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# SER DIGITAL BEING DIGITAL

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MARCOS CRUZ | FILIP DUJARDIN | BIG

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MAD ARCHITECTS | JEAN NOUVEL | VICTOR ENRICH

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MÁRIO KRUGUER

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ANA MARIA FEIJÃO

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ANTOINE PICON

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ASPA | JOÃO ABEL MANTA

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# JA244

SER DIGITAL  
BEING DIGITAL



## PONTOS DE VISTA POINTS OF VIEW



VISTO DA ESQUERDA  
FROM THE LEFT  
Irene Pimentel



BIG  
HOTEL VMCP, ARLANDA  
VMCP HOTEL



MAIS VELHOS  
GREY EMINENCE  
JOÃO ABEL MANTA  
Ana Vaz Milheiro



VISTO DA DIREITA  
FROM THE RIGHT  
José Manuel Fernandes



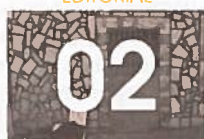
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MUSEU ORDOS, ORDOS  
ORDOS MUSEUM



HOMENAGEM  
TRIBUTE

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E EMERGÊNCIA  
CONTINUITY, COMPLEXITY  
AND EMERGENCE  
Antoine Picon



EDUARDO SOUTO DE MOURA: ATLAS  
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MAIS NOVOS  
UP AND COMING  
ASPAs  
Paulo Tormenta Pinto



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ORDEM DOS  
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# HOW TO USE: DIGITAL MISCONCEPTIONS

BY MANUEL GRAÇA DIAS

The theme of this issue of *J.A*, the digital – the possibility to store, process and transmit information using binary systems, which is the opposite of that other form of understanding the world (analogically), i.e. in a direct way resulting from our observation, without the mediation of electrical, magnetic or minimal electromagnetic units (bits), which are always *invisible*, not matter how many multiples are used – gives rise to a series of misconceptions.

I will endeavour to elucidate herein what, in the domain of architecture, appear to be some of the scientific myths surrounding the diverse hypotheses and possibilities introduced by the *digital* experience.

Firstly, “customisation” (or *parametersation* or *personalisation* or adjustment to the “user’s” preferences or modification to suit individual specifications and needs, individualisation, all of them concepts that are very dear to the IT world); then we have the “scientific” (mathematics, probabilistics, statistics) pretence behind obtaining “random” results for the immaculate commitment of the sin of poetic “will”; and finally, the need, felt by some, for *investigation* into new materials for the physical form-giving to designs resulting from more or less *digital* endeavours.

## MISCONCEPTION 1: ON ARCHITECTURE AS A “PRODUCT”

It has always appeared to me that the possibility of “customisation” was nothing more than a sham, particularly when “adapted” to architecture (what a *boring* life, full of “variants”, like the drag of the supposed freedom of choice of detergents in the supermarket!).

Architecture is not *design*. Cars are “personalised” – or that is the *illusion* on has – as is upholstery, the colour of the dashboard, stripes on the bonnet, differences in engine grills or wheel hubs (there were times when all cars were black and all very much similar because they really were “inaccessible” objects and didn’t yet need to create the *illusion* of being a “unique object”).

It’s like music on your headphones, stored on an iPod. Make your own playlist, the advertising says, and people customise, become accustomed, think they have found the *solipsism* itself in that little, apparent, option in which they lose themselves, forgetting the world around them. “You are individuals with a choice!”

But the beauty of architecture – the freedom it proposes – is of another order.

We traverse the world and find the most marvellous shelters made many centuries ago or during the last decade. We live in houses that contained other lives, 19th century schools, Pombaline laboratories, cafés that were famous, sections of mediaeval streets, old warehouses that are now trendy bars; we cross ancient cities, enter modernist shops, walk through recovered gardens; we visit friends in rooms full of tiles or suffocated by faded wallpaper.

We regularly go back to some of these built situations. The variety of the spaces that exist and replace each other allows us to hierarchise them, desire them, favour them, *adjust* to them.

The ambition to “personalise” is not very generous; it is exclusive. It excludes others, those who make wonderful things for our enjoyment. A world made by all, where all can find reason for joy and the sharing of tastes, wishes and desires is a world that is different from the one in which each person would have to constantly design, cook, sew, compose, model, edit his own “exclusive” individuality; it is a world where no one would be well, where no one could accept the challenge of the *collective construction of life*.

It would be the opposite of the division of work: the little village of yesteryear perpetually occupied with the same tasks as ever: thatching, leading livestock to the pasture, making bread, spinning; each household having its *own* pig, its *own* smokehouse, its *own* slaughterhouse, its *own* vegetable field.

The supposed freedom of “customisation” is the opposite of the city, of commerce, of exchange (of experiences, encounters, discoveries), of trust, of the comfort of differences; of unpredictability.

Real estate agents would also have us believe that a brand-new

3-bed apartment is more attractive than a “used” one; and while we’re at it, still under construction, because then one can choose between three types of tiles without soul.

These are placebos, marketing ideas, things with short-lived sentiment; “products”, as they like to put it. Architecture is invented and later it may be modified, for sure; and anyone can do that, but not from a panel, no matter how unlimited it is, of playlist options.

## MISCONCEPTION 2: ON ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE “OCCUPATION” OF THE VOIDS LEFT BLANK BY RATIONALIST PURITANISM

There is a type of guilty conscience that recognises the lack of expressiveness in much contemporary architecture but can’t handle well the demons of the most banal “sentimentalism”, the “popular”, the ornamented, the codified laws, confusing, in the same register, minor epiphanies, poetic unreasonableness, the naïf, the brutality of “tastes”, and lack of knowledge of the rules.

This guilty “aestheticist” conscience reared in the solitude of its own minimalist stylism believes that, under the alibi of a “scientific” mediation (digital, mathematic, probabilistic or statistic – anything that seems to be rooted in a “rational” origin), it can aspire to games of “filling things out”, beyond the reach of ethical judgements whereby even the most Bauhausian Calvinism would prodigal.

This is closing the door to desire, to impulses and, *above all*, to taking responsibility for choices; it is pretending they are pursuing legitimate, serious fields, shielded now by the “digital revolution”. It is one more pretext for the authority of reason (always the same *totalitarianism*; as in *bio-art*, instead of waiting for science to open up through art, we “invent” an *art* that seeks to legitimise and assert itself through *science*).

To the concept – one that is always necessary, even if a little spent – of *social responsibility* in architecture, we should be able to add another, that of *poetic responsibility*. I, and no one and nothing else, am responsible for the poetic choices proposed in my work, for the *creative point of departure* that will condition my work.

## MISCONCEPTION 3: ON THE NEED TO DISCOVER “NEW MATERIALS”

“The medium is the message”, as McLuhan wrote (1964), is a concept that will remain valid today; however, as in everything else – nature or human artefacts – however, the materials will only serve *for us to use them* and not for *them to use us*.

I believe we do not need to be living in the constant anxiety of the search for “new materials”, full of desire to be elevated into the category of the “nobelised”, as if we were scientists. Everyone is out to try and defeat gravity or, to put it more prosaically, to grind cork or recycled tyres or old glass, to see if they can “discover” some novelty that will amaze.

Why not a “cloud”? Or a material that stretches, that contracts, that evaporates, that is invisible, that *explodes*?

While I by no means wish to hinder “discoveries”, it has always seemed to me that architects should, above all, strive to be able to work with everything that comes across their path, and be able to turn it “inside out”, mixing up the sellers’ “prescriptions”, but in a *serene* way, without the anxiety of *impossibilities*, or the frustration of the ideal circumstances never being given. Would it not be a great project for Art to put in the service of all, in the scope of the intelligence of our discipline, things that, while they already exist, no one would dare use?

Otherwise, we will have little usefulness, always waiting for special requirements, always incapable of building with what is available, always incapable of modifying what is available; and of producing new readings, new interpretations, new ways of using what is available, turning each adversity into a new venture.

The “search” for new materials, while it may seem an interesting quest, at times also seems to be must another excuse for the inability to deal with the conditions of the present. |

# EDUARDO SOUTO DE MOURA: ATLAS DE PAREDE, IMAGENS DE MÉTODO

ANDRÉ TAVARES E PEDRO BANDEIRA (EDS.)

PORTO : DAFNE, 2011

144 P.

ISBN : 978-989-8217-18-9



*Eduardo Souto de Moura: Atlas de parede, imagens do método*, junta um conjunto de imagens pertencentes ao universo de referências de Eduardo Souto de Moura, recolhidas nos seus arquivos pessoais e profissionais. No livro são mostrados alguns planos aproximados do escritório e da casa do arquitecto, onde se vêem, dispostos na parede ou em estantes, objectos diversos, fotografias, desenhos, gravuras, recortes de jornal, maquetas, materiais de construção, livros. Essas imagens lembram os armários de curiosidades, ou *wunderkammer*, fenómeno que se terá iniciado no século XV e onde se guardavam objectos de viagens, pequenas curiosidades arrumadas sem qualquer hierarquia e fora do seu contexto. Nestes armários de curiosidades podemos vislumbrar um antepassado dos museus, da necessidade de mostrar referências de diferentes proveniências num mesmo espaço. Guardam memórias; evocam viagens; reflectem o fascínio pelo desconhecido; condensam num único espaço o mundo inteiro, desvendam espaços outros; relacionam a micro-escala com a macro-escala; permitem uma arqueo-

logia dos objectos simbólicos. Tentativas de domesticação do medo, mas ao mesmo tempo fascínio pelos novos mundos que se começavam a descobrir, os *wunderkammer* eram também espelhos que reflectiam a singularidade do coleccionador, as suas viagens a lugares únicos, os seus encontros com coisas extraordinárias. Eram uma metáfora do mundo, ali replicado em miniatura. “Se a natureza fala através de metáforas, então, as colecções enciclopédicas, que são a soma de todas as metáforas possíveis, tornam-se, logicamente, na maior metáfora do mundo.”<sup>1</sup> Mas as imagens do *Atlas de Parede* são também metonímias (a partir de cada uma delas constrói-se todo um universo) encerradas na metáfora do mundo que são as paredes do *atelier* de Souto de Moura.

Aldo Rossi, na sua *Autobiografia Científica* reconhece que “a observação das coisas permaneceu, provavelmente, como a minha mais importante educação formal e isto, porque a observação se transforma mais tarde em memória”<sup>2</sup>. Ao olhar para trás, Rossi cruza a sua própria cultura, a memória das coisas, “que consigo ver dispostas ordenadamente, como num herbário, num catálogo ou num dicionário”<sup>3</sup>, com a imaginação, entendida aqui como criação. Este processo não é linear, isto é, há um cruzamento entre memória e criação que produz novos significados. “Este catálogo, situado algures entre a imaginação e a memória, não é neutral. Reaparece quase sempre nalguns objectos, constituindo a sua deformação e, em certa medida, a sua evolução.”<sup>4</sup> O que observamos no passado reaparece na presença do novo, filtrado pela força da memória das coisas, permitindo um novo olhar, com sentido crítico. É a memória que forma o olhar, permitindo a deformação dos objectos, isto é, quando olhamos para um qualquer objecto, arquitectónico ou não, ele transfigura-se quando cruzado com a recordação daquilo que já vivemos. “É pela premência, pelo inesperado de uma longínqua ou recente memória, que se completa a ideia ou o sentimento da arquitectura”<sup>5</sup>. Não são apenas as memórias recentes, nem são apenas as memórias espaciais que dão sentido à arquitectura. “Sempre me maravilhou a capacidade da arquitectura de persistentemente gerar e reverberar memórias. A memória questiona a autoridade de uma obra de arquitectura como um objecto autónomo ou como um objecto de importância isolada.”<sup>6</sup> A arquitectura apenas faz sentido como objecto cultural, à medida que desvenda não só o passado de quem lá vive mas também de quem a desenha. “A memória revela a construção gradual de uma obra no

tempo, mostrando a arquitectura como um instrumento de percepção.”

*Eduardo Souto de Moura: Atlas de parede, imagens do método* não tem como ambição ser sistemático, muito menos científico, daí que não se perceba do conjunto coligido uma lógica de organização ou apresentação, deixando que a arbitrariedade do significado das imagens seja desvendada pelo espectador. Será, como se sugere num dos textos que completam o livro, uma das infinitas possibilidades de as apresentar; é a que vemos no livro, mas podia ser outra qualquer. Daí que talvez tivesse sido melhor opção, hipótese aliás colocada pelos editores, que as imagens tivessem sido apresentadas soltas, de modo a que qualquer um as organizasse como bem entendesse, colocando-as nas suas próprias paredes, apropriando-se delas para a construção do seu *atlas* particular.

Quase todas as imagens confirmam o que já sabíamos: a compulsão do desenho (em blocos, em sacos de enjoo ou toalhas de papel); a influência de Mies e de Miles; o fascínio pela ruína; a conjugação entre modernidade e tradição (muitas vezes clássica); o gosto pelo exercício da ironia (algumas vezes auto-infligida). Para além do eventual fascínio que as imagens podem representar em si mesmas ou da curiosidade que levantam sobre o método de trabalho do arquitecto, fica apenas subentendida a relevância que têm nos projectos de Souto de Moura. Não são propositadamente explicitadas relações directas entre as imagens escolhidas e os projectos construídos e não construídos. Não fica claro que imagens serviram de mote a um determinado projecto, ou, pelo contrário, aquelas que entraram no universo do arquitecto depois da obra construída. Isto é, não se procura uma genealogia que possa estabelecer uma relação causa-efeito entre as imagens e as ideias de arquitectura. Pelo contrário, fica em aberto a possibilidade de ambas coexistirem simultaneamente.

Para além das referências visuais, o livro compila algumas contribuições escritas que procuram minorar o “preconceito” que se associa às imagens. A abrir o álbum, o texto de Pedro Bandeira clarifica o papel das imagens na contemporaneidade e na cultura arquitectónica em particular, levantando questões em torno do seu valor, da sua relação com a palavra, da sua subjetividade ou legitimidade (verdade ou mentira), arriscando uma classificação em categorias. Por seu lado, Philip Ursprung remete-nos para os “gabinetes de curiosidades”, procurando entender a importância das imagens no método de projecto de Souto de

Moura. Diogo Seixas Lopes, discorre sobre o uso da analogia “na cronologia do arquiteto”, elucidando como as referências visuais, literárias, musicais, se convertem em arquitetura. A fechar, um texto de Souto de Moura – “Uma autobiografia pouco científica” – cujo título remete para Aldo Rossi, e no qual o Pritzker de 2011 relembra alguns episódios da sua biografia (e outras tantas memórias) para concluir com uma aparente contradição que confirma a sua imprevisibilidade.

O que é que fica da leitura deste *Atlas*? A coragem de fazer uma escolha, o que não é de somenos no distópico universo de imagens em que vivemos submergidos. A persistência de uma ideia de arquitetura como fenómeno eminentemente cultural, e não meramente técnico, aberta a todas as contaminações. O entendimento da arquitetura como um exercício de tempos longos, em que o papel da memória, pessoal e colectiva, é primordial. |

1. Emanuele Tesauro *apud* Nicholas Shakespeare. *Bruce Chatwin*. London : Vintage, 2000. ISBN: 0099289970.
2. Aldo Rossi. *Autobiografia Científica*. Barcelona : Gustavo Gili, 1998. ISBN: 8425217474.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Carlos Jimenez. *Memory, a City, and the Need for Poetry*. 2G. Barcelona : Gustavo Gili. Nº 13.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*

LUÍS URBANO, ARQUITECTO

*Eduardo Souto de Moura: Atlas de parede, imagens do método*, is a compilation of images belonging to the universe of references of Eduardo Souto de Moura that are taken from his personal and professional archives. The book shows a series of close-ups of the architect's office and house, in which one can see, distributed on the walls or shelves, diverse objects, photographs, drawings, etchings, newspaper cuttings, models, building materials and books. These images remind one of curiosity cabinets or *Wunderkammer*, a phenomenon that merged in the 15th century, in which objects picked up during travels and other small curiosities were stored without any specific hierarchy and free of context. In these curiosity cabinets one can see the origins of the museum, of the need to show references of different origins in one and the same space. The cabinets store memories; they evoke travels; they reflect fascination for the unknown; they condense a whole world into one single space, and uncover other spaces; they bring the micro-scale into relation with the macro-scale; they enable an archaeology of symbolic objects. Attempts at domestication of fear, but the same time fascination with the new worlds that were being discovered, the *Wunderkammer* were

also mirrors that reflected the collector's singularity, his travels to unique places, his encounters with things out of the ordinary. They were a metaphor for the world, replicated in miniature. “If nature speaks through such metaphors, then the encyclopaedic collection, which is the sum of all possible metaphors, logically becomes the great metaphor of the world.”<sup>1</sup> But the images in *Atlas de Parede* are also metonymies (from each one we build a whole universe) enclosed in the metaphor of the world that are the walls of Souto de Moura's studio.

In his *Scientific Autobiography*, Aldo Rossi acknowledges that “perhaps the observation of things has remained my most important formal education; for observation later becomes transformed into memory”.<sup>2</sup> In looking back, Rossi crosses his own culture, the memory of things “[he has] observed arranged like tools in a neat row; they are aligned as in a botanical chart, or a catalogue, or a dictionary”, with the imagination, understood here as creativity. This process is not linear, i.e. there is a crossing of memory with creation that produces new meanings. “But this catalogue, lying somewhere between imagination and memory, is not neutral; it always reappears in several objects and constitutes their deformation and, in some way, their evolution.”<sup>3</sup> What we have observed in the past re-emerges in the present again, now filtered by the force of the memory of the things, giving rise to a new, critical, gaze. It is memory that forms the gaze, allowing for the deformation of the objects. In other words, when we look at any object, be it architectural or not, it is transfigured when it is crossed with the memory of what we have already experienced. “It is through the urgency, the very unexpectedness of a precise or distant memory, that one completes the idea and the feeling of architecture.”<sup>4</sup> It is not just recent memories, and not just spatial memories that give meaning to architecture. “I have always marveled at the capacity that architecture possesses to persistently generate and reverberate with memory. Memory undermines the authority of the work of architecture as an autonomous object or as the object of its own isolated importance.”<sup>5</sup> Architecture only makes sense as a cultural object, to the extent that it uncovers not only the past of those living there but also of those who design it. Memory “reveals the gradual construction of a work of architecture in time, revealing architecture as an instrument of perception”.<sup>7</sup>

*Eduardo Souto de Moura: Atlas de parede, imagens do método* does not aspire to be systematic, much less scientific, which is why the reader does not recognise a logic of organisation or presentation from the collected items featured. The randomness of the meaning of the images is thus left to be discovered by the viewer. This is, as suggested in one of the texts that complete the book, only one of the infinite possibilities of presenting them; it is the one we see in the book, but it could have been any other one. Perhaps it would have been a better choice, and this is a hypothesis indeed advanced by the editors, to have presented the images individually, so that the viewer could organise them how they see fit, placing them on their own walls, appropriating them for the construction of their own *atlas*.

Almost all the images confirm things we already knew: the compulsion for drawing (on note blocks, on sick bags and paper towels); the influence of Mies and Miles; the fascination with ruins; the conjugation of modernity and tradition (often classical); a penchant for irony (sometimes directed at himself). Beyond the possible fascination that the images may represent in themselves or the curiosity they raise as to the architect's work methods, the relevance they have in Souto de Moura's design projects is only hinted at. Any direct relationships between the images chosen and built or unbuilt projects are not specifically explained. It is not made clear which images served as the inspiration for a specific project or even which ones entered the architect's universe after the work was built. In other words, there is no attempt at a genealogy that could establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the images and the architectural ideas. On the contrary, the possibility of the two coexisting simultaneously is left open.

In addition to the visual references, the book also brings together a number of texts that seek to undermine any “preconceptions” the reader may associate with the images. The opening text by Pedro Bandeira clarifies the role of the images in contemporaneity and in the architectural culture in particular, raising questions as to their value, their relationship with the word, their subjectivity or legitimacy (true or false), and risking a classification in categories. Philip Ursprung takes us back to the “curiosity cabinets”, seeking to understand the importance of the images in Souto de Moura's design method. Diogo Seixas Lopes discourses on the use of analogy “in the chronology of the architect”, explaining how visual, literary and musical references are converted into architecture. Closing the book is a text by Souto de Moura – “Uma autobiografia pouco científica” [An Unscientific Autobiography] – the title of which references Aldo Rossi, in which the Pritzker Prize winner of 2011 recalls some episodes from his biography (and some more memories) to conclude with a seeming contradiction that confirms his unpredictability.

What does the reader take away from reading this *atlas*? The courage to make choices, which is no mean feat in the dystopic universe of images in which we are submerged. The persistence of an idea of architecture as an eminently cultural – and not merely technical – phenomenon, open to all influences. The understanding of architecture as a long-haul exercise, in which the role of memory, both personal and collective, is of prime importance. |

1. Emanuele Tesauro cited in Nicholas Shakespeare. *Bruce Chatwin*. London : Vintage, 2000. ISBN: 0099289970.
2. Aldo Rossi. *Autobiografia Científica*. Barcelona : Gustavo Gili, 1998. ISBN: 8425217474.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Carlos Jimenez. *Memory, a City, and the Need for Poetry*. 2G. Barcelona : Gustavo Gili. Nº 13.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*

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