorise Abbott as an artist or historian without relying on external captioning to clarify her photographs' functions. Abbott offered a solution to this dilemma when she produced images that redefined these categories as one'.[17] Her photographs are neither a prescription for how the city should change, nor an inventory of endangered structures. They are an argument that the city *is* change, and that the modernist compositions of her architectural photography are the means by which New York's perpetual change is commemorated. Documentary privileges specific instances as evidence, anticipating the process by which the present becomes past, while the modernist artist presents the products of an individual sensibility as universal and timeless. Despite her skill as a portraitist, Abbott chose to represent the city as a collection of buildings, not of humans. When *Life* magazine profiled her, she explained: 'What people are really like... is shown by what they build. Their houses... tell more about a people than their noses. And besides, in a city as vast as New York, human beings are dwarfed by the colossal monuments of their hands'.[18]

Terri Weissman clarifies Abbott's lamination of subject, form, style and transformation as layers of photographic modernity: 'photography is understood as indistinguishable from the city's developmental processes [...] as advertisement for straight as well as avant-garde photographic technique [...] as critique of capitalist urbanization and avatar of modern engineering'.[19] The still-new genre of documentary was not yet fully codified, and in Abbott's hands, it could be allied with both progressive and conservative goals: a project like hers might be executed in service to the past, the present or the future. While Abbott's statements typically emphasise allegiance either to the past (photographic preservation of vanishing heritage) or to the future (photographic identification of social ills demanding reform), her images stubbornly occupy the present, responding to the subjects she chose in subjective terms rather than using them to forge a usable past or draw a blueprint for a better future.

Abbott pronounced that 'the civic use of the camera is not only to record but also to improve [through] the education of the public to an understanding of its civic responsibilities'.[20] The idea of objectivity at the service of improvement embodies a

contradiction characteristic of the era: the belief that fostering a progressive point of view *is* objectivity. Objectivity was certainly a desideratum, and a querulous Federal Art Project researcher suggested that 'many pictures do not show enough detail: that if the series is to be documentary photography they should be taken at closer range and in many cases not one but five or ten pictures of a subject should be taken', indicating that Abbott and her patrons had diverging ideas of her mission.[21] Despite conflict with her patrons, Abbott would not have accepted John Tagg's claim that 'Like the state, the camera is never neutral. The representations it produces are highly coded, and the power it wields is never its own. As a means of record, it arrives on the scene vested with a particular authority to arrest, picture, and transform daily life'.[22]

In her view, the camera could be both improving *and* neutral. Uncovering failures of progressive aspirations in Abbott's work, or shifts in ideology from the 1930s to the 1950s, is beside the point. The imbrication of her work with the unchecked aspirations of capital during the Depression as represented by subjects like the rising towers of Rockefeller Center deflects attention from her concentration upon the more complicated, even contradictory potential of the city itself. Abbott intuited the city's possibilities as a mesh of freedoms and obstructions to be negotiated, drawing upon energies created through dramatic architectural juxtapositions, and upon the sustenance found in urban zones of more human scale. That active negotiation of urban space can be understood in relation to Lefebvre's framing of the individual's place within the city. In 'Seen from the Window', he described his view as both the outward, visible sign of the social order, and a concealment of its forces, presented in the spatial terms of landscape: 'Beyond the horizon, other horizons present themselves without being present, other horizons, beyond material and visible order, which reveals political power, other orders are intimated'.[23]

Both Abbott and her critics often failed to distinguish between urban structures, spaces and experiences. Following the lead of Lewis Mumford, whom she had invited to write a foreword for her book (he declined), Abbott identified specific building forms as determinative of urban space and experience, and thus as critically important in progressive urban planning. Mumford's disapproval of the property developer's goal of increasing congestion and thus rent through building skyscrapers, and his concern that the silhouettes of such buildings demanded placement in vistas not readily available in the dense grid plan of Manhattan are echoed in Abbott's ambivalence:

I may feel that the skyscrapers are beautiful and majestic. Or I may feel that they are ugly, inhuman, illogical, ridiculous, pathological growths which have no place in the planned city. Whatever I think and feel about skyscrapers, I say through understanding and application of composition. [...] Even more complex is the problem if the photographer sees the skyscrapers as both beautiful and ugly and seeks to create such a duality in the photograph by posing tendencies against each other in dynamic composition.[24]

Abbott came to know Mumford through her work for Henry-Russell Hitchcock in 1934, photographing for their collaborative exhibition at Yale University, 'The Urban Vernacular of the Thirties, Forties and Fifties: American Cities Before the Civil War'. Peter Barr observes that as Hitchcock and Mumford's views diverged in the later '30s, Abbott remained loyal to Mumford.[25] Yet the work products from the *Changing New York* project place her squarely in the camp of Hitchcock, the proponent of modernism as a style without politics, rather than displaying Mumford's concern for the community. The record is further complicated by the existence of the original discursive texts for *Changing New York* by McCausland – rejected by the publisher – which offered political interpretations for Abbott's images.[26] Reading Abbott's images in relation to the company she kept results in conclusions very different from those arising from the recognition of a divergence in politics, rhetoric and photographic practice.

McCausland's endorsement and framing of Abbott's work set the terms for much subsequent discussion, but the mismatch of these sentiments with the photographs is considerable. Describing one of Abbott's construction images, McCausland insisted: 'The tiny workman dwarfed by the inhuman steel girder so that he can barely be seen in the photograph is itself a devastating criticism of the thing observed and noted down by the artist'.[27] Quoting this passage, Michael G. Sundell suggested that Abbott's 'criticism becomes almost surrealistically savage'.[28] But at most, her photographs reveal equivocality, a problematic position for a documentarian: it is hard to be strictly objective if you are of two minds. Such ambivalence is a form of self-consciousness that obtrudes subjectivity into the project of representation. Positing the values of the cultural Left as objective truth required taking positions. But Abbott's photographs are agnostic about whether the city is a utopian or dystopian realm, and whether civic planning, growth rooted in capitalism, or the juxtaposition of the new with pockets of pre-modern tradition, best expresses the city's ideal future.

If reading Abbott's photographs as a critique of the skyscraper city as the product of capitalist development is inadequate, taking her statements about the photographer's responsibility in urban planning as descriptive of her practice is misleading. Both require that we discount what Raeburn called her 'fondness for the city and pleasure in its multiform life', and the resulting excitement that her photographs evoke in viewers.[29] This returns us to Lefebvre's concept of the 'right to the city', which David Harvey has argued is 'the right to change ourselves by changing the city. [...] this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization'.[30]

Abbott presented the city's change as emblematic of the potential for both collective or individual transformation, celebrating it because it represents, commemorates and facilitates our own potential for change. The experience of the city itself was the ultimate subject, like what Virginia Woolf called 'street haunting' in her description of the pleasure of moving through the streets of London in autumnal twilight on the way to purchase a pencil.[31] Woolf's pretext of seeking the pencil allowed her to absorb impressions as she walked through the city, and the pencil allo-

wed her to record them; Abbott circulated through the city in the Ford roadster she had insistently petitioned the FAP to provide for her work, visiting locations where her camera fixed images of city spaces and places that conveyed dynamism through urban form.

Abbott embodied the freedom to remake the city through her own movement and representation, appropriating the Rockefeller Center, Wall Street, and other centres of power and capital in her images which suggest that in a dense vertical city like New York, the visual experience of the new architecture is available to everyone, that living amongst continual change and displacement destabilises, but also creates opportunity and reward. Urban change becomes the expression of emancipatory transformation in individuals, and thus – indirectly – in society at large. In this sense, her work fits under the aegis of progressivism, without embracing programmatic collectivism. Her practice appropriated a federally funded space of discourse, not for advocacy of New Deal programs, but for an *individual's* response to the city. For Abbott, the right to the city was primarily for the photographer and the viewer of the photographs, rather than for the rare figures within the photographs. Rather than capturing the lives of characters within the city and employing them as synecdochical devices, Abbott represented a city which is the character itself – or rather, in which her response to that city's character is central.

Although Abbott embraced McCausland's progressive politics and echoed Mumford's views, she also aligned herself with the patrician antiquarianism of I.N. Phelps Stokes's vast *Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909*. Stokes employed teams of researchers throughout the world to aid in the production of a six-volume compendium of representations of the city, which his title page announced to be 'compiled from original sources and illustrated by Photo-Intaglio Reproductions of Important Maps Plans Views and Documents in Public and Private Collections'.[32]

Seemingly more concerned with having the resources and freedom needed for making her work than with its use by her audiences, she cited the *Iconography* in many of her fundraising solicitations for *Changing New York*. It was most relevant to Abbott's goals as an example of a personal project occupying its author for a lifetime. Stokes's reformism was parallel to the publication not implicit in it, which may have reassured Abbott that her work need not directly illustrate the social theories to which she subscribed, just as his lengthy involvement with his project may have inspired her hope of continuing to photograph the city. In 1940, when the FAP ceased to support her work, Abbott called for the creation of a 'civic documentary photographic history' to expand work she had done in New York nationwide, so as to provide a 'wealth of information, supplied through the eye' through which we could live again in vanished cities.[33] While the New York project celebrated change, the national one would have presented the past by archiving soon-to-vanish structures. Unlike Stokes, Abbott was in no position to finance her own project, and while her brief affiliation with the FAP had been a magnificent windfall, when it became clear that no further funding was available, Abbott turned to different projects. She left *Changing New York* unfinished, as the city continued to change without her photographic attentions.

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Mediating social commentary through architectural subject matter muted questions of structural inequality or class conflict, and skyscraper monuments to capital produced perspectives irresistible to her camera. The energy of the city is compressed within her frame so that it is hard to be sure whether modernity and functionalism are reproaching the faux-Gothic church in 'Rockefeller Center with Collegiate Church of St. Nicholas' or whether the juxtaposition preaches a sermon about God and Mammon, saints and robber barons. 'Theoline, Pier 11', 'East River, Manhattan' and 'Downtown Skyport', 'Foot of Wall Street', 'East River', 'Manhattan' – images from the same location separated by a few pages in the book – convey change over time from one image to the other. 'Theoline, Pier 11' also contains the old and new in itself with skyscrapers rising through the sailing vessel's rigging, while 'Downtown Skyport' contrasts new and newer, and recalls the aeroplane-filled canyons of Fritz Lang's dystopian *Metropolis*. The rising towers in the distance seem paradoxically more vibrant than the small planes grounded and at rest or the two shoeshine boys in the foreground who were somehow persuaded to stay sufficiently still for the duration of the exposure to be recorded.

Sequencing and assembling her photographs into a publication required Abbott to partner with the firm E.P. Dutton, which apparently intended the volume as a guide to the city for visitors to the World's Fair of 1939-40. As early as 1937, frankly commercial illustrated souvenir publications like Monaghan's *New York: The World's Fair City* which appeared with the subtitle, 'A comprehensive collection of brilliant photographs of the world's greatest city at work and at play, newly taken by leading American artists, together with official plans and photographs of the New York World's Fair of 1939'; likely, Dutton had something like this in mind for Abbott's book.[34] *Changing New York* was entering an already crowded market for pictorial guidebooks, in which its idiosyncratic choice of subjects cannot have been satisfactory. Yet as an expression of the city's vibrant transformation, it excelled, and has long outlasted rival picture books of the city.

Picturing New York in relation to the World's Fair demanded modernity, as the purpose of the event was to offer visitors glimpses of 'the world of tomorrow'. Though Abbott was denied the opportunity to photograph the Fair itself by the timing of her book's publication to coincide with its opening, her New York was codified as eternally in the process of becoming the City of Tomorrow. To find the fully indexical documentation of the city that Abbott did not attempt, we must look forward to the 1964 New York World's Fair which documented continuing progress toward 1939's promise of the 'world of tomorrow', but deferred attainment of that world to an unspecified future. Its theme was 'Man's Achievement on a Shrinking Globe in an Expanding Universe', a scale-shifting description reified in the 'Panorama of the City of New York'. The Panorama – a starting point for imagining the expanding universe – was a model city presented as a three-dimensional scale map: commissioned by Robert Moses, it still delights visitors to the Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows Park (scene of both New York fairs) today (Fig. 2.3).

As many structures Abbott photographed for *Changing New York* have since disappeared, her identification of change as the essence of the city has proved an in-

FIG. 2.3 - Jim Garrett, 'Raymond Lester looks over his scale model of New York for the World's Fair', in *New York Daily News*, December 27, 1963

spired characterisation, though perhaps not in the terms she intended. In 1942, she wrote that 'If the growth and change of the city is to be visualized with historical value, the future should be able to examine extinct sites and learn what they are like, how progress altered them' but in fact her book operates in a perpetual present rather than commemorating the vanished past.[35] While Abbott spoke pejoratively of 'the anachronistic *unplanning* of our cities', her photographs represent the larger unity of a city continually in construction and destruction.[36]

When Abbott returned to New York from Paris in 1929, bringing Eugène Atget's negatives with her, it took her several years' diligent search to locate a patron for her portrait of New York inspired by his Parisian document. When hired by the FAP, she quickly amassed hundreds of views while managing a staff of darkroom

assistants, clerks and researchers who supported her production. The results resemble her description of Atget's project more than they do his work itself: 'Atget "saw" (that is to say, photographed) practically everything about him, in and outside Paris, with the vision of a poet. As an artist he saw abstractly, and I believe he succeeded in making us feel what he saw. Photographing, recording life, dominating his subjects, was as essential to him as writing to James Joyce or flying to Lindberg'.[37]

Atget certainly 'saw' a wider range of subjects in the city than Abbott did, over more years. Her 'domination' of her subject was more compressed in duration and scope, and almost entirely without system, growing out of her improvisational image-making with a small camera when she first returned to the United States from Paris and marvelled at the burgeoning city. She began by making a scrapbook of snapshot notes for possible compositions to execute later with her view camera. It is in these notes that we can see her developing a concept of the city, and responding to it in relation to her deep knowledge of and respect for Atget's life-long portrait of Paris. When she moved beyond the snapshots to large format studies of the city, she described her own work in terms which however do not precisely match the images produced or the extent of her undertaking:

> Streets, vistas, panoramas, bird's-eye views and worm's-eye views, the noble and the shameful, high life and low life, tragedy, comedy, squalor, wealth, the mighty towers of skyscrapers, the ignoble facades of slums, people at work, people at home, people at play – these are but a small part of the subject matter of the city.[38]

In fact, her realised photographs in *Changing New York* depict a much smaller subset of the subject matter of the city. Bird's-eye and worm's-eye views are there, but men and women are largely omitted and the tragedy, comedy, squalor and play are conspicuously absent.

Abbott's city portrait differs from Atget's portrayal of a city whose form was fixed long ago, and fails to offer an archive of views encompassing the whole city. Weissman described it as 'anarchically heterogeneous and in a perpetual state of disintegration and renewal – or [...] in a perpetual state of construction pursued at the price of the destruction'.[39] Yet that Heraclitean flux actually amounts to a fixed Platonic essence: the city as irrepressible, indomitable change – a perception which would have been of less than no use to the 'city planning groups for the improvement of the city' Abbott once invoked as potential audiences.[40] Conjoined construction and destruction were apparent from the city's geological foundations to its lofty towers. Although the Manhattan schist which formed the bedrock anchor for the rising towers of New York, and the compression of the narrow island of Manhattan into the city's grid plan which forced the skyscrapers into close proximity are only rarely represented in Abbott's work: when they do appear, they convey titanic urban energies.

Weissman is correct that Abbott and McCausland 'sought to position the photographic event as a social and civic one' and that their original conception of their book rendered visible the social relationships that drive change in society's structu-

re.[41] But Abbott's published images display a passionate response to the city which doesn't always accord neatly with the politics she came to espouse, and which Mc-Causland articulated so faithfully over a lifetime. The number and nature of the contradictions in and between Abbott's statements and practice suggest that she was a pragmatist as regards theorising her project, ready to adopt the varying values of potential supporters and patrons, but always intent upon asserting her own vision in practice. Her occasionally uncomfortable working relations with the FAP staff assigned to her project show her determination to pursue her own ends.

FAP researchers were mystified by Abbott's relationship to their work, and sometimes frustrated her by attempts to impose an orderly framework upon her production. A memo in the *Changing New York* files from a researcher reveals the staff's confusion at the lack of definition for the project, something that evidently did not concern Abbott in the slightest.[42] She saw the FAP as a means to her end, not a meaningful endeavour in itself. Willing to align her project with the sources of power and money required to make it a reality, Abbott cannily threw in her lot with critics, scholars, curators and institutions that were able to support her, but refused to compromise the work she was pursuing.

Looking at the results of the completed project, it is apparent that Abbott's approach was closer to that of her friend Walker Evans than to those of antiquarian collectors, civic reformers, urban planners, federal bureaucrats and politically active progressives. Evans foxily described his work as 'documentary-style': artistic expression presented in a package suggesting the elusively objective document, without taking on its responsibilities**.** He revealed the source of his motivation when he said: 'It's as though there's a wonderful secret in a certain place and I can capture it'.[43] Abbott's 'fantastic passion' was one more secret visible in plain view. She was also a 'documentary-style' photographer, more often an advocate for working photographers than for the working class: she was never a party member nor conspicuous for her political activism. Her dedication to Atget's legacy, role in the rediscovery of Lewis Hine's work, and support for the embattled Photo League in the late 1940s, are all examples of her commitment to fellow photographers in need, and to the medium they shared.

A voice for her colleagues and medium, and an effective user of institutional resources but always something of a loner, Abbott's distinctive point of view is present everywhere in the *Changing New York* photographs. Where McCausland and later Sundell saw alienated labour in the figures in Abbott's photographs, another eye might see existential isolation – of the photographer as much as the subjects. As E.B. White put it, New York 'often imparts a feeling of great forlornness or forsakenness, [but] it seldom seems dead or unresourceful; and you always feel that either by shifting your location ten blocks or by reducing your fortune by five dollars you can experience rejuvenation'.[44] That rejuvenation is the change animating Abbott's city, presented as a hope without a specific program for fulfilment. In *Changing New York* we find a metaphorical, existential right to the city which is discovered, affirmed and preserved through continual change in the urban perceivers and the city alike.

Both Abbott and White naturalised continual renewal and change in the city as an inevitability like the orderly succession of day and night. Yet unlike the 'Panorama of the City of New York' where the transition of day and night was signalled by a cycle of changing light effects every few minutes, in *Changing New York*, it is always daytime – and we know from Abbott's technical notes that the photographs were usually taken in the afternoon, when the light suited her purpose. Each image thus fixed a moment in time, rendering Abbott's city of change constant in its transformation – the phenomenon which makes it possible to turn the pages of *Changing New York* today and recognise today's city in photographs three-quarters of a century old. In traversing New York, you walk around a corner to find a building you recall now replaced by a construction site, or you pause before a neighbourhood shop front to register how much you have changed since you first looked through its window. As White noted: 'To a New Yorker, the city is both changeless and changing'.[45] This city of continual becoming is the framework within which lives and selves are continuously reinvented – the city's change is the dynamo powering and potentiating personal transformation.

NOTES

1 Berenice Abbott, 'Documenting the City', in Willard Morgan, ed., *The Complete Photographer* (New York, NY: National Educational Alliance, 1942), 1394.
2 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1994), 100.
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4 *On the Town*, directed by Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corp., 1949).
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3

IN SEARCH OF THE MODERNIST CITY: GRETE STERN'S URBAN GAZE IN TWO PHOTOBOOKS ABOUT BUENOS AIRES

Catalina Fara

The photobook can be described as a photo sequence by one or more authors, with a variable amount of text, which constitutes a discourse.[1] It is a key object in visual culture, facilitating artistic diffusion and expression. The relationship between image, text, typography and 'empty' spaces enhances or complements the artist's perspective on a subject. The *urban* photobook in particular showcases the dynamics of space by highlighting certain visual and textual parameters. It is intrinsically related to the idea of the archive as it preserves the memory of a place,[2] and has a multiple and implicit temporality sprouting from both the sequence of images and the action of browsing through its pages.

The portraits of the great metropolises of the twentieth century, by photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz and Walker Evans in New York or Eugène Atget, Brassaï and Germaine Krull in Paris, were condensed into visual repertoires that became indissolubly attached to those cities' imaginaries.[3] Buenos Aires was no exception. Since the late nineteenth century, the predominance of images of progress had shaped its cosmopolitanism and metropolitan experience.[4] The city's identity was defined through the opposition of its urban and suburban areas, each with their own distinctive characteristics. City views circulated widely in postcards, magazines and books with classical compositions in the works of photographers like Samuel Rimathé, Enrique Moody, Harry G. Olds and Gastón Bourquin. By the 1920s, these popular works had created an enduring imaginary, which contrasted with the avant-garde style embodied by the young artists who were starting to take over the scene.

Among those, I will focus on the role of photographer Grete Stern (1904–1999), whose approach to the city and work as a graphic designer have been insufficiently explored by scholars in comparison to other areas of her production. Stern participated in two photobooks, *Buenos Aires 1936: Visión fotográfica* (1936)[5] and *Buenos Aires* (1956),[6] which embody the aspirations of modernity that shaped the city's imaginary twenty years apart. The first was made by the Argentinian photographer Horacio Coppola (1906–2012), and Stern collaborated as a graphic designer. The second includes over 200 photos by Stern herself. Both books sum up the avant-garde spirit of Buenos Aires' artistic scene, as Stern and Coppola were considered the first modernist photographers in Argentina.

Stern started portraying Buenos Aires upon her arrival in 1935, after building a prosperous career as a photographer and graphic designer in Germany. Over the

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course of more than four decades, she published her cityscapes in books and magazines, in collaboration with local artists and architects. In what follows, I will analyse the aforementioned photobooks and the wider context of their production, with particular regard to the use of urban photomontages as part of a modern aesthetic in photography and graphic design.

Grete Stern behind the scenes of *Buenos Aires 1936*

Stern developed her artistic practice in interwar Germany by working on photography, advertising and graphic design. Around 1932, she met Horacio Coppola in Walter Peterhans's photography workshop at the Bauhaus. After the rise of the Nazi regime, the following year, the recently married couple left Berlin and settled in London, then finally moved to Buenos Aires in 1935.[7] That same year, Stern showed some of her European works alongside Coppola's at the *Sur* magazine headquarters. Because of its unconventional subjects and artistic approach, the event was welcomed by critics like Jorge Romero Brest as the first avant-garde photography exhibition in the country that was both 'modern and socially compelling'.[8]

The influence of the New Objectivity movement that developed in Germany in the 1920s is evident in Stern's photographs and in the design of the exhibition pamphlet, which included an 'artists' statement' written in collaboration with Coppola. The couple opposed the Pictorialism that had characterised local production since the late nineteenth century, stating that 'the photographer makes a selection of the photogenic values of the object. This selection is not mechanical. Through it, the photographer expresses his intuition of the object and his understanding, his knowledge of the object'.[9]

After the *Sur* exhibition, Stern and Coppola collaborated on the photobook *Buenos Aires 1936: Visión fotográfica*. The City Council commissioned the book as part of a wider editorial programme for the commemoration of the Argentine capital's 400th anniversary, with an introductory text by the architect, Alberto Prebisch[10] Prebisch's ideas about modernism are key to understanding why he assigned to Coppola the symbolic operation that this book represented. *Buenos Aires 1936* was then at the centre of official discourse, urban planning policies and avant-garde aesthetics in photography and architecture. The cover of the first edition featured the city's coat of arms, surrounded by the phrase 'Buenos Aires 1936' in a typography resembling those often used on street signs and shops at the time (Fig. 3.1a). The book was printed in Estudio de Artes Gráficas Futura, then one of the city's most important printing houses.[11]

Stern, who was mentioned in the colophon as 'Grete Coppola', designed the book with Atilio Rossi, whom she and Coppola had met while Rossi was the head of the arts section of *Sur* magazine.[12] This was the trio's first collaborative work, even though it does not fully represent their visions about avant-garde graphic design. In an article about *Buenos Aires 1936* published in the Italian magazine *Campo Grafico*, Rossi underlines the book's innovative design in spite of its 'classical form, evidently imposed by the sponsor, which is not the most suitable because of its static structure'.[13] A section page separates Coppola's photo essay from the two articles included

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in the book, one by Alberto Prebisch and the other by Ignacio B. Anzoategui. This highlights the importance of the images over the text, given that the captions underneath them are almost imperceptible. The reproductions have different sizes and orientations, creating a dynamic layout that in some cases requires the reader to rotate the book in order to appreciate the photos as intended.[14]

In wandering the streets of Buenos Aires, Coppola blended the activity of a flâneur with his role as the city's 'official' photographer. Hence, the photos in the book do not follow a clear itinerary. Coppola captures both well-known and marginal areas; he contrasts fragments of emblematic buildings such as the Cathedral or the Congress with the facades of unknown suburban houses. Close-ups reveal the uneven textures of the walls alongside unusual architectural perspectives. This approach to surface and detail is exceptional, bearing in mind that the contemporary architectural photography published in magazines such as *Nuestra Arquitectura* or *Revista de Arquitectura* was more preoccupied with showing general views, the geometric form of structures and the functionality of buildings. Coppola's photos established an urban imaginary that endures to this day.[15] It seems that the sponsors at the City Council intuited the efficacy of his visual language in building a modernist and progressive discourse about the city – one that would allow them to legitimise the many ongoing public works around Buenos Aires.[16]

In addition to Coppola's photographs, there are 14 other images in *Buenos Aires 1936* (out of a total of 202), including aerial shots made by the companies Aermap and Bauer. Aerial and panoramic views of recently finished skyscrapers were often used in the printed press to highlight the city's modern and cosmopolitan aspects, so their inclusion befits the celebrative purpose of the photobook.[17] There are also two images of the Río de la Plata's public beach that belonged to *Critica*, one of the major newspapers at the time.[18] Finally, there is a Grete Stern photo from her series of *patios* that contrasts with the rest of the book for its intimate approach to architecture.[19]

Most pages include only one image, except for two photomosaics that evidence Stern and Rossi's interest in photomontage: one juxtaposing different views of Corrientes Avenue, the other depicting animals and visitors at the zoo.[20] Stern also designed the paper band that came with the book: a photomontage of buildings, people and street advertisements. Therefore, *Buenos Aires 1936* functions as a melting pot for different urban imaginaries, from those espoused by avant-garde photographers to those that circulated in the mass media.

In 1937, the second and last edition of the photobook presented a substantial change in its outer design and materiality. It was printed in Editorial Atlántida's workshop and, like in the first edition, a stamp was used to number the printed copies.[21] Coppola, Rossi and Stern had more freedom to make decisions about its design, so they replaced the lined hardcover with a coloured softcover and added a metal spiral binding (Fig. 3.1b).[22] The new cover featured an asymmetrical collage of black and white cityscapes over an aerial view in orange, in line with Stern's design for the original paper band. Stern's approach to design was decisive in changing the photobook's aspect, and eventually her ideas about avant-garde rhetoric separated

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FIG. 3.1a - Cover of *Buenos Aires 1936. Visión fotográfica. Municipalidad de la ciudad de Buenos Aires* (1st ed., 1936)
FIG. 3.1b - Cover of *Buenos Aires* (2nd ed., 1937)

her from Coppola and his modernist vision.[23] Her use of urban photography in relation to typography illustrates her belief in the integration of mass culture, graphic design and life in the metropolis. She would also mix and reuse Coppola's pictures and her own work multiple times, blending their own gazes with the contemporary urban imaginaries. For example, in an article about the urbanist project of the Grupo Austral in 1939, she included the aerial view published in *Buenos Aires 1936*, which she had also used for the cover of the second edition (Fig. 3.1b).[24]

Stern's experimentation was driven by her belief in the role of photography as part of a larger modernisation of languages and practices in dialogue with the public sphere. On the other hand, Coppola believed in 'the search for a photographic practice that made of it an art through its own materiality, its own ontology, its own particular way of being in the world'.[25] As Natalia Brizuela explains, their two ways of being modern were both complementary and contradictory, and they 'should be understood as negatives of each other, each as the point of critique of the other's belief of photography as modern: Stern as the impulse of a critique of realism; Coppola as the critique of an avant-garde image'.[26] Stern was a protagonist in the avant-garde movement, as many scholars have demonstrated in the last decades. Her work is a testament to the connections among politics, urbanism and artistic discourse within the Buenos Aires art scene of the 1940s and '50s, as I will analyse in the next sections.

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FIG. 3.2 - Journal spread with Grete Stern photocollage included in the article 'Grupo Austral', *Nuestra Arquitectura*, no. 119, June 1939

The *flâneuse*'s gaze: Urban photomontages of the 1940s and '50s

The period after World War II was defined by Juan Domingo Perón's election as president of Argentina in 1946, which had major social, economic and political implications. Perón was widely supported by the national trade union federation (CGT) and the growing urban masses. During his two consecutive terms, from 1946 to 1955, he promoted major changes in labour laws and other populist actions that ensured the continuity of such popular support. Mass media and ritual celebrations were used to solidify his image as a leader both different from his predecessors and simultaneously capable of preserving traditional national values.[27] The use of photography was key in state propaganda: it was controlled by the Secretary of Information (*Subsecretaría de Información*), which decided what messages could be spread in the media.[28] A great number of photobooks and pamphlets were distributed inside and outside the country, with a strong emphasis on the generosity of its leader Juan Domingo Perón and his wife Eva.[29]

Meanwhile, the struggles of the working class led to the achievement of civic rights for relegated social groups. Women started to occupy a more relevant place in the public sphere, the editorial industry being one of the main fields in which they gained recognition.[30] For female artists, this signified an increase in influence and legitimacy. Argentinian photographic practice as a form of modern art was mainly represented by a few names, such as Anne Marie Heinrich (1912–2005) and Anato-

le Saderman (1904–1993), but it was slowly becoming an autonomous field.[31] In this context, Grete Stern kept experimenting with different areas of graphic design and advertising, continuing her line of work at the Ringl and Pit studio, which she managed with Ellen Auerbach in Berlin. Both women had introduced an alternative to patriarchal models by subtly subverting the language and subjects of advertising.[32] Their critique of feminine stereotypes resurfaced in the photomontages published by Stern in the Argentinian magazine *Idilio* between 1948 and 1951.[33] From 1942 to 1945, Stern also collaborated with leftist cultural magazines committed to the defence of democratic values. By then, she was an established photographer, mostly known for her portraits of artists and intellectuals. The city, however, was one of her favourite subjects.

As Stern started to capture the Buenos Aires cityscape, her photos engaged with the material transformations and political disputes taking place in the city and the country at large. They were included in a wide range of publications, from commercial and government-sponsored brochures to popular magazines. In 1947, two photos accompanied an article by the Argentinian art critic Julio Rinaldini, in which he called attention to how locals took their city for granted. He encouraged readers to look around and contemplate the movement and ever-changing atmosphere of Buenos Aires because 'by observing it, by keeping an eye out for it, we are able to create it'.[34] This ode to *flânerie* evokes what moved Stern herself to explore the city. In fact, architecture had captured Stern's attention since her time at the Bauhaus. Years later, she would say that what struck her most about Buenos Aires was the eclectic uniqueness of its houses, and that she therefore 'felt the need to document them for their beauty and historical value'.[35]

Her modernist approach to architectural photography and her opinions on its social use coincided with those of the Argentinian architectural avant-garde. This explains her collaborations on different projects and publications. For example, in 1947, the magazine *Nuestra Arquitectura* published a series of her photos in an issue dedicated to a house in the coastal city of Mar del Plata by Amancio Williams and Delfina G. de Williams.[36] Stern differentiated herself from mainstream architectural photographers by focusing on the textures, details and materials of the buildings she captured. This engagement with architecture and urban issues also led to a collaboration with the Estudio del Plan de Buenos Aires (EPBA), the city's central planning agency, directed by Juan Kruchan, Jorge Ferrari Hardoy, Jorge Vivanco and Antonio Bonet. They were working towards the urban renewal of the city and its surroundings, and aimed to devise affordable modern housing for the working class. Public debate centred on the social and political significance of Buenos Aires's surrounding areas, and on the infrastructure developed by the government. Most public works focused on suburban areas rather than the city centre. The EPBA proposed returning to nature as a solution to many of the city's problems. The idea was rooted in a development plan for Buenos Aires that had been hatched – although never executed – by Kurchan, Ferrari Hardoy and Bonet in 1937, in collaboration with Le Corbusier.[37]

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As a member of the agency since 1948, Stern was able to design its logo and all printed materials and brochures meant to explain the project's goals. In 1949, the EPBA screened a film by Italian director Enrico Gras that was part of a promotional exhibition for a housing plan in a neglected area of the Belgrano neighbourhood, sponsored by the City Council. The architects proposed a series of housing blocks interspersed with green areas in order to tackle the issues of an overpopulated city. Stern designed the brochure mixing stills from Gras's movie with extracts from the plan. Her design reinforced the message with texts and images that depicted the city as 'a jumble of menacing chimneys discharging smoke against an X-ray of lungs, vehicles overtaking the streets, tall buildings blocking the sunlight and crying children'.[38] According to Ana María León, this work was an exception to Peronist propaganda which was 'mostly dominated by kitsch, figurative, and symbolic aesthetics'.[39] Despite these formal differences, however, its content was still aligned with official discourse.

As the EPBA's official photographer, Stern documented both the city and its suburbs in a survey that comprised more than 1,500 images. The EPBA was dissolved in 1949, yet one of its legacies was a thorough analysis of the history and development of the metropolis.[40]

Grete Stern and the photobook *Buenos Aires*

Around 1950, the geographer Francisco de Aparicio invited Stern to participate in the creation of a photobook about Buenos Aires to be printed by publishing house Peuser. The invitation was prompted by Stern's known ability to create descriptive but artistic city images. Stern began working on the project in 1951, using a portable 35mm camera and a large-format camera with a tripod.[41] The publication was part of a series of commemorative photobooks issued by the government and private agencies, already exemplified by *Buenos Aires 1936*. Simply titled *Buenos Aires,* this new book included some of the pictures Stern had made for the EPBA project; it elaborated an imaginary of the 1950s modernist city comparable to tourist guides and travel books in content and appeal.[42] It was intended for an international readership, as demonstrated by translations into English and French of the long captions and texts written by Horacio Klappenbach.[43]

Even though it was not commissioned by the government, *Buenos Aires* shows a collection of places, monuments and historical environments that carried on the tradition of national and urban narratives. Klappenbach mentions in the introduction that the book is 'a plastic answer, graphic and monumental', to the question about the city's character.[44] This echoes the celebratory tone of its 1936 predecessor, which also aimed to show what made Buenos Aires a unique and modern metropolis.

Buenos Aires is a visual essay that, in addition to Stern's photos, combines a wide repertoire of aerial views, photos from the National Archive, images by other photographers (Curt Weiss, Maximo Cubillas and John Kleiner), paintings and engravings from contemporary artists (Luis Aquino and Francisco de Santo), vignettes by Albertina Canellas and reproductions of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-cen-

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FIG. 3.3 - Dustjacket, *Buenos Aires* (1956), private collection

tury prints and watercolours. The dust jacket features a watercolour by Juan Padern depicting an angle of Plaza de Mayo, the symbolic and historical centre of the city (Fig. 3.3). The book's designer is not credited, nor is the person responsible for choosing Stern's photographs (about 200 from a corpus of approximately 1,500).[45] Even though her name appears in a larger print than other contributors' on the cover, the fact that her authorship is not identified within the pages of the book shows the paternalistic bias female artists had to deal with.

The book is divided into two clear sections, distinguishable in their use of colour and types of paper. The first section, titled *'Buenos Aires retrospectivo'* ('Buenos Aires in retrospective'), includes text by Klappenbach combined with colour vignettes and paintings printed on thick matte paper. The layout of the text is unusual, with the Spanish in the centre in a bigger font and the English and French in an L-shape around it. The other section has more pages and includes 288 photos printed in thinner, glossy paper. Thus, design and composition become an assemblage of visual languages, from drawings to photography, with texts in various sizes and positions. Despite the relatively good quality of the paper, the print quality is rather low; most of the colour reproductions, as well as some black and white photos, are out of focus. These defects might have been due to the technology and resources available, but were likely caused by the book's large intended distribution, which may have led to poorer quality control in the context of a rushed production.

Buenos Aires works as a guide in which the use of borrowed icons (or motifs familiar to the foreign gaze) converges with the emphasis on changes within the city, its history and its present. Stern's photos function as the avant-garde component of the book, which otherwise responds to a longstanding discourse about the city's modernisation, as shown in the text and in the use of early nineteenth-century watercolours to represent the past. The persistence of this particular imaginary of the city's past is visible in the use of these images to contrast the 'old' with the 'new': on the one hand, the colonial village, and on the other, the modern metropolis. This visual mechanism had been commonplace in the country's printed press and official discourse since the 1910s.[46]

The captions appear as a sort of textual embroidery on the strong visual fabric of the book. They alternate positions on the blank spaces surrounding the photos. Each image is paired with a short, descriptive text that provides historical context or introduces a concrete place or building. The photobook is thus meant to be a cartography of the modern and contemporary city, a visual journey around Buenos Aires that constitutes 'a synthesis with happy results', as Klappenbach puts it in the prologue.[47] The photo section of the book is divided in two: *'Buenos Aires moderna'* ('Modern Buenos Aires') and *'Buenos Aires íntimo'* ('Intimate Buenos Aires'). The former opens with a double-page spread containing an aerial view titled 'The front-door to the world' and a graph with the distance (in kilometres and time by air travel) from Argentina's capital to other cities in the world. Putting Buenos Aires quite literally 'on the map', this illustration is clearly meant for a foreign audience. Unlike its predecessor, *Buenos Aires* has very clear geographical references. Its subsections present an ordered itinerary from the city centre to the suburbs. Moreover,
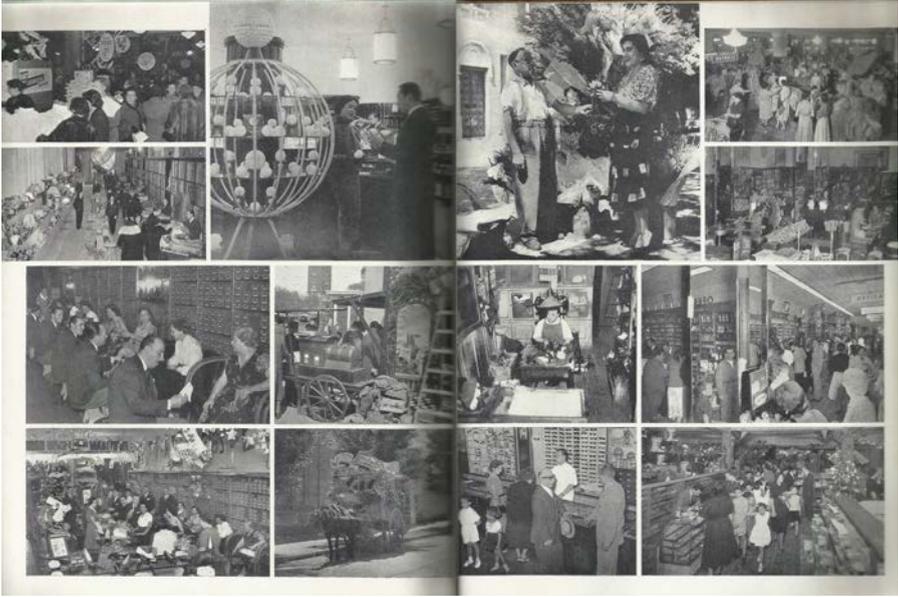
FIG. 3.4 - Book spread with photo mosaic, n/p. *Buenos Aires* (1956), private collection

the many photos of underground entrances and other means of public transportation enhance the idea of the photobook as a visual journey through the city. Identifying all photos by Stern within the book, beyond those referenced in her personal archive, is yet to be fully accomplished. As one turns the pages, however, one may discover her vision in images that focus on the details and contrasts of Buenos Aires's eclectic architecture.

The section 'Intimate Buenos Aires' displays portraits of interiors: theatres, cafes, restaurants or schools, and people in social gatherings such as carnivals, fashion shows or celebrations. There are three pages with a different layout that can be connected to the photomosaics included in *Buenos Aires 1936*. While Stern's influence on the design of these pages is unknown, they stand out from the rest of the book (Fig. 3.4). Stereotypical depictions of locals are not directly apparent, but they can be inferred as postcards of the 'typical *porteño*'[48] from the texts that associate with the otherwise casual images. These captions draw attention to the local habits that 'have to be experienced to be understood' by foreign visitors. Photobooks like this one provide valuable material to both national and foreign imaginaries by forging a spatial and historical environment, and by maintaining or creating national fictions.

It is interesting to note how Grete Stern's photos subtly subvert this discourse by exposing the simplicity of everyday life; her camera portrays spontaneous and irrelevant situations, such as people waiting in line for the bus or buying a newspaper.

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She steers clear of the 'masses' that appeared in Perónist propaganda, which tended to feature party rallies or members of the working class in seemingly casual but often posed attitudes. Stern's approach to city life and landscape becomes a personal record of the period. While Coppola often avoided people in his photos, she embraced the characters that populated the city streets. Buenos Aires through her lens is 'a city of quiet, mundane routines and spellbinding visual landscapes unobscured by crowds'.[49]

Although *Buenos Aires* was not an official publication, its connections to the Peronist regime can still be traced. Peuser was one of the biggest publishing houses in the country, leading the production of postcards, maps and illustrated books since the late nineteenth-century. By the 1950s, the company was in charge of many state-sponsored publications. Although the book was published after Perón's overthrow, it includes the work of two key figures of Peronist photojournalism, Emilio Abras and Pinélides Aristóbulo Fusco, who worked for the Secretary of Information. In addition, as Jodi Roberts points out, the captions also hint at the book's political connotations: descriptions of public works and housing projects from the Peronist era are highly congratulatory.[50]

It has yet to be determined whether Stern was aware of this subtle undertone, but in releasing her photos to Peuser, as Jodi Roberts points out, she had no control over the publisher's use of them. Moreover, Ana María León indicates that Stern, being a European immigrant, had fewer ties to the upper classes than local avant-garde artists, and was also equally distant from Perón's working-class supporters.[51] This 'middle ground' may have worked in her favour when collaborating with state institutions. Still, her vision of Buenos Aires remained a very personal one, and her photobook dedicated to the capital 'stands as a powerful reminder of the complicated relationships and conflicting forces that shaped photographers' careers and public reception during Stern's most active period in Argentina'.[52] Consequently, it is important to study this period of her work in photography and graphic design as a whole; only then can it be grasped as an example of the complex interaction between practices and discourses in visual culture.

Conclusion

Photobooks about cities are fundamental in studying the development of urban culture beyond national boundaries. The relationship between text and image is key to understanding how discourses about a city have unfolded, persisted or changed. *Buenos Aires 1936: Visión fotográfica* and *Buenos Aires* are the graphic materialisation of the end of a cycle of modernisation that started in the late nineteenth century. Both show the symbolic implications of the discourses in tension, and have established most of the urban imaginaries that still prevail.

The images of a city are built upon visual schemes that are implicitly projected over the place. They become new ways of understanding the city itself, through the tension between material progress and cultural identity. Studying Stern's urban images in their transition between different fields and materials is key to understan-

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ding how representations of the urban landscape can also be testaments to the artist's personal journey, as well as her relationship with the everyday life of the city itself. In this sense, the inclusion of Stern's photos of Buenos Aires in various photobooks and magazines operates as an archive of her personal approach to the city's landscape and people. Likewise, in her photomontages, Stern juxtaposed, segmented and superimposed the urban layout and built new ways of understanding it. They became her own visual cartography of modern Buenos Aires – one that subtly subverted the requirements of both official and private publications.

NOTES

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8   Jorge Romero Brest, 'Fotografías de Horacio Coppola y Grete Stern', *Sur*, no. 13 (October 1935): 91–102.
9   Horacio Coppola and Grete Stern, 'Artists' statement', flyer for the exhibition at *Sur*, Buenos Aires, October 1935. Translation in Marcoci and Meister, *From Bauhaus to Buenos Aires: Grete Stern and Horacio Coppola*, 236.
10 Prebisch is also the author of the iconic monument placed for the celebrations: '*El Obelisco*', inaugurated on May 23rd 1936.
11 The Estudio de Artes Gráficas Futura was founded by Ghino Fogli in 1928. Atilio Rossi worked alongside Fogli in various editions of the Atelier between 1935 and 1936. See Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales, *Libros argentinos: Ilustración y modernidad, 1910–1936* (Buenos Aires: CEDODAL, 2014), 158.
12 Atilio Rossi (1909–1994), Italian artist and designer, studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan. He opened a studio with Carlo Dradi, and in 1933 they launched the magazine *Campo Grafico. Rivista di Estetica e di Tecnica Grafica,* published until 1939. Rossi moved to Buenos Aires in 1935, where he led a renaissance in graphic design and publishing during the next decade.
13 Il Campista, 'Sfogliando un libro', *Campo Grafico* 5, no. 1 (January 1937): 6-7. Available at http://www.campografico.org/.
14 Catalina Fara, 'La construcción de un imaginario de ciudad moderna a través de un foto-libro: Buenos Aires 1936. Visión fotográfica de Horacio Coppola', *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, vol. 2, no. 1 (January 2020): 92-100. https://doi.org/10.1525/lavc.2020.210008.
15 Adrián Gorelik, *[Coppola + Zuviría] Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Larivière, 2012), 11.

16   See Valeria González, *Fotografía en la Argentina, 1840-2010* (Buenos Aires: Arte x Arte-Fundación Alfonso y Luz Castillo, 2011), 61.

17   See Catalina Fara, *Un Horizonte Vertical: Paisaje urbano de Buenos Aires 1910–1936* (Buenos Aires: Ampersand, 2020).

18   Two other names are mentioned in the index: Atilio Coppola (two photos) and Tedeschi (a night view of the neon lights in the crowded Florida street). Tedeschi's photos were included in most of the architectural magazines of the '30s and '40s.

19   She will continue working on this series for many years. Some of these photos were published in Alberto Salas, *Arquitectura de Buenos Aires: Los patios* (Editorial Buenos Aires, 1967).

20   Some of Rossi's designs for magazines and books show his interest in photomontage, as well as the many articles on the subject published in *Campo Gráfico* under his direction. Grete Stern will have a key role in photomontage experimentation with her collaborations for *Idilio* magazine in the 1940s.

21   The first edition had a print run of 5,000 volumes (300 numbered with Stern's paper band). The second edition had a print run of 1,000.

22   For further details on this edition, see Fernández, *El fotolibro latinoamericano*, 38-39.

23   See Jodi Roberts, 'A City in Dispute: Grete Stern's Photographs of Buenos Aires, 1936–1956', *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (June 2015): 123–152. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569325.2015.1040742.

24   'Grupo Austral', *Nuestra Arquitectura*, no. 119 (June 1939): 218–219.

25   Natalia Brizuela, 'Grete Stern, Horacio Coppola and the question of modern photography in Argentina', *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2 (June 2015): 243–265, 253. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569325.2015.1040748.

26   Brizuela, 'Grete Stern', 261.

27   See Mariano Ben Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón: A Cultural History of Perón's Argentina* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002).

28   See Brizuela, 'Grete Stern'.

29   Brizuela, 'Grete Stern', 246. See also: Katharina Schembs, 'Education Through Images: Peronist Visual Propaganda between Innovation and Tradition (Argentina 1946–1955)', *Paedagogica Historica*, vol. 49, no. 1 (2013): 90–91.

30   See Paula Bertúa, *Entre lo cotidiano y la revolución: Intervenciones estéticas y políticas de mujeres en la cultura argentina (1930- 1950)* (PhD diss., University of Buenos Aires, 2012); Dora Barrancos, 'Moral sexual, sexualidad y mujeres trabajadoras en el período de entreguerras' in, Fernando Devoto and Marta Madero, eds.,*Historia de la vida privada en la Argentina* vol. 3, (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 1999), 199-225.

31   About Argentinian photography in that period, see Facundo de Zuviría et al., *Mundo propio: Fotografía moderna en la Argentina 1927-1962* (Buenos Aires: MALBA, 2019).

32   Maud Lavin, 'Ringl & Pit: The Representation of Women in German Advertising, 1929–1933' in *Clean New World: Culture, Politics and Graphic Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2001), 50-67.

33   '*El psicoanálisis le ayudará*' ('Psychoanalysis will help you') was a section in *Idilio* magazine, in which readers submitted descriptions of their dreams to be interpreted by a psychologist (the renowned academic Gino Germani, under the pseudonym Richard Rest). The section was widely popular, particularly among middle-class women. Stern contributed to the illustrations by using photomontages, which became the most popular and studied area of her artistic production. See among others, Amelia Russo, 'Grete Stern's splitting women: conflicting identities in Peronist Argentina', *Lapis*, no. 12, (December 2019). https://wp.nyu.edu/lapis/grete-stern-amelia-russo/. Paula Bertúa, *La cámara en el umbral de lo sensible: Grete Stern y la revista Idilio (1948–1951)* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2012).

34   Julio Rinaldini, 'Conocimento de Buenos Aires', *Cabalgata,* vol. 2, no. 7 (14 January 1947): 13. http://revistasdeartelatinoamericano.org/items/show/219.

35 Grete Stern interviewed by Jorge Gullco, reproduced in the catalogue of a retrospective exhibition, *Grete Stern: Fotografías 1927–1980* (Buenos Aires: Fundación San Telmo, 1981). Author's translation.

36 *Nuestra Arquitectura,* no. 217 (August 1947): n.p.

37 About Le Corbusier's ideas and projects in South America see Francisco Liernur and Pablo Pschepiurca, *La red austral: Obras y proyectos de Le Corbusier y sus discípulos en la Argentina (1924–1965)* (Bernal: UNQ, 2008).

38 See Ana María León, 'Modern architecture will help you', *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2016): 14–39, 14.

39 León, 'Modern architecture will help you': 26.

40 The study was published in two consecutive editions of the *Revista de Arquitectura*, vol. XL, no. 375, (December 1955) and vol. XLI, no. 376 (January 1956). About this period in architecture and urbanism see Anahí Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: Vivienda, ciudad y peronismo en Buenos Aires (1943-1955)*. (Bernal: UNQ, 2008).

41 Luis Priamo indicates that she started taking pictures for the book in 1951, and did so until 1953. Luis Priamo, *Grete Stern: Obra fotográfica en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 1995).

42 See Noël, B. Salazar and Nelson H. Graburn, eds., *Tourism Imaginaries: Anthropological Approaches* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014).

43 The translations of Klappenbach's texts and image captions were made by André Rigaud (French) and Federico Schonbach (English).

44 Horacio Klappenbach, 'The personality of Buenos Aires' in *Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1956), n.p. The first edition of the book has 240 pages and was re-edited with few changes in 1961.

45 Thus far it has not been possible to establish who was responsible for selecting the book's images.

46 I have studied the use of these images in modernist discourse in: 'Recuerdos de la Gran Aldea. Usos de imágenes del pasado urbano de Buenos Aires 1910-1936', in *Mediaciones de la Comunicación,* vol. 13, no. 2 (July–December 2017): 129–148, https://doi.org/10.18861/ic.2017.12.2.2778.

47 Klappenbach, 'The personality of Buenos Aires', n.p.

48 *Porteño* is what the inhabitants of Buenos Aires are commonly called.

49 Roberts, 'A City in Dispute': 142.

50 Ivi, 146.

51 León, 'Modern architecture will help you': 19.

52 Roberts, 'A City in Dispute': 146.

URBAN IMAGINARIES

4

PICTURING UNIFIED ITALY THROUGH A PHOTOBOOK UNBOUND: THE STAZIONE S. MARIA NOVELLA IN FLORENCE

Roger J. Crum

At one time Italian trains, like most European trains, had passenger cars with closed seating compartments on one side, a connecting corridor on the other. While travellers moved through and saw an actual Italy, three seats facing three seats, a represented Italy was simultaneously visible and experienced within the compartments. That 'other' Italy was pictured above the seats in the form of small, framed photographs of cities and landscapes, buildings and works of art. Before the era of modern, high-speed trains, equipped with ample windows but little photographic imagery other than advertisements (and usually that only for the train company itself), this erstwhile coming together of two nineteenth-century inventions in mechanised motion and mechanical reproduction was a common denominator of travel across Italy. Put in more direct terms, train travel in Italy and seeing Italy were linked experiences.[1]

For those who travelled in and out of Florence, especially from the mid 1930s onward, they were additionally met (and still are) with a second coming together of Italy and photography beyond the train compartments. That second experience took place within the city's main train station, the Stazione S. Maria Novella (Fig. 4.1). Whether leaving trains or waiting to embark, passengers did and still do encounter a set of enlarged, black and white photographs or *vedute* that are displayed in the main concourse of the station, or Galleria di Testa (Fig. 4.2).[2] The photographs selectively represent Florence itself, the broader region of Tuscany, and the country's many man-made and natural sites further afield. Collectively this imagery of a vastly historic, deeply cultural, and unfailingly beautiful Italy forms a kind of photobook or, to a degree, a 'photobook unbound' that is contextualised and framed (one could even say bound) by the architecture of the train station itself. This essay focuses on how the genre of the more conventional photobook, bound between two covers, likely helped to shape the original and continued meaning of these photographs. It argues that in the wider political context and agenda of Mussolini's Italy, the simultaneous transhistorical and transgeographical reach of these train station photographs – deep into the past and across the expanse of the Italian peninsula – was part of the Fascist regime's efforts to represent or project the illusion of an increasingly unified country.

A major example of Italian Rationalist design, the Stazione S. Maria Novella was begun in 1932 and completed in 1935 and designed by Gruppo Toscano and its principal architect, Giovanni Michelucci (1891–1990).[3] Integral to the station's de-

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sign was the inclusion of the aforementioned photographic *vedute* that collectively form a kind of architectural frieze, not in the traditional media of stone, mosaic or paint but in the modern medium of photography. The photographs are displayed flush to the wall at a height of roughly five metres; their multiple images about one another directly, the visual edge of each photograph directly against its neighbour in a visual totality that is presented in continuous framing. The individual images are approximately one metre in height, but they vary in width. Today, the photographs appear in three separate bands that run on two sides of the Galleria. Their short run is just above the north-east exit from the station, with the two longer segments coursing along the adjacent wall that stands directly opposite the train tracks. Those latter two bands are separated by the expanse of wall that stands above the entrance to the station's ticket windows in the ticket hall. In total there are 58 photographs: eight on the north-east wall of the Galleria, and 29 and 21, respectively, in the left and right segments on the Galleria wall facing the tracks.

These photographs are poorly documented: little is known about them, from the concept and development behind their inclusion in the station's original design to their attributions to a photographer or photographers. That stated, it is generally accepted that the photographs are the work not of a professional photographer or firm but of the lesser-known architects of the Gruppo Toscano itself: Nello Baroni (1906–1958), Pier Niccolò Berardi (1904–1989), Italo Gamberini (1907–1990), Leonardo Lusanna (1908–1973), and Sarre Guarnieri (1904–1933); it has even been suggested that Michelucci may have participated in the project.[4] One way or another, the original installation of the mid-1930s definitely included only the run of photographs along the main wall opposite the tracks, whereas the images on the shorter, north-east wall may or may not have been part of that assemblage. Obviously of later addition, at the right-hand end of the north-east wall, is the photograph of the church of S. Giovanni dell'Autostrada, erected between 1960 and 1964, also designed by Giovanni Michelucci. That building's representation among these photographs – the only modern building in the whole assemblage – is likely to have been a later insertion, indeed a tribute of sorts to the architect in a series that is otherwise wholly about place and monuments of the Italian past, historic and geological.[5]

The present configuration of the photographs takes the viewer on what is essentially a tour of Florence and of sites up and down the Italian peninsula to its towns, monuments and piazzas as well as to its mountains and seascapes. On the short wall to the north-east, Florence appears exclusively in a set of images that represent the major architectural monuments and vistas of the medieval and Renaissance city. Visible are the Cathedral and details of Brunelleschi's majestic cupola, the Palazzo Vecchio, the Ponte Vecchio and the wider panorama of the city as photographed from the hills to the south. On the adjacent wall, the viewer leaves Florence for a wide-ranging visual excursion throughout Italy, with photographed subjects varying in geographical locations, historical periods and emphasis between architecture and natural environments.

These photographs are in no particular or discernible historical, geographic or typological order. Instead, the viewer traverses the peninsula in all directions, even

heading 'out to sea' in a view of the Isola Gaiola off the coast of Naples; ancient Paestum appears next to medieval Piazza San Marco in Venice; the Alps or the Baroque facade of the Cathedral of Catania is adjacent to the beach at Viareggio. Elsewhere the viewer is presented with images from Magna Grecia in the ancient temples in Sicily; ancient Rome is here in ruins of Pompeii, the Roman forum, and the Arena in Verona; and the Medieval era is represented in via various monuments from the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Cathedral of Milan to the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena and the Ca' d'Oro in Venice. Interspersed with these and other architectural monuments celebrating the long history of Italy are picturesque views of Italy's natural beauty, including several representations of seaside expanses around the peninsula and mountainous ranges to its north.

Architecture dominates among the photographs. Examples of civic and ecclesiastical buildings appear in equal numbers, and representations of architecture and natural views are similarly balanced. Notably, individual works of art play a minor role in the series: we note only Giambologna's late Renaissance Neptune fountain in the Piazza Maggiore in Bologna and elsewhere a detail of the Sacrifice of Isaac scene from the Byzantine mosaics in San Vitale in Ravenna. If there are aspects of the Italian cultural and historical heritage 'slighted' by their absence in this visual syncopation, it would be any architecture dating from after the Middle Ages (with the notable exceptions of Brunelleschi's dome of Florence Cathedral and, in later Baroque examples, Bernini's Piazza S. Pietro in Rome or Gian Battista Vaccarini's facade of Catania Cathedral) or any views of residential, commercial or industrial environments. There are also few people caught within or moving through any of these photographed spaces other than a lone gondolier on the Grand Canal in Venice, a few pedestrians within this or that Medieval piazza, or distant bathers on a beach. And those few people are really only visible with magnification or by something between a searching or strained unaided eye. This assemblage of photographs is unquestionably a display of monumental and, predominantly, historic Italy in architecture, urban spaces and natural splendour. Together with this emphasis on historicity, monumentality and grand vistas, what is interesting is how attentive the designers of this assemblage were to the particular viewing distance and demands of seeing and experiencing this imagery in the context of the train station.

As sizable images, these photographs originally had to have produced a viewing experience considerably different from the experience travellers had had with much smaller, standard and usually hand-held or album-mounted photographs. And if the framed photographs once visible within train carriages made of each compartment a small, decorated 'salon' these photographs within the much larger expanse of the station interior formed and form the experience of photography as monumental public art. It is as well to remember that in Italy of the 1930s, photography as large public imagery was limited predominantly to posters and similarly sized advertisements, a cultural form of product and place promotion not unrelated to the celebration of Italy that we see in the station photographs. But the analogy to stand-alone, discrete posters or advertisements only goes so far with regard to these photographs in the Florence train station as they are notably not individual ima-

FIG. 4.1 - Stazione S. Maria Novella in Florence, main entrance, author's photograph

ges but, as indicated above, are linked edge-to-edge, image-to-image in the form of a photographic frieze.

While a frieze is a possible monumental association for these linked images, other media and their related viewing experiences may have come more or equally readily to the minds of those who first looked up to see these photographs. Most closely, the station photographs have a related genre in the hand-held photobook and, in particular, in those produced for the tourist market. More particularly still, this joining of photographs, mounted edge-to-edge and framed – that is joined together – resembles the presentation of postcards in that genre of publication, with attached accordion-style linkages of images that were long produced and, to a degree, still are for the tourist trade. Much like when we hold and view such books, taking in their linkage as much as their separate imagery, when we stand in the train station in Florence we see these Galleria photographs almost as three separate sets of linked postcards, then as individual images, then again as whole sets of connected imagery. In effect, the experience of viewing the photographs in the Florence train station is that of monumentalising such an accordion photobook, even monumentalising the phenomenological effect of seeing images generally and at a glance, moving back and forth among images, and regarding multiple photographs as a totality without the imposition of any directed progression.

FIG. 4.2 - Stazione S. Maria Novella in Florence, Galleria di Testa with the displayed *vedute*, author's photograph

Much as these sets of photographs within the Stazione S. Maria Novella are experienced within the architecture of the building, we do not apprehend them as part of the architecture per se but as imagery presented or even held by the building. That was how this author first experienced them in 1984. I was then a young college student, recently arrived for my first time abroad. Before I had left the United States, I was advised that for travelling in Italy, especially when arriving at a city I did not know, I should go straight away to a news stand and buy an inexpensive picture book of the place. Once I arrived in Florence, at the Stazione S. Maria Novella, my options for acting upon this advice were two: I could purchase a Florentine version of that accordion genre of postcards mentioned above, or I could opt for a more traditional picture book of the city. I chose the latter and bought such a book not long after I entered the station. Standing there, holding my new purchase and seeing therein all of Florence pictured between two covers, I also noticed for the first time the array of photographs above me in the station's Galleria. I remember being interested that while I was buying a photobook about Florence, much the same kind of imagery of Florence and elsewhere was right there, directly above me. And after I finished flipping through the more book I had just bought, I found I was doing much the same with the relatively attached 'pages' above my head, moving with eye and mind from image to image, leafing as it were through another kind of photobook well before I had that term or genre in my vocabulary.

Tourist books, like the one I purchased, often have a text, but arguably the words are generally not what precipitates their purchase or holds predominant attention. Instead, most people, as I was, are likely captivated more by the images that are abundant in such books, bound between two covers and featured on every page. There, it seemed, was what I needed to see of Florence, from the city as urban vista to the particularities of its piazzas, palaces, churches, museums and masterpieces. All I needed to do was to search out and check off everything pictured in my book and I would have the satisfaction of having seen the important 'whole' of Florence. But neither the predominantly picture book in my hands, nor the evocative 'picture book' above me provided any specific site-by-site itinerary for my viewing. Something else beyond an ordered visual experience was at work both in my book and there in the station.

Since the very early days of train travel, the places and buildings of departure and arrival have been where travellers have purchased reading material – mostly newspapers, magazines and novels. In other words, much as the modern traveller rarely goes anywhere without a cellphone, the earlier traveller of the modern age was rarely without such reading material for the journey, and that reading material could often include photobooks. The genre has always been largely a non-scholarly one (in fact, these books are often published without evident authorship). Individual examples of this genre, however, like the related form of the accordion-linked picture postcards within a binding, have been purchased, perused and taken home as souvenirs in far greater abundance than any more intellectually-freighted books about Italian and, more broadly, European cities.

If one can move from that phenomenology of reading texts and even photobooks while travelling to 'reading' the walls and photographs in the Florence train station, the linkage is likely to be found in the long history of a close, symbiotic relationship between travel and photography.[6] This linkage was one that was regularly marketed and literally sold in the form of photobooks that were intended to be visually persuasive, to sell Florence and other places of interest on the peninsula and throughout Europe as places one would explore while there and then 'pack' into one's luggage and take home literally as remembrances or, in Italian, *ricordi*. Not surprisingly, many of the Italian examples are literally entitled *Ricordi* of this or that Italian city.

In a kind of post-modernity *avant la lettre*, these *ricordi* as photobooks were intended as souvenirs before they actually became souvenirs; they were guidebooks of where to go, physically, but they were also memory books of where one might return later in recollecting nostalgia. And they survive, as visual culture relics of times abroad, less so in libraries and archives than in many a personal collection; with occasional regularity they surface on the shelves of used booksellers and among the bric-a-brac of antique stores and flea markets. There they are mostly overlooked and generally unbought as 'dated' material lacking any current usefulness to the modern traveller seeking up-to-date imagery and information. Mostly what relegates them to this near-forgotten status are their dated, black and white, sometimes even sepia-toned photographs, images long predating the era of co-

lour photography and searchable, abundant imagery on the internet of a destination like Florence.

Some of the best and most collectible of these tourist books, at least for Florence and Italy, are those that feature photographs by the Alinari brothers and other early photographers who catered as much to the tourist trade as the publishing industry.7 A particularly attractive example is entitled *Ricordo di Firenze* (Fig. 4.3). Again, typical of this genre, this book is without indication of author, publisher or date of publication. Nonetheless, it was clearly produced about 1900 in the then popular Italian variant of Art Nouveau, called Stile Liberty. Its cover presents a colour reproduction of what had by then become the most recognised image of Dante, together with a quotation from Canto 26 of the famous Florentine's Inferno:

Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande
che per mare e per terra batti l'ali,
e per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!

(Florence! Exult: for thou so mightily
Hast thriven, that o'er land and sea thy wings
Thou beatest, and thy name spreads over hell.)

Worth noting is Dante's theme of Florentine grandeur and reputation – a reputation carried over long distances, even as far as Hell – that provides a kind of one-line literary introduction to the very art and architectural triumphs represented via photographs within *Ricordo di Firenze*. And more than merely an introduction to this book, Dante's presence on the cover presents the poet himself as a guide to the city, much as the ancient Roman Virgil had been Dante's own guide through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise.[8] In addition to drawing upon the great poet's praise of his native city, the book reveals its publisher's intention of attracting a wide readership, since the captions appear in Italian, French, English and German.[9] What is more, intentionally or not, many of the photographs were taken at moments that simultaneously captured the presence of locals and visitors to the city, 'cameo appearances' of a sort that underscore that Florence is a place to be explored, walked about in, seen, consumed, and remembered long after the visit itself.

Like many photobooks of its kind, *Ricordo di Firenze* is unpaginated. This could mean no more than the book has no page numbers, that its publisher simply neglected or decided not to include that conventional form of textual referencing. Accidental or intentional, the effect is the same: other than the fact that one image physically follows another, the absence of page numbers dictates no single path through its contents. What is more, the book does not prioritise images: one is not privileged over another. The lack of page numbers invites the viewer to the book wherever, and randomly move back and forth among its images, ultimately appreciating as much their collected whole as generalised visual splendour of Florence than focusing specifically on one image in isolation before moving to the next. Such

FIG. 4.3 – *Ricordo di Firenze*, private collection

is the phenomenology of the kind of photobook of this general nature, and such is also how one experiences, indeed how one was likely expected to experience, the photographs in the Galleria of the Stazione S. Maria Novella. If we were to imagine an early twentieth-century tourist holding this *Ricordo di Firenze,* while glancing up to the unbound photobook above, that individual had to have experienced Florence specifically and, more generally, Florence, Tuscany, and Italy not as a gathering of separate parts but as one various but united assemblage of local, regional and national dimensions.

When I was first there as a traveller, my assumption was that the message in photographs above my head was a message meant for me. Little did I understand how that message was once clearly directed to the more local populations of Florentines and Italians generally, especially in the era of Mussolini. Public image management was no minor matter in Italy from Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922 to the dictator's own last public 'image', captured against his will in photographs of his execution in 1943.[10] 'In Fascist Italy', writes Diane Ghirardo, 'much of the battle for the hearts and minds of Italians took place in the public arena, in the streets and squares of the peninsula's cities'.[11] The interior of the Florence train station was no exception, and at the persuasive centre of that public space were installed the black-and-white photographs of Italy unbound in all its historic splendour. It seems that

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together with the streamlined modernity of the train station, those images were designed to give visual explication of a country both as it once was but, to an even more important degree, as it *was not* in the era of Mussolini, his national imaginary and Fascist persuasion.[12] This duality (or dualities) of Mussolini's Italy – promoted as modern and historic, united and successful yet, in reality, still trapped in its past, divided and problematic – is at play in this continuous array of photographs on the station walls. And the thematic complexity of this imagery at Stazione S. Maria Novella was not unique: Fascist Italy gave rise to any number of art and architectural projects that aimed to address, even disguise, these various dualities.[13]

When the installation of these photographs in Florence was new – well before the era of mass international tourism – it would have been intended for Florentines and Italians in the interest of communicating how they should regard their nation in the period of Mussolini. During the era of Italian Fascism, much national effort was spent on shaping the international image of Italy; as well as shaping, for Italians, an understanding of their past as relevant to their present. Modern in design and constructed right in the centre of the old city of Florence, the Stazione S. Maria Novella was the perfect context for this additional messaging. In other words, this monumentalised photobook, writ large and with images knitted together, could only have partially functioned as a tourist guide to the specific sites in Florence and across Tuscany and Italy; taken as a whole, this non-directional viewing would have conveyed more broadly what foreigners and Italians alike were to understand about the county. The viewer had to have been captivated by this non-directional viewing to experience generally a form of nationalistic promotion in a visual array that proclaimed what the Italian and foreigner alike was supposed to understand broadly about Italy.

Together with its tracks, the Florence train station as urban infrastructure created a sizable wedge of modernity directly in the heart of the city where the building sits directly behind the apse end of the late Medieval church from which the station gets its name. The station's clean-line, geometric modernity is in notable contrast to the Gothic style of that much earlier structure, not to mention the built heterogeneity of the entire Medieval and Renaissance part of the city. At the level of material and colour, Michelucci's use of the local brown sandstone (*pietra forte*) powerfully connected the station to the historic local context. With the exception of various tempera paintings, marble relief carvings and tapestries on the interior – works that stand as a collective, latter-day answer to the great tradition of Florentine Renaissance painting – the station's concessions to the local environment and context stopped with the building's exterior; inside, modernity predominates.[14] Upon entering the station, either from the city itself or from the tracks, the visitor steps into an environment of open space, expansive glass, clean, modernist lines and, with those photographs above, virtually the whole of Italy pointing from history in this coordinated modernist direction.

Yet even here, all things modern were not entirely modern. Mussolini and the Fascists were eager to establish their connections to the Italian past to convey the idea that Fascism was a continuation of Italian historical greatness and not a break

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with its past. Although by the 1930s Italy had a history of more than two millennia, the main periods of interest for Fascist propaganda were Roman antiquity and the Medieval period of the country's many city states and principalities. This may explain why Ancient Roman and Italian Medieval structures predominate in the assemblages in Stazione S. Maria Novella.[15] The Fascists knew full well what they needed to accomplish in the challenge to unite a widely diverse and historically-divided country; an endeavour to which such Classical and Medieval reference points were key.[16]

Essentially, Fascism inherited the old national problem of the Risorgimento, one that was famously expressed in the previous century by leading politician Massimo d'Azeglio: 'We have made Italy; now we must make Italians'.[17] The Risorgimento and the post-Risorgimento worked toward this goal through a host of measures, ranging from national laws and a standardisation of language to common styles in architecture and sculpture. Slowly, these initiatives began to meld an old, historically divided land into a newly (or seemingly) unified country. In the case of the Florence train station, Michelucci and his Gruppo Toscano were engaged to emphasise this progression, perhaps most effectively through the making and installation of the Galleria photographs that show a united, if diverse Italy. The 'unity' of Italy is underscored in these photographs by the uniformity of their black-and-white tonality and from the consistent approach that the various photographers took in their composition of individual scenes. If, as is thought, these are photographs by different photographers, they are remarkably similar as visual products. Clearly this project was 'art directed': from the selection of sites to the making of the images, informing the editorial selection process and their sequencing and framing. Put another way, much as the Stazione S. Maria Novella was designed as a total, integrated work of modernist architecture, these photographs presented and continue to present Italy as a whole work of art, a *gesamtkunstwerk* of national imagery and imaginary. That must have been key to how they were seen by visitors in 1935, the thirteenth year of Mussolini's regime.

In this project of unification, however, there is something striking by its absence. There is nothing to address the disparities between north and south, the embarrassing and vexing 'southern question' that had, by the 1930s, already plagued Italy for decades and would continue to do so for decades to come.[18] In the station photographs, none of that nagging reality was allowed to disrupt the Fascist's visual sweep, showing a united Italy – if only in appearance. All is historic significance and natural splendour, and the whole displayed in the context of a train station that heralded modernity and power, importance and prosperity, unity and unified direction. Significantly, the station accomplished this messaging not least in a photographic display that resembled the visual effect of linked images in cinema, a major interest and propagandistic arm of Mussolini's regime. Additionally, the overall impression that many of these photographs make is that they are aerial shots (aviation and aerial photography being another sign of Fascist modernity).[19]

It is no wonder that when the station was formally inaugurated on 30 October 1935, Italy's King Vittorio Emanuele III was in attendance; it is also no wonder that

three years later, in May of 1938, it was there in the station that Mussolini first received Adolf Hitler, a few feet away from the photographs that have been the focus of this essay. Hitler arrived in Florence for the beginning of an Italian tour that led from the Renaissance – and now modern (thanks to Michelucci and the Gruppo Toscano) – city all the way to Naples, with parades and military displays underscoring Italy's parity and readiness as a military ally.[20] Hitler was treated throughout his visit to the visual propaganda of a prosperous and ready Italy; almost a modern parallel to Ambrogio Lorenzetti's allegorical frescoes of good and bad government in Siena painted six centuries earlier.[21] There were no images of bad government that would sully the Fascist imaginary of a seamlessly united, historic and beautiful Italy as the foundation of the Fascist present and potential. The Risorgimento made this unity a dream; the politics of Fascism made this an urgency; the train and its tracks, uniting all of Italy through one system of transportation, made this practically possible; and these photographs put it all before the eyes and minds of Italians, Florentines and non-Florentines alike.

Fascism was the first time since the Risorgimento when a 'national' style was one and the same with a local style and vice versa. Back and forth between the Stazione S. Maria Novella's courteous reference to Florentine building stone and its conscious engagement with international modernism, Michelucci's new station was at once a melding of Florence and Italy, past and present, and a nationalistic assemblage of imagery in its galleria that constituted and constitutes an occlusion of any and all differences between north and south.

For the initial viewers of these images in the 1930s, this photobook in monumental imagery represented an Italy that was, both physically and experientially, far beyond their local cities, monuments and landscapes. After the Second World War, the Italian 'economic miracle' of the 1950s and 1960s witnessed increased prosperity, the proliferation of television and the construction of motorways. This and continued train travel allowed Italians to get to know their country to a degree never experienced by earlier more localised and often quite literally more parochial generations.[22] In more recent years, and on any given day at the Stazione S. Maria Novella, it is common to see scores, indeed hundreds of Italians and others moving quickly through the station's well-preserved Galleria, clearly paying little or no attention to the dated photographs above their heads. They still buy reading material and even modern-day photobooks before moving along to their trains or into the city. But what they may evidently or imaginatively need by way of another type of 'photobook' may be an altogether different sort of imaginary, one less about a specific place proclaiming Italian national unity.

Present-day Italy, as with much of Europe, is experiencing the rise of the far right, and renewed forms of problematic nationalism – similar to those that gave rise to the photographs of Stazione S. Maria Novella and their frieze-like presentation of a beautiful, picturesque, varied, historic, and above all unified Italy. Perhaps it is no bad thing that these photographs are now largely overlooked, and that this vision of the past is relegated to the past, even as we may celebrate the beautiful, picturesque, varied and historic views of Italy today.

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NOTES

1. For the history of trains in Italy, see Peter Michael Kalla-Bishop, *Italian Railroads* (New York: Drake Publishers, 1972). For the idea of photography and mechanical reproduction, see Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken,1968).

2. For these photographs, see Claudia Conforti, Roberto Dulio, Marzia Marandola, Nadia Musumeci and Paola Ricco, *La stazione di Firenze di Giovanni Michelucci e del Gruppo Toscano 1932–1935* (Milan: Electa, 2016): 29; and Patrizia Cappellini, '*Il fregio della galleria di testa e altre decorazioni fotografiche nella stazione fiorentina di Santa Maria Novella*', in Giovanna Lambroni and Dora Liscia Bemporad, eds., *Arti visive e decorative nella stazione di Santa Maria Novella a Firenze* (Florence: Angelo Pontecorboli Editore, 2017): 83–114.

3. For the Stazione S. Maria Novella, see Amedeo Belluzzi and Claudia Conforti, *Giovanni Michelucci* (Milan: Edizioni Electa, 1986): 95-101; Claudia Conforti et al., *La stazione di Firenze*.

4. Conforti, *La stazione di Firenze*, 29.

5. For what is known of the history and restoration of these photographs after the 1930s, see Cappellini, '*Il fregio*': 84–86.

6. See Graham Smith, *Photography and Travel* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013).

7. The reference here to Alinari photographs is particularly apropos to the appearance of the large photographs in the Florence train station. Though modern, that is obviously of the 1930s and afterward, the train station photographs were clearly made to have the same kind of crisp, clear, and uncluttered depiction of places and monuments that one appreciates in that earlier imagery.

8. For the history of Dante and the idea and promotion of Florence, see Graham Smith, *The Stone of Dante and Later Florentine Celebrations of the Poet* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2000).

9. Aside from the stylistic evidence that it was published around 1900 and in the 'Liberty Style', there is no information in the book about the author or photographers, nor the place, publisher and date of publication.

10. See in particular Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Staging Fascism: 18BL and the Theater of the Masses for Masses* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); and Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum, eds., *Donatello Among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005).

11. Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, 'Surveillance and Spectacle in Fascist Ferrara', in Martha Pollak, ed., *The Education of the Architect: Historiography, Urbanism, and the Growth of Architectural Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1997): 325-361.

12. The striking modernity of the Stazione S. Maria Novella was particularly underscored in John Baldwin's early 1930s painting of the station that shows the building juxtaposed with both a contemporary truck and a cart driven by two horses. For Baldwin's painting, see Conforti et al., *La stazione di Firenze*: 42.

13. See in particular Lazzaro and Crum, *Donatello*.

14. For these interior decorations, see Conforti et al., *La stazione di Firenze*, passim.

15. For the propagandistic relationship among Fascist modernity, the Italian Medieval and Renaissance past, and dimensions of travel and tourism, see in particular D. Medina Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

16. See Crum and Lazzaro, *Donatello*; Lasansky, *The Renaissance*; and generally David Gilmore, *The Pursuit of Italy: A History of a Land, its Regions, and their Peoples* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 304–317.

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17 Massimo d'Azeglio, *Things I Remember (I miei ricordi)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

18 See Guido Pescosolido, 'Italy's Southern Question: Long-standing Thorny Issues and Current Problems', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 24 (2019): 441–455.

19 For an analogy of the assemblage of photographs to film, see Cappellini, 84; for Fascism and aviation and aerial photography, see Gerald Silk, '*Il Primo Pilota*: Mussolini, Fascist Aeronautical Symbolism, and Imperial Rome', in Lazzaro and Crum, eds., *Donatello*, 67–81.

20 For the King's visit, see Conforti et al., *La stazione di Firenze*: 37; for Hitler's visit, see Roger J. Crum, 'Shaping the Fascist "New Man": Donatello's St. George and Mussolini's Appropriated Renaissance of the Italian Nation', in Lazzaro and Crum, *Donatello*, 133–144.

21 See Randolph Starn, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300–1600* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

22 For the economic development of Italy in the post-War period, see Nicola Rossi and Gianni Toniolo, 'Italy', in Nicholas Crafts and Gianni Toniolo, eds., *Economic Growth in Europe Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 427–454.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY:
THE LEANING TOWER OF VENICE
Letizia Goretti

The Leaning Tower of Venice was published by the English artist Ralph Rumney (1934–2002) the year he died. However, the true origin of the book dates back to 1957, the official year of the establishment of the Situationist International. It was during the foundation of the movement that Rumney proposed to carry out 'a psychogeographic exploration of Venice'.[1] This particular guide – which was not a real guide, as Rumney himself explained – was to be published in the first issue of the *Internationale Situationniste* magazine in 1958, under the title *Psychogeographical Venice*.[2] However, the work was not published and Rumney was excluded from the Situationist movement in March 1958. The announcement was made in an article mischievously entitled 'Venice has vanquished Ralph Rumney' ('*Venise a vaincu Ralph Rumney*'), which appeared in the first issue of the magazine, indicating that the absence was due to the artist's delay in delivering his work. Later, Rumney managed to publish six of his photographic storyboards in *ARK*, a magazine published by the Royal College of Art.[3]

Immediately after publication, Rumney's original work went missing. As the artist wrote in the introduction, the storyboards may have been stolen, but the affair remains a mystery to this day. The materials for *The Leaning Tower of Venice* reappeared on the occasion of the exhibition *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps: À propos de l'Internationale Situationniste, 1957–1972,* which was held at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1989. The exhibition was later displayed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London, where the artist decided to hire a photographer in order to document and keep track of his work. In 2002, the year in which Ralph Rumney died, *The Leaning Tower of Venice* was finally published thanks to photographs of original documents that – whether by coincidence or destiny – disappeared, again, after the exhibition at the ICA.

Theoretical foundations

The Situationist International movement (henceforth SI) was officially founded on 28 July 1957 in Cosio di Arroscia, a small town in northern Italian region of Liguria, following an international conference that was attended by Ralph Rumney, as the sole representative of the London Psychogeographical Committee,[4] along with Michèle Bernstein and Guy Debord (delegates of the Lettrist International) as well as Pinot Gallizio, Asger Jorn, Walter Olmo, Piero Simondo and Elena Verrone (members of the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus).[5] This is the official version of the movement's creation: the history of the conference in Cosio di Arroscia has become – in a sense – part of the Situationist mythology. However,

this essay is not concerned with the birth of the group but rather with its theoretical foundation.[6] The SI was a revolutionary cultural movement that affected various sectors, from art to politics, from architecture to urbanism, and much more. Its aim was to take 'a revolutionary alternative to the ruling culture'[7] everywhere and anywhere, in order to use research and experimentation for the purposes of criticism and distribution; as well as for the purpose of inviting 'the newest artists and intellectuals of all countries to contact' them 'in view of a collective action'.[8] Indeed, as Rumney said during the interview for the documentary *Dérive Gallizio*, the Situationists aimed to change the world by 'cultural means' rather than 'rifles' or 'direct political action'.[9]

A report written by Guy Debord in June 1957 begins with the following words: 'First of all, we think the world must be changed. We want the most liberating change of the society and life in which we find ourselves confined. We know that such a change is possible through appropriate actions'.[10] The text indicates the guidelines of the Situationist programme, although the members of the SI adopted it as an official document only later. The Situationists wanted to make art out of everyday life; however, in order to do this, they had to change the structures of society, attacking the power that fuelled them and kept them alive.

Art was therefore required to abandon its traditional spectacular role and become 'a direct organisation of more advanced sensations'.[11] For this reason, art was to be integrated into everyday life as a natural behaviour, because the new civilisation imagined by the Situationists was a playful one, with physical concrete products – such as works of plastic art – becoming part of the material units that integrate environment and architecture. The aim was that of building situations and playing within society without falling into the Surrealist belief in the 'idea of the infinite richness of the unconscious imagination'.[12] So as to overcome the established cultural order, the Situationists had to destroy 'all forms of pseudo-communication' and leave room for 'authentic direct communication'.[13] In other words, the constructed situation was not only a means but a representation of a gesture that transmitted a message. According to the official definition, the constructed situation is a fairly complex concept: 'a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambiance and a game of events'.[14] But it is also, as indicated above, a means of communication, because it is composed of gestures. The gesture reveals social conditions to the society and allows it to become aware of them,[15] but at the same time the gesture is also a means of communication between people.[16]

The Situationists wanted to intervene in everyday life. Theory was not enough to do this effectively: they also had to operate in the urban fabric, since the city – in Lewis Mumford's words – 'is a special receptacle for storing and transmitting messages'.[17] They were required to take two essential factors into account: 'the material environment' and 'the comportments which that environment gives rise to and which radically transform it'.[18] Unitary urbanism therefore comes into play: this approach views the built environment as an integrated one, where the separation of play and function was shown to be false. Practical techniques like the *détournement* and *dérive* were integral to this theory.
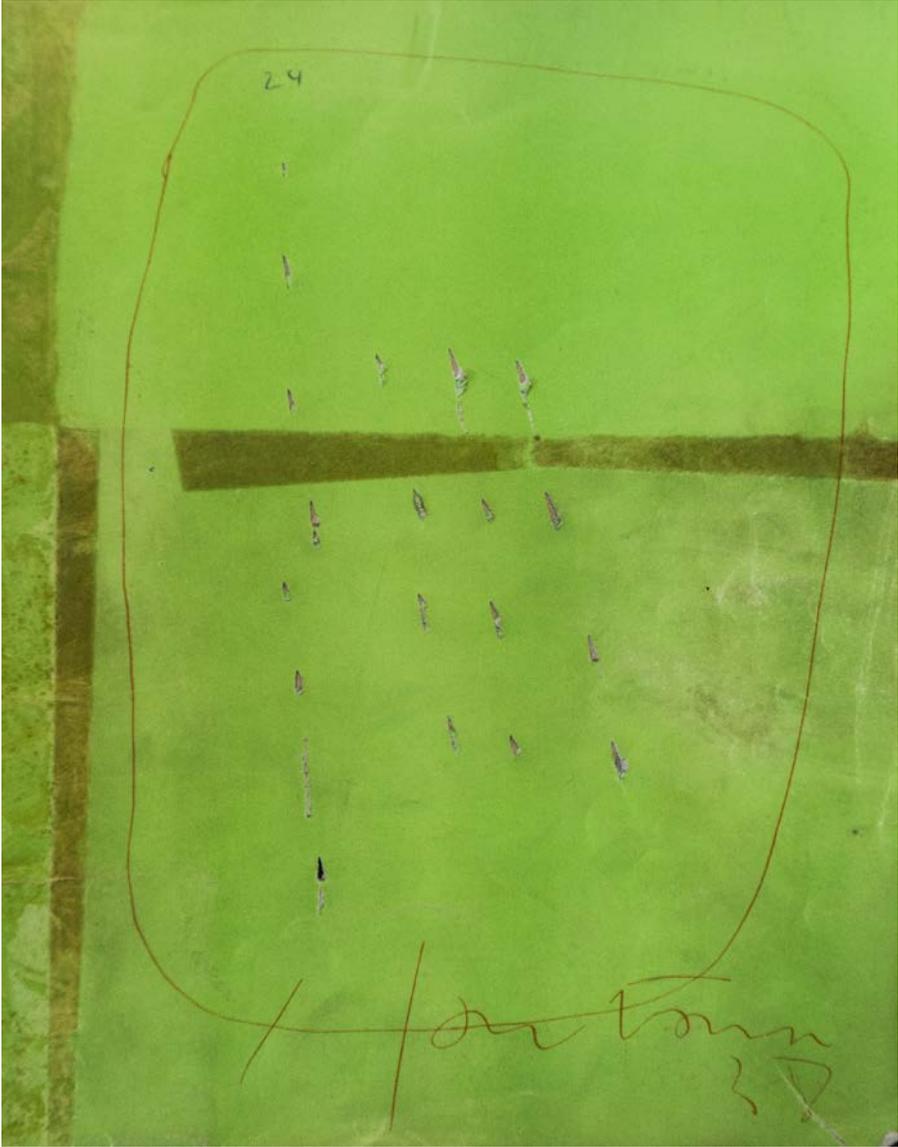
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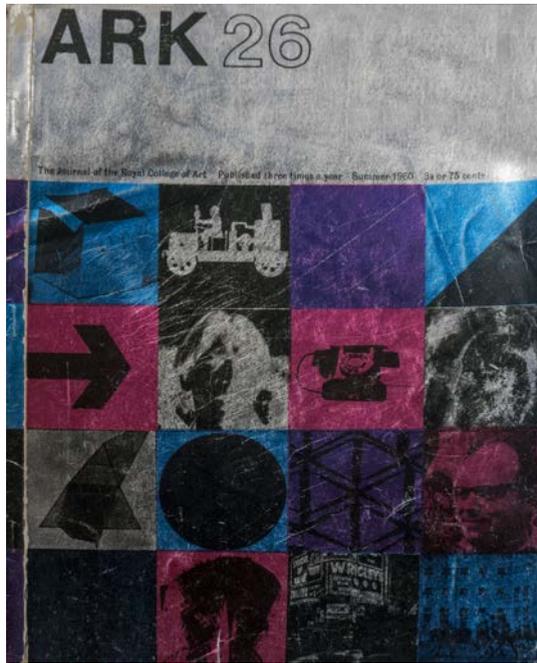FIG. 5.1 - *ARK* no. 24/1959, private collection

FIG. 5.2 - *ARK* no. 26/1960, private collection

If psychogeography studies the effects produced by different urban environments on human emotions, the *dérive* [drift] is the empirical research tool for the exploration of portions of urban fabric. *Dérive* was used term used by the Situationists to describe a exploring the city on foot, untethered to a goal or end-point, and immersed in its many and varied moods and meanings. *Détournement* was defined as the appropriation and re-use of original elements in a new context. This technique could also be applied to written texts or images, as Asger Jorn does in his *peinture détournée* (misused painting).[19] The study and practice of these two procedures went hand in hand; they were inseparable, as one implied the other. Their experimental nature gave rise to a sense of a permanent game being played: an essential in unleashing creativity and for the creation of shared values. Rumney's work is mainly linked to the technique of *détournement*, the practice of *dérive*, and psychogeographic research.[20]

A psychogeographic story

Rumney's book, *The Leaning Tower of Venice*, was based on the idea of the graphic novel or *fotoromanzo*, a form which, according to Anna Bravo, was invented in Italy in 1946 and became a popular genre.[21] *Fotoromanzos* of this time were usually love stories, and they can be seen as forerunners to the modern soap opera. The

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basic form – a combination of photos and dialogue captions – inspired many other genres, artistic and political, and had a striking affinity to cinematic storytelling.

In order to create his 'psychogeographic map of Venice', Rumney chose to combine the *fotoromanzo* form with the technique of *détournment*.[22] He acknowledged the power of this popular format and understood that he could greatly strengthen the message through this direct style of communication.[23] Furthermore, the island of Venice lends itself to practise the *dérive*. It is a labyrinthine place, where one can easily become disorientated, where one can freely follow whim and fancy in the spirit of play evoked by Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens:* 'culture arises in the form of play, that it is played from the very beginning'.[24] As such, the map of Venice – unique in its kind – does not represent a 'static design' that includes 'the needs of a single generation, arbitrarily ruling out the possibilities of growth, re-adaptation, change' but it reflects 'a continuity in change'.[25] The *dérive* is the best practice to discover the city and its dynamic design.

Rumney was a pioneer in mixing photography and psychogeography. The piece consists of six photographic storyboards – which he called 'documents' – made up of 129 photographs, assembled and accompanied by captions written by the artist himself. Rumney began taking the photographs in the autumn of 1957, with a Rolleiflex, when he returned to Venice after the conference in Cosio di Arroscia. His route – sketched on a postcard map of Venice – led from Piazzale Roma to Castello neighbourhood, passing through the northern part of the city, and including stops at the Rialto Bridge and in Campo San Giacomo dell'Orio. To this day, we do not know how many days Rumney's *dérive* took.

The psychogeographic story begins with a portrait of a man wearing sunglasses, a jacket and a white hat. In the background, there is a Venetian *campo* – a sort of small city square – under the title, 'The Leaning Tower of Venice'.[26] The protagonist of this *dérive* is the American poet and writer Alan Ansen, a friend of Rumney's. The route goes from Piazzale Roma to Campo Santi Apostoli, crossing over the Ponte degli Scalzi and along Strada Nova. The text of the first storyboard starts with the official definition of the term psychogeography, which first appeared in the 1958 issue of the *Internationale Situationniste* magazine. In the storyboard, the artist also gives us information on his work and the city: where the photographs were taken; the meaning of the black line on the map (marking 'an ideal trajectory' through the most interesting psychogeographic areas); and the city's population density. An aerial view of Venice indicates a few important locations, such as the road-rail bridge that connects the island to the mainland and the 'distant Lido, playground of the idle rich'. Finally, Rumney introduces the protagonist ('200 lb. "A" – well-known author of *Heroin – an Ode'*), describing Venice as a North Adriatic 'honeymoon town built on 118 islets joined by 364 bridges'.[27]

The *dérive* continues on toward Campo Santa Maria Formosa, Campo Bandiera and Moro, and ends in Riva degli Schiavoni. The artist writes that the information acquired from such 'psychogeographic phenomena' was used to construct the 'Situationist cities'. Then he focuses on the main protagonist, Ansen, and his 'participation in children's game' and 'his hostility to cats and pigeons'. The author also tries

to show us the damp and foggy microclimate of the lagoon, but he cannot explain its causes.[28] The two adventurers move from Riva degli Schiavoni to Via Garibaldi and then continue towards the Arsenale and Celestia. Here, they rest in a local bar but when they head to the Arsenale – the centre of Venetian military power – they discover a sinister area. Despite this, in front of the Arsenale entrance, Ansen cannot resist climbing on one of the guardian statues: the stone lions 'brought back from the East many years ago by Venetian conquerors'. The artist tells us that, over the centuries, Venetians have filled the city of these symbols representing their past glory. Ansen and Rumney continue their *dérive*, arriving at Fondamenta Nove – what Rumney refers to as the 'back door' – the place of final departure: from here, the dead are transported 'by gondola to the island cemetery'.[29]

The journey continues toward Campo San Francesco della Vigna and Campo San Giovanni e Paolo. The area is popular with children which influences Ansen's behaviour, as he happily indulges in jokes and playing games with them 'which the moment inspires'. Suddenly, however, 'there are no more children' (Campo Abbazia, Ponte dei Muti, Ponte del Ghetto) but 'their influence is still present in Ansen's play patterns', as he continues to walk and have fun in the city. [30] From the Ghetto – 'the most beautiful "ambience" in Venice'– Rumney and Ansen move toward San Giacomo dell'Orio. This document does not provide us with much information, but the second caption informs us that the protagonist 'enters an extremely sinister zone frequented by cats and men with Tommy guns' and that some canals are dry.[31] The study comes to an end at the Rialto Bridge. The protagonist 'hastens' to reach the bridge, despite 'a light rain' that falls 'in the sombre streets'. Ansen has been spotted 'for the last time with arms outspread' at the top of the Rialto Bridge. In a final plot twist, the two adventurers by chance meet the 'Dover Street playboy' going down the other side of the bridge: it is Lawrence Alloway, a famous art critic, curator and friend.[32]

Past and present

The Leaning Tower of Venice can be considered the first instance of psychogeographic research documented through photography. The title was inspired by the first photograph, where the leaning bell tower of Santo Stefano lies in the background – like the 'Leaning Tower of Pisa'.[33] In the preface to the photobook, *Pour un livre projeté par Ralph Rumney*, Debord wrote that the city had been chosen as a place to create 'the first complete work on psychogeography applied to urbanism', and that Rumney had also identified 'the sentimental resonance of this city notoriously linked to the backward emotions of the old aesthetic'.[34] The basic idea of this work was to study the relationship between the neighbourhoods and the moods they inspired, but the artist also wanted to suggest more unusual routes and go against the 'spectacular' approach and view of the city. He aimed to show real life in neighbourhoods beyond the tourist sights along the Grand Canal.

At the same time, the work is, in a way, an urban investigation and an historical document. Through the photographic collage, it is possible to observe what li-

FIG. 5.3 - *The Leaning Tower of Venice*, document 1, reproduced in *Le Consul* (2018)

fe was like in the neighbourhoods and to perceive its transformation: its human, rather than architectural, changes. Despite their small size, many places in the photographs are recognisable: some, such as Piazzale Roma, slightly changed but others identical, as if time had stopped, as is the case of the Ghetto. Some of the neighbourhood shops and businesses still exist, like the hardware store near Campo San Giacomo dell'Orio. The images show a Venice that is inhabited but not too crowded; certain habits have not changed – like stopping to exchange a few words with people you encounter on the way – but the way of walking seems to be more relaxed than the frenzy caused by mass tourism today. Another rare thing we see today is, for example, many children playing in the *campi* and *calli*, freely having fun among each other and with passers-by. Nowadays, we see them playing in groups only at specific points in the city.

The photographic sequences are accompanied by captions whose tone changes from the serious to the sarcastic. The artist reports news of the city, setting an ironic and playful tone, in keeping with his protagonist who plays with the city and its residents. Ansen – the interpreter – becomes *Homo ludens*: he penetrates and lives within the urban space from a new perspective. In this way, he pulls in the author, who also plays with the protagonist and with everything that revolves around him. The text itself is a game and, in some cases, it is an inversion, a reversal of the image.

FIG. 5.4 - *The Leaning Tower of Venice*, document 3, reproduced in *Le Consul* (2018)

In 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', Walter Benjamin begins to define captions as 'signposts' of the images, the 'directives' addressed to 'those looking at pictures'.[35] Instead, in Rumney's work, the captions often have the opposite effect on the viewer, evoking a sense of estrangement as they come into play.

Conclusion

In the 1950s, the Lettrist International adopted a manifesto for a new urbanism written by Ivan Chtcheglov under the pseudonym Gilles Ivain, who described the boredom he experienced in the city. Ivain expressed the need to find new ways to discover the city's secrets, and escape that closed landscape that dragged him into a past without a future. The human passion and the creativity of individuals was stuck, suffocating between the city walls and streets unable to escape their sad fate. Poetry no longer existed in the city; the only trace left was found 'on the sidewalk billboards'. They had 'to *play* with architecture, time and space'.[36] According to the Situationists – and to the members of the Lettrist International before them – one of the antidotes to tedium was the *dérive*; namely, walking 'between the lines' of the city in order to get lost and have new adventures. For them, the *dérive* was 'a form of experimental behaviour in an urban society'; but it also was 'a means of action' and 'a means of knowledge' since free walking may induce the subject to break the predefined standards of society.[37]

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In *The Leaning Tower of Venice*, the artist and the protagonist are both breaking the norms: they do not travel the city like holidaymakers but interpret and play with it. The *dérive* can be defined as a practice of letting go of the consumerist focus to engage in a game; a desired loss, escape from productive time and abandonment of reality in order to enter another dimension. This proved to be a fundamental element for the realisation of Rumney's game: a creative act that bursts and breaks the everyday routine, while also remaining a means of interpreting reality. Inspired by Huizinga's *Homo ludens*, the philosopher Eugen Fink defines the game as a symbol-activity of human existence to represent the meaning of the life and of the world; in particular, the 'human game' is 'social existence' through which man 'opens himself to the world'.[38]

The *détournement* technique used to create the psychogeographic story has two functions: to reverse the classic form of the photo-novel to devalue the image while simultaneously giving it a new value. In fact, the *détournement* is as 'a game born out of the capacity for *dévalorization* (devaluation)',[39] as Asger Jorn wrote, with the ability to bring the past back into play in order to create and transmit another meaning in the present. Rumney uses the photographic medium not simply to document an event, but as a way to investigate and represent the world. The artist plays with both outside events and with the camera, creating images of Venice that elude the aesthetic canons of classic photo-postcards or documentaries, multiplying their poetic power and giving them a new value. The photographic composition is therefore transformed into a story, which is also a 'representation within the representation' at the same time: reality is narrated through a staging for which there is no script but where everything takes place in the succession of events experienced directly by the protagonist and the artist, and finally reproduced as a photographic sequence.

Rumney interpreted the city of Venice through photography, using the combined practice of *dérive* and psychogeographic research. Thanks to this, today it is possible for us to move, together with Rumney and Ansen, among the Venetian *calli* of the 1950s. Other artists followed in Rumney's footsteps. In her 1980 photographic book, *Suite Vénitienne*, the French artist Sophie Calle features a man she met by chance at a party in Paris (Henri B.) and follows him to Venice. She secretly follows him through tourist hotspots and lesser-known side streets, documenting his day-to-day actions for two weeks. What ensued was a photographic diary based on intimate observations. Calle's work has some points in common with Rumney's, but there are also significant differences. Rumney does not secretly follow Ansen: he interacts with him. His work is not inspired by the impulse to observe and document Ansen's actions, but as a means to discover the city through his friend and his gestures. It is a participatory work.

Furthermore, Rumney's images describe a reality that is also fiction at the same time. The photographic evidence thus becomes a negation of itself, opening the way to other new possibilities of interpretation by the observer. *The Leaning Tower of Venice* is a piece that invites multiple levels of interpretation and reading. It may be argued that poetry and play lie at its heart. A visual game that, thanks to its theo-

retical context, presents itself as a valid means of analysis and reflection: getting lost and playing in the city to live new experiences and emotions.

NOTES

1   Ralph Rumney, *Le Consul* (Paris: Allia, 2018), 71.
2   The exploration of Venice was announced in *Potlatch* (no. 29) on 5 November 1957. *Potlatch* was the name of the information bulletin of the Lettrist International movement (1952–1957), a Paris-based collective of artists and writers that resulted from a break with Isidore Isou's Lettrist group.
3   *ARK – Journal of the Royal College of Art* (London: The Royal College of Art, 1950–1978). *The Leaning Tower of Venice* was published in issue no. 24 in 1959, then issues nos. 25 and 26 in 1960.
4   Ralph Rumney was the founder of the London Psychogeographical Committee and was – at the time of the conference – its only member. Rumney said that he first thought of the committee during the conference in Cosio di Arroscia (Rumney, *Le Consul*, 50). However, the London Psychogeographical Committee already existed at the time of the *Première exposition psychogéographique* at the Taptoe Gallery in February 1957, in which Rumney also participated. He probably confused the events. Cf. Debord's letter addressed to Rumney reproduced in Guy Debord, *Correspondance* (Paris: Fayard, 2010), 145.
5   The movement was founded in Switzerland, in 1953, by the Danish painter Asger Jorn in order to promote a revolutionary cultural approach against functionalism. An Imaginist laboratory was founded in 1955 at Alba, a small town in Piedmont, Italy.
6   The matter of the foundation of the group is not fully clear. Comparing information from unpublished interviews of Gérard Berréby and Giulio Minghini – as well as from correspondence and other documents – mixed thoughts have emerged on how this conference actually came about.
7   Gérard Berréby, ed., *Textes et documents situationnistes 1957/1960* (Paris: Allia, 2004), 22.
8   Ibid.
9   Monica Repetto and Pietro Balla, *Dérive Gallizio,* documentary (Italy, 2001). Sentence from minute 25:39 to 26:33.
10   *Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale*. See Berréby, *Textes*, 1.
11   Guy Debord, 'Thèses sur la révolution culturelle', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 1 (June 1958): 21.
12   Berréby, *Textes*, 5.
13   Debord, 'Thèses', 21.
14   'Définitions', *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 1 (June 1958): 13.
15   Bertolt Brecht, *Scritti teatrali* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), 213.
16   Giorgio Agamben, *Mezzi senza fine: Note sulla politica* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1996), 51–52.
17   Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, 1961), 99.
18   Berréby, *Textes et documents situationnistes 1957/1960,* 16.
19   The *détournement* technique has multiple uses. See Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman, 'Mode d'emploi du détournement', *Les Lèvres nues,* (8 May 1956).
20   The originator of psychogeography was Ivan Chtcheglov – as Rumney also reminds us (Rumney, *Le Consul*, 78) – who outlined these practices in *Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau*, written in 1953 under the pseudonym of Gilles Ivain. Ivan Chtcheglov was a member of the Lettrist International movement.

21 See Anna Bravo, *Il fotoromanzo. L'educazione sentimentale dell'Italia popolare* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).

22 Rumney, *Le Consul*, 71.

23 See Marcel Mariën, 'Défense et illustration de la langue française', *Les Lèvres nues*, 5 (1955).

24 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 46.

25 Mumford, *The City in History*, 322.

26 The documents are reproduced in Ralph Rumney, *The Leaning Tower of Venice* (Montreuil: Silverbridge, 2002), as well as in Rumney, *ARK: Journal of the Royal College of Art*, 186–197, see note 3.

27 Rumney, Document 1: 186-187.

28 Rumney, Document 5: 194-195.

29 Rumney, Document 2, 190-191.

30 Rumney, Document 4, 192-193.

31 Rumney, Document 3, 188-189.

32 Rumney, Document 6, 196-197. Rumney inserts a riddle in the text to suggest the name of the person he encountered: L+wr+n c ++11+w+y. The solution was published in the Silverbridge edition of the book.

33 Ivi, 72.

34 Rumney, Document 6, 184-185.

35 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 27.

36 Gilles Ivain, 'Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau', *Internationale situationniste,* no. 1 (June 1958): 15-18.

37 Abdelhafid Khatib, 'Essai de description psychogéographique des Halles', *Internationale situationniste,* no. 2, (December 1958): 13.

38 Eugen Fink, *Le jeu comme symbole du monde* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1966), 224.

39 Berréby, *Textes*, 104.

THE DREAM CITY: LONDON PHOTOBOOKS FROM BILL BRANDT TO RUT BLEES LUXEMBURG

Andrew Higgott

London has been a recurrent subject for photobooks since early in the twentieth century, but compared to other great cities it has a less spectacular potential for imagery, lacking the grand scale of the avenues of Paris or the breathtaking towers of New York. Over the past hundred years many books of photographs on London have been published that emphasise the grand and monumental landmarks of the city – Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London – but they present a metropolis without the grand plan or spectacular topography of other famous cities.[1] In its history, London's position as the largest city in the world, the greatest global focus of commerce and industry, and as the hub of the British Empire has of course constantly been reflected in publications in a variety of textual forms.[2] Novelists such as Charles Dickens, who vividly presented the diverse lives of Londoners in the majority of his books, was followed by many later authors including George Gissing and Henry James.[3] Historical accounts were written by Walter Besant and others, while Henry Mayhew's volumes documenting the poverty and dispossession of many Londoners began an influential tradition of social documentary writing that came to shape a new political and economic understanding of the modern metropolis.[4]

That a city is less a gigantic constructed artefact, and more an *imaginative* construction is perhaps a radically alternative interpretation in the twentieth century that spent so much of its resources in considering, planning and undertaking the rebuilding of its cities. London, like most other cities in the mid-century, was the subject of grand modernist plans that would totally reconstruct it, even if their realisation was to be very piecemeal.[5] A more current awareness is that the network of human interrelations, both personal and structural, are what makes the experience of a city viable. As Peter Ackroyd wrote in the introduction to his book, *London: A Biography* (2000): 'London is a labyrinth, half stone and half of flesh'.[6] The buildings of the city are of no more importance than the passage of human lives that take place within and outside its structures. It is this conjunction that a number of individual artist-photographers have reflected in photobooks published in the past hundred years. The aim of this chapter is to examine photobooks on London that evoke and suggest the richness of a particular imaginative interpretation of the city: books that instead of representing the city as a series of built forms, express it as the field of experience of a variety of human subjects, the 'labyrinth' of stone and flesh described by Ackroyd. These photobooks all deal in their own way with the theme of the oneiric: going beyond the conventions of urban photographic representation to reveal not so much what is seen but what is unseen.

In the early years of the twentieth century the role of photography was transformed: it would become, like other arts, the means of expressing a personal vision. This originated nowhere more than in New York, with a school of pictorialist photographers dominated by Alfred Stieglitz, who founded the American Photo-Secession in 1902. Edward Steichen, Frank Eugene and Alvin Langdon Coburn were among the photographers promoted and exhibited by Stieglitz who expressed in their work a lyrical and artistic interpretation of what they pictured, working as if their materials were canvas and oils.[7] A sense of their art as a heightened practice with an almost spiritual quality shaped their very particular aesthetic approach. Coburn lived in London from 1899, and perhaps the first photobook of the city was his own *London* (1909), which he followed with a book on New York.[8] This large-format folio has twenty delicate hand-produced photogravure plates, their subjects presenting the city in both familiar and unfamiliar aspects, both by night and by day. Their quality of softness in surface and focus as well as their composition emulate contemporary etched plates, and seem to be a new form of that practice, rather than something radically new.

That photography is a practice of fine art, and should be reproduced accordingly, is the assumption that differentiates Coburn's work from later books on London which lie somewhere between art and reportage, and perhaps really begin the story of the photobook as an art form in itself. If the photobook in its editing, structure and sequencing is a distinct artefact, its meaning is accumulated through its realisation as a moderated group of photographs that are transformed into much more than a collection of individual images. Perhaps it can be said that Coburn's book comprises a series of images, while later London photobooks become what they are through their informing idea and editorial order. Nevertheless, shadowing the model provided by Coburn, the best of London's photographers have tried to capture atmosphere, feeling, a sense of place or a personal encounter with the bewildering city, rather than a mapping of its monuments and sites. This can be first seen in two highly effective books from the 1930s, both presenting powerful images of London at night.

Images of events form a narrative of the city in Bill Brandt's *A Night in London* (1938), in contrast to the evocative photographs of unpeopled streets by Harold Burdekin in *London Night* (1934).[9] These books are persuasive artefacts that question the physical nature of the city as well as, in Brandt's case, reflecting the lives lived within it. Both follow in the wake of the extraordinary book *Paris de Nuit* (1932) by the Paris-based photographer Brassaï.[10] In its photographic subjects, Brassaï's book reflected the nocturnal lives of the marginalised and unconventional: it was an immediate success, which undoubtedly influenced the publication of these two books on London at night.

Brandt began photography in Vienna and later worked as an assistant in Paris to the artist Man Ray, known for his avant-garde photographic work and a primary figure associated with the Surrealist movement.[11] In Paris, Brandt's contact with the work of other artist-photographers included André Kertész and Eugène Atget, who the Surrealists saw as an unwitting precursor to their approach, interpreting his Pa-
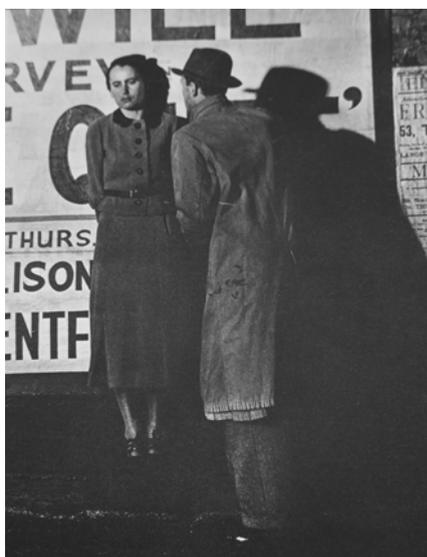
FIGS. 6.1a / 6.1b - Bill Brandt, Piccadilly Circus is blocked on the left and Street Scene on the right, from A Night in London (1938)

risian urban scenes as landscapes of dreams.[12] These influences stayed with him as Brandt's own practice developed, and he was later to be acknowledged through numerous exhibitions and publications as a leading artist-photographer.

Living in London from 1933, Brandt initially established his reputation through the publication of two photobooks: *The English at Home* (1936) and *A Night in London* (1938).[13] Often understood as a social documentary, *The English at Home* presented the rich and poor of a highly divided society in the starkest of contrasts but Brandt's mode of representation gives his work a poetic power, beyond that of picturing poverty and injustice as a conventional document might do. Brandt later wrote that the social contrasts he pictured were 'visually very inspiring' for him, rather than his aim being that of politically oriented documentary.[14] And while *A Night in London* was undoubtedly influenced by the picturing of Paris by Brassaï, it is clear that the processes of work in making images and their chosen subjects were Brandt's own.

Commissioned by Arts et Métiers Graphiques, the same Paris publisher as Brassaï's book, *A Night in London* is presented as a photographic record of the city in one night from dusk to dawn. It is a book about London lives played out against the background of its houses and streets, the lights of Piccadilly and Mayfair as well as the dark East End streets of Stepney and Limehouse. Some figures are sleeping, others are working, as porters in Billingsgate fish market, as ballerinas waiting to dance, or as tic-tac men at a racetrack. Many are pictured taking part in the Lon-

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don nightlife of the theatre, the boxing ring or the genteel card game. Other figures are wandering the streets, disappearing into the darkness of London after nightfall. Brandt pictured London in a heightened state, as a labyrinth of shadows and often faded hopes. The viewer may recognise the scenes depicted, but will see that they are presented in an intensified way: sometimes dramatically, often through windows or at a distance, the familiar nocturnal contents of a dream world.

In his later book, *Camera in London*, Brandt wrote of the intuitive as shaping his work: 'instinct itself should be a strong enough force to carve its own channel'.[15] Perhaps this embodies a Surrealist position that was to appear more fully expressed in his later work. He wrote: 'Thus it was I found atmosphere to be the spell that charged the commonplace with beauty. And still I am not sure what atmosphere is. I should be hard put to define it. I only know it is a combination of elements, perhaps most simply and yet most inadequately described in technical terms of lighting and viewpoint, which reveals the subject as familiar and yet strange'.[16]

Presented as a chronological sequence from nightfall to first light, early evening on the first page to the start of the day on the last, the 64 photographs of *A Night in London* are also arranged to function as pairs in each double-page spread: such pairings are often complementary rather than contrasting, such as a suburban couple glimpsed in their sitting room juxtaposed with their child quietly reading in bed. Elsewhere, the quietness of dark and often empty streets is contrasted with brightly lit West End scenes thronged with people and traffic jams (Fig. 6.1a). The more intimate scenes make of the viewer a voyeur, but they were carefully set up in a sometimes theatrical way: the characters illustrated are fulfilling their roles appointed by the photographer. Brandt's brother and friends play a suspicious-looking group in a dark street, his wife sets off for an evening in a (borrowed) Rolls-Royce. A *mise en scène* with a couple apparently in the midst of an intense argument, dramatically side-lit, features his brother and sister-in-law (Fig. 6.1b). Authentic it may not be, but for Brandt the veracity of its representation is not the issue. He wrote later that 'it is the result that counts, no matter how it is achieved'. Standing against those photographers who advocate following rules of authenticity, he also talked in the same passage of the importance of editing and manipulating his images: 'I find darkroom work most important, as I can finish the composition of a picture only under the enlarger'.[17]

Cumulatively, *A Night in London* is a warmly affectionate portrait of the city Brandt had come to live in, but, as has been remarked by Marianne Amar, 'it is a vision of a stranger in his own country'.[18] His affection is tempered by a sense of distance: the photographer is far from being a participant in the events he pictures and instead, like a series of stills from a film, he presents events and scenery through a mediating lens. Photographer and historian David Campany has described how Brandt's aims lie beyond the documentary:

Brandt was drawn to the rituals and customs of daily life, to what he saw as the deeply unconscious ways in which people inhabit their social roles. For him to photograph these minutiae was (...) to estrange through a heightened sense of atmosphere, theatrical artifice and a dreamlike sensibility.[19]

An oneiric quality is clearly present in Brandt's work, and its intensity is achieved through a penetrating focus on place and event. This becomes the means of detaching the viewer from the weighty presence of a vast and largely formless metropolis. Brandt described his process of making a picture as seeing the world intensely and afresh; comparing it to the receptiveness of a child he wrote, 'Vicariously, through another person's eyes, men and women can see the world anew. It is shown to them as something interesting and exciting. There is given to them again a sense of wonder'.[20] In the primacy of imagination in reinventing London, Brandt may be seen as following a Surrealist position that photography might represent anything but 'truth': the photograph is seen instead, to quote Campany, 'as a charged, enigmatic fragment that left as much unknown as it revealed, pushing the viewer back on to their own judgment or imagination'.[21]

The nearly identical title of Harold Burdekin's book *London Night,* published four years earlier, belies the utterly different feeling it has in comparison to Brandt's imagery of a city as the material background to human interactions.[22] This beautiful and little-known book presents a night-time London entirely devoid of people or events, in a series of calm, still photographs softly realised with rich blacks and powerful *chiaroscuro*. Printed in refined photogravure*,* images of familiar buildings, of hidden courtyards and alleys in the city, and limpid scenes of the riverside seem timeless and numinous, appearing imagined rather than real.

John Morrison quotes Paul Morand's own introduction to *Paris de Nuit* in his introductory essay that 'night [...] is not the negative of day',[23] but has its own subtle revealing of a different nature. 'Night reveals another, different world, real in its unreality'.[24] Morrison writes that it creates and makes something visible, that its radically different way of seeing the city reveals not only a different beauty but elicits a different understanding of the city's form.

In its sequence of 50 photographs, urban landmarks like Regent Street and the tower of Big Ben are presented in unfamiliar ways, as if they have removed themselves from the normal currency of the city. Scenes of staircases and colonnades as well as the grand buildings of venerable institutions become compositions of light and shadow. There is a rich three-dimensionality to the photographs, which invariably have a sense of layering and depth: the close view of a corner house leads to a street view of identical houses: the *chiaroscuro* of the portico of All Souls Church frames a well-lit block beyond. And while there are a few suggestions of inhabitation, that people have been here, Burdekin's subject is the hard London of stone and brick, made illusory and insubstantial by light and darkness.

This highly romantic landscape of nocturnal London is of course very artfully created: Burdekin's photographic process involved long time exposures in his use of only available light. A courtyard inside the precincts of St Bartholomew's Hospital is pictured with particularly dramatic contrast, light streaming in rays from

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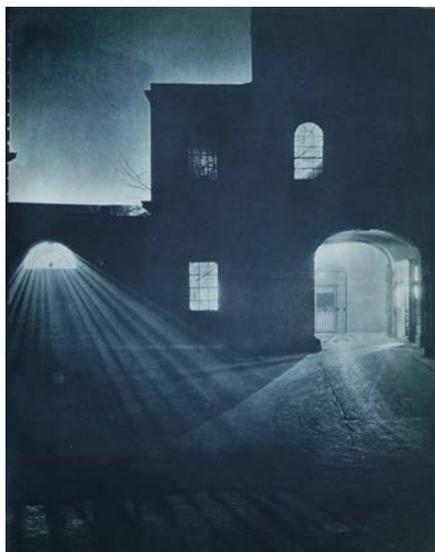
FIGS. 6.2a / 6.2b - Harold Burdekin, 'Night Fantasy: St Bartholomew's Hospital' on the left and 'Curve: Regent Street' on the right, from *London Night* (1934)

a partially obscured window, and this looks considerably more like a stage set than a still-functioning if ancient hospital (Fig. 6.2a). Regent Street had been rebuilt by Reginald Blomfield just a few years before Burdekin's photograph, but rather than communicating any sense of modernity, it is pictured from its roof top as a fragment of a dream-like, geometrically-designed city (Fig. 6.2b). Darkness and still light had never before been used to depict London with such effect. Mysterious, atmospheric, eerie in its emptiness, Burdekin has recreated the city as a deserted 'dreamscape'.

In London after 1945, the war-damaged city recovered more slowly than might be expected. And for the most part, its photographic representation stayed within the conventions that had been established earlier.[25] Tony Armstrong-Jones's photobook published in 1958 and simply titled *London* pictured the people of the city he enjoyed as an insider, and following Brandt, as one of social and material contrasts.[26] The rich and the poor, the famous and the neglected, the shabby and the smart are juxtaposed in a book that has some claim to be the first modernist photobook of the city in the intense subjectivity of its apparently stolen glimpses of Londoners' lives, and that is the product of a modern sensibility and aesthetic. In a bold and original design by Mark Boxer, its images, often full-page and without margins, reflect moments of the lives of London with a humane and acute perception, highly cropped but sometimes reminiscent of those of London, Paris and elsewhere in the 'decisive moment' as documented earlier in the decade by Henri Cartier-Bresson.[27]

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The Czech-born photographer Erwin Fieger first photographed London in 1960, and his work was exhibited at a Photokina exhibition on new colour photography in Cologne in that year. A book commission followed, and *London: The City of Any Dream* was published in Germany and Great Britain in 1962.[28] A collaboration with the novelist Colin MacInnes, who wrote a lengthy introduction as well as some passages of commentary, this relationship seems to be one of incompatibility. MacInnes' text is that of a Londoner who wrote with affection about his city, even if his preferred London was that of the river, the docks, the marginalised and the immigrant who people his novels, although they play only a part of the London lives seen in the book's photographs.[29]

Fieger's subjects often echo those of Armstrong-Jones, but are otherwise those that might be expected of a visitor to London in that period; buildings such as the Houses of Parliament and Albert Memorial, the Royal Parks and the Thames. And, in a rather greater number, images of so-called London 'characters': the well-known types of a conventional understanding of the kind of people who lived in the city: bowler-hatted businessmen, taxi drivers, children's nannies, ageing society ladies and market stall holders.

But in Fieger's hands their representation is quite radically new: first, in its use of colour which was still rarely used in photobooks or indeed by serious photographers, but equally in his use of the telephoto lens. This means that the images have a highly distinct quality with a small area of focus, giving each framed subject the quality of a fragment, a stolen image of the everyday life seen in the city. His consistent use of the 200mm lens captures moments of experience: London is seen afresh, with an apparently innocent vision. The images seem to penetrate beyond what is achieved in more conventional photographers' work into something far more like an echo of the individual process of seeing, brilliantly evocative of emotionally charged experience. The photographs are printed large, with the majority of images reproduced in 51cm by 20cm double-page spreads. This collection of 56 images builds up an astonishing compendium of impressions of a newly-seen London, like a memory or perhaps like the dream the book's title suggests. Together, it creates a highly resonant picture of the city that was beginning to emerge into a condition of modernity, both in its materiality and in its social structures.

Fieger's work may be interpreted as a phenomenological reading, presenting the city primarily as a field of experience, motivated on his part as a way of communicating his feelings and sensations in wandering around the city. Since the telephoto lens gives a short depth of field, in many if not most cases the majority of the photograph is out of focus, an impressionistic blur of colour and suggested forms. Sometimes the image consists mostly of blurred colour, but never becomes totally abstracted: for example in the image 'Conversation' two talkers are surrounded by indistinct traces of the trees in the park where they are sitting. The effect of the telephoto lens is also to remove the middle ground which in other photographs will give a sense to the viewer of distance from the subject seen, as well as its context. It often gives the sense of a voyeuristic, stolen view, a simultaneous closeness and distance.

FIG. 6.3 - Erwin Fieger, 'Taxi Driver' from London: *The City of Any Dream* (1962)

Something similar can be seen in the highly innovative colour street photographs of New York by Saul Leiter, who is nevertheless less interested in human themes: often he made strong images of fragments of street life that seem to have no subject. These were taken in the 1950s, although relatively little published, and it may well be that Fieger's work was shaped by seeing them. The quality of colour in Fieger's images of London is saturated and rich, and this heightens the effect of each fragmentary image.[30] In 'Taxi Driver' (Fig. 6.3) light and shiny surfaces frame the driver, who is contrasted to the rich surroundings in which he is pictured.

The success of Fieger's book on London led to his creation of further photobooks based on more extensive travels, such as *Japan: Sunrise Islands*.[31] But a wider appreciation of the new way of seeing he developed may have been part of the new consciousness of London's visual qualities as well as cultural rebirth. Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow-Up* (1966) – itself a film about a London photographer – similarly presented fragmentary images of a re-framed London,[32] and in Carlo di Palma's cinematography there is a parallel sense of unlikely beauty seen at a remove: its images tell a story as important as the film's narrative. Both Fieger and Antonioni saw London as visually acute outsiders from continental Europe, and both contributed to a representation of the city primarily as the field of individual experience, alienated from its political and economic actuality.

In the short, heady decade of the 'Swinging Sixties', the world transformed its view of what London was: from a drab and fading post-imperial city to the global focus of youth culture, music and fashion. But in the following decades the city fell into a period of social crisis and political confrontation and those that photographed it tended to depict a fractured order and scenes of dilapidation. London could no longer be pictured as an ordered sequence of monuments, but neither could it be seen only as the background to harmonious social relationships.[33] Individual reactions to the city were documentary, highly focused in their approach and subject. One example is the photobook created by Axel Hütte, a sequence of photographs of housing estates titled simply *London*.[34] Their formal order and indisputable sense of detachment makes the work typical of the restrained conceptually-based photographic school of Bernd and Hilla Becher, influential teachers at the Düsseldorf School of Art.

Hütte's work is in turn one influence on the very different work of the photographer, Rut Blees Luxemburg, who has a strong claim to being the most original and most poetic of those that have been working to picture the contemporary city. Initially, she presented the photography of her adoptive city as a 'modern project', in which a particularly British interpretation of the state of modernity could be framed. Her book of that name published in 1997 includes several images of tower blocks and slabs of social housing, located not in a Le Corbusier-inspired green landscape but dislocated from the fabric of the existing patterns of the city's streets and spaces.[35] The subjects of Blees Luxemburg's photographs are deliberately universal rather than specific to their location, although most are on the Old Street and Shoreditch axis of inner East London.

Photographs of multi-storey car parks, playgrounds, a petrol station, and a building site are presented empty of people and of use: they are invariably taken at night, lit only by the available street lighting. Their long exposure leaves traces of car tail-lights and allows glimpses into illuminated but uninhabited flats, as if the teeming population of these areas of inner London had disappeared. Transcending the banality of their subjects, Michael Bracewell has suggested in the introduction to *London: A Modern Project* that, in conventional terms, many of them *have* no subjects[36]; they lack as well an obvious narrative of social or aesthetic critique, but they are powerful and affective images. One point of their origin is to present the project of modernism as realised in London in a sense uncritically, even if one image is ironically titled 'Meet me in Arcadia'. After the utopian thought and high ideals that lie beneath the buildings she chooses to photograph, *this* is what happened.

Perhaps a more fundamental consideration of the significance of this work is to reflect on the entire city as a vast and composite artefact. By picturing so powerfully that which is generally disregarded, its presentation of such apparent ordinariness enriches the experience of the modern city we unthinkingly inhabit. In the book a line of razor wire is transformed into what looks like a piece of precious jewellery, at a scale that prefigures her later work in representing the urban fabric of London.

The glowing images in her second book *Liebeslied* (2000) pay attention to subjects at a very much smaller scale than most of those in *London*, and indeed are

FIGS. 6.4a / 6.4b - Rut Blees Luxemburg, In Deeper on the left and Narrow Stage on the right, from Liebeslied (2000)

at the scale of the perceiving human body.[37] Fragments of the city's unnoticed surfaces, a graffitied subway wall, water flooded on a car park's surface, light on muddy river steps (Fig. 6.4a), or crumbling brick on a building's end wall are viscerally brought to life. Familiar objects made strange but also more potent; seen in this heightened way the ordinary is made fantastic.

Alexandra Stara has written that 'the dreamlike quality of lucidity and strangeness in [Blees Luxemburg's] photographs' is often remarked on, and rather than accounting for this in psychoanalytical terms, says that the mundane objects of the world are presented in such a way that their presence becomes palpable, simultaneously in the world and in the individual's consciousness: 'a way of representing that is also a presencing'.[38] In her work, we see *par excellence* an exploration of a psychogeography of the night. In 'Narrow Stage' (Fig. 6.4b) the open door of a builder's container located in an otherwise empty car park discloses an interior space with a table, a chair, a drink can. But its still power and magnetic luminosity turns the viewer into an urban explorer, who sees in this empty scene a metaphor of the inhabitation of the world. Although as Régis Durand writes in *Commonsensual,* a monograph on Blees Luxemburg's work, the space of her photographs has an enigmatic power, and certainly 'resists easy identification, woven of literary and philosophical allusion'.[39]

A dream-like revelation of the world is made in her photographs of these unseen and unvalued fragments of London. As Michael Bracewell writes, Blees Luxemburg's images 'possess the quality of a psychic photography to see beyond the seen and enter a secondary state of perception'.[40] She has said in a conversation with David Campany:

that is the pleasure within my practice – that the camera allows (…) a transformation. Something other than what you can see during your mundane, everyday experience of the city can emerge. Something which is there, but which can be sensed better than it can be seen. The camera allows this to be unveiled or shown.[41]

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Blees Luxemburg uses serious and weighty photographic equipment and each image is set up with great attentiveness and purpose. Long exposures of ten to twenty minutes using a large-format view camera require, as she says 'slowness and concentration'.[42] The use of such relatively low-tech but very high specification methods is crucial to the approach she adopts and to the success of her work, and is the opposite of the instant image that is almost invariably what the contemporary world requires. She is reclaiming photography – now the most universal and everyday practice in the world at large – for the serious professional artist, returning to the approach of Stieglitz and Langdon Coburn a century ago.

The epigraph of the book *London: A Modern Project* is taken from Roland Barthes, 'To get out, go in deeper', and the depth is attained through an intense process of looking. Like Burdekin's photographs of very different urban scenery 70 years earlier, her images of the city at night are devoid of event and habitation. The extraordinarily still, numinous quality of these pictures transform and raise the utterly ordinary objects typical of marginal urban spaces, in a way rarely seen in art practice. While other photographers certainly enhance our ways of seeing, Rut Blees Luxemburg's photography of its liminal and unnoticed fabric makes modern London uniquely transcendent.

The aim of this chapter has been to examine a series of photobooks that embody particular artists' imaginative reconstructions of London. Each is extraordinary in their own way, representing the work of gifted photographers in the carefully designed form of the illustrated book, where the pictures rather than text present their own stories that serve to communicate their interpretations of an extraordinary city. Each is historically contingent, which is to say that the London of a particular period is represented in each of these books: the London illustrated in photographs of the 1930s, 1960s and 1990s is unmistakably of its time. But these books also transcend their respective periods and stand for something of enduring relevance, as art works inevitably can do.

In a rather different context, the architectural historian Joseph Rykwert has asserted that 'the town is not really like a natural phenomenon. It is an artefact – an artefact of a curious kind, compounded of willed and random elements, imperfectly controlled, if it is related to physiology at all, it is more like a dream than anything else'.[43] The 'dream' of London that these photographers imaginatively reconstruct in their work is that of the outsider – Brandt, Fieger and Blees Luxemburg were all born in other countries, and even Burdekin grew up outside London in the English provinces. In each of these bodies of work, the camera is used as a mediating device, framing and creating its subject. Their books accumulate images into a narrative that embodies a very particular vision that is the artist's own. Further, an oneiric quality is clearly present in these photographers' work. It is as if their subjects scarcely existed in the material world, but only through the imagination: they could not possibly be seen in everyday conditions; their intensity is achieved through a penetrating focus on place and event, thus becoming the means of detaching the viewer from the weighty presence of a vast and largely formless metropolis. The photographers whose work has been analysed in this chapter have in common their remo-

val from everyday concerns. They depict the city as an empty and dream-like nocturnal landscape, or by showing its human interactions as if through a telescope. Whether this approach is unique to London's characteristic urban alienation is a question this analysis cannot definitively answer.

Susan Sontag's series of essays published in *On Photography* can give fundamental insights into the processes and reception of the photograph: in 'Melancholy Objects' she writes of the flâneur as a model of the urban photographer. [44] A solitary wanderer 'armed' with a camera will create a subject out of what they observe on their journey, an onlooker detached from the objects of their attention. However, her argument portrays this pursuit in an entirely negative light: the photographer of the city is, for Sontag, simply indulging their curiosity, and inevitably patronising and voyeuristic. But this seems to misunderstand the process that the solitary photographer is undertaking. The acute processes of observation as well as the implicit humane qualities that are brought to bear in the creation of such urban imagery, such as that of Bill Brandt or Erwin Fieger, or the unexpected beauty captured by Burdekin or Blees Luxemburg, are very far from the model she articulates. Such work as has been examined in this chapter is of lasting value: these photobooks also make clear that many of the most outstanding photographers' major preoccupation has been experiencing and making sense of the modern city through their work. However much the modern city has become universal with the processes and politics of the past century, and cities begin to look all the same, these photobooks of London have revealed its *genius loci*.

NOTES

1   A late example of the genre is *Beautiful London* (London: Phaidon Press, 1950), with 103 photographs by the leading photographer and author Helmut Gernsheim.
2   London was the largest city in the world from the late eighteenth century to c.1920, whereas the British Empire was at its height in 1914.
3   The first word of one of his greatest novels *Bleak House* (1853) is 'London', and the city remains a living character in this as in many other of his works.
4   Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 4 vols. (London: George Woodhall,1851).
5   The key document is the County of London plan of 1943. See Andrew Higgott, *Mediating Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2007), 57-84.
6   Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), 2.
7   As well as his own practice as an artist-photographer, Stieglitz's larger cultural role includes his publication of the journal *Camera Work* and the establishment of the 291 Gallery in New York.
8   Alvin Langdon Coburn, *London* (London: Duckworth, 1909); Alvin Langdon Coburn, *New York* (New York: Brentano's, 1910).
9   Bill Brandt, *A Night in London: Story of a London night in sixty-four photographs*, introduction by James Bone (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, London: Country Life, 1938). John Morrison and Harold Burdekin, *London Night* (London: Collins, 1934).
10 Brassaï, *Paris de Nuit,* with text by Paul Morand (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1933).

11 Man Ray's work at this time included 'Rayographs' and other experimental photographic techniques. See Emmanuelle de L'Ecotais, *Man Ray: Photography and its Double* (Berkeley CA: Gingko Press, 2001).

12 On Atget and the Surrealists, see John Fuller, 'Atget and Man Ray in the Context of Surrealism', *Art Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2 (Winter 1976-77): 130-138.

13 See footnote 19.

14 Bill Brandt, 'A Statement', Album no 2 (1970) in Nigel Warburton, ed., *Bill Brandt: Selected Texts and Bibliography* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1993), 29.

15 Bill Brandt, 'A Photographer's London', Introduction to Brandt 'Camera in London' (1948) London Focal Press, in Warburton, *Bill Brandt*, 86-87.

16 Bill Brandt, *Camera in London*, 10.

17 Brandt, 'A Statement', 32.

18 Marianne Amar, 'Bill Brandt, photographe de l'Angleterre', *Vingtième Siècle* 43, no. 1 (1994), 136–139.

19 David Campany, 'The Career of a Photographer, The Career of a Photograph: Bill Brandt's Art of the Document', in *Making History: Art and Documentary in Britain from 1929 to Now* (Liverpool: Tate Liverpool, 2006), 54.

20 Bill Brandt, 'A Photographer's London' (1948) in Warburton, *Bill Brandt*, 89-90.

21 Campany, *Making History*, 54.

22 See footnote 21.

23 John Morrison, 'Introduction', in John Morrison and Harold Burdekin, *London Night* (London: Collins, 1934), n.p.

24 Ibid.

25 Such as the collection of crisply defined London monuments seen in Helmut Gernsheim's popular *Beautiful London* (1950). See footnote 1.

26 Tony Armstrong-Jones, *London* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1958).27 Henri Cartier-Bresson's celebrated photobook, titled in English *The Decisive Moment* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1952), set a new standard for documentary photography in its apparently artless and humane approach.

28 Erwin Vienna Fieger, *Farbiges London* 1962, *London The City of any Dream* (Dusseldorf: Econ Verlag and London: Thames and Hudson, 1962).

29 See John J. MacLeod, 'Always Turning: Colin MacInnes's tour of the Thames', *The Literary London Journal* 5, no. 1 (March 2007): n.p.

30 On Saul Leiter, see *Saul Leiter, Early Color* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006).

31 Erwin Fieger, *Japan: Sunrise Islands* (New York, NY: Harry Abrams, 1972).

32 See Philippe Garner and David Mellor, *Antonioni's Blow-up* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010).

33 Patrick Keiller's film *London* (1994), an account of a flâneur revisiting the city, represented the late years of a post-Swinging and pre-Cool London.

34 Axel Hütte, *London* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1993).

35 Rut Blees Luxemburg, *London: A Modern Project* (London: Black Dog, 1997).

36 Michael Bracewell, Introduction in Luxemburg, *London*, 9.

37 Rut Blees Luxemburg, *Liebeslied* (Song of Love)/ Alexander Garcia Duttman, *My Suicides* (London: Black Dog, 2000).

38 Alexandra Stara, 'What is the modern city?', *AA Files* 49 (Spring 2003): 19.

39 Régis Durand in *Commonsensual: The works of Rut Blees Luxemburg* (London: Black Dog 2009), X.

40 Bracewell in *London: A Modern Project*, 9.

41 From 'Why don't we walk along the river? Rut Blees Luxemburg and David Campany in conversation', 1999. https://davidcampany.com/rut-blees-luxemburg-and-david-campany/ accessed 20 November 2020.

42 Ibid.

43 Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1988), 24.

44 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), 55-82.

VISUAL JOURNEYS

7

LAWRENCE HALPRIN:
FOR A TAXONOMY OF CITIES

Barbara Boifava

In 1963, Lawrence Halprin (1916–2009), one of the more noteworthy American landscape architects of the last century, published a book of photography entitled *Cities* (Fig. 7.1). 'Though we do not have a clear picture of the ideal form of a city', Halprin stated in the introduction, 'we do have a clear image of the purpose of an ideal city. This purpose is clearly to make possible a rich and biologically satisfying life for all the city's people. What we are really searching for is a creative process, a constantly changing sequence where people are the generators, their creative activities are the aim, and the physical elements are the tools. This book is an examination of some of these elements'.[1] Halprin identified the landscape of cities, which is to say, the open spaces, that could configure itself as a place of real social evolution. His critical approach to the metropolitan realm, and his employment of the necessary tools to better understand it for project interventions, was effectively expressed in the pages of *Cities*. This was also the first book in a rich series of publications that Halprin developed in parallel with his applied research, in which methods of visual survey became a key tool for reading and designing public spaces in the contemporary city.

Some important studies on Halprin, published a few years after his death, have underlined the profound value of his modern choreographic method, which was adopted in order to stage a new and autonomous order of movement in the city, 'offering the chance', as Alison Bick Hirsch pointed out, 'to enact new and embedded rituals with enhanced awareness and experience the drama and mystery of forces abstracted from Nature reintroduced in the city'.[2] The emphasis on a dynamic urban experience of everyday choreography was also addressed in the first exhibition in Europe dedicated to the work of Halprin and his dancer and choreographer wife Anna (née Schuman, 1920–2021),[3] which established a 'reflection on the project of public space as an architecture of behaviour and as a performative place'.[4] In much of the literature dedicated to these themes, perhaps not enough attention has been given to the passionate vigour and rigorous methodological research employed in *Cities* and in other books by Halprin that followed, such as *Freeways*, *New York New York, The RSVP Cycles* and *Take Part*.[5] These publications represent accomplished and exemplary editorial projects that are worthy of further study.

The city's mirror reflection
The book *Cities* resulted from a Grand Tour-style European journey[6] that Lawrence Halprin took in 1961 accompanied by his 12-year-old daughter, Daria.[7] The
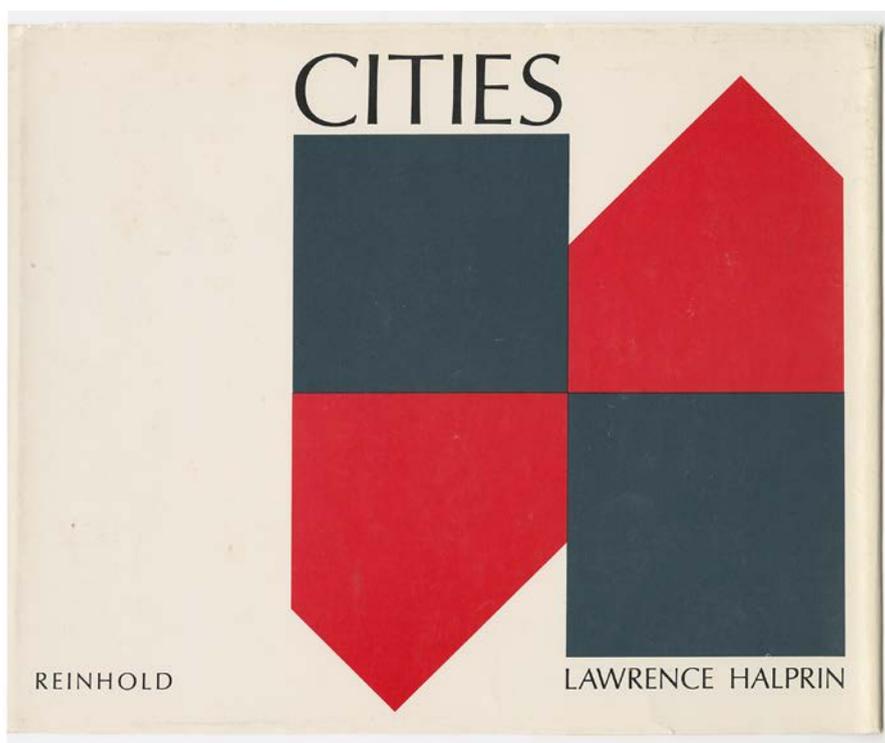
FIG. 7.1 - Lawrence Halprin, *Cities* (1963), dust cover

many stages of a journey that, from California, moved through some capitals of Northern Europe to finally reach Italy, presented a unique opportunity to observe and study the urban choreography of cities in the Old Continent. This led the architect to compare and contrast very different urban cases. 'A city is a complex series of events' – reads the prologue to *Cities*. 'For this reason, I have used examples from all over the world, and many different times, including some which are not carefully or even particularly tastefully designed, but all of which add to the colourful character and vitality of life in the city'.[8]

The taxonomic register adopted in *Cities* to catalogue and classify urban forms allowed the author to present possible project-design solutions conceived of to facilitate the collective events of the metropolis as dynamic rituals of society. In Halprin's discoveries, recorded during his travels, the urban environment is made up of 'basic biological ingredients' which, through the various chapters in the book, are subdivided into categories of places, according to groupings of urban design elements and by the recurring materials used. Starting from this articulated system of universal urban elements, the city landscape comes to life through movement, and becomes the complete environment for a creative life process.

FIG. 7.2 - Sketch by Lawrence Halprin of Piazza San Marco in Venice published in *Cities* (1963)

The final part of the book is ultimately dedicated to behaviours, i.e. what Halprin defines as 'the choreography of the city because of its implication of movement and participation-movement of people, of cars, of flying kites, of clouds and pigeons, and even the change of seasons'.[9] And it is precisely the dynamic image of a flight of birds sublimating the urban experience par excellence that the landscape architect identifies in the city of Venice, which he renders with a quick sketch taken from his precious notebooks and inserts amongst the pages of *Cities* (Fig. 7.2):

> I remember with great clarity the greatest urban experience I have ever had. It was in Venice in winter. In front of the church of San Marco, the great square, which Napoleon called the most beautiful drawing room in Europe, was empty. [...] The tide was in, and the black and white stones of the intricately laid pavement were covered with a thin film of water. There was no sound – no automobile exhausts, no buses. Absolute quiet in the very heart of a great city. [...] All of a sudden the air became dark with birds, the square filled with the beating of thousands of wings, the noise increased and increased until it was deafening, and the deserted square became absolutely filled with pigeons. The noise was incredible – even frightening. They had come to feed, and when they had finished, they left just as quickly, and the great square was empty and quiet again.[10]

The 'urban charisma'[11] that Halprin captures, bringing back the Venetian image as a visual experience of the monumental architectural void of the great plaza almost seems to echo the interpretation of enclosed space as suggested by Bruno Zevi in *Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture*,[12] a text translated into English just a few years prior to the publication of *Cities*. There are in fact documented and repeated contacts between Halprin and Zevi,[13] an Italian architectural theorist who became his fervent promoter.[14] We can thus hypothesise that Halprin was well aware of Zevi's published work, which included a critical page layout of images dedicated to Piazza San Marco, demonstrating how voids in the city could become true protagonists of architecture.

The Venetian paradigm was also adopted as a model in another text in which Halprin stated: 'Our collective experience of cities depends on their landscape of open spaces'.[15] The opening words of this text clearly imply a strong interest in an in-depth exploration of models, as well as representations and the constituting elements of the city. These factors, combined with the sense of belonging experienced by a city's inhabitants, represent a further exploration that Halprin had already started in gathering a collection of the numerous materials necessary for the publication of *Cities*. Praise for a city, intended as a three-dimensional experience, and as a tangible sign of the idea of 'imageability' as suggested by Kevin Lynch,[16] legitimises the choice of the Venetian urban canon alongside other examples that verify their ability to take on almost anthropomorphic characteristics. The 'choreography of pedestrian dreams' of New York recalls the anomalous and fascinating dimension of the 'architectural forest' of Hong Kong, which is in turn confirmed in San Francisco's 'reflection of its landscape', to also include Jerusalem, where 'the city has always represented a portrait of its inhabitants [...] perhaps of all of us'.[17] Halprin therefore seems to invite in-depth observations of our own city and to 'examine it closely for those qualities which make it a creative environment for living [...] which allow you to see yourself reflected in the mirror of your own city'.[18]

The numerous writings by Halprin preserved at the Lawrence Halprin Collection at Philadelphia's Architectural Archives confirm a vibrant theoretical activity in which texts of conferences, academic lectures and book chapters become the materials that were shaped and reshaped by the author in order to best express the components of a modern approach to urban design from an ecological and social perspective. Through the descriptions of his works and the ongoing definition of the role of the landscape architect in the twentieth century that followed, Halprin's mission always aimed 'to emphasise the importance of landscape open space as the very matrix of life, as the dominant part of the environment and structures'.[19] In particular, his reflections on the collective perception of urban spaces are also part of another new and very ambitious editorial project entitled *The Environment as Art Experience*, which focused on interactions between people and their environment and specifically on the value of cities as artistic experiences inasmuch as they are made up of a process of perception, action, creation and engagement.[20]

In this sense, Halprin's research has often been compared to Lewis Mumford's theories of urban culture for the unexpected ways of portraying a city as a place where people can have the opportunity to realise their personal creative potential.[21] The raison d'être or rationale of cities hence lies in their nature of being 'art, because of our total experience of them and our involvement in them – because we live out lives in them, move through them and because we are the city we live in just as we are in nature'.[22] It is precisely from this conviction that the project for *Cities* was conceived ten years earlier.

A visual discourse on the urban landscape

The volume dedicated to cities as edited by Halprin contains about 30 drawings and nearly 450 black-and-white photographs. The second edition, revised and published in 1972, was enhanced with 40 images relating to the urban projects created, starting from the 1960s, by Lawrence Halprin & Associates, an architecture firm founded in 1949 by Lawrence Halprin and botanist Jean Walton, who were later joined by Donald Ray Carter, Satoru Nishita, Richard Vignolo, Sue Yung Li Ikeda and Gerald Rubin.[23] Many of these names appear among the photographic references in the book, confirming the joint efforts on the collection and arrangement of images that benefited from the decisive contribution of some members of the studio team – particularly Carter, Vignolo and Rubin – for how they defined the strategies of representation of architecture and city (Fig. 7.3). Alongside a series of amateur snapshots and a large number of photos taken by Halprin, there is the use of near perfect professional photography by renowned American architectural photographers who collaborated in those years with important design studios.[24]

The collaboration with other photographers who were familiar with the oftentimes performative practices of the Halprin husband-and-wife team also proved to be decisive. In particular there were Rudy Bender and Paul Ryan who, starting in 1966, documented a series of experimental cross-disciplinary workshops in northern California entitled *Experiments in Environment*, conceived as an experience of collective creativity with the purpose of discovering the productive interactions between dance and design, in a mutual exchange among designers, artists, dancers, musicians and writers, all to attain more integrated creativity and a greater environmental awareness.[25]

The visual narration of the urban landscape in the *Cities* volume was also composed through contributions with some architects from the San Francisco Bay Area, who clearly shared a certain understanding about private residential design, and with whom Halprin came into contact after his move to San Francisco. In 1945, Halprin had in fact started collaborating with the renowned studio of landscape architect Thomas Dolliver Church, who inspired Halprin with his highly intuitive sites and how the environment should be treated, and his serious conviction that people could enrich their lives through their garden spaces.[26] Among the photographs by George Homsey, George Rockrise, Frants Albert, Donn Emmons, Vernon De-Mars and Donald Reay, what stands out particularly are the exuberant fountains of Villa d'Este in Tivoli, as immortalised by Catherine Bauer Wurster, an intellectual and activist who worked in the field of urban planning for the development of a modern social housing in the United States.[27]

The strong friendship between Halprin, Catherine and her husband Willliam Wuster, an important architect in the Bay Area, started back in the early 1940s with their first meeting in Cambridge. Wurster had been appointed Dean of the School of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and his wife taught at Harvard University's Department of Regional Planning, while Halprin, following a scholarship from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, attended landscape architecture courses after earning a bachelor's degree in

FIG. 7.3 - 'Urban Spaces', Donald Ray Carter, Piazza del Duomo in Milan; Adrian Wilson, 'Terraces at Gap', France, Halprin's *Cities* (1963) book spread

botany from the University of Wisconsin. The house in the forest of Kentfield, just north of San Francisco, where Halprin moved with his family in 1952, was designed by Wurster after the famous project for the Donnell Garden in Sonoma County (1947), the product of a fruitful collaboration involving Wurster, Church and Halprin.[28] For Halprin, it was a first experiment in landscape architecture, where the garden – conceived as a kinetic sequence of spatial experiences and as a 'it was a f for activities of movement – embodied an original choreographic approach in development, which was soon to be fully applied at a metropolitan scale a few years later.[29] A relevant example of this dynamic arrangement can be found in the project design for the Open Space Sequence plan in Portland, Oregon (1963–1970) and its captivating public fountains, also presented in the photographs of the second edition of *Cities* (Fig. 7.4).

The imprint of a choreographic program, as experimented by Halprin at the beginning of his career in numerous projects for private gardens, designed as stage sets for the dance of life,[30] was further credited in the architect's perceptive experience of the urban landscape, which, in the pages of the *Cities* book, was defined as 'an evolving process, as interaction between highly mobile users and their changing physical surround, not as a static picture'.[31] These are the words that Catherine Bauer Wurster used to review Halprin's book, specifying that the text was not a treatise on the design of urban spaces; nor was it a manual for landscape plantings, or a statement on the need for more Nature in cities. What instead emerged in the text was the value of a rich series of photographs that the volume contains, allowing for the book to communicate 'fresh meaning to immediate problems by relating them to old forms and world-wide experience'.[32]

FIG. 7.4 - Portland Open-Space Network (1963-1970) designed by Lawrence Halprin & Associates, photographed details of Lovejoy Plaza and Fountain, Portland, Oregon, sketch by Lawrence Halprin and photographs by Maude Dorr, John Donat, Fred Lyon, book spread from Halprin's *Cities* (1972)

The representation of cities as a paradigm

In the visual imagery of *Cities,* contributed to by several collaborators but rigorously coordinated by Halprin, there was the defined proposal for a new functional aesthetic of urban landscapes. With many of Lawrence Halprin & Associates studio projects and through recognised European urban models, the aim and focus of the book's layout privileged an urban canon of Italian origin, which confirms a visual approach to the urban landscape as a project tool, and as a distinctive element that could be found in many cities including Venice, Milan, Rome and Florence. Within this new aesthetic, particular attention was given to a specific type of landscape: the 'floorscape', which, in referencing the Gordon Cullens lesson,[33] was perceived as a complex component of the urban scene, in that it can be created using a wide range of construction materials.

'The square of San Marco' – as Halprin notes, once again referencing the Venetian example – 'like all the great urban spaces of the world, has beautiful pavings, elaborately designed, to make walking an aesthetic experience'.[34] In this sense, the urban landscape at ground level is not a simple synonym of public space paving, but rather a term linked to the perception and collective use of the city according to new aesthetic and compositional values. The horizontal character of the square then becomes a dramatic event through the introduction of a third dimension generated by stairways and inclined planes which can newly transform necessity into an artistic experience. An example of this is the 'beautifully articulated quality of the Spanish Steps in Rome, with their rhythmic variations broken up by level platforms, and their continuing curvilinear, flowing lines are a great theatre piece in the heart of the city'.[35] The marked tension that comes with some interpretative categories of the city such as 'Townscape'[36] and particularly with certain elements of

Italian urban development brings about clear references to the volume *The Italian Townscape* published in the same year as *Cities* by Ivor de Wolfe, under the pseudonym Hubert de Cronin Hastings.[37]

Starting in the late 1920s, as a long-time editor of *The Architectural Review*, de Wolfe laid the foundations of a radical philosophy based on English landscape theories in an attempt to remedy the betrayal of some of the principles of the modern movement, the first being relevant interests in the qualitative and psychological dimension of human needs. Although the book edited by Ivor de Wolfe and his wife Ivy was clearly inspired by the same spirit found in many other contemporary photographic publications focusing on the extraordinary beauty of the Italian landscape, this volume exhibited an innovative visual reading that suggested 'a new appreciation of the vernacular elements, both historical and contemporary, of the built environment, as well as efforts towards understanding the urban structures of pedestrian and vehicular traffic'.[38]

In a similar way, Halprin's book is part of a critical investigation of the phenomenon of the urban landscape, and particularly Italy's, where photography takes on a significant visual and cultural value, going beyond the 'picturesque aesthetic' of Camillo Sitte,[39] to move towards a study of the more social nature of the city's open public spaces and the relationship between behaviour and urban environment, in order to redefine the language and philosophy of urban planning altogether.[40] As a catalogue of elements that create the framework for a daily urban ritual, *Cities* establishes a new paradigm of expression around the concept of urban landscape, introducing a significant change in the possible ways of approaching the design of open public spaces, while also suggesting an effective system for the notation of movement in the city, called 'motation', which was further illustrated by Halprin in the volume *Freeways*.[41]

The architectural debate regarding the idea of urban landscape – which started in England at the end of the 1940s, championed by *The Architectural Review* through a series of thematic campaigns and supported by relevant photographic material – highlighted the need to adopt the dynamic perception of urban spaces as a relevant tool of design. A series of works published in the 1960s responded to the same instance which, starting with the constructive contributions of the aforementioned book-manifesto by Cullen and the volume under investigation by Halprin, dealt explicitly with the theme of the urban landscape using photography as a parallel visual discourse and as a strategy for the description and evaluation of contexts. Compared to the categorical denunciation of the pathologies of the American city featured in Peter Blake's book,[42] and the characterisation of the urban scene that in Geoffrey Jellicoe's book *Motopia*[43] leads to the depiction of a metropolitan and territorial utopia, Halprin's text presents a categorisation of urban elements alongside numerous projects developed by Lawrence Halprin & Associates which, as in Cullen's book, manifest the operational character of the concept of *townscape*. 'A city is a natural phenomenon as well as a work of art in the environment' Halprin emphasised in the epilogue of his book, and: 'The art of urban design, as other branches of modern art, follows a naturalistic process. The designer does not give form to a pre-

conceived idea, he takes the elements and allows them to come together'.[44] Along the lines of defining a domain relating to *urban landscape design*, as suggested also by Garett Eckbo and Ian McHarg, urban landscape thinking intersects with contemporary natural sciences to arrive at the development of a new conception in the relationship between city and nature.[45]

Conclusions

The international acclaim of the book *Cities* emerged within a literary scene in which the urban landscape was beginning to establish itself as a domain of knowledge as well as a field of operation, alongside the book's contribution to an effective evaluation, assessments and description of the different kinds of representation of cities. This was also reflected in Halprin's in-depth analyses of the urban environment, so much so that he was invited to be part of the Advisory Committee for the United States participation in the XIV Triennale di Milano in 1968.[46] In response to the theme *Il Grande Numero* (The Great Number), the US submitted two thematic proposals: *American Street* and *The City Scene*. The city hence defined as 'the most twentieth-century place, the most exciting place, the place where everything looms larger, where the tempo quickens, where special solutions to special problems become the prototypes for tomorrow's living'[47] became a key topic of investigation and discussion, starting with an examination of metropolitan choreography, where Halprin's book represents a clear statement and platform. The urban scene is thus interpreted 'as a continuum, a sequence of events, a dance of life',[48] and represented in light of the classic conception of townscape design, alongside which we see the emergence of new categories of landscape.

In particular, Halprin's reflection on the concept of wilderness introduced a new environmental concept and a creative means for the perception of nature to be translated into the design of a metropolitan environment: in other words, 'an ecologically sound or even creative environment for people to live in'.[49] The urban scene thus becomes a field for experimenting highly innovative approaches and activities aimed at safeguarding an uncontaminated nature which Halprin identified in the landscape of the High Sierra region, a grand mountain range in eastern California.[50] Many of the design projects for parks and public spaces by Halprin, which were partially included in the second edition of *Cities* – such as the Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis, the Embarcadero Plaza in San Francisco, and the Open Space Sequence in Portland, Oregon – demonstrate the introduction of a modern choreographic method of urban design and the tension toward the creation of a complete, more inclusive urban environment generated by a collective perception and creative dimension in part accorded to citizens.

Halprin stated: 'As a lover of the wilderness, I have a feeling that its preservation lies in the design and planning of the city'.[51] The urban choreography is expressed primarily through a concept of wilderness whose preservation lies precisely in the planning of the city and in a modern 'design with nature' which is undeniably inspired by the rigorous ecological method introduced some years earlier by the Scottish landscape architect Ian McHarg. This principle might appear contradictory but

it takes on more profound significance when Halprin explicitly proclaims the need we all have to experience nature that should be taken care of in our cities. The art of urban environmental design is confronted for the first time with the ability to creatively cope with a violent condition of 'disclimax' in response to which the landscape architect suggests a biological approach to the ecosystem of the city, 'where processes of growth, elements of chance, discriminating chaos, and natural methods of esthetic evolution produce new forms for our time'.[52]

The introduction into the sterile urban dimension of an 'experiential equivalent'[53] that can be traced back to the complexity of ecological processes, stimulates an aesthetic of involvement that includes art and nature. Halprin therefore attempts to offer the same kind of experience that one has in perceiving the wildest states of nature; not through a process of imitation, but through a 'transmutation'[54] of the experience of natural landscape in one that is manmade. As Halprin argued, this kind of approach 'would leave the wilderness as a great resource, as a special event [...] This beautiful city could, in fact, preserve the wilderness by its very existence'.[55] In this way, the urban question is enhanced with a new poetics of nature that aims to promote a more harmonious growth of the metropolitan dimension, based on a recognised ecological paradigm and on a functional aesthetic that can impart a renewed and more effective meaning to open space, and especially in its very form of public space.

The insertion of a wilderness aesthetic in urban design is then joined by the search for a 'fantasy environment'[56] in which the theme of participation becomes decisive for the staging in the city of a creative process and an act of collective imagination by all citizens. In this way the art of cities becomes an experience of creative assemblage or, as Halprin defines it in a broader sense, 'a participatory environmental art without boundaries'.[57] Starting with the recognition that cities lack places for imagination, hiding, playing and having fun, Halprin invites us to stage our own fantasy urban environments, a tendency that was further highlighted by Reyner Banham in *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*.[58] However, this is certainly not a reference to 'set-piece fantasies' or the intentional fantasyland locations such as Las Vegas, Disneyland or Coney Island, and their ability to offer 'the opportunity to shuck off everyday responsibilities and, like Alice in Wonderland, to walk through the looking glass'.[59] Halprin instead emphasises the validity of urban spaces and objects, parks and gardens – such as Simon Rodia's Watts Towers in Los Angeles, the Tiger Balm gardens in Hong Kong or the Bomarzo gardens in Italy – which, through distinct and specific materials, can guarantee that our imaginations merge to become an important part of our daily life.

Halprin always considered the city as a series of large-scale theatrical events characterised by a profound creativity, and nourished by the participation and involvement of all citizens. In this sense, the urban taxonomy, illustrated in the photobook format of *Cities,* successfully renews and strengthens the will to respond to an increasingly complex urban life; one that requires innovative and effective solutions for the city's time and space, starting with a more active and collective understanding of its past experiences.

NOTES

1   Lawrence Halprin, *Cities* (New York, NY: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1963), 7. Second edition, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972).

2   Alison B. Hirsch, *City Choreographer: Lawrence Halprin in Urban Renewal America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 182.

3   On the work by Anna Schuman, see Janice Roos, *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Gabriele Wittmann, Ursula Schorn and Ronit Land, *Anna Halprin: Dance – Process – Form* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014).

4   Annalisa Metta and Benedetta Di Donato, eds., *Anna e Lawrence Halprin: Paesaggi e coreografie del quotidiano* (Melfi: Libria, 2014), 32.

5   See also Lawrence Halprin, *Freeways* (New York, NY: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1966); Lawrence Halprin, *New York, New York: A Study of the Quality, Character, and Meaning of Open Space in Urban Design* (San Francisco, CA: Chapman Press, 1968); LawrenceHalprin, *The RSVP Cycle: Creative Process in the Human* Environment (New York, NY: George Braziller Inc., 1969); Lawrence Halprin, *Take Part: A Report on New Ways in Which People Can Participate in Planning Their Own Environments* (San Francisco, CA / New York, NY: Lawrence Halprin & Associates, 1972).

6   See the special issue of *Architectural Histories* on 'Travel', Davide Deriu, Belgin Turan Ozkaya and Edoardo Piccoli, eds., vol. 4, no. 1 (2016).

7   Daria Halprin, only a few years later, starred in the film Zabriskie Point by Michelangelo Antonioni, representing the 'real America' in the middle of the Californian desert.

8   Halprin, *Cities*, 9.

9   Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 With the expression 'urban charisma' Halprin identified that distinctive character of certain cities that transmit a certain sense of fairness and exhibit an almost human personality, in developing significant relationships with the people who live in them. See also Lawrence Halprin, 'Our collective perception of cities' in *The Environment as Art Experience* (1974), unpublished type-written text, Lawrence Halprin Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania, 014.I.B.2032, 3.

12 Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as Space: How to look at Architecture* (New York, NY: Horizon Press, 1957), English translation of Zevi, Bruno. *Saper vedere l'architettura: Saggio sull'interpretazione spaziale dell'architettura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1948).

13 The letters Bruno Zevi sent to Halprin are testimony of their deep friendship and of a critical exchange they shared on many questions concerning landscape. One particular letter from Zevi, dated 3 February 1971, reads: 'there are people who have known each other for centuries, even without ever meeting... when they do meet, it looks as if they would simply recognize each other, see in their inner souls, brushing up atavistic memories... This was our case, dear Lawrence'. Lawrence Halprin Collection, 014.I.B.1701.

14 Jim Burns, *Lawrence Halprin paesaggista* (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1982).

15 Lawrence Halprin, 'The Collective Perception of Cities' in *Urban Open Spaces* (London: Academy Editions, 1979), 4. This is the reworking of the text that Halprin had written a few years earlier, entitled 'Our collective perception of cities'.

16 See Kevin Lynch, *The Images of the* City (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960). Lynch shared with Halprin the desire to bring attention to the aesthetic dimension of the city, focusing on the dimension of the urban experience and concentrating on the image of the city as perceived by its inhabitants.

17 Halprin, 'The Collective Perception of Cities', 5-12. Ellipsis in original.

18 Ivi, 19.

19 Lawrence Halprin, *The Role of the Twentieth-Century Landscape Architect*, International Federation of Landscape Architects, Amsterdam 1960, type-written transcription of the conference, Lawrence Halprin Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania, 014.I.A.6141, 2.

20 Lawrence Halprin, *The Environment as Art Experience.* This unpublished manuscript, preserved in the Lawrence Halprin Collection is made up of seven chapters. It was later completed in July 1974, and finally republished with the title *The New Modernism: Art of the Environment.*

21 Peter Walker and Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 145.

22 Lawrence Halprin, 'The Environment as Art Experience' in Halprin, *The Environment as Art Experience*, 6.

23 See also Peter Walker, 'Lawrence Halprin & Associates, 1954: A brief memoir', *Landscape Journal*, Special Halprin Issue, no. 31 (2012): 28-32.

24 Among the photographs by Ernest Braun, George Knight, Maude Dorr, Jeremiah Bragstad, John Donat, Glenn Christiansen, Philip Fein and Hedrich Blessing Studio, there are also numerous shots relating to projects completed in San Francisco by the Lawrence Halprin & Associates team, mainly by the photographer Baer Morley, director of the department of photography at the San Francisco Art Institute since 1953. Halprin designed the garden of Baer Morley's home in Berkeley, CA (c. 1963). See Marc Treib, *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1995), 67. See also the images of the garden in Halprin, *Cities*, 42-43.

25 Judith Wasserman, 'A World in Motion. The Creative Synergy of Lawrence and Anna Halprin', *Landscape Journal*, Special Halprin Issue, no. 31 (2012): 33-52.

26 Hirsch, *City Choreographer*, 40.

27 Alison Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco: Art, Land, and Urban Renewal in the City by the Bay* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 130. See also Cynthia Hammond, 'The Interior of Modernism: Catherine Bauer and the American Housing Movement' in Janice Helland and Sandra Alfoldy, eds., *Craft, Space and Interior Design 1855–2005* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 169–188.

28 Treib, *An Everyday Modernism*, 127–128.

29 Lawrence Halprin, 'The Choreography of Gardens', *Impulse: Annual of Contemporary Dance*, no. 2, (1949): 30-34.

30 Alison Bick Hirsch, 'The Choreography of Private Gardens', *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes,* vol. 27, no. 4 (2007): 258-355.

31 Catherine Bauer Wurster papers, 1931-1964, Box 10, Folder 2, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

32 Ibid.

33 Gordon Cullen, *Townscape* (London: The Architectural Press, 1961).

34 Halprin, *Cities*, 92.

35 Ivi, 116.

36 See the special issue of *The Journal of Architecture,* 'Townscape Revisited', vol. 17, issue 5 (2012).

37 Ivor De Wolfe, *The Italian Townscape* (London: The Architectural Press, 1963).

38 Angelo Maggi, 'Capturing the Italian townscape: From the beginnings of Italian landscape photography to the anti-idyllic images of Ivor and Ivy de Wolfe', *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 21, no. 6 (2016): 892.

39 Camillo Sitte, *Der Städtebau nach seinen Künstlerischen Grundsätzen* (Vienna: C. Graeser, 1889).

40 Charles Waldheim, *Landscape Urbanism Reader* (New Brunswick, N.J., Princeton: Architectural Press, 2006), 446.

41 Halprin, *Cities*, 208-215. Halprin, *Freeways*, 87-88. See also Cristina Barbiani, *The Process is the Purpose: Notazione dello spazio e creatività collettiva. Il caso di Anna e Lawrence Halprin.* PhD diss., University Cà Foscari and University Iuav of Venice (2008), 62-74.

42 Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

43 Geoffrey Allan Jellicoe, *Motopia: A Study in the Evolution of Urban Landscape* (London: Studio Books-Longacre Press, 1961). An image of the proposal for the New Town Motopia was published by Halprin in his book, *Freeways*, 128.

44 Halprin, *Cities*, 220.

45 Garett Eckbo, *Urban Landscape Design* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1964), and Ian L. McHarg, *Design with Nature* (New York, NY: Natural History Press, 1969).

46 Letter by the designer Michael Lax sent to Lawrence Halprin, 27 October 1967, Lawrence Halprin Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania, 014.I.A.6117.

47 'The City Scene: A Proposed Theme for the American Exhibit at the Triennale', type-written text attached to the letter by Michael Lax.

48 Procter Mellquist, editor of the periodical *Sunset Magazine*, promotional article for the book *Cities*, Lawrence Halprin Collection, 014.I.A.5122.

49 Lawrence Halprin, *Wilderness and the City*, Eighth Biennial Wilderness Conference, *Tomorrow's Wilderness* (March 1963) San Francisco, type-written text, Lawrence Halprin Collection, 014.I.A.6146:2. The conference was organised by the Sierra Club, the historic American organisation founded in San Francisco in 1892. Halprin's contribution, partially reviewed, was published in the minutes of the conference: *Tomorrow's Wilderness*, ed. François Leydet (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club, 1963), 127-130. See Barbara Boifava, 'Il selvatico come arte. Lawrence Halprin: wilderness e città', *Vesper. Rivista di architettura, arti e teoria*, no. 3 (2020): 139-148.

50 Halprin, *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes and the Human Environment*, 104-111.

51 Halprin, *Wilderness and the City*, 1.

52 Ibid.

53 Lawrence Halprin, *Sketchbooks of Lawrence Halprin* (Tokyo: Process Architecture, 1981),30-31.

54 Lawrence Halprin, 'Nature into Landscape into Art', *Ekistics*, no. 333 (1986): 352.

55 Halprin, *Wilderness and the City*, 4.

56 Lawrence Halprin, *Fantasy Environments*, type-written text, Lawrence Halprin Collection, 014.I.B.2302. In the archive there is a draft of the book entitled *Fantasy Environments*, which was to become part of a published series with the title *Environments of Man*, edited by the New York publisher George Braziller.

57 Halprin, *Cities*, second edition, 221.

58 Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1971).

59 Halprin, *Fantasy Environments*, 11.

<center>8</center>

STREETSCAPES IN THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DISTANCE: ABSTRACT AND LIVED SPACES IN ED RUSCHA'S *THEN & NOW*

Lilyana Karadjova

Then & Now: Hollywood Boulevard, 1973–2004 is a well-known photobook by Edward J. Ruscha.[1] The renowned conceptual artist from Los Angeles produced 18 small photobooks from 1963 to 1978: however, in a strange anachronic deviation, *Then & Now* only appeared much later in 2005. In the 1960s and '70s, Ruscha's works made a significant contribution to the iconography of Los Angeles, creating the image of a sunny city with expanding low-density suburbs, repetitive architectural patterns, ample freeways and commercial signs, all of them fuelled by an accelerating economy. *Then & Now* displays a series of black-and-white and colour panoramas of Hollywood Boulevard taken over 30 years. As the title implies, the focus is on the changes that took place during that period. Printed together, the juxtaposed panoramas create an intriguingly multi-layered image, which challenges viewer's perception of space. Black-and-white and colour images have a strikingly different impact in architectural photography, the former emphasising primary features as lines, shapes, volume and patterns, while the latter accentuate secondary features and less significant details. The 'then' space appears distant, dull and somewhat abstract and the 'now' space stands out as proximate, emotional and particular.

The French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre elaborated a conceptual triad to discuss the processes and dimensions of spaces produced by different societies. His definitions of 'spatial practices', 'representation of space' and 'representational space' indicate, respectively, the physical space perceived by senses; the space conceived by architects and scientists; and the lived space experienced in human coexistence.[2] To put it simply, abstract space is produced when the lived space is dominated by the conceived space. This framework can be applied to *Then & Now* in order to reveal perspectives on understanding the irreconcilable spaces of monochrome and colour photography. The concept sheds light on the impact of the book and underscores its very subject: the passage of time, and urban change as an expansion of lived space. Furthermore, it hints why in *Then & Now* Ruscha departs from his detached style to create a more personal record of Los Angeles.

Apart from this late artwork, Ruscha's photobooks construct a picture of Los Angeles in a detached conceptual manner: a break from the traditional limited-edition handcrafted artist's book. They present Los Angeles as a cityscape of clean design without any decorative elements. The cover page, the layout and the typographic format in capital letters emphasise the quality of the book, the simplicity of design mirroring that of the photographs. The camera adheres to the same viewpoint and scale and the straightforward photographs focus on urban patterns.

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Not only does the city seem devoid of human presence, it emphasises the ordinary appearance of monotonous architecture, lacking salient features or marks of historical, social or personal significance. Ruscha's detached style is characterised as 'rigorous purity, deadpan humour and a casual disregard'.[3] Some of these works were included in the influential exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape* held at George Eastman House in 1975. The curator, William Jenkins, described the selected pictures as 'stripped of any artistic frills and reduced to an essentially topographic state, conveying substantial amounts of visual information, but eschewing entirely the aspects of beauty, emotion and opinion'.[4]

The *New Topographics* exhibition was the culmination of years of urban exploration by Ruscha. His first book, *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* (1962), is compiled of gas stations he photographed along Route 66, while travelling five or six times a year between his home town of Los Angeles and his parents' home in Oklahoma City. *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965) explores the city's architecture with an emphasis on repetitive structures, and *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (1968) depicts water basins and vast urban spaces. *Thirty-four Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (1967) comprises aerial views of empty parking areas and *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970) creates a typology of empty spaces suitable for new buildings. Although these books adhere to the same objective style, some of them bear a personal connection. Kevin Hatch points out that *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass*, was created in a period when Ruscha swam on a regular basis, and *Records (1971)* includes photographs of albums from Ruscha's collection.[5] Similarly, *Then & Now* also reveals the artist's long-term personal connection with Los Angeles.

A distinctive break from the uniform layout of Ruscha's books came with *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), which encompasses the entire length of the famous Los Angeles' street with an accordion fold-out panorama (Fig. 8.1). This photobook is Ruscha's most discussed work.[6] Using a creative pre-cinematic technique together with precise calculations, the photographer attached his Nikon F2 camera to a motor drive, mounted on a tripod 46 inches above the bed of a Datsun pickup truck, and set the 35mm lens to infinity. He shot a continuous strip of Ilford Fine Grain Panchromatic (FP3) film, and using 250 cassettes, covering the 2.4 km long distance left and right of Sunset Strip.[7] To show the urban fabric rather than the bustle of the city, the streetscape was captured in the early hours of the morning or on Sunday afternoons. Ruscha continued to work on the streetscape between 1965 and 2001.[8]

Ruscha followed the same procedure on Hollywood Boulevard, driving from Sunset Plaza Drive in the East, to Hillhurst Avenue in the West, which he shot four times: in 1973, 2002, 2003 and 2004. In July 1973, he loaded a continuous strip of Ilford Fine Grain (FP-4) black-and-white film into his camera and drove back and forth across the 19km of the street, shooting both the north and south sides. Another panorama was captured in 1974 on the Pacific Coast Highway. Both sequences remained unpublished, probably because Ruscha intended to create an archive of the city but possibly due to a lack of a distinctive idea for the design of another panoramic book. The negatives were developed, contact sheets were printed and the materials were placed in storage.[9]
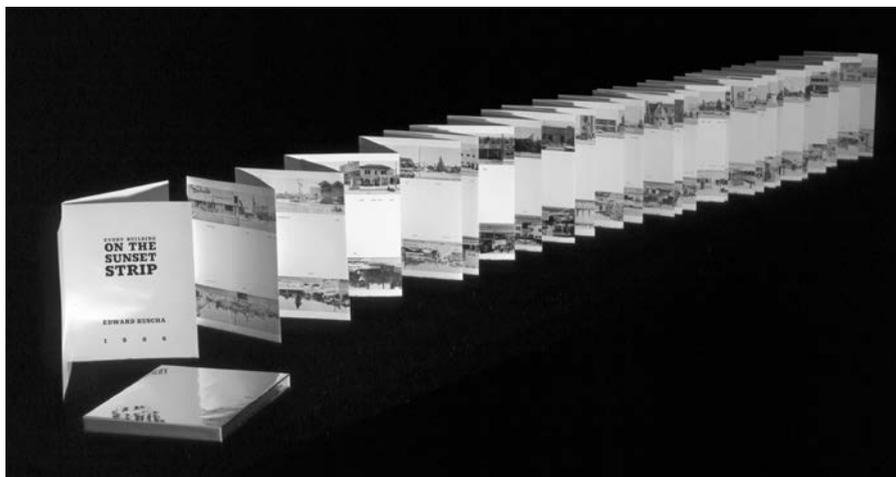
FIG. 8.1 - Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on Sunset Strip* (1966), self-published book, printed offset

Almost 30 years later, on three different occasions, between 2002 and 2004, Ruscha went back to Hollywood Boulevard and used the same type of equipment to re-photograph it on 35mm colour-negative film. This resulted in a set of 4,500 black-and-white and 13,000 colour images. A selection was scanned and digitally edited into panoramas, which were published in the photobook with juxtaposed strips on the top and bottom of each page. Having reshot the boulevard in colour, he came up with a new book design combining black-and-white and colour photography, encompassing not two, but four panoramas. This added a vertical element to the layout, which supplemented their traditional horizontal display.

Panoramic streetscapes

In the history of photography, panoramic streetscapes have been employed to reveal architectural coherence, common patterns and distinctive landmarks. Writing about Ruscha's work, Matt Reynolds remarks: 'Unlike its counterpart, the portrait, a genre of intimacy and detail, panoramas and landscapes encourage the viewer's gaze to roam around the image. As the eye travels over the work, the panorama's presentation of an all-encompassing view asserts a deceptive mastery over time and space'.[10] Although *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* was seen as unconventional, its approach – representing both sides of a street by upside-down juxtaposition and merging multiple viewpoints – had a long history. For example, in 1824, the printmaker John Heaviside Clark created the accordion-fold format *Panorama of the Thames from London to Richmond*, covering a 15-mile stretch between London and Richmond.[11] The two parallel panoramas of every building on both the riverside is a dramatic portrayal. This panorama shows that the accordion-fold format of Ru-

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scha's photobooks belongs to a long historical tradition of urban views. However, while Clark inserted the blue river to his etchings to clarify the object of representation, Ruscha relied on viewer's abilities to perceive the two sides of a road without printing a pavement in-between. In comparison with Clark's *Panorama*, the layout of the black-and-white photography in *Sunset Strip* has a more abstract quality.

However, Ruscha was not the first to create such an abstract layout. Twelve years before *Sunset Strip*, in 1954, the Japanese artist Shohachi Kimura created an accordion fold-out book, *Ginza Kawaii / Ginza Haccho,* depicting every building on Ginza Street, Tokyo. The two sides of the street are similarly juxtaposed on the top and bottom of each page, and the photographic strips are supplemented by captions. While Ruscha's book has a number of imperfections, such as pedestrians and cars being frequently cut, signs and advertisements shortened and building facades that do not match, Kimura's work is more precisely edited and the social aspect of the street is enhanced by the additional inclusion of pedestrians and cars. In *Sunset Strip*, Ruscha is more concerned with the documentary function of the medium and the authenticity of the paste-up montage technique than with the social appeal of the street. As such, his shots are a valuable visual record, important historical documents for the study of changing urban landscapes.

'Then and now' in photobooks

'Repeat photography' is characterised by photographing a subject from the same point of view at different times. It is used to survey man-made urban changes as well as natural disasters. This method has been popularised by the sub-genre of 'then and now' books, in which contemporary authors revisit famous locations already captured by celebrated photographers. Among them are *Paris Changing* (2007), in which Christopher Rauschenberg re-photographed many of Eugene Atget's urban subjects, and *New York Changing* (2004) by Douglas Levere, who recaptured 114 views from Berenice Abbott's *Changing New York*. In 2003, Thunder Bay Press published the book *Hollywood Then and Now* as part of the popular *Then and Now* series representing major American cities, such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.[12] This series is likely to have prompted Ruscha to display some of his panoramas of Sunset Strip and Hollywood Boulevard.

The quintessence of repeat photography is comparison, that is to say the juxtaposition of photographs on either side of the page. This layout, on facing pages, accentuates the contrasts. However, in order to compare panoramas, a different solution is needed. A remarkable example is *Such is One City / Two Visions* (1990) by Mark Klett, whose shots of San Francisco's skyline echo those by Eadweard Muybridge in 1877. Klett's photobook provides a 'then and now' comparison showing how the skyline has changed over the course of a century. However, Klett does not display both sets of images on the same spread, but prints them sequentially. As a result, the strips taken at different times are explored as separate spaces, preserving their autonomy but making isolating differences more demanding.

FIG. 8.2 - Ed Ruscha, *Then & Now: Hollywood Boulevard 1973-2004* (2005) book cover

These examples indicate the importance of the layout as means to highlight similarities and contrasts. Whereas Klett's format worked in the portrayal of the big picture of San Francisco's changing skyline, the one in Ruscha's *Then & Now* was designed to convey transformations on a smaller scale and, thus, had to make the process of comparison easier. For this, he used the upside-down format used in the design of *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, but adding significant changes, such as the coupling of new and old strips, and splitting the panoramas between pages. In the context of the mentioned 'then and now' photobooks, Ruscha's work has some distinctive features. Some geological surveys may combine black-and-white and colour images, but this is generally avoided in photobooks as colour brings distractions and confusion in the comparative process. By using both black-and-white and colour photography, Ed Ruscha intentionally went against the traditional norms of 'then and now' books to create a more complex space. His book intertwines the panoramas, reinforcing comparisons, as the impact of colour builds up relations and meanings which could not be achieved in the common 'either side of the page' layout of other 'then and now' photobooks.

Ruscha's work on Los Angeles

Although Ruscha shot both panoramic streetscapes in a similar way, Hollywood Boulevard and Sunset Strip appeared in books whose designs were strikingly different. *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* was a low-budget self-published book, with an initial print run of 1,000 copies (1966) that was later augmented to 5,000 copies in the second edition (1971).[13] The 2.4km panorama unfolds to an 8m-long strip. The borders of the merged frames are slightly visible, while the house numbers are printed underneath. As Jennifer Quick points out: 'Lacking a sewn binding, *Sun-*
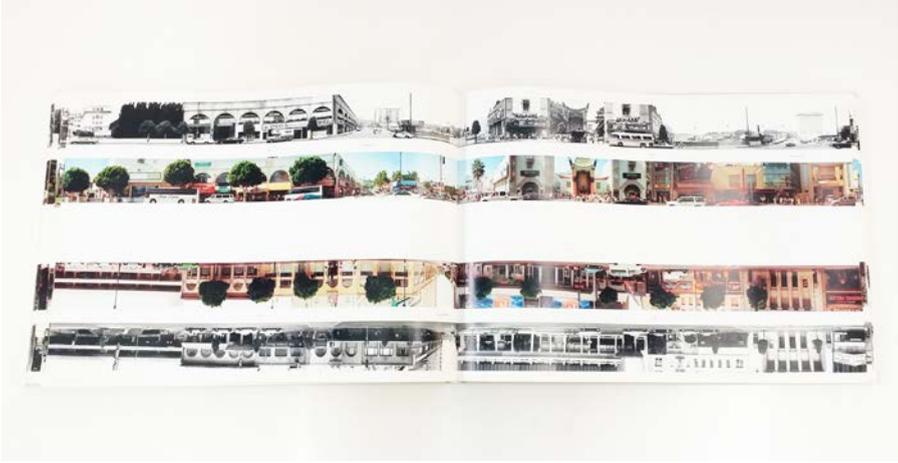
FIG. 8.3 - Ed Ruscha, *Then & Now: Hollywood Boulevard 1973-2004* (2005), book spread featuring the Grauman's Chinese theater

set bears a closer resemblance to a pamphlet or brochure than to a book'.[14] Indeed, the design could be connected to the brochures that Ruscha printed to promote his books. The final layout was preceded by a mock-up process of cutting out the photographs, hand pasting them on a board and printing maquettes.[15] The accordion style had proliferated in Los Angeles in the form of souvenir booklets containing postcards of Hollywood from the 1940s.[16] Some of them portray iconic locations on Sunset and Hollywood Boulevards, such as the Grauman's Chinese Theatre.

Apart from being a compact book, when unfolded, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* is also an impressive art object. For this reason, the accordion fold-out was often shown in a case or mounted on a wall, as Leo Castelli Gallery did at an exhibition in 1973.[17] As Quick remarks, the display seemed to expand outwards from the wall, while the long page 'took on a three-dimensional presence'.[18] The ambiguity of this unconventional display is overcome by the representation of Hollywood Boulevard in three different mediums. In an exhibition held at the Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills (2005), the strips acquired an object-like quality. The installation of an uninterrupted panorama was organised in a zigzag display as an alternative to the accordion fold-out.

In the same year, the photographs were published under the title *Then & Now: Hollywood Boulevard, 1973–2004*, by the German master printer Gerhard Steidl, in a luxury limited edition of ten portfolios and in a hardback commercial book (Fig. 8.2).[19] The smaller hardback book is folio sized with a centrefold binding instead of an unfolding layout (Fig. 8.3). As in *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, the north side of the boulevard is printed on top of each page and the south side inverted and printed along the bottom. Although there are a few editing imperfections,

the joints between the frames are rarely visible. In both the portfolio and book editions, the flow of the panorama is staggered over a huge number of pages. The new work failed to receive critical acclaim. This may have been due to its nostalgic overtones, since the author had revived the same technique that he had used for *Sunset Strip*. Although similar inverted images had already been used by John Heaviside Clark and Shohachi Kimura, *Then & Now* had the merit of revealing a new layer of Ruscha's work. As well as conducting his extensive topological study of Los Angeles' patterns, he also tracked the changes occurring over time. The complex design of the book reflects his sensitivity to the dynamics of urban space. The representation of space is essential to Ruscha's work on Los Angeles, and its analysis reveals the impact of *Then & Now* and its distinctiveness from the one of *Sunset Strip*.

The spatial dimensions of panoramic photography
The layout of Ruscha's photobooks discussed here relates to pre-modern European principles of composition, spatial organisation and internal relations. The panoramic images suppress the spatial coordinates, annihilating the foreground, background, centre and periphery, left and right, and respectively the meaning attributed to them. Objects at the edges of the frame are not diminished and the inverted southern side of the boulevards does not imply anything regressive or negative. However, the pre-modern principles subordinate the panoramic length of *Sunset Strip* and the multi-layered layout of *Then & Now* to a visual organisation based on verticals and horizontals. The vertical composition is the principle of visual hierarchy, unity and common sense and the horizontal one represents chaos, diversity and difference. Thus, the panoramic space illustrates the urban landscape as freely organised and abundant in peculiarities. This chaos and diversity expresses an idea of separateness and fragmentation, while the reduced vertical side implies a non-hierarchical structure.

The elongated and flat space suggests perceptual constancy and movement along the surface of the horizontal line. The reduced vertical dimension could cut out parts of the streetscape, but in the case of Los Angeles' long boulevards and low-rise buildings, almost all inhabited space sits within the frame. In the case of *Then & Now*, the chaotic character is reduced by the panoramas being broken into smaller sections. However, the view does not explore details of the vernacular and the authentic, as a close-up could do. Although the inscriptions on some of the buildings are legible, the street numbers printed below create a linear progression and make a reference to industrial serial order. Despite the chaos, few places on the road seem unique and the ordinariness of buildings is emphasised by the inexorable rise in the numbers. As Sylvia Wolf notes on *Sunset Strip*: 'No single enterprise is privileged over another. There is no hierarchy to this information'.[20]

While discussing his work in an interview with Wolf, Ruscha reveals his feelings about going back to Sunset Boulevard. He felt as though he was pursuing a documentary: 'I record it as a piece of history [...] It is a very democratic, unemotional look at the world [...] Everything gets judiciously photographed, not just the in-

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teresting parts of it but everything. It's documentary in that sense. I think that may be its ultimate value, if there is any'.[21] However, no matter how documentary Ruscha's intention is and how structurally organised the panoramas may appear to be, this upside-down reversed strip creates what Quick calls 'dual modes of orientation and mixed perceptual structure'.[22] The accordion layout and the visible binding seams of *Sunset Strip* entangle the space between the horizontal and the vertical. In comparison, *Then & Now* does not have such vertical paste-up lines, as it is perfectly edited and the continuous strip is substituted with pages.

Observing the details of the two panoramas, one may conclude that geometrical accuracy was not an overriding principle in the latter photobook. There is a slight expansion of the frame on the south side of the boulevard, as Ruscha did not strictly observe the requirements of a topographical study. The camera had to be set up at the same original location, and represent the view in approximately the same light conditions. The first panorama of Hollywood Boulevard was taken on 8 July 1973, a seemingly cloudy day, while the panoramas taken from 2002 to 2004 include sunny strips with sharp shadows, which distort the architectural features. In colour photography, a grey cloudy sky does little to convey the appeal of the entertainment going on, on the street. Indeed, Ruscha always prioritised a sunny image over the technical parameters of repeat photography. Probably in line with his aim to emphasise Los Angeles's climate, in some sections of the south side, he slightly opens the frame and enlarges the area of blue sky. With this subtle change, he suggests the passage of time as a progressive expansion of human well-being. As the boulevard is a public space, Ruscha's optimistic approach also tracks the proliferation of shared social activities.

Social approach to space in Ruscha's photography

The concept of social space could help to reveal some of the particularities of and differences between the panoramas. Lefebvre notes that every society produces 'its own space' and its organisation reveals the economy, social relations and activities existing within it.[23] His tripartite structure, discussed above – physical space perceived by senses; mental space conceived by architects and scientists; and the lived space of human coexistence – has been applied to Ruscha's work by Ken Allen and Kristen Sharp, who argue that Ruscha emphasises the experience of representational space.[24] Furthermore, these concepts could give a particular interpretation to the two distinctive panoramas in *Then & Now*. Colour photography as a transparent medium emphasises the proximity and vitality of the representational space (lived space). Black-and-white photography, on the other hand, has a more graphic and abstract quality. It merges the mental character of the representation of space (conceived space) and the distant realism of representational space (lived space). Abstract space is produced when the lived space is dominated by conceived space.[25] Indeed, one could argue that black-and-white architectural photography inherently emphasises abstract space.

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Lefebvre's Marxist critique of abstract capitalist space has been resourcefully applied to architectural photography, for example in Eugenie Shinkle's analysis of Gabriele Basilico's urban landscape in *Milano: Ritratti di fabbriche* (Milan: Portraits of Factories).[26]

Although Ruscha's photographs in the *New Topographics* exhibition resemble the abstract character of dominating conceived space, *Then & Now* is based on his long-term relationship to Los Angeles. Although the place is ruled by capitalist economy, the book departs from the representation of the abstract. The colour strips, which supplement the black-and-white ones, represent a vibrant lived space. Furthermore, they do not let the conceived space rule over the lived one, but the other way around. The intensity and proximity of advancing colours dominate the dull receding monochromatic images and thereby highlight the lived space. However, whereas Basilico's photographs create the illusion of depth guided by vanishing points of diagonal lines and movement inside the representational space, Ruscha's frontal views create a flat image and limit the visual accessibility to the surface of the photograph. Basilico's sensitivity to space emphasises the vertical dimension, excavating 'layers of spatial depth',[27] while Ruscha underscores the extended horizontal line, presenting a uniform plane. The former approach instils inexhaustible experience and the latter confines it. Instead of riskily moving inside vitalities of representational space, the panoramic view enables a safe distance from which to survey the scene. Although, by employing colour photography, Ruscha portrays the lived space as dominating the conceived, he does not communicate an inclusive exploration of the social space, but rather restricts viewer's experience on the surface of activities.

The concept of social space is a more complex and profound expression of the lived space, containing well-integrated perceived and conceived space: '(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelations in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder'.[28] Lefebvre notes that places defined by social space are very different from those of natural space, because they may be intercalated, combined, superimposed.[29] Space is populated and full of human connections, forming many interconnected places. Lefebvre discusses their meanings and structures in capitalist society: 'In their pre-eminence, buildings, the homogeneous matrix of capitalistic space, successfully combine the object of control by power with the object of commercial exchange'.[30] This approach defines a place as constructed by social activity and its economic environment. Since it is constructed by people who can freely move in space, places do not have strict locations. They are in flux and do not have limiting boundaries.[31] This idea liberates the idea of 'place' from its traditional geographical definition and redefines it according to human activity.

The geographer Tim Cresswell, who discusses Lefebvre's concept notes that 'Looking at the social construction of place involves explaining the unique attributes of a place (say the Docklands of London or the Baltimore harbour) by showing how these places are instances of wider processes of the construction of place in ge-

neral under conditions of capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, postcolonialism and a host of other structural conditions'.[32] Following Cresswell's example, one can conclude that Hollywood Boulevard is such a unique attribute of Los Angeles' social space. This busy district of entertainment, with high accessibility to consumption goods and services, is particular to the city's conditions of vast space and long roads. Art historian Steven Jacobs describes it as 'a realm characterised by spatial, social and cultural fragmentation, determined by the politics of a globalised economy and shaped by the visual instruments of mass media'.[33] The noted spatial fragmentation is subverted by the same technique and viewpoint, unifying the streetscape into a total homogenous structure. Such is Hollywood Boulevard's position as a social expression within the capitalistic economy: global and focused on the surface. It is a perfect example of what Lefebvre called 'homogeneous matrix of capitalistic space'.[34]

Everything on the Boulevard seems equally susceptible to exploration and the viewing mode resembles distant oversight. Ruscha does not allow any close-ups of a person or a detail.[35] While discussing *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations*, Reynolds remarks, 'Social interaction, conflict, or views of the diverse and disparate populations of Los Angeles are literally "behind the scenes" in his work'.[36] In the case of the long panoramas of *Then & Now,* authentic vernacular urban life is reduced to the uniform consumerist behaviour of pedestrians crossing and crowding the busy boulevard. In Lefebvre's terms 'The true – invisible yet highly irregular – contours of "real" social space lying beneath its homogeneous surface'[37] remain unavailable in Ruscha's work.

Although the visual accessibility to the space is limited to the surface, the short segments of the panorama are more 'accommodating' to human perception and do not instil the disorientation described by Reynolds when discussing *Sunset Strip*.[38] As the eye meanders across the surface of urban fabric, human presence becomes rare and social activity is signified more by objects and buildings. Thus, social places are represented as fixed. Rather than being in flux, as the definition implies, these social hubs lack an essential human characteristic – the freedom to move about in space. The object of surveillance is not to observe human activity, but to follow the urban and architectural changes. This substitution of human activity with locations and signs is another expression of the capitalistic space, which subverts people's behaviour to a material outcome.

Spaces of transformation in Hollywood Boulevard
By exploring the book, one understands the urban organisation of the boulevard, which could be divided in four segments. It begins at the green, west areas of Hollywood Hills, runs through a quiet residential area, heads to the busy tourist district and Thai Town, before ending at Sunset Boulevard in Los Feliz district. From the beginning of the panorama on Plaza Drive onwards, one sees luxury real estate with high fences, vegetation and garages. The second segment, between Laurel Canyon Boulevard and La Brea Avenue, shows residential houses surrounded by

open green spaces with very few shops or tourist activity. The busy hustle and bustle is located between La Brea Avenue and El Centro Avenue. One sees different architectural styles, big shopping chains, restaurants, movie theatres; the boulevard is full of traffic and crowds of pedestrians. From Gower Street until the end of the panorama on Hillhurst Avenue, are open spaces, parking lots, low industrial buildings and occasional shops. This sequence starts with isolated private life in the luxury real estates, then moves to socialised private life in the residential buildings, shared social life in the entertainment district and ends with services and consumption goods in the industrial area. The green spaces at the beginning fill the frame leaving no space for the sky. The parking lots at the end are low, there are few trees, and the sky fills the large empty space. By following the panorama one tracks the stages of technological progress and moves from private to public space.

The journey along the boulevard reveals the distinctiveness of black-and-white and colour images in representing the lived space. The monochrome panorama outlines the abstract features of the street while the colour strips bring out its vibrant and diverse life. However, this impact has more complex implications, because the principal aim of the book is to draw attention to changes within a given location. Each renewal in a place is represented as a colourful discrepancy, the margins of which are defined by its transformation. In the opening pages, the author omits some black-and-white strips. On the colour strips one understands that these spaces are covered in vegetation. This reveals that Ruscha's attention was not focused on monotonous and inarticulate areas, but on human diversity and its salient features.

The most striking changes are visible between La Brea Avenue and El Centro Avenue. Most of this area came under the Hollywood Redevelopment Project (HRP) that began in 1986 with the aim of facilitating 'the construction of mixed-use buildings, luxury condominiums, restaurants, clubs, and retail centres'.[39] Buildings were demolished in order to open up space for parking lots, while small independent shops were replaced by chains, many of which are recognisable from their commercial signs. This testifies to the structure of a capitalist city, where the interaction between people is organised around economic means. By comparing the strips, one sees that in the 2000s there were fewer antique shops, photographic studios and bookstores than in the 1970s. This reveals how human interests and activities changed over time.

It was not only the HRP but also the digital revolution – the proliferation of digital photography and reduction of printed books – that altered the street's appearance. Few historical buildings, such as Grauman's Chinese Theatre, remained untouched. Wolf noted that the things that did not change were the 'apartment buildings whose style has been nostalgically maintained or left unchanged through neglect and businesses that provide readymade consumables, efficiency and service: Kentucky Fried Chicken, for example, or Pep Boys auto parts supplier'.[40] Ironically, aside from the entertainment district, the horizontal dimension, which represents chaos and diversity, is populated by small-scale monotonous architecture.

In this late work photobook Ruscha, who associated himself with the West Coast pop movement at the onset of his career advocates the humanistic values of pop

culture, representing it as sunny, diverse and exhilarating. Despite the monotonous passage of the camera corresponding to a 'matrix of capitalistic space', Ruscha never attempts to impose a critical approach. The vast horizontal dimension is employed to emphasise the spread of entertainment, while the reduced vertical dimension represents the break from the traditional hierarchical model of elite culture and its vertically organised social stratification. Lefebvre criticised capitalistic space for introducing a spatial hierarchy inside cities, such as relegating suburban areas while emphasising the centre. Such a hierarchy does not exist on the sunny Boulevard. The realism of colour photography serves to convey an impression of a pleasurable living in the residential area, joyful bustling social life in the centre, and abundance of resources in the industrial zone. Hollywood Boulevard is represented as an open *mise-en-scène*, beefed up by unquestionable well-being, a swinging entertainment industry and proliferating consumerism. Moreover, the repeat photography confirms its longstanding status as an iconic place, where the visitors could freely touch the marks left by the Hollywood movie stars.

Subjective experience of Ruscha's streetscapes

Geographers Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan claim that there is an inherent subjectivity in a photographers' work and soon after the invention of the new media, they shaped the popular image of historically significant places. The authors note that 'photographs create "imaginative geographies" or, in other words, photographs shape perceptions of place'.[41] This assumption is particularly interesting when applied to Ruscha's book, as his intention is to be highly objective and aspire to the strictly documentary in his work.

As Ken Allan notes, Ruscha employs subtle means to depict 'nondescript spaces of Los Angeles'.[42] 'If we take Ruscha's remarks literally about the way his books "give you the act of editing them in your own mind as you move through the pages," then the reader can also use these otherwise unassuming books to imaginatively manipulate the spaces of Los Angeles by following the subtle shifts and reconfigurations that Ruscha employs'.[43] In the case of *Sunset Strip,* the viewer can fold the accordion in different configurations and merge distant parts of the street. Moreover, Allan argues that 'the actual experience of this collection of images is structured by fragmentation' and when holding the book, viewing the entire street at once is impossible: 'To use the book the viewer can adopt a number of different strategies, such as turning it upside down and right side up to see both sides of the street in succession or by unfolding only a small portion at a time'.[44] According to Allan this enforces the experience of representational space. He describes it as 'a form of resistance to abstract space of capital and control'.[45]

Describing this experience, Matt Reynolds employs a more expressive corporeal language: 'To read the book is to handle it, unfold and refold it, walk around it, tilt your head, and crane your neck [...] The eye "shifts up and down, moves between the horizontal and the vertical, and turns around" the large blank area between the panoramas'.[46] Both explanations convey a dynamic experience of lived space,

which represent the inverted strips as hardly legible. The upside-down representation is an exaggerated juxtaposition of the sides of the streets, prioritising it over the viewer's ability to fully explore the south side of the boulevard. The perceptual challenge in *Sunset Strip* is rendered more intricate by the paste-up imperfections of the mismatching facades, which distract the single viewpoint perspective.

In comparison, the book edition of *Then & Now* has a less flexible layout and does not provide freedom to make different configurations of pages. The paste-up process was done digitally resulting in more precise edits, which suggested a unified, single-point perspective. The representation is more accurate, while the division of the panorama on separate pages, the inverted boulevard and the mix of black-and-white and colour photography, all serve to create a sense of imaginative geography. This transition from black-and-white to colour photography is an expressive means commonly used in movies that brings a specific impact. Not only does it juxtapose the primary and secondary features of a composition, the abstract to the particular, but it clearly denotes the distant and the proximate. It differentiates historical periods, memories or flashbacks, fantasies, alternative reality or an idealised plane of existence.[47] Although Ruscha adopted the shift from black-and-white to colour photography as a representation of *then* and *now*, its side-effect is to imply changing states of reality. The phenomenal aspect of this space is one of sudden breaks in routine perception, of encountering memories, a sensation of ascending to a realm of ideas. Emotionally charged places have the capacity to provoke intense experiences of being in-place, to unfold mental geographies and uncover memories of long forgotten events. Such trips in memory are common when visiting a place connected to important, formative or extraordinary moments in life. Thus, the particularities of lived space and their biographical context gain importance.

Since 1974, Ed Ruscha had been working in a studio on North Western Avenue, close to Sunset and Hollywood Boulevards, remaining there over 20 years.[48] Although his intention is documentary, the photobook has an artistic streak which establishes a connection between his well-known detached style and his emotional experience of Los Angeles. Regardless of touristic overflow or consumerist activities, *Then & Now* is the net result of Ruscha's long-term and close personal relationship to his hometown as an ever-changing lived space.

NOTES

1   Ed Ruscha, *Then & Now: Hollywood Boulevard, 1973–2004* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005).
2   Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).
3   William Jenkins, *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape* (New York, NY: The International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1975), 5.
4   Jenkins, *New Topographics*, 5.
5   Kevin Hatch, '"Something Else": Ed Ruscha's Photographic Books', *October,* no. 111 (Winter 2005): 114.
6   Jennifer Quick, 'Pasteup Pictures: Ed Ruscha's *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*', *The Art Bulletin*, no. 100 (2018): 2, 125, see note 5: Alexandra Schwartz, *Ed Ruscha's Los Angeles*

(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010); Richard D. Marshall, *Ed Ruscha* (New York: Phaidon, 2003); Margit Rowell, *Ed Ruscha, Photographer* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art; Gottingen: Steidl, 2006); and Sylvia Wolf, *Ed Ruscha and Photography* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2004).

7   His brother Paul Ruscha assisted with photography and his colleague and friend Jerry McMillan collaborated by documenting the process and printing contact sheets.

8   Quick, 'Pasteup pictures', 130.

9   In 1996, a short strip from *Hollywood Boulevard* was featured in the *Grand Street* magazine. Edward Ruscha, 'From "Hollywood Boulevard," 1973/1995', *Grand Street* no. 56, Sprint (1996): 260.

10 Matt Reynolds, 'Landscape in motion: Nostalgia and urban redevelopment in Ed Ruscha's *Then & Now: Hollywood Boulevard, 1973 – 2004'*. *Journal of Urban History* 41, no. 6 (November 2015): 1064.

11 The collection is made up of 45 hand-coloured prints of etchings and is 18 m (59 ft) long. Ralph Hyde, *Panoramania! The Art and Entertainment of the 'All-embracing' View* (London: Trefoil Publications in association with Barbican Art Gallery, 1988), 124.

12 Reynolds, 'Landscape in motion', 1066.

13 The covers are soft and white with silver type, and the size is small: 18.1x14.3x1.1cm.

14 Quick, 'Pasteup pictures', 143.

15 Sylvia Wolf, *Ed Ruscha and Photography* (Gottingen and New York: Steidl and Whitney Museum of American Art, 2004): 139.

16 Reynolds, 'Landscape in motion', 1056.

17 Quick, 'Pasteup pictures', 148.

18 Ibid.

19 The highly expensive portfolios contain 142 gelatin C-prints on Fuji Crystal Archive Paper, each measuring 70x100cm, signed by the artist and dated and packed in a large, handmade wooden crate.

20 Wolf, *Ed Ruscha*, 141.

21 Wolf, *Ed Ruscha*, 251, note 40: Ed Ruscha in conversation with Sylvia Wolf, 2 June 2003.

22 Quick, 'Pasteup pictures', 148.

23 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 31.

24 Ken Allan, 'Ed Ruscha, Pop Art, and Spectatorship in 1960s Los Angeles', *The Art Bulletin* 92, no. 3 (September 2010): 231-249; Kristen Sharp, 'Destination anywhere: Experiences of place in the work of Ed Ruscha and Andreas Gursky', *Access: Contemporary Issues in Education* 29, no. 1 (2010): 10-20; Ken Allen analyses the experience of handling the book as related to representational space. Kristen Sharp points out that Ruscha's work draws attention to the experience of everyday life in the car and on the street.

25 Japhy Wilson, '"The Devastating Conquest of the Lived by the Conceived": The Concept of Abstract Space in the Work of Henri Lefebvre', *Space and Culture* 16, no. 3 (2013): 364–380.

26 Eugenie Shinkle, 'The city inhabits me: Space, topology, and Gabriele Basilico's *Milano: Ritratti di fabbriche'*, *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 24, no. 8 (2019): 1070-1083. See also chapter 11 of this volume.

27 Davide Deriu, '"A dynamic attitude of the gaze": Gabriele Basilico's sense of vertical space', *The Journal of Architecture,* vol. 24, no. 8 (2019): 1104.

28 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 73.

29 Ivi, 88.

30 Ivi, 227.

31 Ivi, 87.

32 Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 51.

33 Steven Jacobs, 'Leafing through Los Angeles: Edward Ruscha's photographic books', in Andrew Higgott and Timothy Wray, eds., *Camera Constructs: Photography, Architecture and the Modern City* (London: Routledge, 2012), 211.

34 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 227, 126.

35 An exception can be found on the opening pages, at Blvd. no. 8700, where a man is shot face-on in close-up, holding a page with a hand inscription and a black-and-white photograph of a building. This visual pun departs from the style of the book and is probably there to hint at 'repeat photography'.

36 Reynolds, 'Landscape in motion', 1065.

37 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 317.

38 Reynolds, 'Landscape in motion', 1066.

39 Reynolds, 'Landscape in motion', 1053.

40 Sylvia Wolf, 'Frank observations of seemingly uninteresting stuff', *Foam Magazine*, no. 31 (Summer 2012): 108. https://issuu.com/foam-magazine/docs/08_058_ref._all/67

41 Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 6.

42 Allan, 'Ed Ruscha, Pop Art, and Spectatorship': 243.

43 Ivi, 245.

44 Ivi, 246.

45 Ivi, 232.

46 Reynolds, 'Landscape in motion', 1057, quoted Allan, 'Ed Ruscha, Pop Art and Spectatorship', 237.

47 There are many examples of the complex combination of colour and black-and-white in films. In *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) by Victor Fleming, colour differentiates two universes. In *Stairway to Heaven* (1946) by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, the earthly life is in colour and heaven is coolly futuristic. Likewise in Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire*, the juxtaposition of colour and black-and-white gives the sense of overlapping co-existent dimensions. In *American History X* (1998) by Tony Kaye, black-and-white has been used to represent the past, while the present is always in colour, which enhances the sense of immediacy.

48 Ed Ruscha and Alexandra Schwartz, eds., *Leave Any Information at the Signal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 47, 310.

VENICE'S TIME WARP: THE VISUAL METAMORPHOSIS OF A FLOATING CITY
Angelo Maggi

Venice has always occupied a place in popular imagination as an extraordinary visual narrative. Since photographic images first featured on the printed page, 'La Serenissima' has been the subject of numerous photobooks, spanning from the earliest attempts to reproduce the city's architectural beauty on the part of nineteenth-century French publishers such as Noël Marie Paymal Lerebours (1807–1873), up until the most recent dedications to its urban spirit, masterfully captured by such contemporary photographers as Giuseppe 'Bepi' Bruno (1926–1999),[1] Leonio Berto (1963–2019),[2] David Hamilton (1933–2016),[3] Laurent Dequick (b.1961),[4] Leonard Freed (1929–2006),[5] Mark Edward Smith (b.1942),[6] Andrea Pancino (b.1965),[7] Luca Campigotto (b.1962)[8] and many others.

One can approach a photobook as a novel or a visual essay which narrates the metamorphosis of the lagoon-locked city. In selecting images from reportage and various series produced across the years, we see the recurrence of a number of themes, addressed by photographers who share the same passion but deal with their subjects differently. Their photographs become the words of a narrative, divided into episodes: a photographic library that explores social and spatial transformations, new forms of settlement, the city's multidimensional character and the sometimes contradictory relationships that exist in its different social, political and economic dimensions.

We understand the fundamental importance of photography for the cultural and architectural representation of the city, both as an identification tool and as a geographic and informational visual reference. Yet it is worth underlining how the photographic image also informs and inspires the way in which a place is experienced. With the first technical discoveries that allowed us to mechanically fix images on photosensitive materials, static subjects (architecture, initially) became both the testing ground and the only objects that photography could effectively capture due to the long length of time for which the subject needed to remain completely still. During this early period, therefore, the way of reading a city through this new medium developed in the wake of pictorial and engraving traditions, in all their various meanings.

In Venice, the way of capturing the urban subject most favoured by the great nineteenth-century ateliers can best be understood in light of the perspective vision of the Renaissance and the tradition of eighteenth-century picturesque views. 'Portraits' of the city are often linked to the protection of architectural heritage and the study of art on the one hand, and to the touristic image market on the other,

in a work of cataloguing the territory and its monuments that would long influence peoples' perceptions of Venice. Photographers of the calibre of Carlo Naya (1816–1882), Carlo Ponti (1823–1893) and Domenico Bresolin (1813–1900), to name just a few, were among those who presented images of Venice in photographic albums. These were not only souvenirs, they also became the model for numerous twentieth-century photobooks which we will turn to shortly.

We owe the first real attempt to narrate Venice in the photographic publishing industry to Ferdinando Ongania (1842–1911): a talented artist and a great entrepreneur. In addition to his extraordinary visual contribution – comprising a monumental illustration of the whole of St. Mark's Basilica[9] – Ongania embraced the idea of undertaking a commercial project, *Calli e canali in Venezia*, followed by *Calli, canali e isole della Laguna*, which involved him in the production of one hundred heliotype prints, published and distributed between 1890 and 1897.

Ongania's work does not, however, constitute a photobook in the true sense of the word, as the volume consists of a collection of images accompanied by a very short introductory test by Pompeo Molmenti (1852–1928). As the historian Alberto Prandi (1948–2016) explained in a conference at the Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere e Arti, this collection 'borrows substantially from the tradition of the great engraved volumes, albeit in a slightly evolved way' towards what would become 'the context into which photobooks would eventually fit [...] composed almost exclusively from images, or in which the image is critical. Because images can now perform the narrative function, just as text once could'.[10]

The dawn of the twentieth century saw a substantial shift in the tradition of great photographic albums. Venice emerges, via periodical magazines like those published by the Touring Club Italiano, illustrated elegantly in composite photography accompanied by short captions. Touring Club Italiano was founded to reveal 'Italy to the Italians', and perhaps 'Venice to the Venetians': a motto that implied 'not only the knowledge of this still barely-known setting and landscape, but the formation of a public opinion capable of supporting a new sense of patriotic pride directly linked to an attachment to the national territory'.[11] Its publications are still not photobooks in the modern sense of the word. However, they certainly capture a moment of transition in which revelatory urban reportage provided a medium through which to see the city, even while sitting comfortably in front of the fireplace at home.

The first real photography book dedicated to Venice, in which the photographer appears as the author on the front cover, is *Venedig mit der Leica* by Rudolf Pestalozzi (1881–1963), published by the Munich publishing house Bruckmann in 1933. Pestalozzi was a Swiss photographer who arrived in Venice in the 1930s, armed with a device that allowed him to visually chronicle the urban space in sequence, and in quick succession. The Leica camera was a revolution in the mass market of portable cameras, and it ushered in a new critical method through which the photographer could perform the role of an even more analytical, argumentative and therefore authoritative observer. It was almost natural that this photographic project should evolve into an editorial programme. By storytelling through images,

Pestalozzi offers novel visual testimony of Venice. In particular, his oblique or lowered orientation as an elementary but effective means of obtaining guided tension becomes characteristic of his photographic interpretation of the city. Beyond its elegant page layout design, *Venedig mit der Leica* is, first and foremost, an exploration of Venice that renders its topography in detail. Pestalozzi's already modern manner shunned the often superficial curiosity of the Grand Tour to emphasise instead the cognitive and informative faculties of photography.

Photobooks endowed their readers with a better understanding of the city. Photographs, unlike the written word, are not only able to reveal things in a credible way: they also develop a new interactive experience which engages the urban space in all its dimensions. Literary-inspired images of Venice featured little in printed publications during the Second World War. Yet as soon as the war had ended, practising photographers and writers from various disciplinary fields exchanged a range of new approaches to creating numerous Venetian photobooks. As the photographer and historian Italo Zannier (b.1932) declared: 'The fascination with photography, especially as an artistic language, was increasingly fermenting in the city, especially among the young people who were caught up in the exciting events of the new neo-realist cinema'.[12]

During these halcyon years, Venice's photographic representation progressively transformed from an element of pure, simple spectacular attraction, taking on a variety of functions and uses across genres of photographic publishing thanks to the rapid development of printing techniques. Differences between the various tendencies and schools of thought found fertile ground – and became a diverse topic of discussion – among photobook enthusiasts and in the pages of specialist magazines. Particularly profound in marking Venice's new role in the publishing world was an expansive collection of photographs titled *Immagini di Venezia*, published in 1953 by the local photographer Ferruccio Leiss (1890–1968).

The task of coordinating Leiss's magnificent photobook was taken up by the editor Daria Guarnati (1891–1965) with the help of Milanese architect Gio Ponti (1891–1979), who organised the sequence of its 95 images (Fig. 9.1b). Its two short introductions were entrusted to the poet Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) and painter Filippo de Pisis (1896–1956), who were the respective authors of *L'autre face de Venice, ou Venice la gaie* and *Venezia, o la consolazione della pietra*. Both writers highlight the sheer weight of Venice's luminosity: 'A light both glorious and pitiful, cheerful and funerary' in a city described as a 'palace of dreams, a happy land that rises towards the heavens'.[13] The sunlight that glorifies the city's shared spaces and architecture is the same 'silver light of Venice' that feeds Leiss's photographs to 'draw' doors, stairs, porticos and wells. For the photographer, the capriciousness of the water on which the whole city stands is one of the fundamental elements for shooting his images. Nocturnal photographs with artificial lighting and Venetian atmospheres often feature fog. The rhythm of the photobook seems to follow the slow glide of the boats. Indeed it falls to the photographer himself, at the end of the book, to suggest that letting oneself be transported into an environmental (rather than documentary) dimension is how the reader should approach his images.
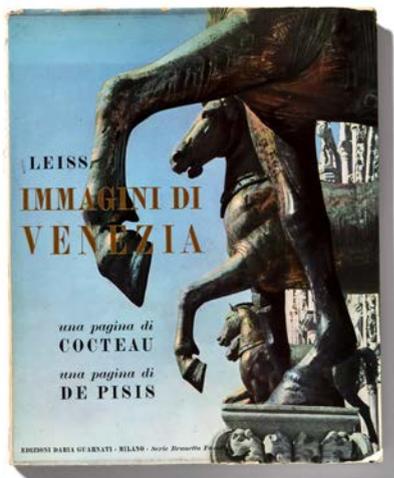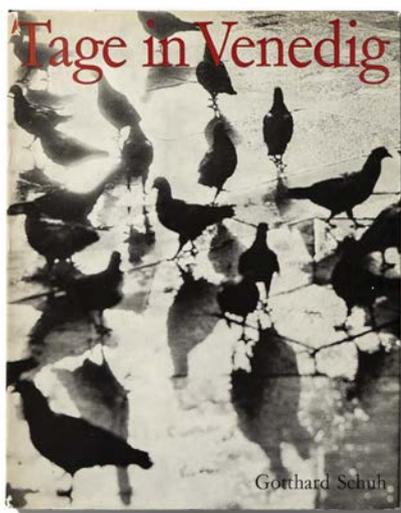
FIGS. 9.1a / 9.1b - Gotthard Schuh, *Tage in Venedig* (1965) on the left and Ferruccio Leiss, *Immagini di Venezia* (1953) on the right

Photography, more than any other medium, lends itself best to establishing and portraying those aspects of Venice that pass by unobserved and underappreciated. In other viewings, the movement of water, while not the primary theme, constitutes an important accessory to complete the composition, provide the tone and render the environmental character. The reader will have instinctively understood the preeminence of the true photographer over his documentary […] Indeed, the documentary illustrates – or, rather, reproduces – the subject with mechanical coldness, which can be useful to the scholar or to the amateur who is already familiar with Venice. Thus they see it again, in all its details, setting the scene in their mind's eye through memory and imagination. Yet whoever is not possessed of such personal abilities, or whoever is entirely or partially unaware of Venice's charm, can extract nothing from a simple, banal documentary. But through the clear, expressive images of real photography, they can experience the same sensations as the photographer feels about his environment.[14]

Leiss's eloquent observation of poetic documentation evokes the expressive research of another photographer, Fulvio Roiter (1926–2018), whose masterly visual lucidity earned him distinction in Venice during the early 1950s. For Roiter, Venice is a place of lyric realism. He was among the first to systematically approach photographic investigation as both poetic expression and visual narration with a strong documentary impact. Without the excessive self-indulgence of amateur photographers, and with a well-defined editorial programme, such as his reportage on Venice, Roiter produced *Venice à fleur d'eau* (1954), which was printed by Europe's most prestigious publishing house of the day, Guilde du Livre in Lausanne (Fig. 9.2b). This memorable photobook brought Roiter to prominence, and he became among the first Italian photographers to break into the international circuit

of photographic publishing. Giuseppe Turroni (b.1930), the foremost authority on Italian photography during those years, underlines that: '*Venice à fleur d'eau* was a photobook of considerable importance. Published one year after Vittorini and Crocenzi's *Conversazioni in Sicilia*, and one year before Strand's *Un paese*, it constitutes a clear demonstration of the wonderful essence of good lyric documentary photography when entrusted to an instinctive temperament like that of Roiter. Venice is not seen with the spirit of Monti, but lives with real sweetness and mysterious languor in the vision of a young man guided by a fervid and intense imagination'.[15]

More than any other photographer of the twentieth century, it was Roiter who contributed most to spreading the myth of Venice around the world, portraying it as a picture-perfect city and tapping into a rich vein of publishing that remained inexhaustible for years. His photobook *Essere Venezia* (Edizioni Magnus, Udine 1978) was an unsurpassed global bestseller with print runs of a million copies, in every language. Between continuous departures from – and returns to – the city, the true scope of his photographic projects was to freeze Venice's beauty in time: its canals, tides and carnival; its palaces and people. What interested him was composing books, publishing and thoroughly telling the story of an idea and a place.

Another significant author of a photography book about Venice was the Swiss photographer Gotthard Schuh (1897–1969). From the mid 1930s, Schuh spent much time in the city with his Leica camera. But it would not be until almost 30 years later, when he was already succumbing to illness, that he decided to complete his book *Tage in Venedig*, which was published in 1965 with texts by the journalist Helbing Hanno (1930–2005).[16] Something that emerges from the volume is Schuh's energetic sociological commitment as a photojournalist, which tends towards the emblematic rather than the descriptive. The photographs, taken in a documentary style, narrate a Venice that is simultaneously demythologised and charged with the powerful allure of its history. Running through the book is a whole strand of research into photography translated into a typographic image in all its various forms. One can make out fragments of canals and surfaces according to a rigidly geometric structure and lit in dramatic *chiaroscuro*. The photobook dust jacket is an essential creative image of Venice experimenting with pigeons at St. Mark's Square in the style of the *Subjektive Fotografie* of the late 1940s. The true subject of this photograph is not movement, but the location of pure energy and the shape of motion's underlying dynamic, which Schuh believed to be an essential property of reality. Covers like this, whose effects exceed what visual imagery alone can express and what can properly reside in the mind's eye, are like visual fields of abstract space in which conceptual play is as important as visible fact or pictorial structure (Fig. 9.1a).

The year that Schuh's book was published was the same in which *Venis des Saisons*, the debut photobook by the adopted Venetian photographer Gianni Berengo Gardin (b.1930), first came into print, published by Guilde du Livre (Fig. 9.2a). Five years previously, in 1960, Berengo Gardin had worked for Bruno Zevi (1918–2000), taking architectural shots for an exhibition and catalogue dedicated to the Ferrarese architect Biagio Rossetti (1447–1516). Although this was a commissioned work dedicated to Ferrara's Renaissance architecture, the numerous photographs

FIGS. 9.2a / 9.2b - Gianni Berengo Gardin, *Venis des Saisons* (1965) on the left and Fulvio Roiter, *Venice à fleur d'eau* (1954) on the right

never took the shape of a photobook in which the photographer had autonomy in selecting the images. We see the same with the photographs for the volume *Le Case Fondaco sul Canal Grande* (1961) where Berengo Gardin's entire visual apparatus becomes just a vehicle for the study of Venetian civil architecture from the ninth to thirteenth century. The volume features texts by Giorgia Scattolin, but we can say that these works, together with other minor commissions, led the photographer to mature his own language for interpreting the city in his editorial masterpiece. 'Unpredictable and torturous' was how photography historian Peter Galassi (b.1951) defined the journey linked to the inception of *Venis des Saisons*[17]. 'Everything was as envisaged and imagined' writes Mario Soldati (1906–1999) in the introduction to the volume that was to proclaim the success that had marked the photographer's career, with 10,000 copies bound for subscribers of Guilde du Livre and some printed copies by Éditions Clairfontaine destined for general sale. Berengo Gardin's publication presents an image of Venice in which the protagonists begin to be no longer the monuments nor the city in its own form but perhaps the people, with a truly surprising synchronicity. According to Zannier, *Venis des Saisons* is 'a book made up of diachronic photographs, thereby summarising a long enterprise, with which the author attains definitive international recognition. Upon a second reading of the images, the volume appears extremely transgressive in its traditional iconography and is by far the most actively engaged photobook about Venice. Its circulation around Italy was, however, limited, despite a later splendid edition by Massimo Baldini in 1981, but the volume was published in France, Germany

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FIG. 9.3 - Leonio Berto, *Venice cruise in the waters near St.Marks's Square*, mignon, 2016.

and Switzerland'.[18] *Venis des Saisons* evocatively summarises Berengo Gardin's style while echoing and paying homage to the grandmasters of photobooks from the twentieth century, including Édouard Boubat (1923–1999), Izis Bidermanas (1911–1980), Brassaï (1899–1984), Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004) and William Klein (1926–2022).

Over the last fifty years, Berengo Gardin has, on average, published four or five books each year, reaching a remarkable total of more than 200 photobooks. Galassi suggests that no comparable figures exist in Italy, among the world of photography from the second half of the twentieth century, whose photographic work is so deeply rooted in photobooks or who have produced them in such numbers.[19] *Venezia e la sua laguna* (1964), *Immagine di Venezia* (1970), *Tempo veneziano* (1974), *Venezia: Una storia d'amore* (1981), which was designed by Massimo Vignelli (1931–2014) with a series of diptychs that the photographer himself describes as extraordinary, *Giardini segreti a Venezia* (1988), *Le isole della Laguna di Venezia, Un universo inesplorato* (1988), *Gianni Berengo Gardin: Gli anni di Venezi*a (1994), *Veneziani* (2002), *Venezia* (2006), *Caffè Florian* (2013), *Venezia e le Grandi Navi* (2015), are the eleven photobooks that Berengo Gardin dedicated to Venice in the wake of *Venis des Saisons'* success. His latest printed volume, published by Contrasto, caused a stir for the photographer's denunciation of the imposing presence of large cruise ships, which would pass along the canal of Venice's Giudecca in the pre-Covid era, obscuring the urban scenery and upsetting the city's fragile and precarious equilibrium. The architect Vittorio Gregotti (1927–2020), who writes the preface of this

photobook, calls them 'the huge maritime condos of modern cruise ships, with their menacing extraneousness, an almost extraterrestrial presence, dwarfing Venice's historic centre and the noble presence of its history'.[20]

The photographic medium furnishes both the images and the instruments to enlarge, reduce, manipulate, cut out and combine photographs with other graphic elements, including text. In journals, these instruments cause the independent voice of photographers to dissipate in what Peter Galassi defines as the 'collective racket' of mass communication.[21] Books, by contrast, provide a space to shelter from that racket – a semi-autonomous reality in which the photographer and a restricted number of collaborators can carry out their creative experiments. This is certainly the case of the colossal volume *Invito a Venezia*, published by Ugo Mursia in 1962.

The photographer that accompanies the reader with his 125 monochrome and 35 colour photographs is Ugo Mulas (1928–1973). He explores the city in a completely unprecedented manner, creating a hybrid visual narrative of the city and its art *tout court*. Venice is photographed through its surfaces, as is evident from the cover image: St. Mark's basin and its gondolas together with the outline of the Palladian church of San Giorgio in Isola which is filtered through the architectural detail of the Palazzo Ducale's loggia. Starting out in what we might define as a neorealistic territory, with a peculiar vivid colour image occupying the cover and a tarry black and white tone within the text, Mulas assumes the identity of a conceptual artist. Venice is portrayed within its own spaces. Mulas does not depart substantially from a penetrating exploration of the city, entering its monuments with atmospheric photographs which are interspersed with alluring details from works of art. Fundamentally, Mulas's itinerary blends the wealth of urban gazes with the fine magnificence of Venetian sculpture and painting, extending an irresistible invitation to intimately uncover the city.

The photographer Franco Fontana (b.1933) also took on Venice's sublime landscape in a series entitled *Presenze Veneziane*.[22] In 1980, he produced a volume for the Milanese editor Maurizio Rossi in which colour was no longer taken as objective fact but was blended into an energetic *chiaroscuro*, hitherto unheard of in this kind of photography and photobook. As far as colour photography manuals are concerned, Fontana's is the definitive transcript, dictating that only soft light should be considered, without contrasts that exceed the relationship between light and dark. Fontana captures chromatic differences as if they were black and white, obtaining a kind of watercolour image that is at once delicate and controlled. As Achille Bonito Oliva (b.1939) has observed: '*Presenze Veneziane* has the qualities of a tale told through images which, rather than indulge in cliché, seeks an approach that oscillates between documentation and abstraction. Fontana's photographic textuality is constructed in such a way that Venice appears to have been traversed by a net area's use of colour and the transmutation of its water'.[23] Building on the themes of the water's transmutation and Venice's fluctuating surfaces, we cannot but reflect on Lord Snowdon's contribution of a bilingual volume in landscape format *Una Immagine a Venezia / A View of Venice* (1972) designed by Germano Facetti (1926–2006) and published by Olivetti. Lord Snowdon, Antony Charles Robert

FIG. 9.4 - Lord Snowdon, *Una Immagine di Venezia / A View of Venice* (1972) design Germano Facetti and published by Olivetti

Armstrong-Jones (1930–2017), never completed his course on architecture, and at 21 took up photography as a career, setting up a studio of his own in London. He later became the photographer for *The Sunday Times*, *Vogue*, and *The Telegraph Magazine*. His Venice photobook is a profusely illustrated volume featuring full-colour photographs of Venice and its denizens (Fig. 9.4). It is an attractively produced book and an important social document, and was originally given as a corporate gift in very small quantities.

> The beautiful photographs that make up the present volume have caught some of the aspects of Venice — a city with a unique geographical setting, rich in visible testimony to a glorious past, abounding in the heritage of great eras in the history of art, yet devoid of present purpose so that, with the civilised and gentle patience of its inhabitants, its mode of daily life is utterly different from that of any other city and any other place. All Venice becomes a ghetto, a vast convent: a closed circle, that is, where life goes on in its own special way, with its own rules. Snowdon's photographs capture this special life of small, everyday occurrences set against a background of great monuments, or against that type of Venetian architecture which is called 'lesser' because, to be really critical, it is not in itself monumental, but which is essential to Venice and indeed *is* Venice, since Venice is not only a city of many monuments or whole quarters that are monumental, but is a single monument in its entirety.[24]

Photography is almost always assigned the task of visualising the appearance of Venice in order to fix its image before it undergoes change. The photobooks that have featured up to this point not only play a role as instruments of information, they are also read as a conditioning element of the cultural system insofar as our very idea of Venice undergoes systematic transformation precisely through these photobooks. Thus, for all these photographers who worked to see their efforts in print, the preferred medium of the photobook reaches a wider audience, and it becomes the principal form of their individual communication.

Venice serves as the scene of a decisive evolution in the history of its photobooks. In 1982, the need was felt to transform photography into a narrative act ac-
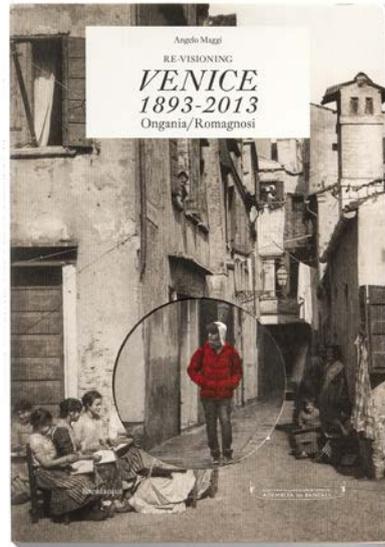
FIG. 9.5 - Angelo Maggi, *Re-Visioning Venice 1893-2013 Ongania/Romagnosi* (2013), design Giorgio Camuffo, cover first edition on the left and cover second edition on the right

cording to a reading that entails contemplating the city, revealing its changing contours and commenting on its urban development. This leads us to the town planner Edoardo Salzano (1930–2019) who was given charge of drafting Venice's urban development plan from 1981 to 1985. His idea inspired a photographic campaign to produce a 1:500 scale colour plan of Venice's historic centre. This static precursor to Google Earth's online mapping was never intended to be usable for an audience of readers (or rather of photobook readers). It would fall to the Venetian publishing house Marsilio to draw up an editorial project, with an intersection of Jacopo de' Barbari's sixteenth-century bird's-eye view and the evolutionary interpretation of cartography through its publication of the *Atlanti* series, starting from the aerial photograph of the city itself. Atlases are made to imagine worlds, dream of horizons or perceive an unknown elsewhere. *Atlante di Venezia* (Atlas of Venice, 1982) was the first of a long and successful series which glorified this scientific approach and the supremacy of aerial photography. This photobook (if we can call it that) has drawn interest not only among academics, architects and town planners but also citizens, travellers and visitors as a tool that provides an immediate reading of the constructed city. It encompasses built up areas as well as relational spaces; monuments as well as minor buildings; public spaces, canals and hidden, remote places: reconstructing a unitary, completed image of the city. Visually absorbing a city, observing it from on high and discovering its most recondite corners evokes a special pleasure, a sense of subtle intoxication imbued by the unveiling of its most intimate

and unknown secrets that only the immediacy of the image can offer. This is all the more accentuated in the case of Venice, a special place *par excellence* whose foundation is immersed in mythical history. *Atlante di Venezia* therefore becomes simultaneously a photograph open to interpretation and an instrument of technical knowledge, as well as a faithful reflection of an often secret reality, well hidden from casual inquiry. It preserves Venice's urban form and dimensions in scale, just like a traditional map. Yet it does not do so to the exclusion of dynamic subjects and fleeting flashes of real life.

We devote our final thought to the reprographic survey of Ongania's *Calli e canali in Venezia* by the contemporary photographer Giampaolo Romagnosi (b.1966), published as a photobook entitled *Re-Visioning Venice 1893–2013*. Romagnosi recovers the sense of time by means of facing pairs of images. The two editions of the volume present an obsessive search for the exact camera angle with which Ongania immortalised Venice (Fig. 9.5). The project takes place in the physical space, just as Ongania's had. However Romagnosi's journey through time in search of the points of view of the Venetian places favoured by the nineteenth-century photographer was much more demanding and interesting. Throughout the course of his work, Romagnosi became stylistically more audacious; during his search for missing places he decided to entrust recognition to two large format cameras: a Lupa Fantuz 10x12 (65 and 47 mm) and a Hasselblad 503 (80 and 40 mm). Each place was photographed two to five times in the different formats. His commendable work finds confirmation in the pages of an extraordinary book designed by Giorgio Camuffo Lab for Lineadacqua editions. As the photographer of the modern images points out: 'all shots of St Mark's Square, the Doge's Palace and the Grand Canal were omitted by choice'. The most stereotypical views for a 're-photographic survey' are certainly also the least attractive from a communicative point of view. So Romagnosi concentrated his search on the scenes most difficult to identify, leaving a map of the 191 camera angles shown in *Calli e canali in Venezia*. We read about the absence of one unidentified pictures, but history can alter and erase places. Even the most adamant of photographers cannot dig up the image of a *vera da pozzo* (well head) or a square that has been swept away by time. All that remains, as Romagnosi himself points out, is to identify the *genius loci* of cities like a 'diachronic flâneur, in the style of Walter Benjamin, capable of studying the past in the present, of reconstructing and safeguarding the memory linked to places'.[25]

The informative value of *Re-Visioning Venice 1893–2013* evokes all the examples by Pestalozzi, Leiss, Roiter, Berengo Gardin, Fontana and Lord Snowdon introduced and analysed above. The sequences of photos dialectically linked to one another, page after page, bring out both the permanence and the changes of the lagoon city which would pass by unobserved and underappreciated were it not for the visual documentation of those who made Venice their subject.

NOTES

1   Giuseppe Bruno, text by Alvise Zorzi, *Venezia e un popolo della laguna* (Milan: Longanesi, 1978); Giuseppe Bruno, text by Fernand Braudel, *Il respiro di Venezia* (Verona: Cierre edizioni, 1987).

2   Leonio Berto, text by Angelo Maggi, *Venice, Any Colour You Like* (Verona: Mignon Le Rondini, EBS, 2013).

3   David Hamilton, text by Peter Lauritzen, *Venise* (Paris: Vilo,1989).

4   Laurent Dequick, *Grand Canal* (Vanves: Éditions du Chêne, 2019).

5   Leonard Freed and Claudio Corrivetti, *Venice/Venezia* (Rome: Postcart edizioni, 2006).

6   Mark Smith with Umberto Franzoi, *Canal Grande* (Venice: Arsenale editrice, 1993).

7   Andrea Pancino, text by Leonardo Driusso, *Venezia: il silenzio della bellezza. 59 foto per 59 giorni / Venice: the silence of beauty. 59 shots for 59 days* (Crocetta del Montello/Treviso: Antiga edizioni, 2020).

8   Luca Campigotto, text by Tiziano Scarpa, *Venezia Storie d'acqua* (Milan: Silvana editoriale, Cinisello Balsamo, 2019). See also by the same photographer *Venice exposed* (Rome: Contrasto, London: Thames & Hudson, and Paris: La Martinière, 2006); *Venetia Obscura* (Rome: Peliti Associati, Paris: Marval, and Stockport: Dewi Lewis, 1995).

9   See Maria da Villa Urbani and Irene Favaretto, eds., *Ferdinando Ongania: La Basilica di San Marco 1881–1893*, exhibition catalogue (Venice, 16 July–27 November 2011), (Venice: Marsilio, 2011).

10   We refer to Alberto Prandi's speech entitled 'L'immagine di Venezia nell'editoria fotografica negli anni '30-'60' at the Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, given on 17 April 2013, during the exhibition *L'ultima Venezia: Fotografie di Gotthard Schuh* at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6UmaM7sk54.

11   Fabio Mangone, 'Together and Alongside Public Institutions: An Avant-Garde for Landscape and Architecture, 1904–1921' in G. Belli, F. Mangone and R. Sessa, eds., *L'Italia del Touring Club, 1894–2019*, special edition n. 1/2021 of *Storia dell'Urbanistica* (Palermo: Caracol, 2021), 20. See also Chapter 11 in this volume, footnote 25.

12   Italo Zannier, 'Ansie di realismo e ricerca di un linguaggio' in Italo Zannier, ed., *Fotografia a Venezia nel dopoguerra da Ferruccio Leiss al Circolo 'La Gondola'* (Florence: Alinari-Craf, 2005), 5.

13   Ferruccio Leiss, *Immagini di Venezia* (Milan: Edizioni Daria Guarnati, 1953), 14.

14   Ivi, 121.

15   Giuseppe Turroni, *Nuova Fotografia Italiana* (Milan: Schwarz Editore, 1959), 50.

16   See Gotthard Schuh, *Tage in Venedig* (Zurich: Ex Libris, 1965).

17   Peter Galassi, 'I libri di Gianni Berengo Gardin', in Bruno Carbone, ed., *Gianni Berengo Gardin il libro dei libri*, (Rome: Contrasto, 2014), 10.

18   Giovanni Chiaramonte, R. Martinez and Italo Zannier, *Gianni Berengo Gardin fotografo 1953–1988* (Udine: Arté, 1988), 51.

19   See the essay by Peter Galassi, 'I libri di Gianni Berengo Gardin', in Carbone, 7–13.

20   Gianni Berengo Gardin, *Venezia e le Grandi Navi* (Rome: Edizioni Contrasto, 2015), 71.

21   Galassi, 'I libri di Gianni Berengo Gardin', in Carbone, 9.

22   Franco Fontana, *Presenze Veneziane* (Modena: Maurizio Rossi Editore, 1980).

23   Italo Zannier, *Sublime fotografia. Il Veneto* (Venice: Corbo e Fiore editori, 1992), 23.

24   From the introduction by Bruno Visentini in Lord Snowdon and Derek Hart, *Una Immagine a Venezia / A View of Venice* (Zurich: Conzett & Huber, 1972), 10.

25   Angelo Maggi, *Re-Visioning Venice 1893-2013 Ongania/Romagnosi* (Venice: Lineadacqua edizioni, 2013), 18.

10

CITIES AND ARCHITECTURE IN LATIN AMERICA: THE IMMERSIVE CARTOGRAPHY OF LEONARDO FINOTTI'S PHOTOBOOKS

Maria Pia Fontana and Miguel Mayorga

In the midst of the digital age, there has been increased interest in the study of photography and, paradoxically, an interest in the revision and revaluation of the printed photobook as a physical object. Though it is difficult to give a clear definition of the photobook, we can suppose that it is an editorial product that emerged thanks to the technological evolution of the first illustrated publications that were developed by the historical avant-gardes in such a way that the book format is conceived as physical support that together with the photographs forms a single, compact and harmonious entity.[1] The history of photography has already been dealt with but comparatively less attention has been paid to the *photobook phenomenon* which, for many photographers and architects, has become the most appropriate vehicle to make their work visible and to establish more elaborated forms of communication than photographs alone. The photobook can be aimed at a wider audience and with greater impact.

We should refer here to the three-volume work by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History* in which the authors provide an overview of the development of the photobook from its inception to the dawn of photography in the early nineteenth century.[2] They reveal a lesser-known network of influences and interrelationships between photographers and photographic movements around the world. The photographs and images of the photobooks are accompanied by texts that contextualise the most significant examples from an artistic and cultural point of view. The covers and the posters are also researched as complementary products to understand the message of the books. In addition, it is essential to mention the work of Horacio Fernández, whose research publications on photobooks include *Public Photography* (1999), *The Latin American Photobook* (2011), and the exhibition 'Photos and Books: Spain 1905–1977' (2015) which brought together a selection of photographic books from the collection of the Museo Reina Sofía. Fernández was also a member of the international curator team for the exceptional exhibition 'Photobook Phenomenon'[3] held in Barcelona. There they offer new perspectives on the importance and impact that the photobook has had on the visual culture of our time, tracing a journey from its beginnings to major contemporary productions.

Joan Fontcuberta has also emphasised the importance of the photobook stating that 'photography makes more sense in a book than in an exhibition', and that 'very few photographs are taken to be exhibited in galleries and museums, and in essence, their museification is an act against its nature'.[4] These provocative assertions

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open up a space for discussion and debate proper to the field of architecture and urban planning because they focus on a different way of communicating and disseminating information about the buildings and urban spaces of cities. As for the photographic documentation of cities and architecture, there is an ample and varied group of referenced authors, architectural photographers, and architects with a camera who have compiled a whole heritage of visual data. These images not only show places, spaces, and buildings from different moments but also display different perspectives by which we can identify different methods and ways of seeing. They are approaches in which we can intersect the circumstances of time and place, as well as the conditions or requirements of the client, depending on the type of commission assigned. City and architecture photographers worldwide have made key contributions to shaping the visual universe of reference in contemporary society. The relationship between city, architecture and photography is becoming a field of research related to visual culture as a result and as a process.

It is worth remembering that the link between modern reflective looking and the city marked the careers of representative visual artists of modern European and American photography and cinema: the Paris of Atget, Brassaï, Krull and Kertész; Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927); Stieglitz, Strand and Abbott's New York. In Latin America, the same happened with leading photographers who portrayed modern cities and their architecture: Horacio Coppola's Buenos Aires, the Bogotá of Paul Beer or Saúl Orduz, Marcel Gautherot's Brasilia, Rene Combeau's Santiago de Chile, Guillermo Zamora's Mexico City, Paolo Gasparini's Caracas, among many others.[5] The correlations and influences between architecture and photography establish close associations and mutual repercussions in their diffusion and knowledge: 'The architecture of Le Corbusier, Neutra or Mies Van der Rohe is inseparable from the eye of Lucien Hervé, Julius Shulman and Ezra Stoller, among others, photographers who have produced images capable of initiating a new architectural visual culture'.[6]

In his introduction to the book dedicated to Julius Shulman, one of the most influential architectural photographers of the twentieth century, Pierluigi Serraino explains that architectural memory strategies depend on three fundamental factors: *architectural photographers*, whose eye becomes an 'interpretive act' of the reality of a building; *editorial policies*, as a means of selecting and filtering images; and *media coverage*, which becomes a tool for guaranteeing diffusion and access to every kind of audiences.[7] Although urban photography had its own evolution in European and North American cities, gaining greater recognition, in the case of Latin America it is important to highlight the parallel development of urban transformations under the precepts of modern architecture and its close relationship with photography. 'Modernity implied a new way of looking. [...] Latin American architecture opened up horizons in Europe and North America, and their photographers were key agents in its development, and influenced the horizon of what a whole generation could long for. The history of photography published so far omits the extensive and valuable Latin American landscape, a shortcoming that needs to be remedied'.[8]

In *The Latin American Photobook*, Horacio Fernández proposes a new vision of the relationship between the photobook and the city through 'hundred of works of great value and complexity, which reveal the enormous contribution of Latin America to the history of the photobook and some of the best-kept secrets in the history of photography'.[9] He does so through the study of the production in eleven countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Venezuela) from 1920 to the present. Fernández highlights the value of the work of great authors such as Horacio Coppola, Claudia Andujar, Boris Kossoy, Paz Errázuriz, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Miguel Rio Branco or Paolo Gasparini, and publisher/designers such as Massao Ohno, Wesley Duke Lee, Alvaro Sotillo or Vicente Rojo, bringing to light some of the most significant urban photobooks of the last hundred years, largely unknown to the general public. The selected photobooks show Latin American cities from different points of view, offering a vision of architecture, streets, city life and people as a single, indivisible urban entity.

Photography, photobooks, exhibitions

All of these premises frame and explain some of the reasons for our interest in the work of the Brazilian architectural photographer Leonardo Finotti. He shows a renewed look at modern and contemporary Latin American architecture, as well as the construction processes of the formal and informal city. A look at Latin America from a Latin American perspective could be a good way to describe Finotti's work. His work can be considered as a continuous exploration and immersion in architectural landscape and urban Latin American context in which personal interests, experiences and issues are considered as well as the professional concerns and innovations in the techniques and methods used. It is an approach to the relationship between architecture and photography as visual arts linked to each other, to show how their mutual impact and influence develop and evolve, evidencing new perceptions of the reality that surrounds us.

Finotti's work shows a complex view of architecture and the city, as a continuation of the photobook tradition in Latin America to which Fernández refers. The photography and the graphic narrative associated with it are forms of representation that promote the communication and diffusion of architecture and the city through 'multiple points of view and interpretations to build a museum imagery with new cartographies'.[10] Finotti recounts his beginnings as a photographer of Latin American architecture, when he was commissioned to produce the exhibition '100 years, 100 photos, 100 Oscar Niemeyer works' curated by M.J. De Castro in 2007: 'I was living in Portugal, but I knew that doing research about Niemeyer would necessarily lead me to Brazil. I highlight this as the first important aspect: it was a way of reconnecting with the architecture of my country, with the climate and geography that are so special in Brazil. It was also my first encounter with modern architecture in Latin America, which would then be one of the central lines of my work'.[11]

That first work on Niemeyer led Finotti to explore an unknown terrain, because in his own words 'South America does not have a great culture in terms of documentation, and with respect to architecture, Latin American modernism has been underestimated'.[12] This turns him into a cultural activist who portrays Latin America from a new and different perspective, showing architecture, places, and spaces from more austere and unprecedented angles, linking the modern architectural tradition with an urban and contemporary dimension. Jorge Gambini explains:

> It is undeniable that architectural photography mixes with other visual practices from the world of art, science, advertising, journalism and, currently, renderings and even video games. Extra-architectural influences drive its development from the outside, affecting the balance of its conventions and expanding its scope and vocabulary. Ultimately, there is always the pulse of the photographer that maintains the validity of that specific relationship between the object and the eye that is the photographic image and the photography of precision.[13]

According to Finotti, 'The problem of Latin American architecture, in general, is one of evaluation and care'.[14] Through his own work, he exercises a brand of cultural activism that is based on the need to document and construct a contemporary Latin American workable visual history, capable of transmitting a contrasted reality that combines modernity, contemporaneity, informality and natural landscape. 'Finotti details through colour the contemporary circumstances of modern buildings in Brazil, and he does so through the composition of almost hieratic frames. He adopts a *frontal* approach that treats photography almost as an extension of architectural design, favouring a frontal approach to the building that highlights the two-dimensionality of the image and, therefore, its character as a representative artifice, as opposed to editorial image clippings, highlighting the geometric rigor in the construction of his compositions, tributaries of a concrete discipline. The search for the exact framing is a constant, evident in the coincidence of the lines of the image with the vertices of its edges'.[15] All of these aspects define its pulse and brand: the construction of new imaginaries on Latin America and the precision, rigour and accuracy of the images produced.

Through photographs, photobooks, exhibitions and posters Finotti creates a unique and personal point of view. However, it is important to consider that his creative process includes various strategies, products and different composition strategies. It is an interesting fusion that he calls 'expographies' in which architecture, cities and places are shown through his particular way of framing reality.

Three approaches towards architecture and the city

In this section, we present three approaches adopted by Finotti in the construction of his visual narratives of cities: the trilogy *Uma Coleção di Architettura Moderno na América Latina 2016–2019*; the pair of photobooks *Rio Enquadrado* (2016) and *Rio Reenquadrado* (2018), and the photobook *Futebol: Urban Euphoria in Brazil* (2014). Through these photobooks, the author deploys a complex, dynamic and multifaceted creative process to develop a visual map of Latin American cities. It hi-

FIG. 10.1 – Leonardo Finotti, *A Collection of Latin American Modern Architecture* (2016, 2019) cover and book spread

ghlights – through convergences, divergences and contrasts – authors, projects and urban spaces, well-known and less-known within the architectural and urban reality of different countries or cities.

In 2015, the Museum of Modern Art in New York organised the exhibition 'Latin America in Construction: Architecture 1955–1980', the third in a series dedicated to modern Latin American architecture. After G. E. Kidder Smith in 1943 and R. McKenna in 1955, Leonardo Finotti was the photographer in charge of making a photographic report to show modern buildings, with a marked urban character, in various Latin American cities. The aim of this project has its origin in the photographer's own reflection, which starts from the opportunity to provide a new look at Brazil, his own country, and then extends to the entire region. By way of personal research, Finotti carries on with the work he began with MoMA and continues his photographic journey portraying buildings in different cities in Latin America with the aim of offering a renewed and current vision of them.

Latinitudes is a photographic project by the artist conceived in São Paulo in 2015. The photographer establishes a first linear narrative through the digital publication of a photobook, in which he shows nine cities: Havana (Cuba), Mexico Ci-

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ty (Mexico), Caracas (Venezuela), Bogotá (Colombia), São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Valparaíso (Chile), Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Montevideo (Uruguay). The book can be opened from the front or from the back, and the cities are ordered according to two criteria: those that are coloured according to their latitude, from west to east; and those in black and white, from south to north, thus breaking the typical north-south approach. *Latinitudes*, a word that can be translated as 'Latinities', or a mixture of 'latitude' and 'Latinity', represents an identity that vindicates a necessarily broad vision of the territory of the continent. It is structured through different realities in a new visual construction of the Latin American city and its architecture. Geographically distant works, conceived and built in different periods, appear ordered by the eye of the photographer into a new imaginary and real map; a cartography in which the cities are arranged in such a way as to once again express Finotti's nonconformity with typical approaches to Latin American cities and architecture as seen from Europe or America.

The *Latinitudes* project has been exhibited and shown in various contexts with variations. The first printed publication of the trilogy in the form of a photobook by Lars Müller is an important effort to revalue this architecture. By showing it as a phenomenon that transcends the cities and borders of Latin America, the mapping process continues to develop as Finotti's research project through photography, expography and editorial production. In this case, eight cities are depicted (Montevideo, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Bogotá, Caracas, Mexico City and Havana) in colour photographs and ordered from south to north. In line with Finotti's other photobooks, each piece of architecture has its own character: looking at buildings in sequence stimulates a dialogue between the pages, the cities, the architects, the elements, the materials and the urban realities, proposing a new interpretation of what architecture and the modern city has been and what it can continue to be (Fig. 10.1).

The *Rio Enquadrado* project was born as a catalogue of an exhibition curated by M.J. De Castro, held in the Casa do Brasil Museum (MCB), an institution of the Ministry of Culture of the State of São Paulo. Eighty unpublished photographs of the city of Rio de Janeiro were exhibited. The desire to pay tribute to Rio de Janeiro arose during the celebration of the city's 450th anniversary in 2015, with a selection of projects. Here Finotti highlights the relationships between the public and the private, the interior and the exterior, and the city and the landscape, expressing the city's unique relationship with nature through the interventions of man, mainly by means of architecture.

A further interpretation of the city of Rio was recently achieved through a selection of 20 of the 80 photographs entitled *Rio de Janeiro en 20 mirades* curated by M.P. Fontana and J.M. Torra, held in Girona, Spain. Unlike the usual format used by Finotti, based on a 2:3 ratio and in colour, the photographs in this exhibition are all black-and-white and square, 80cm x 80cm. This forced framing cut establishes a new working hypothesis and relationship between Finotti and his existing archive of images of Rio de Janeiro (started in 2007 and made up of approximately 5,000 photographs). This interpretation of his work, a kind of photography of existing photographs, through new frames, has made him reveal not only different

FIG. 10.2 – Leonardo Finotti, *Río Enquadrado* (2016) cover and book spread

aspects of those images and of the city through a sophisticated eye but also represents a work of recomposition and correlation between the selection in an existing collection, the creation of an exhibition with a specific format and the edition and graphic design of a photobook. A complex and articulated process that shows the cross-cutting vision of the photographer and the expressive and creative possibilities of the same material (Fig. 10.2).

Subsequently, with the 2016 photobook *Río Reenquadrado*, the artist once again played with his photographs of the architectural landscapes of Rio de Janeiro based on his previous work *Río Enquadrado*. This time his work revises its predecessor and the creative process continues. Along with Mariutti and A. Viggiani, Finotti was responsible for the design of the photobook as an art object. His first artist's book, as he likes to call it, in which the challenge of visual storytelling consists of using the photographs within a new compositional exploration based on the design of an ordered sequence of images arranged like a pop-up book that allows combinations and compositions of new images, a sort of 'exquisite corpse' created through the rigorous images of modern architecture, urban spaces but also anonymous or informal places in Rio.

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FIG. 10.3 – Leonardo Finotti, Río Reenquadrado (2018) cover, back cover, book spread, design by Julio Mariutti and Alice Viggiani

Through the physical design of the book, the readers have the possibility of making associations, collages, superimpositions and graphic intersections of images, allowing them to personalise their narratives and thus develop an active and operative view in the construction of the multiple and multifaceted image of the city in which the ambivalent relationship between nature, the urban landscape and architecture predominates, are shown, depending on the observer's look, as projects of artificial landscapes or architectures in the landscape (Fig. 10.3).

The point of view is undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of Finotti's urban narratives. From 2007 until the publication of the photobook *Futebol: Urban Euphoria in Brazil*, he made several helicopter flights that allowed him to contemplate the city of São Paulo from above. These allowed him to complete the record of various ongoing projects carried out by the municipality, which led him to discover the importance of football fields as crucial public spaces in the configuration of Brazilian cities. In the editor's notes, we can read the following:

... in Brazil, football is more than a sport. It is the hope of a better future, a distraction from everyday life, a creator of identity and community. If there is no ball nearby, people kick fruit or cans; when there is no field, they make one. Football marks the soul of the Brazilian people, as well as the image of the city and the landscape. Any land that is a bit flat and has not grown too much has become a football field. Although there is a lack of meeting places, parks or town centres, there is always a *campo de pelada*, a bare field.[16]

Through his first photobook project on football fields and their relationship with the city, Finotti created an inventory of 80 photographs that he published in 2013 under the title *Sacred Fields*. In this photobook, he showed a wide variety of temporary and 'real' football fields, with their surroundings, contours and relationship with the building fabric or with the empty space of the suburbs, in different neighborhoods, rich and poor, in industrial zones and in urban outskirts. As an evolution of this first panoramic record, he later contributed to the exhibition and photobook *Futebol: Urban Euphoria in Brazil* (2014) together with the photographer Ed Viggiani. In this collaborative project, curated by the architectural designer Michelle Jean De Castro with the collaboration of Lars Müller, Finotti shows the space of the field from an urban point of view and Viggiani from the point of view of social relations and the movements of the players.

The layout of the photos on the gallery wall responds to one of the different combinatorial possibilities of the players in an imaginary and abstract football field that exists through the relationship between the images. In Finotti's aerial shots, different physical realities overlap and intersect, showing the contrast between the natural space, the buildings, the public spaces, the streets and the people, with the vast and geometrically ordered football field paradoxically becoming a large square and the only urban element capable of ordering the surrounding space.

The work of photographers and the diffusion in specialised architecture publications, the production, and publication of photographic reports of representative urban spaces and buildings, reveal a descriptive view, which intentionally enunciates and formalises a criticism, which is decisive in the construction of new urban images associated with a building.[17]

Finotti takes a new approach to Latin American architecture and manages to place us in a new critical position, breaking many stereotypes and clichés.

A contemporary look at Latin American cities

The common denominator of the three specific cases analysed is Finotti's focus on the look towards Latin America, which reveals the importance of photobooks in his production as privileged tools of dissemination and diffusion. The first aspect is that, as a photographer specialising in architecture, Finotti has a defined and recognisable style as confirmed by the display of his work on his personal website. On the occasion of the 2019 exhibition organised at COAC (College of Architects of Catalonia) in collaboration with the University of Girona, the photographer referred to some invariants in his approach to photography: his preference for frontal perspectives; the reference to a grid and a central axis to order the space; the use of the 2:3 ratio in the

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format of the photos; the search for a plane without making any cutbacks, are some of the aspects that characterise his vision of the city and the landscape.[18]

A second aspect has to do with the variety of Finotti's visual production and the importance of interdisciplinarity: the photographs (taken with a camera or drone), the setting up of exhibitions that he defines as 'expographies', created in close collaboration with de Castro, is another way of narrating the reality that surrounds us. The new relationship between the images and the design of his photobooks, show great complexity in his approach to visual storytelling.

In the three cases presented, it is important to refer to the aim of the books and to the underlying group work: the experience of the photobooks related to *Latin America in Construction* and *Latinitudes* proposes the interpretation of several Latin American cities. They are ordered according to a new geographical criterion, which breaks the north-south logic, and published through sequences of urban architecture.

The double experiment *Rio Enquadrado* and *Rio Reenquadrado*, carried out in collaboration with Michelle de Castro, Julio Mariutti and Alice Viggiani, proposes an ambitious photographic interpretation of a city, through a selection of projects and urban spaces, shown through images based on duality: nature/construction, building/context; fullness/emptiness; opacity/transparency; interior/exterior. All of this is done through a single frame, the square format, which defines the character of the city as an artificial landscape.

The city of São Paulo appears in the photobook *Futebol: Urban Euphoria in Brazil*, in which the football field is shown as the urban space par excellence. Here the photographer chooses a privileged point of view: the bird's-eye view. The football field seen from above seems to acquire a new urban role becoming a 'sacred space' capable of restoring identity, order and life to the city whether central or peripheral. Publishing a project in which once more the participation of the publisher Lars Müller takes on importance.

To conclude, it seems important to highlight one last aspect, the role of Finotti as an activist, and artist involved in cultural, architectural, and urban production, that allows the knowledge and dissemination of modern and contemporary architecture, and also the understanding of the urban phenomenon of Latin American cities. As heir to the tradition of publishing photographic books on cities, he has become an essential reference for discovering Latin America, a great narrator capable of proposing a contemporary perspective that breaks stereotypes and builds new visual cartography of architecture, spaces and places.

NOTES

1   Jon Uriarte, 'El fotolibro aquí y ahora' (2014), https://fotocolectania.wordpress.com/catego-ry/exposiciones/fotolibros-aqui-y-ahora/

2   See Martin Parr and Harry Badger, eds., *The Photobook: A History*, vols. 1–3 (London: Phaidon, 2004–2014).

3   The exhibition was held at CCCB and at Fundación Foto Colectania, 17–27 August 2017.

4   Joan Fontcuberta, 'El hechizo del fotolibro' (2011). See http://www.centroandaluzdelafoto-grafia.es/cafexposicion/hoja_de_sala_horacio_co-ppola.pdf

5   Maria Pia Fontana, Miguel Mayorga and Margarita Roa, 'Photography and the construction of a city's images. Three tall buildings: Pirelli (Milán), Atlántico (Barcelona), Avianca (Bogotá)', in *Arquitectura, Ciudad, Fotografía*. ART 01 Architectural Research Tribune (Valencia: General de Ediciones de Arquitectura, 2019), 48.

6   Helio Piñón, 'Remirar la arquitectura moderna', in Maria Pia Fontana et al. *Colombia Arquitectura Moderna. 50-60* (Barcelona: Activitats Culturals ETSAB-UPC, 2004), 18.

7   Julius Shulman, *Modernism Rediscovered*, text by Pierluigi Serraino (Cologne: Taschen, 2005), 11.

8   Cristina Gastón Guirao, ed., *América Latina Fotografía y Arquitectura Moderna* (Barcelona: Iniciativa Digital Politécnica UPC, 2017), back cover page.

9   Horacio Férnandez Martínez, *El Fotolibro Latinoamericano* (Mexico: Editorial RM, 2011), back cover page.

10   Maria Pia Fontana, Miguel Mayorga and Margarita Roa, *Bogotá en la Mirada de 10 fotógrafos*. Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá. (Bogotá: IDPC Instituto Distrital de Patrimonio, 2018), 21.

11   Leonardo Finotti, 'El modernismo latinoamericano ha sido subestimado', Interview published in *Luster*, 17.11.2016, http://www.lustermagazine.com/leonardo-finotti-fotografia-ar-quitectura/

12   Ibid.

13   Jorge Gambini, 'La mirada exacta: Leonardo Finotti y la fotografía de precisión', Textos De Tecnología, 01 (2020): 93-103. https://revistas.udelar.edu.uy/OJS/index.php/RTdT/article/view/55.

14   Leonardo Finotti, *Oscar Niemeyer.* LAMA.SP (São Paulo: Editora Brasileira, 2016), n.p.

15   Ibid.

16   Leonardo Finotti and Ed Viggiani, *Futebol: Urban Euphoria in Brazil* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2014).

17   Fontana, Mayorga, Roa, 'Photography and the construction of "city's images,"' 68

18   Leonardo Finotti, *Conferencia Brasil: Fotografies / expografies: aproximacions i narratives visuals* UdG, (Girona: March, 2019).

POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

ARCHIVING THE ITALIAN CITY:
THREE PHOTOBOOKS BY GABRIELE BASILICO

Alexandra Tommasini

Throughout his working life, Gabriele Basilico (1944–2013) was repeatedly commissioned by public and private entities to photograph Italy's urban fabric. Often, these projects resulted in an accompanying photobook or exhibition catalogue. From Milan to Bari, Brescia to Rome, Naples to Palermo, examples of Basilico's far-reaching photographic gaze on Italian cityscapes have been published in numerous volumes. More than just methods of display or a means to provide a narrative structure to a collection of photographs, such volumes are, arguably, charged with renewing, re-evaluating and promoting Italian civic narratives. This chapter analyses, in reverse chronological order, a selection of three commissions on the Italian urban landscape with resulting photobook publications that demonstrate the breadth of Basilico's engagement during the 1990s and 2000s: a commission for the city of Bari in 2007; a project on the requalification of urban areas in Italy's Emilia Romagna region in 2001; and a collaboration with architect Stefano Boeri for the sixth Venice Architecture Biennale in 1996, *Italy: Cross Sections of a Country*.

The examination of these books raises critical questions: What agendas were these documentary photobooks asked to promote? In what ways do these volumes represent the implied promises, politics, mythologising effects and enduring legacies of the commissioning bodies? How can the documentary mode be understood as engendering a 'progressive citizenship'? As archives that record a disappearing landscape, can Basilico's photobooks be interpreted as stabilisers of cultural memory? How can the systematic coherence of the photobook define the often contested and indeterminate spaces Basilico photographed? By analysing these three commissions and their resulting photobooks, this chapter assembles evidence to answer these questions. The discussion also explores the wider Italian impulse to use photography as a means to archive the changing landscape.

Forging a civic identity

In 2007, Basilico was commissioned as part of a cultural initiative sponsored by the Province of Bari called *La generazione ritrovata* (The Generation Found). This project, as the title suggests, was an attempt to respond to wider national concerns about Italy's 'invisible generation' – a term describing Italian young adults blighted by unemployment and disenchanted with public institutions.[1] Vittorino Curci, the city's councillor of culture at the time, explained the intention of the project: to create a programme of events led by this younger generation to help restore their sense of regional identity. The Basilico commission was one part of a year-long calendar

of events dedicated to the theme, including concerts, exhibitions and conferences. A drive to forge a civic identity through documentary photography was one of its key features.

A curator and photographer based in the region of Puglia, Cosmo Laera, was responsible for proposing Basilico as the ideal candidate for the commission.[2] The hope was that the project would highlight Bari's importance in Italy's photographic tradition. In the 1980s, the city's painting gallery (Pinacoteca) had acquired a large archive of 14,000 photographs; from 1981–1984 the Spazio Immagine gallery, located in the historic centre, was among the first in Italy to exhibit photography. In addition, noted photographer Mario Cresci, one of Basilico's fellow so-called 'masters' of the Italian 'school of landscape photography', lived and worked in Matera, in the neighbouring region of Basilicata.[3] And most significantly, Bari was the location of the seminal exhibition Viaggio in Italia (Journey to Italy), organised by Luigi Ghirri and held at the city's Pinacoteca in 1984. Curci described the intent of the photographic commission in his annual proposal for the 2007 programme:

> To organise for the first time in Bari a large photographic exhibition of international scale that proposes a personal reading by Gabriele Basilico of Puglia's county seat – one of the Mediterranean's lesser known cities for its positioning 'apparatus' and in a certain sense her 'abnormality'; to continue the discussion already established in the volume [...] with the intent of bringing Bari to the table, as it were, in an international debate not solely on a strictly artistic but, above all, [on an] urban planning level.[4]

As Curci's text makes clear, Basilico's international reputation was key to the city's interest in his involvement on the project. Basilico took photographs of all aspects of the city's urban fabric, including boardwalk areas, historic city-centre zones, the central train station, the periphery and the city's stadium. Nocturnal and daytime scenes were all shot in black-and-white. The views were mainly taken at street level, with some aerial shots. The photographs cover the range of Basilico's usual urban scenes, including large panoramic shots of the city, street scenes with diminishing perspective points, and some frontal images of buildings.

An exhibition of the work was held at the Province of Bari's painting gallery (Pinacoteca Provinciale di Bari) between 13 October 2007 and 2 March 2008. The exhibition catalogue *Basilico: Bari0607* is a large, well-crafted book with glossy pages and French binding and contains an interview with Basilico, three essays on the city of Bari by different authors, and 104 photographs (Fig. 11.1). Each photograph fills an entire page and is enclosed in a slim white frame, mostly landscape format. There are no captions or titles, and no list of images can be found at the back of the volume. Instead, just above each page number there is a code that corresponds to each photograph's negative.

As the aim of the commission implies, Basilico's images were an attempt at renewing and promoting Bari's identity. Therefore, the photographs can be interpreted as forming part of an institutional imperative to create a refreshed and enduring civic legacy. Even the polished exhibition catalogue, entirely printed on matte, UV-varnished paper with high-quality binding, seems to some extent to demonstra-
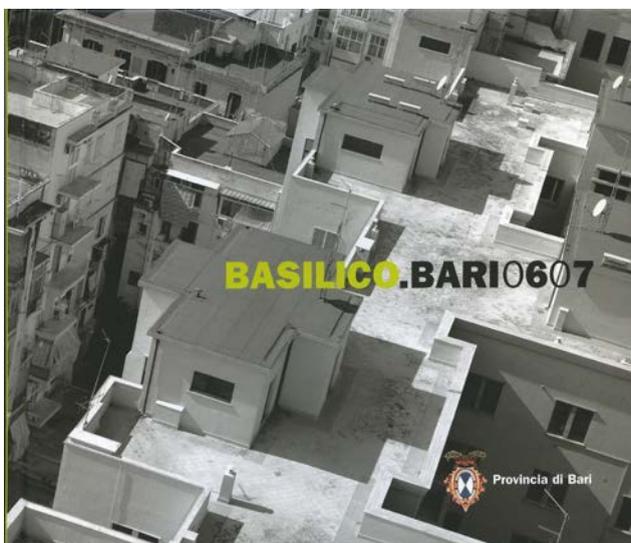
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FIG. 11.1 - Gabriele Basilico, *Basilico. Bari. 0607* (2007)

te a desire to promote a more appealing image of the city, and the regional logo conspicuously placed in the lower right corner of the cover makes it seem like an extended tourist brochure. Given the premise of the project and the culture minister's words, the documentary photography project for Bari is arguably an attempt to activate what John Grierson describes, in his argument about the power of the genre of documentary, as 'progressive citizenship'.[5] Basilico's photographs were indeed charged, as Grierson states, with bringing 'alive to the citizen the terms of the world in which he lives'.[6]

An agent of change

In the spring of 2001, Basilico was commissioned by another body: the Artistic and Natural Culture Heritage Institute of Emilia-Romagna (*Istituto Beni Artistici Culturali e Naturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna*), this time to document the region's redeveloped urban areas. The project, *Gabriele Basilico: L.R. 19/98 Riqualificazione delle aree urbane in Emilia-Romagna* (Redevelopment of Urban Areas in the Emilia-Romagna Region), covered roughly 70 urban zones and 27 city councils in the region. The title of the project derives from an Act (19/98), passed in 1998, concerning urban redevelopment projects. A description of the law, which can be found in the project's exhibition catalogue, states that it seeks to 'promote and foster the redevelopment of the city, in order to assure the construction of new living spaces through the urban renewal of degraded areas and the reutilisation of disused spaces'.[7]
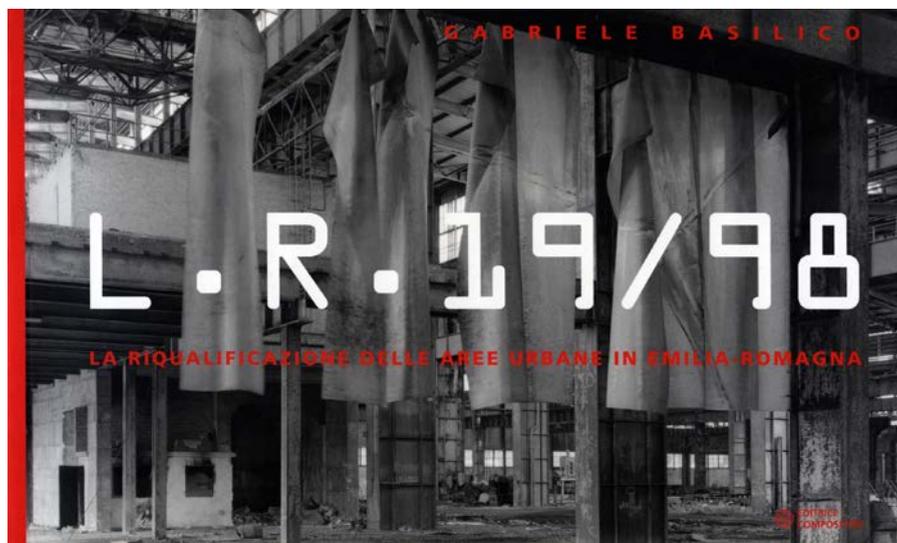
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FIG. 11.2 - Gabriele Basilico, *Gabriele Basilico: L.R. 19/98 Riqualificazione delle aree urbane in Emilia-Romagna* (2001)

Emilia-Romagna's urban areas comprise over 800 acres of industrial zones, as well as former hospitals, defunct train depots, and old neighbourhoods of reclaimed public housing projects. For the project, Basilico shot some 700 photographs between 9 April and 19 June 2001. The photographs capture images of army barracks, distilleries, food industry factories, chemical plants, hospitals, cinemas and theatres, among other types of sites. Basilico plotted a geographic course through the region, visiting 12 cities including Bologna, Ravenna, Modena and Parma. He spent between two and four days photographing each urban landscape. The locations in Basilico's photographs lie mainly along the peripheries of these historic centres. These spaces mark the borderlines where, at the end of the 1900s, the first urban peripheries in this region were formed. The buildings themselves date from between roughly the second half of the nineteenth century until the end of the twentieth.[8] Piero Orlandi, then manager of Regional Services and Building Programmes for the Cultural Heritage Institute, stated in the exhibition catalogue that the project was 'a testimony to the social, architectural, productive, and urban planning history of the city space and laid bare the reality of the region's urban transformation'.[9]

Given the timing of the project and the councillor's words, the project arguably functioned as an appeal for public support in the regeneration of Emilia-Romagna's urban landscape: 'It is in everyone's interest that the city's transformation project is more secure, beautiful, and responsive to the needs of its citizens'.[10] According to the archival documentation of the re-qualified areas under Act 19, Basilico's images were meant to 'illustrate in a concrete and visible way the effects of a regional law like 19/98, which must translate into intentional concrete action'.[11] Furthermore, the

text by the Superintendent of Fine Arts and Cultural activities of Emilia-Romagna described the photographs themselves as 'armour' against the loss of the memory of the spaces pictured.[12]

The primary exhibition was held from 8 December 2001 to 20 January 2002 in Bologna at the deconsecrated church of San Mattia. It then travelled throughout the region, to Rimini, Cesena, Forli, Modena, Reggio Emilia, Parma, Ferrara and Ravenna. In 2004, images from the project were displayed along with work from Basilico's photobook *Bord de mer* (Sea side) at the MIT Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An accompanying exhibition catalogue was published in 2001. Laid out in landscape format, this oblong-shaped volume includes a series of 147 photographs shot using black-and-white film. Most of the views were taken frontally at street level (Fig. 11.2). The photographic plates are printed with full bleeds and the name of the city where each shot was taken printed along the inner border. Each photograph depicts the regional spaces before the urban requalification work was eventually carried out in 2002.

Reappropriating a vision

The third project, *Italy: Cross Sections of a Country*, can be located somewhere between commission and private research, to a place in which a spirit of investigation and documentary mission is dictated directly by Basilico to demonstrate a more deliberate engagement with the urban fabric without the watchful eye of a commissioning body looking on. It was conceived for the sixth Venice Architecture Biennale, in 1996. The Rector of the Università Iuav di Venezia at that time, Marino Folin, was asked to curate the Italian entry for the Biennale. He decided to invite a group of young Italian architects to exhibit their work. In order to make his selection, Folin journeyed throughout Italy visiting the sites of these architects' projects. He recorded, 'It was certainly a landscape of abuse, but it was also a place in which every sort of experimentation was possible, and to which the works I had chosen also, in a way, belonged, although unlike the other buildings, they questioned themselves and their relationship with the context and history'.[13]

The journey was fundamental to Folin's experience, and he felt that it should be captured photographically and displayed as part of the exhibition. He asked Basilico to make an accompanying visual journey for the Biennale that mirrored his experience. Basilico agreed, but, as he himself said, he 'raised the stakes' and 'obtained carte blanche', enlisting the help of architect Stefano Boeri and his staff. Together they identified six critical areas of Italy's landscape to focus on: two in the centre, two in the north, and two in the south. The zones measured about 50 km long by 10 km wide and included territories from Milan to Como, Venice-Mestre to Treviso, Florence to Pistoia, Rimini-Riccione to Montefeltro, Naples to Caserta, and Gioia Tauro to Siderno. The strict focus gave the comparisons of the areas a formal quality and characterised the project's documentary rigour. Though each of the six territories differed markedly from the next, they did share some significant characteristics, as Boeri confirmed:

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FIG. 11.3 - Gabriele Basilico, *Italy. Cross Sections of a Country* (1998)

> All six comprise densely populated suburban zones at the outer reaches of a consolidated urban area; all are influenced by a significant orography; all are crossed by at least one large thoroughfare; and all show signs of recent and intense transformation of the inhabited space.[14]

To capture these places, Basilico used black-and-white film and generally shot at street level. He travelled by car to each area, looking almost exclusively at the peripheries of the cities – the places where recent construction had transformed the landscape, creating incongruous zones in the built environment. For Basilico, the investigation of the landscape was like examining the 'country's DNA'.[15] In the project's photobook, Boeri argues that the traditional imaging devices and techniques used to represent urban space – such as aerial mapping, satellite pictures, or topographical maps – are 'not capable of decoding the large amorphous and variable densities which have spread out from the principal cities of Italy and Europe'.[16] The interdisciplinary and experimental nature of the project offered an alternative way of investigating the multiplicity and complexity of the peninsula's mutating spaces and exemplified the thrust of the research in urban studies being undertaken in Italy during the 1990s.

The exhibition was held in the first room of the Italian Pavilion of the 1996 Venice Biennale.[17] It was curated by Boeri and the exhibition design was by BoeriStudio and Basilico. The design included an enlarged satellite image of the geophysics of the six territories included in the photographic journey. Boeri described the exhibition as follows:

FIG. 11.4 - Gabriele Basilico, 'Napoli – Caserta', 1996, example photograph from Gabriele Basilico, *Italy: Cross Sections of a Country* (1998)

The installation consisted of a large satellite picture of the peninsula on the floor out of which emerged (like extrusions) Plexiglas and magnesium models and the six sections of landscape within which the six sequences of photographs had been taken. The images entirely covered the walls of the room, surrounding the viewers and prompting them to look for connections and to move about within three different 'representations' of the inhabited space.[18]

The accompanying gift-book size exhibition catalogue *Italia: Sezioni del paesaggio Italiano* (*Italy: Cross Sections of a Country*) shows a comprehensive engagement with the urban landscape (Fig. 11.3).[19] The bilingual book includes 108 duo-toned photographs by Basilico divided into the regional sections mentioned above. Each photograph is laid out on the page using a full-bleed format. Images of empty motorways and endless strip malls recount the development of contemporary Italian lifestyles. One photograph in particular stands out: the black-and-white image *Napoli-Caserta* (1996) depicts an abandoned and half-constructed motorway flyover on the road between Naples and Caserta (Fig. 11.4). This conspicuously unfinished structure lies centre-stage in a composition that is at once ordinary in its deadpan view and extraordinary in the incongruity of its incompleteness. The physical suspension present in the central image of the photograph seems to speak to the rupture and strain on the competing local political and planning bodies which would have created such an unfinished reality.

The images included in the book lay bare the impact of the prioritisation of commercial profit and poor planning regulations on the landscape. Both the vir-

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tues and vices of contemporary Italian culture are on full display. As a collaboration between architect and photographer, this project succeeded in moving beyond the narrow boundaries of the civic commissions explored in the previous projects to communicate to a wider audience a clearer and better researched position on the urban world that it depicted.

Commissioning enduring legacies

Each of the three projects outlined are examples of the way in which Italian institutions, municipalities and provinces had, since the 1960s, increasingly delegated responsibility for depicting the land to photographers.[20] The origins of the contemporary Italian photographic documentary impulse can be traced back to photographer Paolo Monti and his rereading of the historical centres of many of the Emilia-Romagna region's cities. Commissioned by the local heritage and preservation institute (Istituto dei Beni Culturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna), Monti was invited to document the civic centre spaces of many of the region's urban areas. Monti's photographs reveal an interest in vernacular post-war architecture, frequently juxtaposing new constructions with those of the historic city.[21]

Much of this kind of photography commissioning continued in Italy on a regional level over the subsequent decades. The interest in photographing the urban and natural landscape was strong, as a profound disassociation with place provoked a disparate group of photographers, which included Basilico, to direct their gaze toward the nation's natural and urban topography during the 1970s. In addition to the pan-European factors (such as the reorganisation of territorial boundaries due to large-scale immigration, post-industrialisation, and the resulting environmental and ecological problems), Italian photographers were motivated by a set of local circumstances that included the oil crisis of the 1970s and its repercussions, the renewed economic prosperity of the 1980s and its resulting decadence, and political scandals such as *Tangentopoli* ('Bribesville') in the 1990s.[22] The effects of these events were written into the fabric of the nation's landscape, leaving it vulnerable to abuses, including the expansion of suburban areas, dramatic and uncontrolled construction development, weak and shifting land bylaws, and the effects of mass tourism on the peninsula's natural treasures, such as the coastline.

The investigations made by these landscape photographers marked a deliberate and self-reflexive moment in Italy's photographic history, heralding a new chapter in the nation's photographic tradition. Similar to the wider European trend, Italian photographers tended to move away from the small format and quick rhythms of social reportage that had previously dominated. This new visual orientation sought to contrast the legacy of, for example, the Alinari Brothers' photography firm, which was most well known for producing photographic images of Italy inspired by Renaissance perspective and demonstrating archival rigour.[23] This new trend served as a counterpoint to prominent television, advertisement and travel campaigns at the time, such as Touring Club Italia, which perpetuated the myth of the Italian landscape as the *bel paese*, or 'beautiful country'.[24] Instead, Basilico and other photographers of his generation looked at 'the complex reality of the historical centres,

the urbanised and industrialised areas, the lesser things, the provinces, the peripheries, and the changing signs'.[25] For example, *Italy: Cross Sections of a Country* points to the anti-Alinari Brother and anti-Touring Club Italia aesthetic promoted by the Italian 'school' of landscape photography. In this way, the images produced by these practitioners attempted to deconstruct the 'bel paese' narrative.

Each of the three projects examined highlight the ways in which Basilico's images were used by the commissioners to further their individual civic agendas. In both the Bari and Emilia-Romagna projects, the image is charged with an external political or cultural consciousness and a mixture of strategic attitudes and assumptions dictated by the commissioners. In the introductory texts of both volumes, the commissioners exaggerate the social and political function of Basilico's photography, whereas in *Italy: Cross Sections of a Country*, the specific strategic aims of the commissioning agent seem to linger only in the subtexts of the project.

Yet, overall, the fact that the photographs taken for the three projects are 'documentary', and represent a 'purchase on the real', means that they provided a rich seam for the commissioning bodies to exploit.[26] Each of the different commissioners shared the sense that the documentary mode could serve to further a progressive understanding of their particular social and political situations. This attitude of the commissions' supporters seems to fall in line with the kind of humanitarian reformist ideals indicative of other such projects, such as the FSA photography campaign carried out in the US during the 1930s. These commissions demonstrate that the documentary mode is very much alive in the Italian context, following a wider trend towards a renewed appreciation for this format.

Furthermore, it has been observed that working on commission suited Basilico. Indeed, he was a trained architect, and this is how most professionals in that field work. Basilico's commissions largely controlled the ways in which his photographs were viewed and disseminated. In a 1999 interview, curator Filippo Maggia asked Basilico: 'How do you evaluate today the many experiences stemming from institutional campaigns, and how do you think this relationship will develop?'[27] Basilico offered the following reply:

Another aspect to consider in these projects is the diversity of relationships between client and institution and between photographer and author. For some, strict documentation of the subject matter (streets, places, buildings, monuments) was obligatory, while others gave the photographer full freedom of interpretation. It should be added that [...] public clients have been faced with a deep awareness of the cultural environment surrounding photography and its potentiality. This has had the result of some commissions not always being appropriately planned, transforming maximum freedom of language into an ambiguous instrument of disintegration. In other cases, however, a spontaneous dialect has sprung up, inducing at times a state of crisis between the institutional role of the client and the professional stance of the photographer. This has consequentially introduced a new kind of open and honest relationship, in which the capacity for dialogue may lead to a game of educational and erudite exchanges.[28]

Basilico's remarks demonstrate his awareness of the dynamics involved in the commissioning practice, such as the need to be flexible and the ability to respond to a commissioner's concerns and needs. Equally significantly, the critic Roberta Valtorta made the following statement about Basilico's commissioning practice:

> When considering Basilico's work and style, it is fundamental to be reminded about the theme of commissions. All of the photographic work and expressivity of this photographer (who is also an architect) is entwined in commissions. Therefore, for Basilico photography is an expressive form that finds natural application, it is a job; or it is a job that becomes an expressive form.[29]

Valtorta's suggestion that Basilico viewed his work – much as an architect might – as a 'job', and therefore part of an economic exchange, is an interesting one, given the wider perception of the role of the photographer in Italy. In a culture where it is easier for the public to name an important Italian writer or journalist than a photographer, Basilico's attitude and way of working sent a clear message to the public about the medium's legitimacy.[30]

Furthermore, it is worth noting the peculiarity of Basilico's visual language: taken at face value, the banal and everyday subject matter coupled with the aesthetic quality of Basilico's photographs arguably made him an ideal candidate in the promotion of civic or governmental platforms. Yet at the same time he pushed the boundaries of what could be achieved by exploring otherwise unappreciated or disjointed Italian cityscapes.[31] Given the number of commissions that he received from Italian civic and regional bodies, Basilico certainly made a name for himself as one of the preferred visual architects of contemporary Italy's changing urban landscape.[32] But the large, black-and-white panoramic views framed within the traditional documentary projects could also be attractive to those looking for memorable, highly visible – perhaps iconic – images of a city or region.[33]

On a formal level, Basilico's photographs recall the tradition of the Alinari Brothers, and make use of some of the conventions of the 'school of landscape' and other more traditional photographers of his generation. But in their choice of subject they often sought to counter this formal tradition, seeing beauty in the otherwise neglected parts of the city. On an ideological level, Basilico remained aligned with the 'school', but his architect/planner's gaze on the city always showed great appreciation for the often disjointed spaces that he depicted.

Conclusion
Basilico's strong and commanding aesthetic, developed over his career in the form of high-profile commissions, exhibitions and publications (especially within Italy), lent itself to the demands of projects that generally involved large-scale, seemingly objective and eloquently composed urban views such as those bound within the pages of the three photobooks outlined in this chapter. Archived within each of these documentary volumes, Basilico's photographs aestheticise the complexities and ambiguities of Italy's contemporary landscape. Equally significantly, the

three publications and others like them by Basilico demonstrate not only a certain measure of success but also the wide dissemination of his work. Basilico published books with many large international publishing houses, such as Thames & Hudson and Phaidon, as well as with Italian publishers. So prolific was his output that in 2006 an exhibition dedicated to his volumes was held in Milan, *Gabriele Basilico: Photo Books 1978–2005*. For Basilico, books were integral to his practice and represented a 'point of arrival, the shape in print and on paper of a project'.[34]

Furthermore, the three photobook projects can arguably be said to have contributed to the growing professional status of photographers in Italy.[35] The profession of photographer has for the most part had an ambiguous place in Italy, and arguably this continues to the present day. Basilico's relentless archiving, his photobook publications and his commissions, have in part functioned to counter this reality. It must be acknowledged that Basilico's photography commissions on Italy's urban landscape (and those of his peers who are counted among the members of the Italian photographic 'school of landscape') played a significant role in raising the cultural status of the medium. The resultant photobooks must be valued within the history of contemporary Italian photography for this reason. Additionally, by often achieving institutional support and backing, his photography, and therefore the medium of photography in general, became esteemed in a way that it might not otherwise have been. Arguably, this served to help elevate the value of photography as an art form in the eyes of the Italian public. The large number of Basilico publications can also be understood as having contributed to strengthening the market for such publications within Italy.

Another equally significant measure of the value of these three photobooks lies in their function as personal records of contemporary Italy's myriad civic realities. The form of the photobook, its portability, its often affordable price and its intimate format, make repeatedly returning to the subject within the reader's grasp. Books add rhythm and pacing to the subject and therefore represent a form of taxonomy. Even in the digital age, the tangibility of the object of the book is still important, as 'people still need to experience the feel of this object and the ritual of experiencing – slowly and in their own space – photographs in a narrative form'.[36] A book has the capacity to create a subtle yet binding intimacy between reader and narrator.

In the economy of display, Basilico's three photobooks on the Italian cityscapes have, as this chapter has explored, the ability to advocate a specific mode of narration, concealing, highlighting, or privileging one form of storytelling over another, acting as key archival documents. By binding the histories and memories of the spaces between two covers, these photobooks give shape to and secure the memories of the indeterminate spaces they present. Basilico's photobooks take the photograph off the wall and place it into the hands of the reader, in their private space. In this way, Basilico's photobooks encourage interested city dwellers and residents of these urban areas to take part in and dig deeper into the changing urban landscape around them. They can consider the transformation of their own landscape via this flickable, comfortable to handle, undemanding format.

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NOTES

1   Ilvo Diamanti, *La generazione invisibile* (Milan: Edizioni Il Sole 24 Ore, 1999).

2   Unpublished interview with Vittorino Curci (ex-Minister of Culture, Province of Bari) by Alexandra Tommasini, 21 January 2012, Noci (Bari), Italy.

3   Arturo Carlo Quintavalle first referred to the idea of a 'school' in *Muri di carta: Fotografia e paesaggio dopo le avanguardie* (Milan: Electa, 1993), 50. See also Claudio Marra, 'La sovversiva normalità dello sguardo: Fotografi italiani di paesaggio degli anni Ottanta', in Marisa Galbiati, Piero Pozzi and Roberto Signorini, eds., *Fotografia e paesaggio: La rappresentazione fotografica del territorio*, (Milan: Electa, 1993), 87–90. For more on the generations of photographers influenced by the 'school' and its 'masters', see Giovanna Calvenzi, and Maddalena d'Alfonso, *Ereditare il paesaggio* (Milan: Electa, 2008). See also Alexandra Tommasini, 'Anti-icon, icon: Gabriele Basilico's photography of the Italian urban landscape', *Modern Italy*, vol. 21, no. 4 (2016): 427–440.

4   Vittorino Curci, unpublished cultural programme dated 2007 and titled 'Linee di indirizzo di politica culturale e programma di attività per l'anno 2007', 4, (2007), Curci's private collection.

5   John Grierson, 'Postwar Patterns', Hollywood Quarterly, vol. 1, no. 2 (Jan. 1946), 165.

6   Ivi, 164.

7   A description of the law can be found in the exhibition catalogue: 'Legge Regionale 19/98: Norme in materia di riqualificazione urbane', *Gabriele Basilico: L.R. 19/98 Riqualificazione delle aree urbane in Emilia-Romagna* (Bologna: Editrici Compositori, 2001), 179.

8   Piero Orlandi, 'Le città in attesa', in *Gabriele Basilico: L.R. 19/98*, 11.

9   Ibid.

10 Pier Antonio Rivola and Ezio Raimondi, introduction, in *Gabriele Basilico: L.R. 19/98*, n.p.

11 Ibid.

12 Elio Garzillo, 'Immagine e storia dei luoghi' in *Gabriele Basilico: L.R. 19/98*, n.p.

13 Marino Folin, 'Afterword', in *Italy: Cross Sections of a Country*, eds. Stefano Boeri and Gabriele Basilico (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), 147.

14 Stefano Boeri, 'The Italian Landscape: Towards an "Eclectic Atlas"', in *Italy: Cross Sections of a Country*, eds. Stefano Boeri and Gabriele Basilico (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), 9.

15 Gabriele Basilico, *Architetture, Città, Visioni* (Milan: Mondadori, 2007), 100.

16 Stefano Boeri, 'The Italian Landscape', 12.

17 The Sixth International Architecture Biennale, *Sensori del futuro: L'architetto come sismografo*, was held from 15 September to 17 November 1996. On the occasion Basilico was awarded the Osella d'Oro special prize for architectural photography.

18 Stefano Boeri, 'The Italian Landscape', 9 (footnote 1).

19 Gabriele Basilico, *Italy: Cross Sections of a Country* (Zurich: Scalo, 1998), Italian edition: Gabriele Basilico, *Italia: Sezioni del paesaggio italiano* (Udine: Art&, 1997). The volume includes a foreword by Boeri and an afterword by Folin. The sequencing of the photographs was done by Basilico's widow, photo editor Giovanna Calvenzi. A short biography of the photographer is included at the back of the book.

20 Roberta Valtorta, 'Photography and the Public Customer', *Casabella*, no. 560 (September 1989), 61–62.

21 On the work of Paolo Monti, see Roberta Valtorta, 'Monti, artista e lavoratore', in *Pieve di Cento nelle foto di Paolo Monti*, ed. Andrea Emiliani (Milan: Instituto di fotografia Paolo Monti,1995).

22 See also Paul Ginsborg, *Italy and its Discontents 1980–2001* (London: Penguin, 2001).

23 Roberta Valtorta, 'Experiencing Landscape' in *Italy: Portrait of a Country Through 60 Years of Photography*, ed. Giovanna Calvenzi (Rome: Contrasto, 2003), 192-195.

24 The Touring Club photography archive narrates the changes to the natural and built environment in Italy. It holds over 400,000 black-and-white prints documenting Italian and foreign landscapes from the end of the 1800s to the 1970s. See also Chapter 9 of this volume.

25 Roberta Valtorta, 'Photography and the Public Customer', 61.

26 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 170.

27 Gabriele Basilico and Filippo Maggia, 'Interview with Gabriele Basilico', *Cityscapes* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 371.

28 Ibid.

29 Roberta Valtorta, *Porti di Mare* (Udine: Art&, 1990), 9.

30 Giorgio Olmoti, 'Il mestiere della fotografia', in *L'Italia del Novecento: Le fotografie e la storia. La società in posa,* eds. Giovanni De Luna, Gabriele D'Autilia, and Luca Criscenti (Turin: Einaudi, 2006), 415-452.

31 My argument is informed by discussions and interviews with photography historian and critic Roberta Valtorta, photographer Guido Guidi, and curator and critic Francesca Lazzarini carried out individually in 2012 regarding an apparent preference among civic councils for 'non-analytical' photography.

32 Other masters of the so-called 'school of landscape' photography have also been involved in public institutional commissions, including such photographers as Guido Guidi, Luigi Ghirri and Mimmo Jodice, among others.

33 For a discussion on iconic images and Basilico's photographs of the contemporary Italian landscape, see Alexandra Tommasini, 'Anti-icon icon: Gabriele Basilico's photography of the Italian urban landscape', *Modern Italy*, vol. 21, no. 4 (2016): 427-440.

34 Gabriele Basilico, *Gabriele Basilico: Photo Books 1978-2005* (Mantova: Corraini, 2006), 251. For more on Basilico's photobooks, see Alexandra Tommasini, '"My point of arrival": Gabriele Basilico's photobooks', *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 24, no. 8 (2019): 1118-1133.

35 For a brief discussion on the professional status of the photographer in Italy, see Antonella Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 2011), 195.

36 Gerry Badger and Martin Parr, *The Photobook: A History*, vol. 2 (London: Phaidon, 2006), 7.

12

RECLAIMING THE VERTICAL CITY:
PLAY AND POLITICS IN *LONDON RISING*
Davide Deriu

Urban explorations

As a pervasive form of urban representation, the photobook has contributed since the early twentieth century to define the imaginary of vertical cities. The recent revival of this genre is bound up with the spread of vertical urbanism, which has become an increasingly global phenomenon since the turn of the millennium. While skyscrapers have been shaping the skylines of rising cities, particularly in the Middle East and in Southeast Asia, high-rise construction has also had an impact on Western metropolises that were historically averse to vertical growth. This trend is not limited to the design of iconic architecture but extends to many buildings, including residential and mixed-use towers, that have recently sprung up in urban landscapes the world over, including downtown America where the skyscraper age dawned. To an ever-greater extent, our urban age is marked by a race to densify cities through the colonisation of their skies.[1]

Against this background, a three-dimensional understanding of cities has emerged in an attempt to overcome the flattened geographic imaginations that were traditionally mediated by cartography. In the 2010s, the so-called 'vertical turn', or 'volumetric turn', in the social sciences opened up an alternative way of thinking about cities that has proved widely influential. In his book, *Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers,* urban scholar Stephen Graham brought this fundamental yet oft-neglected dimension into relief, probing the politics that underpins high-rise urban environments as well as the underground spaces that form their less visible counterpart.[2] However, as the geographer Andrew Harris points out, a clear-cut opposition between verticality as expression of power and privilege, and horizontality as the dimension of everyday life, is problematic insofar as these dimensions 'are mutually implicated and produced'.[3] This critical debate has brought about not only a deeper understanding of social and political aspects of contemporary urbanism, but also a recognition of the 'counter-politics of verticality' that have materialised in response to it.[4]

A notable case of this counter-politics is the Urban Exploration movement that cropped up in the noughties, drawing on the legacy of urban sub-cultures that developed in Europe and North America during the 1970s. This networked community (abbreviated as Urb-Ex or simply UE) set about reclaiming the increasingly privatised spaces of Western cities.[5] Although urban explorers are animated by different motives, they are often united by a similar intent to infiltrate spaces that are abandoned, derelict or simply out of bounds to ordinary people. By activating new sen-

sory encounters with the city, 'expedition crews' surreptitiously assert the values of free play and adventure that are denied by the spatial logic of capitalism. Their targets range widely, from underground tunnels to skyscraper rooftops; tall buildings being favoured sites of exploration since towers – as well as cranes installed on building sites – can yield urban vistas that are inaccessible to most of us. While vertical construction affects the shape and scale of the built environment, at the same time it opens up new vantage points as well as potential fields of experience.

In his first book, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City*, geographer-cum-explorer Bradley Garrett suggested that this transient reappropriation of space amounts to a veritable 'cultural renaissance'.[6] Garrett's unique position as the self-styled 'scribe for the tribe' offers at once an insider's perspective on the movement and a critical reflection on its methods and practices. His ethnographic research reveals a diversity of approaches among urban explorers, some of whom are politically driven while others are primarily motivated by a sense of adventure, fuelled by the exhilaration of illicit endeavours fraught with danger.[7] In all cases, the element of play underlies their various attempts to reterritorialise cities by pushing the boundaries of what is socially perceived to be accessible.[8] Turning the act of trespassing into a symbolic reclamation of space, their tactics reinvigorate the spirit of *homo ludens* that was dear to the situationists and other avant-garde movements of the post-war period.

As the cultural historian Johan Huizinga observed, all manifestations of the play instinct occur in a particular sphere akin to a sacred place, in which the norms and customs of everyday life are suspended. Every place that is defined as a playground is governed by its own special rules: 'All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart'.[9] Through its diverse rituals and manifestations, human play can therefore be regarded as a state of mind as much as an activity: 'It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means'.[10] This definition applies well to the endeavours of urban explorers who turn the built environment into a playing field – a ludic and often hazardous pursuit that is fraught with consequences. Benefiting from the cover of darkness to hack urban places, latter-day explorers update the practice of scaling buildings (also known as 'buildering' or 'stegophily') that was pioneered in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century, then developed into a nocturnal activity by a group of Cambridge students in the interwar period.[11]

The means of documenting those expeditions vary as much as the motivations behind them. Since the early 2010s, image-sharing online platforms such as Flickr, Instagram and YouTube have provided a popular means of communicating place-hacking campaigns through photographs and videos. This trend was boosted by the development of participatory social media based on user-generated content (the so-called 'Web 2.0') along with the diffusion of consumer digital cameras and camera phones which further boosted the popularity of amateur photography. The rise of

modern urban exploration cannot be understood without considering the technological revolution which has vastly expanded the field of possibilities for recording and disseminating the images of daily actions. Within this new media landscape, self-imaging practices reflect increasing social tendencies towards 'self-objectification' and 'self-voyeurism', as the ubiquitous 'selfie' has become emblematic of the symbolic exchanges mediated by the camera.[12]

In parallel, the boom of vertical construction has multiplied the range of opportunities for exploration, feeding a desire to access tall buildings and to record unique views of cities from above. A recurring trope of rooftopping imagery is the presence of human figures on the edge of tall structures. By depicting their own or their fellow explorers' bodies in the act of scaling urban heights, rooftoppers produce visual records of their feats that can be assimilated to performative acts. While this practice was embraced by scores of so-called 'adrenaline junkies' intent on displaying their heroics on the web, at its sharper edge it disclosed a space of transgression that challenges the logic of capitalist development. By reclaiming this liminal space, rooftoppers assert a fleeting mastery over the city while also revealing the power structures that preside over the production of space.[13] Yet the rapid diffusion of sensational images through online media inevitably raised questions about the politics of urban exploration. If one overt aim of place-hacking is to sabotage the culture of passive consumption through the active reappropriation of space, it is nevertheless inseparable from the allure of self-representation and its spectacular effects.[14] Conscious of this dilemma, Garrett suggested that the 'hero shots' posted on the web might 'just create a different kind of spectacle', one that allows viewers to connect with the rooftoppers' actions: by documenting places that are not otherwise accessible, these pictures 'have the effect of dissipating privileged scopic power'.[15]

This approach informs two photobooks on London produced by Garrett and fellow explorers during the 2010s, when the image culture emerging from the UE movement began to spread from online platforms to the realm of exhibitions and publications. The first, *Subterranean London: Cracking the Capital* (2014), includes the work of a dozen photographers who share a fascination with underground tunnels and shed light onto a hidden aspect of the vertical city.[16] A visual narrative unfolds through a series of expeditions into the chthonic spaces of the city, including deep-level tunnels that were accessed via roped or free climbs. Garrett captures their driving force in a provocative statement: 'In our dreams we may all be anarchists, but in our actions, for the vast majority of the time, we're the most rigid of conformists'.[17] Two years later, he published another photobook, *London Rising: Illicit Photos from the City's Heights* (2016), which, along with his works mentioned above, constitutes a trilogy on urban exploration. Garrett teamed up with co-authors Alexander Moss and Scott Cadman, along with sixteen other explorers, to document a decade of expeditions through a metropolis that was being reshaped by vertical construction.[18]

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Three heights of *London Rising*

Following the visual journey into the city's underground, *London Rising* contemplates the city from above as a means of reflecting on the process of urban transformation. The photobook is at once a homage to the fast-changing capital and a critique of the ideology underpinning its rampant growth. In the foreword, media theorist McKenzie Wark likens the explorers to 'vertical situationists' engaging in acts of *détournement* that reveal the ludic-constructive potential of built environments.[19] Comprising 158 views, mostly taken from high vantage points, *London Rising* demonstrates the significance of a class of images which, in Garrett's words, 'contain a kernel of power inversion'.[20] The drive to ascend tall structures draws its strength from the acts of trespass that make such images possible in the first place. Hence the photobook becomes a site where spatial practice and visual representation are intertwined.

Taking London as their terrain of operations, Cadman, Garrett and Moss produced three photo essays focusing on distinct aspects of this fast-changing city. Following a loose taxonomy, the first chapter depicts its *infrastructural heights*. As Moss points out, the crew share an admiration for the 'architectural splendour' of industrial features, mainly dating to the Victorian era, which are threatened by unbridled urban development. Invoking the psychoanalytic concept of *jouissance,* they seek out the thrill of scaling pylons, gas holders and freestanding masts in order to behold the views from and onto them. In Lacanian theory *jouissance* refers to the 'deadly enjoyment' we derive from the impulse to live out our desires in spite of their potentially harmful consequences.[21] Echoing twentieth-century situationists, London's explorers enact this drive and bring it to bear on the conquest of urban heights.

Their ludic impulse is combined with an attention to the capital's industrial heritage whose historical value is endangered by the pressure of real estate markets. As Moss writes, 'Bearing witness to all this, our night-time adventures were increasingly motivated by real indignation at what we saw happening to the city where we lived and which we'd loved, as well as melancholy for the seeming inevitability of its loss'.[22] And recalling the encounters with historical structures slated for demolition, he adds: 'we were perpetually conscious that we were cresting a wave of historical oblivion'.[23] This metaphorical crest materialised in the upper ridge of abandoned gas holders, which opened up elevated vistas across the cityscape either side of the River Thames. The explorers scaled the remnants of the coal gas industry scattered around town by using the service ladders that run along their lattice works, bringing into view their cylindrical forms and construction details. Set against the background of coloured city lights, the gasometers provided unlikely vantage points from which to observe layers of London's history while contemplating what the authors call the 'municipal Sublime'.[24] In hindsight, these constructions might also be regarded as traces of a momentous change in the development of the imperial capital, embedded as they were in the growth of a city that required ever greater energy supplies to sustain its population as well as its industrial activities: their awe-inspiring structures are inseparable from the rise of the Anthropocene.

FIG. 12.1 - View from gas holder No. 7 in Battersea, from *London Rising: Illicit Photos from the City's Heights* (2016), courtesy of the authors

A series of variations on infrastructural heights makes it possible to appreciate the structures of gas holders and their differences in size and location, ranging from Battersea to Bethnal Green and from Greenwich to Hornsey. The forlorn beauty of these abandoned structures is emphasised through an assortment of points of views that reveal their unfamiliar spaces anew: from the crown of a holder at East Greenwich whose neat geometric lines stand out against a night sky, to the one at Nine Elms, which the caption compares to 'an enormous cathedral to the age of coal gas'.[25] The latter refers to the Battersea No. 7 gas holder (already demolished by the time *London Rising* was published), which is photographed from the outer dome but also from within the majestic, and rather sci-fi like, isolation chamber. Here the juxtaposition of wide-angle views from the top, interior shots and close-up details captures the visual narrative of the book, which relies on a multiplicity of vantage points to conjure up the authors' embodied experiences. The latter is also an instance of how captions are integral to the narrative itself: embedded in the frames of the photographs, they punctuate the sequence by highlighting specific subjects or by conveying the authors' reflections on what they saw.

Gas holder No. 7 also provided an exceptional vantage point from which to contemplate Battersea Power Station, directly next to it (Fig. 12.1). At the time of the crew's expedition, this monument of interwar architecture was in a state of dereliction that encapsulated the contested nature of industrial heritage in Britain. Built

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in the 1930s to Giles Gilbert Scott's design, and expanded through successive phases until the mid-1950s, the coal-fired station was later decommissioned and finally closed down in 1983 – after half a century of service – as the production of energy switched to oil, gas and nuclear sources. The demise of the station came to symbolise the post-industrial decline of London amidst the deregulation of the British economy that was administered by prime minister Margaret Thatcher during the 1980s. Uniquely crowned by four white chimneys, the massive brick-clad building remains an unmistakable feature of London's cityscape and is recognised as one of its 'most loved' yet also 'most contentious' buildings.[26] Its mythical aura was reflected in a number of art and architectural projects, ranging from the cover of Pink Floyd's 1977 album, *Animals* (in which an inflatable pig floats between the chimneys), to Cedric Price's 1984 proposal to suspend the four chimneys and overhead masonry on a steel structure.

Following its closure, Battersea Power Station was the subject of various reuse projects. Proposals for real estate development and amusement functions were shelved after strenuous opposition by local community groups, and so were plans for its conversion to public use as an industrial heritage park. After the site changed hands from one developer to another, in 2012 a Malaysian consortium adopted the masterplan drawn by Rafael Viñoly architects for the wider Nine Elms area, a former brownfield site that was turned into the largest developer-led regeneration zone in London. Surrounded by exclusive residential blocks designed by architects such as Frank Gehry and Foster + Partners, the power station was reopened in 2022 as a mixed-use complex including retail shops, cafes, restaurants, office and event spaces, as well as 254 luxury apartments on the upper levels, with exclusive access to rooftop gardens. Departing from one of the former turbine halls, a special lift carries paying visitors through the northwest chimney for a panoramic view from the top: the tourist attraction, called 'Lift 109' from the height of the chimney itself (in metres), was branded 'London's epic new elevator experience'. This transformation is all the more striking if compared with that of another power station from the same period, the Tate Modern on Bankside, whose adaptive reuse into an art gallery made it one of the most popular cultural venues in London.

Prior to the redevelopment of Nine Elms, several place-hacking crews visited Battersea Power Station in a state of abandonment, witnessing a key passage in the relentless privatisation of the public realm. Climbing its chimneys on ropes, the urban explorers attempted to assert, albeit transiently, the right to repossess the industrial relic and embrace the views from its top, savouring the last throes of a place threatened by 'the insane fantasies of philistine architects and planners'.[27] Their contemplative gaze makes one imagine the place as an industrial ruin, freezing its condition before it would yield to the imperatives of neoliberal urbanism.[28] Through the pages of *London Rising*, panoramic views of the cityscape alternate with pictures of the station's empty shell and closer-up shots that capture the authors' bodies balancing on its edges. Here, as well as elsewhere, their images attest to an intimate and often visceral connection with places. Whether standing on the rim of a chimney, climbing a transmission mast, or sitting on the dome of a gas holder to

contemplate the view, their embodied actions are integral to the narrative of infra-structural heights.

In the second part of the book, this approach is brought to bear on the exploration of *social heights*. Here the authors tackle an assortment of 'social housing, lingering brutalist builds, monuments, hotels and squats' from which they enjoyed free views across the city.[29] Gaining access to the tops of tower blocks is an enterprise that carries political relevance, particularly at a time when vertical construction is all but monopolised by corporate office towers and luxury flats: that is to say, the exclusive high places produced by 'rooftop capitalism'.[30] Following the post-war decades when the local authorities that governed the capital (first the London County Council then the Greater London Council) oversaw a large-scale programme of social housing, the 1980s marked a reversal of policy that led to the effective dismantling of the public house-building policy by the British government. A further shift occurred in the 2010s, when the private sector was called upon to solve the chronic housing crisis. As a consequence of market-driven policies promoted by mayor Boris Johnson, many London boroughs were led to demolish existing council estates and sell the land to property developers in what architectural critic Owen Hatherley described as a 'social purge'.[31]

It was against this background that urban explorers conducted their place-hacking missions across London. Their actions carry an even greater resonance since, in 2012, squatting became a criminal offence in Britain, ending a long period in which the occupation of vacant properties was an integral part of the social and cultural landscape. This shift only exacerbated the housing shortage in a city where the property market is inflated by sky-high investments of foreign capital. To the vertical situationists, social housing blocks disclosed a realm of communal spaces that are seldom seen and even more rarely represented. Armed with cameras, they conveyed the nocturnal atmospheres of rooftops while observing with curiosity the signs of life on the city's margins: from rare falcon's nests to the aerials for pirate radio stations that enabled the diffusion of grime music in the noughties. The authors' avowed goal was to observe a part of London they felt was 'underappreciated', hence their photographs bring to light hidden aspects of the metropolis while refraining from an explicit social critique.[32]

Spanning an array of places, the photobook suggests that social heights form the nodes of a widespread urban web whose geography is largely invisible. It produces a record of unfamiliar sights that are often lit by the cold hues of lights coming from interiors, streets and traffic. Some of these images are reminiscent of the eerie nocturnal views depicted in the 1990s by the photographer Rut Blees Luxemburg, whose gaze upon the city evoked a realm of premonitions and possibilities that was called the 'commonsensual'.[33] The images published in her 1997 photobook, *London: A Modern Project*, eschew human presence to capture a general mood emphasised by titles such as 'Vertiginous Exhilaration' and 'A Towering Inferno'.[34] By contrast, the photographers of *London Rising* framed their own embodied experience captured during illicit expeditions: their use of different optics and points of view is not so much an attempt to develop a distinct visual language as to represent their encounters with edge spaces.
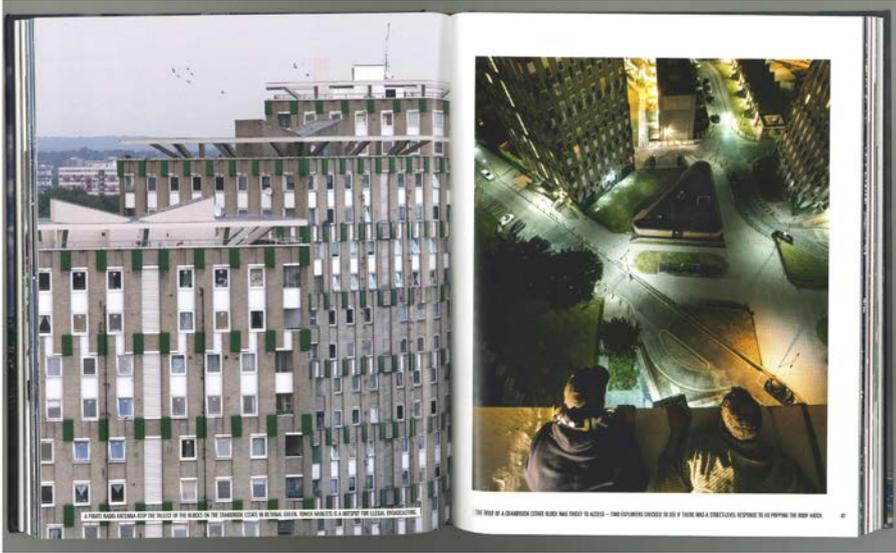
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FIG. 12.2 - Views of and from the Cranbrook estate in Bethnal Green, book spread from *London Rising: Illicit Photos from the City's Heights* (2016), courtesy of the authors

The chapter on social heights joins together views of and from anonymous residential towers in the suburbs as well as the inner city. In addition, it affords glimpses of post-war architectural landmarks that, with varying fortunes, promoted radical experiments in social living such as the Barbican Estate in the City of London; Robin Hood Gardens in Poplar; the Alton Estate in Richmond; and Dawson Heights in Dulwich. A double-page spread of the Cranbrook Estate in Bethnal Green – designed in the early 1960s by Francis Skinner and Douglas Bailey with Berthold Lubetkin – shows the view from a tower's rooftop next to a picture of two explorers looking over the edge (Fig. 12.2). Despite the apparent time lag that separates them (the former shot in daylight and the latter at night), the juxtaposition emphasises the authors' embodied positions in space, while the captions reflect the trials and tribulations involved in their acts.

Throughout the book, the pointed silhouette of the Shard looms large on the horizon as an inescapable sign of London's vertical growth. The glass skyscraper is also depicted in close-up from the rooftop of the adjacent public hospital, showing that even the tallest building can be contemplated without the privileged view from a high-rise cocktail bar. Socio-economic inequality is the focus of the last chapter of the photobook, dedicated to *corporate heights*. Besides the cluster of towers that dot the City, an inescapable sight is that of Canary Wharf, the business district that epitomises the triumph of neoliberal economics aided and abetted by the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s. The development of this area at the heart

of the Docklands saw the wholesale import of skyscraper architecture. Since the appearance of American-style office towers in the 1920s, high-rises remained a relatively minor phenomenon in London, largely limited to a cluster of blocks erected in the City during the post-war decades. It was after the deregulation of the financial markets following the 'Big Bang' of 1986 that this building type became an index of the power structures underlying the city's economy, as well as that of the state itself. Various critics have pointed out that Canary Wharf epitomises a model of urban regeneration based on privatisation, surveillance and social segregation.[35]

In the noughties, London witnessed a tall-building boom that brought about a spate of corporate towers in the central districts, but also hundreds of residential high-rises scattered around the city as densification became a driver of urban development. As Günter Gassner argues, 'The new London skyline is a key site for believing in limitless economic growth without showing the cost and ruinous effects that this growth brings with it'.[36] Through their photographs, Garrett and his fellow explorers brought some of those effects to light. To scale what they call 'supertall and iconic starchitecture' amounts to an affirmation of individual freedom over the corporate city: the photobook validates the possibility of dwelling on rooftops that have colonised the urban sky. Repossessing them is a playful act of transgression that relies on tactical manoeuvres in order to overcome obstacles and bypass security.

A variety of props such as ladders and elevated walkways feature in *London Rising* along with cranes and other devices the explorers use to access building sites. But ultimately the fulcrum of their images are their own bodies (Fig. 12.3). Captured during nocturnal missions, their presence draws attention to the hazardous spaces they negotiated, often at considerable risk. It is as though the human figures in the frames condense the energy of a practice that allows them to take temporary ownership of places and to record the views from the top. Such an attitude is summed up by Garrett himself: 'In scaling these scrapers on our own terms, before the bored security guard takes up his post at the base of the erection, we make dead spaces alive, animate them, by bringing to the building a popular narrative that becomes indelibly latticed into the fabric of the space'.[37] Reclaiming the vantage points of the neoliberal city, therefore, becomes an act of 'counter-surveillance' that reverses the power dynamic of the gaze from above.

The right to the (vertical) city
Reaching the top of high-rise buildings reflects an active engagement with the city's fabric. In this respect, the playful nature of urban exploration is closely related to the situationist practice of psychogeography, which has gained a large following in Britain. Echoing the writings of Iain Sinclair and Will Self, but also the essay films of Patrick Keiller, *London Rising* narrates a journey of discovery in which the city is traversed, dissected and reimagined through a distinct set of criteria that disrupt its conventional space-time geography. Wandering through urban heights, mostly at night, yields moments of illumination as well as critical reflections on a

FIG. 12.3 - Night views of Tower 42, aka NatWest Tower (left) and 30 St Mary Axe, aka the Gherkin (right), book spread from *London Rising: Illicit Photos from the City's Heights* (2016), courtesy of the authors

fast-changing landscape that can hardly be apprehended at a glance. In the photobook, the visual narrative asserts the use value of edge spaces over their exchange value, as rooftops are reconfigured as units of ambience in which new spatial configurations appear. The plunging views make the experience of heights all the more vivid, and their vertiginous effects are accentuated in places by the use of wide-angle lenses that distort the perspective (Fig. 12.4).

Urban exploration draws out the potentiality of the body as an agent of alternative subjectivities. Andrea Mubi Brighenti and Andrea Pavoni have aptly suggested that scaling urban buildings entails a 'deeply sensuous engagement' with the environment that is inherently political, insofar as it rejects the passive forms of consumption associated with commodity capitalism: 'By pushing control to its limits, urban climbing questions the false security of comfort and the false freedom of the consumer'.[38] Hence, through considering the specific relations between body and space that are constituted by vertical urbanism, it becomes possible to reimagine the power structures that are involved in the production of space and probe its regimes of property and use. In Henri Lefebvre's words, urban heights present themselves as 'places of the possible'.[39]

This notion harks back to the revolutionary juncture of the late 1960s, when the French philosopher placed the urban at the heart of his critique of everyday life. Lefebvre's writings on the *right to the city* have gained renewed currency over recent
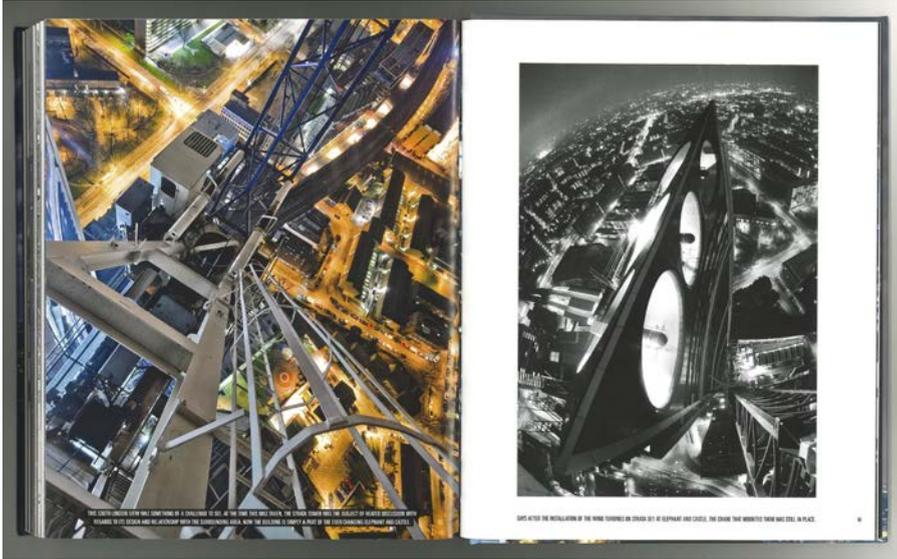
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FIG. 12.4 - Views from and of the Strata Tower, book spread from *London Rising: Illicit Photos from the City's Heights* (2016), courtesy of the authors

decades, as a growing movement for spatial justice fuelled new claims for human rights, the formulation of citizen charters and other incremental reforms within liberal democracies. However, as Mark Purcell points out, for Lefebvre the right to the city was a far more radical idea: it was originally aimed towards a collective self-government of society (*autogestion*) that would wrench political power away from both capitalism and the state.[40] Activism and art practices were deemed to be integral to the development of new policies that would enable the participation of all members of society in 'urgent utopias'; not merely an abstract vision of a better world but rather a concrete project underpinned by scientific research.

Key to this revolutionary politics was 'the urban', which Lefebvre described as a condition that 'remains in a state of dispersed and alienated actuality, as kernel and virtuality'.[41] Accordingly, the use value of urban space would be reaffirmed over its exchange value dictated by capitalism through fleeting moments of social connection and interaction. This vision relies on a sharp critique of the industrial city as 'an urban world reduced to its economic elements', a realm where the regime of property rights based on the separation of functions alienates its citizens from the basic human act of inhabiting space. By contrast, reclaiming the urban means to engage with those active and meaningful forms of participation that have been suppressed by capitalism. For Lefebvre, 'The *right to the city* [...] can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*'.[42] Hence, only a 'revolutionary ima-

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gination' could truly realise the potential of urban society; and, as he later posited, the re-appropriation of one's body is essential for the re-appropriation of space.[43]

Although the urban exploration movement is marked by a diversity of motives that eschew a unified approach or a single strategy, some of its practices clearly resonate with the radical claims underpinning the right to the city. Throughout *London Rising*, urban heights are reconfigured as places of the possible that can be inhabited, albeit transiently, so as to break free from the paradigm of neoliberal urbanism. Reclaiming the vertical, then, means to infiltrate the cracks in the edifice of capitalism by treading on the edge of legal as well as spatial boundaries. In a culture saturated with screen images, Cadman, Garrett and Moss did not reject the channels of mainstream communication but chose to engage with a time-honoured genre – the photobook – that historically plays a distinct role in the representation of urban landscapes.

Ever since the pictorialist views published by Alvin Langdon Coburn in the early 1900s, and the street scenes portrayed in the interwar period by social photographers such as Bill Brandt, the modern metropolis has provided the subjects for a variety of visual narratives that have shaped its perception. With its focus on verticality, *London Rising* alludes in particular to the work of interwar photographers associated with the New Vision. Echoes of Berenice Abbott's 'roof's-eye views' of the 1930s – popularised by her now-classic photobook, *Changing New York* – reverberate through the explorers' survey of London's heights: their concerns with places that are bound to change dramatically or disappear altogether reflect a critique of rampant urban development.[44] An underlying sense of wonder is manifested, in both cases, through the framing of views from elevated vantage points. While Abbott herself had troubles with heights, though, Garrett and fellow explorers revel in exploring tall structures that open up new vistas on the cityscape.

A closer reference can be found in another photobook, realised by the late Italian photographer Gabriele Basilico in 2008, *Vertiginous Moscow,* which appeared when the UE movement was in full swing.[45] Driven by the rapid change of the Russian capital after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this project is centred on the monumental towers built under Stalin which provide unique vantage points onto the cityscape. The resulting series is the outcome of a patient research which brought Basilico to confront the vertical as a constitutive aspect of the cityscape.[46] While this photobook was meticulously designed and edited in the smallest detail, in keeping with his authorial voice, by contrast *London Rising* has the raw quality of an activist project: the sequence of images never attributed to their individual photographers proceeds by leaps and bounds, reproducing the explorers' swift urban tactics and framing the bodily gestures that constitute their raison d'être.

The body is not only the vector of spatial practices enacted by these climbers-cum-photographers but also an agent of their visual narratives. What unfolds through the photobook is a conscious play on the self-portrait aesthetic that proliferated over the 2010s, when the desire to immortalise oneself in the most unusual and sensational places gained new indexical status. As digital media fostered a boom of amateur photography, the selfie came to validate those experiences, from tou-

rism to extreme sports, which signify adventurous lifestyles. Feeding off this image culture, urban explorers depict their bodies-at-heights against landscapes of flickering lights, reclaiming their place in the picture as well as in the city. Upon close scrutiny, these photographs have a twofold agency: on the surface, they are visual documents that record fleeting moments of *détournement* in the vertical city; at a deeper level though, they may also be regarded as witnesses to a process of socio-spatial mutation that is inscribed in the built environment. Although the authors were conscious of these layers of meaning, they did not seek to over-theorise their practice nor to make their narrative cohere more than the images themselves. If Cadman denies any provocative intent to find fault with the city itself, for instance, Garrett is adamant in his belief that images can persuade 'those in power, the media and the public to rethink the boundaries between bodies and infrastructure, bodies and power'.[47]

After the heyday of urban exploration, from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, the movement began to show signs of fatigue. By the time *London Rising* was published, the authors already felt that 'a particular era of rooftopping may be coming to a close'.[48] As the practice of hacking places became gradually normalised, and its imagery co-opted for commercial purposes, the spirit that animated the rise of rooftopping began to wane. Nevertheless, *London Rising* highlights the critical role of the photobook as an enduring tool of urban representation. Driven by a mix of indignation and melancholy, this work embodies the paradox of a practice that seeks to challenge the society of spectacle, yet is itself in thrall to the spectacle of the city. We might read through its curated sequence of photographs an attempt to question the spatial logic of capitalism, one that does not reject visual media but embraces them in order to convey a visceral experience. Turning London's heights into a play-ground, these explorers managed to re-enchant the city as a field of possibilities: a place where a nostalgic fascination with the traces of the industrial past blends with the contemplation of the latest skyscrapers.

While the skyline mutates at rapid pace, their work intimates that photography can still provide a critical and creative tool for reimagining the cityscape. At a time when digital images proliferate at unprecedented rates via social media, the photobook provides a safe refuge in which the records of illicit expeditions can be laid out and contemplated in print form. Therefore, this publication arguably serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it frames a series of place-hacking exploits as a consistent project, weaving together the pictures of disparate places with the explorers' own musings and observations. On the other, it aligns this project with a publishing genre that, however wide-ranging in scope and content, draws its lasting power on the ability to produce a visual narrative that is carefully observed, composed and edited.

Unlike an online picture gallery, the photobook defines a specific mode of spectatorship based on an imaginary journey through space and time. Arguably, its linearity is what guarantees a trajectory as well as manifold digressions. This format enables a series of encounters to take place across the pages, but also incongruities and surprises that invite reflections on the subjects depicted and on the embodied

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actions that are inseparable from them. As the overexposure of rooftopping images on the Internet led critical explorers to shun a sensationalism that is associated with extreme sports, *London Rising* signals an attempt to salvage the ethos of this practice by aligning it with a time-honoured, pre-digital form of urban representation. With all its inherent paradoxes, the book captures some of the most blatant yet largely unseen aspects of vertical urbanism, inviting us to consider its implications beyond the shiny surface of buildings.

NOTES

1   See, for instance, Zhongjie Lin and José L.S. Gámez, eds., *Vertical Urbanism: Designing Compact Cities in China* (London: Routledge, 2018).
2   Stephen Graham, *Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers* (London: Verso, 2016). See also Stephen Graham and Lucy Hewitt, 'Getting off the Ground: On the Politics of Urban Verticality', *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 37, no.1 (2012): 72-92.
3   Andrew Harris, 'Vertical urbanisms: Opening up geographies of the three-dimensional city', *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 39, no. 5 (2015): 601-620; 602.
4   Ivi, 608.
5   The coinage of the term is attributed to the late Canadian author Ninjalicious (pseudonym of Jeff Chapman) in the book *Access All Areas: A User's Guide to the Art of Urban Exploration* (n.p.: Infilpress, 2005).
6   Bradley L. Garrett, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City* (London: Verso, 2013).
7   See also: Bradley L. Garrett, *Subterranean London: Cracking the Capital* (Munich and London: Prestel Verlag, 2014).
8   Garrett, *Explore Everything*, 89.
9   Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element of Culture* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1950 [1938]):10.
10 Ivi, 13.
11 Geoffrey Winthrop Young, *Wall and Roof Climbing* (Eton: Spottiswoode & Co., 1905); Whipplesnaith [Noel Symington], *The Night Climbers of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 2007 [1937]).
12 Yasmin Ibrahim, 'Self-representation and the disaster event: Self-imaging, morality and immortality', *Journal of Media Practice*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2015): 211-227.
13 Davide Deriu, *On Balance: Architecture and Vertigo* (London: Lund Humphries, 2023).
14 Davide Deriu, '"Don't Look Down!" A Short History of Rooftopping Photography', *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 21, no. 7 (2016): 1033-1061.
15 Bradley L. Garrett, 'Corporate Heights', in Bradley L. Garrett, Alexander Moss and Scott Cadman, *London Rising: Illicit Photos from the City's Heights* (Munich and London: Prestel, 2016), 123.
16 Bradley L. Garrett, *Subterranean London: Cracking the Capital* (Munich and London: Prestel, 2014).
17 Garrett, 'Foreword', *Subterranean London*, 9.
18 Garrett, Moss and Cadman, *London Rising*.
19 McKenzie Wark, 'Foreword', *London Rising*, 4-5.
20 Garrett, 'Corporate Heights', 123.
21 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X: Anxiety, 1962–1963*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Adrian Price (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).
22 Alexander Moss, 'Infrastructural Heights', in *London Rising*, 14.
23 Ivi, 15.

24 Ivi, 12.

25 Ibid.

26 Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke: The Failed Dreams of Battersea Power Station* (London: Paradise Road, 2016), 11.

27 Garrett, Moss and Cadman, *London Rising*, 35.

28 A similar position was taken by the writer Will Self who made a plea to keep the power station as it was: Will Self, 'Battersea Power Station', *The London Review of Books*, vol. 35, no 14 (18 July 2013). https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v35/n14/will-self/diary.

29 Garrett, Moss and Cadman, *London Rising*, 63.

30 Scott Cadman, 'Social Heights' in *London Rising*, Cadman, Garrett and Moss, 64.

31 Owen Hatherley, 'The Government of London', *New Left Review*, no. 122 (Mar/Apr 2020): 81–114; 106 ff.

32 Cadman, 'Social Heights', 66.

33 Rut Blees Luxemburg, *Commonsensual: The Works of Rut Blees* Luxemburg (London: Black Dog, 2009). See also Chapter 6 of this volume.

34 Rut Blees Luxemburg, *London: A Modern Project* (London: Black Dog, 1997).

35 Anna Minton, *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

36 Günter Gassner, *Ruined Skylines: Aesthetics, Politics and London's Towering Cityscape* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 196.

37 Garrett, 'Corporate Heights', 121.

38 Andrea Mubi Brighenti and Andrea Pavoni, 'Climbing the City: Inhabiting Verticality Outside of Comfort Bubbles', *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2017): 63-80, 74.

39 Henri Lefebvre, 'The Right to the City' (1968), in *Writing on Cities*, trans. and ed. by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 156.

40 Mark Purcell, 'Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and The Right to the City,, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2013): 141-154.

41 Lefebvre, 'The Right to the City', 148.

42 Ivi, 158.

43 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

44 Berenice Abbott, *Changing New York,* text by Elizabeth McCausland (New York, NY: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1939). See also Chapter 2 of this volume.

45 The project was first exhibited in Paris, at the Cité de l'Architecture / Palais de Chaillot, under the title: 'Gabriele Basilico: Moscou Verticale' (23 October to 30 November 2008) and later in Moscow at the State Museum of Architecture (20 December 2011 to 5 February 2012). The accompanying volume, edited by Umberto Zanetti and Alessandro De Magistris, appeared first in Italian as *Mosca Verticale* (Milano: Federico Motta Editore, 2008), then in English as *Vertiginous Moscow: Stalin's City Today* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009). See also Chapter 11 of this volume.

46 Davide Deriu, 'A Dynamic Attitude of the Gaze: Gabriele Basilico's Sense of Vertical Space', *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 24, no. 8 (2019): 1096-1117.

47 Garrett, 'Corporate Heights', 123.

48 Garrett and Moss, 'Introduction', in *London Rising*, 9.

13

'DETROIT. MOVE HERE. MOVE THE WORLD': CONSTRUCTING DETROIT IN PHOTOBOOKS

Wes Aelbrecht

On 19 October 2017, the Detroit Amazon Bid Committee publicly released the pitch video 'Detroit. Move Here. Move the World' as part of a confidential proposal to become Amazon's second headquarters (Amazon HQ2).[1] The high-energy sequence of images of lush Art Deco interiors, fancy freeway junctions, glimmering Renaissance Center silos and technological innovations led viewers to believe that 'Detroit is the starting line of the world's imagination' and urged them to be part of it. According to the producer Stephen McGee the ad 'made them [the residents] proud to live here, while others who have left, tell him (sic) it makes them want to move back'.[2] As such, the video follows closely the opportunity rhetoric of Detroit's newest marketing campaign 'Opportunity Detroit' (2013) produced by Dan Gilbert's company Rock Ventures.[3] In these ad campaigns an image of the city is constructed as a place filled with opportunities where empty sites and abandoned buildings are reimagined as sites of possibility to counter the predominant narratives of the city's ruination. More recently, in response to the loss of the Amazon bid, Gilbert repeated his claim that Detroit's reputation as a ruined city continues to influence its future.[4] 'We have to do better', he claimed following the much criticised and short-lived ad 'See Detroit like we do'.[5]

The British photographer Marcus Lyon's new limited-edition art photobook, *i.Detroit: A Human Atlas of the Contemporary City* (2020), is such an attempt to 'do better' in order to construct an image that lies closer to Detroit's so-called reality (as opposed to the ruins depicted in some photobooks).[6] To see and believe in the rising excitement and opportunity, Lyon was guided by a curatorial committee and a group of local leaders who nominated the participants for his 'human atlas'. The 100 'unsung heroes' included in the atlas who carry city's faith on their shoulders (in reference to the mythological Greek Titan, Atlas) are all in some way trying to change the city from the bottom up. They are people normally absent from Gilbert's exhilarating ad campaigns. Shot in front of a white background devoid of any specific urban context , these photographic portraits are an attempt to remove barriers and stage an encounter with the other and the self (Fig. 13.1a, Fig. 13.1b).[7]

Lyon was one of the first outsiders to be praised for his efforts to be 'the voice of Detroit': someone who '"gets" Detroit and its achievers', as the Fisher Group CEO Mark Davidoff put it.[8] However *i.Detroit* is not the first photographic project to focus on the people of Detroit rather that its ruins. The book is part of a largely unknown and little discussed collection of photobooks produced over the past few decades that are setting up a dialogue with the city's redevelopment. These comprise a variety of self-published photobooks: exhibition, artist's, reportage, archival, pro-

FIG. 13.1a - Marcus Lyon, *i.Detroit: A Human Atlas of the Contemporary City* (2020)

paganda and protest photobooks among others. Given that so many books, with or without Detroit's ruins, have been published since the 1960s, with a visible growth in photobooks from the 1990s onwards, it's surprising that more work has not been done on the photobook as an alternative site for constructing, exhibiting and questioning Detroit's image and politics.

The absence of debate around these publications is even more surprising considering the rising popularity of the photobook triggered by recent surveys such as Martin Parr and Gerry Badger's three-volume *The Photobook: A History*.[9] In fact, these surveys sparked a new scholarship around the photobook as an object to study as important, if not more important, than the photography exhibition. However, practically none of Detroit's recent publications have been included in them. There is no comprehensive study on Detroit photobooks to date, and none on the relationship between such books and urban development processes such as urban renewal and downtown renaissance. This lack of knowledge together with the positive reception of *i.Detroit* and the identified shift from ruins to human portraits warrants a closer inspection of the relationship between the city and its photobooks. Hence, this chapter seeks to analyse what the book format, image sequence and layout can contribute to the debate around Detroit's image, and how and what type of relation this sets up between the reader, the city and its redevelopment. Can a photobook question, redirect and potentially reimagine the city's future? By contextualising and analysing a series of selected photobooks from the 1980s and the 2010s, I

FIG. 13.1b - Marcus Lyon, *i.Detroit: A Human Atlas of the Contemporary City* (2020)

discuss a shift in approach identified in photographic practices from urban activism to social advertisement.

Keep Sending Eye-opening Photographs, 1980s

On November 22, 1981, Detroit's largest daily newspaper the *Detroit Free Press* (DFP) published *Struggling for Life: A Picture Story*, a critical piece of photojournalism on the state- and city-sponsored demolition of Poletown (located in east Detroit).[10] Like most promotional images for popular movies, the cover image of the pull-out issue reveals some of the drama and active resistance that unfolds during Poletown's decline and disappearance. We are witness to the arrest of Josephine Jacubowski on 14 July 1981, for example. She was one of the main leaders of an elderly activist group in the neighbourhood and we see her smiling and looking from behind the shoulders of a Detroit police officer in the hopes that one of the photojournalists on the scene would recognise her plight. Jacubowski's arrest signalled the end of the residents' fight against the demolition of Poletown's Immaculate Conception Church and hence the disappearance of the neighbourhood. Moments after her arrest, the wrecking ball hit the church facade.

The pull-out issue included in the popular Sunday edition was the outcome of 13 months of intensive work between three Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalists (Craig Porter, David C. Turnley and Taro Yamasaki) and the few remaining and actively resisting local residents. It signalled the start of a decade-long campaign by

the DFP to expose the fraught urban policies of Coleman Young (mayor of Detroit from 1974 to 1994) and his administration, which led to a culture of abandonment, neglect and demolition, all in the name of job creation.[11]

Fifteen carefully edited chapters guide readers with words and images through the highly contested erasure of 465 acres – including homes, schools, churches, retail stores, small producers and a hospital – and the displacement of 4,200 residents using the principle of 'eminent domain' in order to make way for a new General Motors assembly plant.[12] Using the same compositional frame, each double-page spread is presented as an encounter with a long-time resident active in the community. While one can read each as an independent photo-story and combine it at random with other sections in a non-chronological order, the issue has a strong narrative element, akin to that of popular movies. One DFP reader wrote in to say: 'When I started reading, I could not quit [...] the complete picture emerged so clearly'.[13]

Young considered the construction of GM's new assembly plant 'the most important thing he could accomplish as mayor'.[14] He was so convinced about his plans and its impact on the economy of the city that he did not understand or even try to comprehend the disappointment and anger among the remaining residents. Bringing GM back to the city at a moment when most manufacturing plants in the nation were relocating to the suburbs was celebrated as a victory rather than as a loss or betrayal. In fact, he used the on-going economic recession to justify his plans and controversial fiscal support programmes to meet GM's demands.[15] Combined with the impact of deindustrialisation, the downward spiral set of the physical integrity of Poletown since the 1950s made it possible and even acceptable for Young to portray Poletown as a blighted area not worth preserving or protecting.[16] These injustices and lack of recognition of the cultural and social value of a place like Poletown, together with the use of the 'eminent domain' precept, explains why these photographers undertook the work they did.

As the Marxist geographer David Harvey pointed out in the late 1980s, in the constant search for investment and urban economic development, Poletown demonstrates that Young and his administration focused primarily on 'the political economy of place rather than [ameliorating the living and working conditions of a particular] territory'.[17] The public sector no longer merely managed the provision of social services but adopted a mode of urban governance defined by Harvey as entrepreneurial.[18] In other words, the city council adopted characteristics from the private sector such as 'risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation'.[19] As the urban planner Peter Hall puts it, in the 1970s planning was no longer going to be used, as it had during the 1950s and 1960s, 'as a means of guiding and controlling explosive physical growth', but rather to stimulate economic growth (Fig. 13.2).[20]

No flashy renaissance Detroit images feature in *Struggling for Life* to lure residents or future consumers to return to the city. Instead, it adopts storytelling tropes from the language of narrative film. The pull-out issue follows the four-part narrative structure identified by James E. Cutting in relation to movies : setup, complicating action, development and climax.[21] These were applied by the DFP editors to grab and hold the reader's attention and as such encourage viewers to identify with

FIG. 13.2 - Tony Spina, 'Mayor Coleman Young stands atop the Riverfront Apartments', 1989

the characters in the story, their struggle and resistance. It follows from what Cutting writes about the use of narrative formulae that it is a 'highly effective format that allows rapid processing of complex narratives' (in this case eminent domain) and by extension humanising and making this piece of legislation tangible.[22]

The first part of the four-part story, entitled 'The Neighborhood: Modest homes, rich lives in the core of the metropolis', borrows a much-used concept from cinema: the oblique view. This is an establishing shot designed to illustrate the place where the story of loss, acceptance and resistance takes place. At its centre stands the Immaculate Conception Church, surrounded by suburban houses with the recognisable profile of the Renaissance Center (RenCen) on Detroit's riverfront in the distance. This unique and tight-knit community is further explored on the following five spreads where particular focus is placed on the various and diverse social spaces of Poletown. Behind these photographic encounters looms the question of what will happen to the community once it loses the social spaces that have shaped its identity and that of the people who live there

In keeping with a real drama, the story shifts when 'the dismantling begins' with views of an empty, mostly derelict and partly demolished Dodge Main plant. The caption reads: 'Dodge Main: For so long its great muscle made its passing unimaginable'. Following Cutting's narrative formula, this marks the 'turning point' where we move into a different phase of 'complicating action'. We are given a closer look at the circumstances forced upon the residents still living in Poletown

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and struggling with the newly emerging reality. During the set-up stage, demolition looms in the background; here it moves centre stage both in image as well as in subject matter. We can also observe that the rhythm and pace of the storytelling shifts, something Cutting also mentions as a technique to separate the different stages of the story.

At a moment when all seems lost, the narrative shifts again. We see glimmers of hope, resistance and community action around the church where residents gather. This phase is called 'development' and it is the part in the story where, as Cutting says, 'the story typically broadens, often as subsidiary characters play a greater role and while the protagonist struggles but remains fully committed to her goal'.[23] In this instance, we see over two double-page spreads Josephine Jacubowski, Father Joe and Ralph Nader each in their own way gathering a resistance. The final chapters 'The Church is no more' and 'Stella Borowski moves out' signify the end of Poletown's story, the 'climax phase' in the narrative. In contrast to the celebration of the ethnic diversity and social dynamics of a 'proud neighbourhood' we are confronted in the final chapter with a 'barren land', an oblique view of Poletown in October 1981. Instead of children smiling and playing in the streets, we meet again the various residents from the opening chapters, now 'orphaned by their city'.

The narrative construction of *Struggling for Life* allows readers to witness the major psychological ramifications caused by large displacements. Writing of the urban upheavals of the 1960s, psychologist Marc Fried suggests that the removal of social and economic structures causes 'grief' or 'intense personal suffering' which might in time increase 'social and psychological "pathologies"'.[24] This is borne out in some of the letters to the DFP praising the Poletown photo-essay. Some readers referred to the essay's emotional impact saying that it made them realise, often for the first time, 'the devastating consequences of eminent domain', and 'the pain of progress'. Others said they were 'deeply touched by the pictures [which moved them to tears]' and felt that they had been given a real opportunity 'to meet some wonderful people [who were the] backbone of any community' and to 'feel the emptiness and despair of the many displaced people of Poletown'.[25]

Curating Detroit's ruined images

Most of the photojournalists that feature in *Struggling for Life* seem to follow the argument made by sociologist Mark Fishman in *Manufacturing the News* (1980) that if journalists, or in this case photographers, were to employ different methods of news gathering, another reality would emerge that would challenge the status quo.[26] In other words, by choosing not to rely on the images or suggestions from the city's Public Information Department, citizens would develop another urban imaginary. Like Fishman, urban policy analyst Peter Dreier argued that news reporting whereby 'beat reporters' with in-depth knowledge and familiarity with the community are assigned to specific neighbourhoods has the ability to shift the dominant narrative of blight, violence and crime.[27] This way of news gathering, as sociologist Herbert Gans points out, increases the appearance of 'ordinary people' and the unknown or neglected places that hardly ever feature in the news.[28]

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In photography, we can witness similar developments in the 1970s and 1980s to those mentioned by Fishman, Dreier and Gans, which may help to explain why these narrative elements were followed in photobooks. In that sense, it's not only about shifting the gaze that allows new facts and stories to emerge. Following the 1980s 'turn to culture' theorised by Victor Burgin and others, it is also about recognising photography as a signifying practice, one that contributes to the production and dissemination of meaning and knowledge (what Michel Foucault calls a 'discourse').[29] As a meaning-making practice, what is important is to focus on its effects, rather than analyse how it stands in relation to the 'real' – as the photo editors at DFP fully understood.

Further evidence of these 1980s practices can be observed in the use of a set of narrative strategies that build on the classic repertoire in art photography in the book *Detroit Images: Photographs of the Renaissance City* (1989), and the photography exhibition 'Demolished by Neglect' (1986).[30] In line with the argument proposed by Susana Martins and Anne Reverseau in *Paper Cities*, these Detroit photobooks produce 'new sort of visual urban cartographies – new ways of mapping the city' while they function at the same time 'beyond its aesthetic value as a powerful ideological and political tool'.[31] They fully embraced the critique of photography's ideological ends and follow what Blake Stimson later theorised as photography's 'sociality'. The photographic index, according to Stimson, thus moved from 'scientific guarantee to social promise to myth, now finds its calling as a secular ritual form'.[32] The idea of the photographic index as a secular ritual form comes fully to the surface in the following section.

Your Town Tomorrow, 2010s

Following an argument made by the linguist Biljana Scott on a series of photo campaigns set up 'to quell racism and sell multiculturalism' after 9/11, I propose to read the most recent photobooks as a form of 'public diplomacy'.[33] Like Scott's photo campaigns, these photobooks can be seen as a form of social advertisement, whereby concepts instead of commodities are sold. Adopting strategies from the world of advertisement, Detroit is not just pictured but rather associated with and connected to a particular way of living and working. As a form of branding the city, one of the primary intentions of these books was to suppress the dominant imagery of a city in ruins but to show, as one local photographer put it, that 'not everyone in Detroit is an abandoned building'.[34] And even though these new attempts appropriate the strategies of commercial ad campaigns, I want to argue that they present us with a form of the American dream and city far removed from rhetoric of Detroit's rebirth espoused by Gilbert and his associates.[35] The American dream we can see in these photobooks aligns well to the conclusions of Samuel J. Abrams who wrote in a *New York Times* survey that 'Americans would be well served to focus less intently on [...] the material temptations of our consumer culture, and to focus more on the communities they are part of'.[36] These photobooks emphasise the importance of social capital, and the collaborative nature in these photographic practices offers further reflections on the new type of city-making and city politics that the communities represented stand for.[37]

One of the first photobooks in which the idea of a community is not only presented as a form of evidence (as it was in *Struggling for Life*) but where the actual production of the book reinforces the building and maintenance of a community is *Thanks for the View, Mr Mies* (2012).[38] Produced and edited by Clanada, a collective of three graphic designers Danielle Aubert, Lana Cavar and Natasha Chandani, the book is the result of a collaboration with the residents of Lafayette Park, a collection of three high-rises, 24 single-story courthouses and 162 two-story town houses designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in the early 1960s in the centre of Detroit. During the book's launch at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) urban historian Robert Fishman pointed out a general assumption that 'you cannot have a community unless you have this kind of old-fashioned neighbourhood'.[39] The lack of interest in and representation of Lafayette Park until now, the editors write, 'may have to do with the fact that it doesn't fit the popular national image of Detroit as a crime-ridden, cash-strapped city struggling to fulfil basic services'.[40]

Like Poletown, *Thanks for the View* is not a standard photobook one encounters in Parr's or other photobook collections. None of the editors are professional (art) photographers nor do they pretend to be: they designed essentially a platform to gather together the distinct voices (in words and images) from inside Mies's buildings. The narrative structures and strategies identified and discussed in the 1980s photobooks do not determine the book's main focus. Instead, it is the architectural and urban setting that structures the movement: from the townhouses across the neighbourhood to the tower blocks. In each section, we encounter different communities in Lafayette Park, portraits constructed using a variety of sources: written and photographic essays, interviews, archival images of the construction, newsletters and miscellaneous items.

The ten black-and-white archival photo spreads of Lafayette Park under construction appear at different points in the book, disrupting any attempt to develop a chronological narrative. What they do instead, is to pull readers out of the present in order to question and reflect on the controversial 1950s urban renewal project mentioned by Marsha Music, a contributor and resident, in one of the first essays in the book. At the same time, these encounters with the past challenge the idea that buildings are complete when they are built. Indeed, buildings merely deliver the contours for human inhabitation. A good example of this can be seen in the sequence of images that run from Corine Vermeulen's portraits of the townhouse residents to the archival image 'May 1958 Pavilion under construction', leading the viewer from the diverse displays of domestic life to the empty and lifeless steel skeleton. We can also see such play with juxtapositions in the treatment of the relation between the landscape, the residents, and the buildings.

The book is also interspersed with entries from the 'LP Sporadic' newsletter, a new incarnation of the original newsletter from the early 1960s. Like the original, it also covers all sorts of social events and meetings among residents. All sixteen newsletters are spread out in the book in between the photo-essays and interviews, each laid out in the same way with photographs accompanied by a caption. The photos

are mostly taken by one of the editors and, in terms of aesthetics, have a 'snapshot' quality to them.

Among the pages, there are also what I call the miscellaneous items: collages of various experiences and stories brought together on a double-page spread from different places using small-framed photographs with captions often provided with the support of the residents. In these sections, the editors present events that might appear banal or even gossipy at first but turn out to be an important part of the residents' lives. These pages also allow us behind-the-scenes glimpse of the book's production because the editors have included their communication with the residents.

The collaborative nature of the book can be further witnessed in the photo-essays, and photographs used to illustrate the essays and interviews. Archival documents and pictures are shared by the residents. Guided tours of Lafayette Park are organised and illustrated. Residents are used as photographers alongside Corine Vermeulen. And finally, the editors include a chapter on their own experience while living in the building during the production of the book. These diverse encounters and engagements with the residents steered and ultimately determined the outcome of the book and its final shape. It is the playful, surprising, and often funny presentation of the book that leads to different emotions and multiple readings with different narratives intertwining. It is a book that lies between gossip and art – and that is its appeal, making it far more accessible to audiences unfamiliar with reading art photographs.

In between those cracks: Our Town Tomorrow

The word play in the title of Vermeulen's self-published photobook *Your Town Tomorrow* exemplifies the aims and objectives of many recently published photobooks. Not only does the title convey the idea of the rise of a (new) community in Detroit and a rekindling of the American dream, it also wants to provoke envy, such that we may adopt similar social values. The gaps in the typography render 'Your Town' 'Our Town' or even 'Our own', inviting the reader to view 'Our Own Tomorrow' as a place shaped by the partnerships between humans and nature. Like many art photobooks about cities or landscapes the book is organised as a journey through the city's landscape whereby the human portraits act as encounters between us (or the photographer herself), the landscape and the residents photographed in their home environment. This dialogue enables us to relate to and even imaginatively join the subjects in their environment. These intimate and beautiful portraits and landscape settings help our coming together in a dialogue.

We rarely feel this intimacy in our previous readings of *Struggling for Life* (1981) or *Detroit Images* (1989). In the former, we are sucked into the narrative as we observe and experience all of the different emotions as though we were watching a movie drama. This turbulent journey enables us to identify with the protagonists, and to understand the impact and injustice of 'eminent domain'. In *Detroit Images* this strategy is taken to another level by suggesting tools and tactics to reading and deconstructing the renaissance processes with a critical eye. From the making

of a critical eye, we move to an enviable eye, that is to the recent books branding the city as a place where one can organise life outside the dominant renaissance narrative evolving around material consumption and individual success. Where the 1980s books expose the fraught policies of Mayor Young's urban governance, more recent photobooks present us with a new vision of the American dream. The collaborative nature in these photographic practices offers a reflection on the new type of city-making and city politics these communities stand for and, by extension, the new form of American dream they embody. This change in the dialogue between photobooks and urban redevelopment is similar to the shift the art historian Claire Bishop identified in art practices from the 1990s onwards, where terms like 'collaboration' and 'empowerment' came to dominate the discourse.[41]

The photobook *i.Detroit* works differently, but one can see how the working methods and intention to give the people of Detroit a voice aligns with the more recent discourses. Many photographers and collectives have been developing catalogues of human portraits. Between 2009 and 2019, Vermeulen for example set up multiple walk-in portrait studios, the first of which was organised in 2009 in a foreclosed house in the neighbourhood where she lives.[42] Other photographers initiated similar projects: Noah Stephens in 2010 with *The People of Detroit Portraiture Project*, Dawoud Bey, Dave Jordano, Detroit's public radio station WDET-FM, Darkroom Detroit, and the photographer's collective Facing Change: Documenting America.

Even though we will have to wait to see how Lyon and others will use the limited-edition art photobook *i.Detroit*, the recent ad 'Detroit Kneaded us. We knead Detroit' shows some of the limitations of such social projects and how easily they can slide from social to commercial advertisement whereby products are branded instead of different forms of living together.[43] It is no coincidence that the owner and founder of Avalon Bakery features in Lyon's human atlas and that many of the portraits in *i.Detroit* return in the ad campaign. Only this time instead of a white background the subjects are framed through the bakery's window. The 'Detroit Kneaded Us' campaign was developed and set up by the marketing company Seeds that explicitly states that it 'opened our [their] doors in 2008 with one simple mission: To help brands grow'.[44] Gilbert also became aware of the strengths of these campaigns and as a consequence began to fund similar projects through his company Bedrock who also leads the 'Opportunity Detroit' campaign.

While the blurring of the line between social and commercial advertisement should concern us all, on the positive side there is an 'opportunity' to blur the boundaries between architecture, urban planning and design and photography. In a move similar to the one described by Juan Herreros in his prologue to Jesús Vassallo's book *Seamless*, this would mean that we reverse 'the usual relation between architecture [planning] and photography [... meaning] that in its relation with photography, the architectural project has undergone a highly significant transmutation of roles'.[45] Photography in that sense is no longer instrumentalised by a planning discourse for ideological and rhetorical purposes. Instead, as these photobooks demonstrate, photography can play a role as the supplier of new publics, sites

and forms of engagement. As such, it avoids the oversimplification and the celebration of a cultural diversity in the pages of the photobook which ultimately serves to brand the selling of Detroit as a great place to shop and play, as opposed to improve and invest in the local people, and hence change the economic model which remains at present based on the idea that accumulating wealth in the city's centre will cause a ripple effect. We have already been waiting for fifty years and haven't seen the ripples yet. It is time to change the planning system and these photobooks show us how we can press the reset button.

NOTES

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What is a photobook? And how can we assess its historical and cultural relevance for the representation of cities? The terms 'photographic book' and 'picture book' refer to various illustrated publications, with or without text, in which photographic images play a key role. Often resulting from the collaboration between photographers, editors and graphic designers, they are intended to build visual narratives on specific places or subjects. Throughout its history, this versatile form of publication has allowed photographers to depict urban environments in widely different ways. Although the photobook has been integral to the construction of urban narratives since the early-twentieth century, its significance for the experience and perception of cities has so far been rarely investigated. Picturing Cities addresses this gap by mapping the shifting nature and function of photobooks onto the history of urban representation. This collection of essays from Europe and the Americas illustrates a broad range of aesthetic attitudes as well as analytical approaches to Western cities expressed through photobooks. The anthology, stemming from a conference session chaired by the editors, focuses on the photobook as a form of urban narrative: a tool that has been deployed to read, analyse and interpret cities through curated sequences of images, often in conjunction with literary or critical texts. It opens up a multidisciplinary field of research with the potential to expand into further geographical and cultural areas.

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