
editorial

Time passes by very quickly and a year has gone by since October 2010, when our first issue of *scopio*® *Aboveground*, focused on *Architecture*, was published and presented to the public in the city of Porto, together with the photographic exhibition *A Periferia do Centro*, held in the future building of OASRN - *Portuguese Order of Architects. Northern Chapter*. We are very pleased with the encouraging results obtained so far, especially the sales achieved and the positive feedback we have received from different people, groups and institutions with an interest related to photography and image of Architecture and Public Space.

Throughout this year we were able to successfully overcome some difficulties related with the distribution and selling of this kind of publication and it is our intention to build up on these results and achieve even better ones with this second edition of *scopio*. From the experience gained until now and in order to give an answer to some of the concerns raised by our readers, we decided to further refine certain design features of *scopio* regarding its text format and overall importance in the publication. In addition, we also decided to alter the periodicity of each issue from 6 months to a full year. The main goal of this change is to secure a more extended period of time to efficiently publicize the magazine and guarantee its refined work, which we want to maintain as *scopio*'s trademark, given that it has been a key factor in the success of the magazine until now.

In accordance with the pre-announced themes for the three magazine issues that comprise *scopio Aboveground*, this second issue is entitled *City* and is mainly focused on the subject of public space and city life, showing works that try to critically understand and characterize the rich multi-faceted world that exists in the cities.

One of the goals of *scopio Aboveground: City* is to make the intrinsic richness of several public spaces of our cities widely known, so that elements or features that might have been previously considered fragmentary, trivial, or hidden may gain a new visibility. Thus, we look for authors that take photographs or write about photography in a way that will make people question what they are seeing. This can be hard work and, as Brian Ulrich¹ points out in Joerg Colberg's *Conscientious Extended*, "It's a hard thing to take a picture of something we look at and do every day and do it in a way that will ask to be scrutinized". Nevertheless, we believe that most of the works present in *scopio* fall into this category.

Even though many of the authors featured in *scopio* come from academic circles, and despite the strong presence in the magazine's editorial board of the research group from the R&D Unit of the Faculty of Architecture of Porto, we make an effort to achieve a good balance between academic and non-academic works and we are especially careful not to fill our text with incomprehensible jargon that makes no sense outside academic contexts. We would also like to add that, even though we believe that photography work is open to multiple meanings and, for that reason, that *scopio* should allow enough space for the multi-dimensionality to happen, we believe that sometimes there is a need for words to unlock the deeper meaning of certain photographic work as well.

¹ http://jmcolberg.com/weblog/extended/archives/a_conversation_with_brian_ulrich/

Finally, it is worth mentioning two features of this publication. Firstly, *scopio* perceives digital technology in a creative way and as a tool to create synergies and build bridges with the analogue universe, instead of replacing it. Accordingly, the magazine will also be available in the tablet world from now on, more specifically on iPad, making it possible to access *scopio* from App Store, alongside with its official website and social network. Secondly, we all hope *scopio* continues to receive the positive feedback that it has gathered so far and that it may keep on encouraging the participation of the academic, cultural and social sectors in the development of conceptions and practices capable of promoting the city's innovation in its multiple strands, with particular attention to those which are connected to public space's critical imagery and usage captured by photography.

PEDRO LEÃO NETO

sections

Project

We have invited Paulo Catrica for our second issue – *Aboveground City* –, knowing that his work on urban landscapes and architecture is an original synthesis that offers a fresh and insightful perspective of the recent past and present realities of our hybrid city. *The city is not a palimpsest: reading unmediated experiences* tries to understand how the author's personal expression evolved from black and white photography to colour, how the descriptive and allusive complexity of his images falls on both sides of the document and fiction genres and, finally, how his work has a postmodernist strand of its own.

Limited Edition

André Cepeda is a well-known international Portuguese photographer whose work has been exhibited in several places, such as *Galerie INVALIDEN1* (Berlin), *The Mews Project Space* (London, 2009) and *Berardo Museum (CCB, Lisbon, 2010)*. He has also been awarded a significant amount of prizes and grants, such as the nomination for the BES Photo Photography Prize 2010, Lisbon; the nomination for the Paul Huf Award, Foam Fotografiemuseum 2011, Amsterdam; and the Artist Residency, at Espace Photographique Contretype, Brussels, 2012. André Cepeda is the invited author, who agreed to collaborate with our second issue *City*. Thus, we have in this section a limited edition of one of his fine art photographic images, which can be acquired at the exclusive price of 200 Euros.

the city is not a palimpsest: reading unmediated experiences

Critic by Pedro Leão Neto

The first time I saw Paulo Catrica's work I was struck by its clearness and insightful understanding of architectural spaces and by the various signs revealing their transformation and uses through time. He is a photographer with a strong interest in history and his subject of election is urban landscape, especially city spaces and architecture. His academic background includes a BA in History at the Universidade Lusitana and a PhD at the School of Art and Media, University of Westminster, with a research focused on The New Towns Program / UK 1946–1970s, examining the role of photography in relation to the discourses of 'modern' architecture and urban planning. Thus, it is not surprising that his photographs are able to trace and visually express the historical spatial configuration stratum of certain architectural buildings (as in the work related to *Educational Spaces*) or the different chaotic layers of buildings and spaces of contemporary developments through detailed finely measured images (as in his photographic work *Periferias*, focused on suburban areas of England and Portugal).

His series of photographs related to Educational Spaces in Portugal (Catica 1999) and England (Grosvenor et al. 2004) of more than a decade ago, where playgrounds and classrooms are revealed to us as if coming from an omniscient observer and where people are absent from the frame, allow viewers to see those schooling places with new eyes¹. In fact, as Martin Law (Grosvenor et al. 2004) writes, "*They appeared to be calm, black and white reflections on the spaces of the school which observed everything – the floor, the ceilings, the way that paper lies everywhere, the cupboard, the arrangement of the rooms, display and notices, and surfaces*". Right from the start, we can sense in these images a certain connection to the work of Atget, Evans and Basilico, the former being a pioneer of the large-format documentary objectivity, with a straightforward way of portraying reality and

1 "Paulo Catrica's photographs are a strong invitation to see what we already know, but by adopting a different way of looking at it." PAULO CATRICA, LICEUS, Assírio & Alvim. col. Livros de fotografia, n.º 39, 2005, texto de António Nóvoa (Exp. Liceus de Portugal. Biblioteca Nacional, Lisboa, 1999



PAULO CATRICA

Lf 269 from the top of car park n.º 5 towards Printwood, Bracknell, 16.11.1997, 10:47 hrs.

a keen attention and interest in the particular². In fact, as António Nóvoa (Grosvenor et al. 2004) states, "In a certain way, Catrica's work suggests a return of photography to the 'objectivity' of the early stage". Catrica's photographic work, as we will later see, has an individuality of its own that differs from previous more objective approaches or even from other authors as, for example, late modernist photographers like Basilico³. Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that Evans's work and poetics have influenced all photography of the second half of the 20th century (Szarkowski 1971).

It is worth noting that Catrica's body of work skilfully serves as both document and fiction, showing how an artistic approach can play an

important role in city space and architectural analysis, as is the case with *Periferias*. This means serving as an historical document, a *New Topography*, like Tereza Siza (Jeffrey et al. 1998) suggests – "...rehearsing interpretative surveys of the urban periphery..." – a body of work that records with rigor and with extreme visual detail these rich, complex chaotic suburbs. In fact, Catrica's images call to mind places and signs of other times, giving an important spatial understanding of contemporary developments and, through it, revisiting and strengthening the idea that the city is not a palimpsest, as Nuno Portas⁴ appropriately explained.

4 "A cidade não é um palimpsesto" (pergaminho manuscrito, de que se fez desaparecer a primeira escrita, para nele escrever de novo" – definição do Dicionário Francisco Torrinha) refere Portas, e continua sublinhando que a "cidade não é um quadro com camadas", e que até os próprios loteadores clandestinos o sabem, pois também fizeram ruas; e as ruas e as praças, foi o que sempre ficou, característica esta que já não se verifica com os edifícios." Notas sobre a palestra de Nuno Portas a propósito do tema – e do lançamento de uma colectânea do LNEC sobre – "humanização e vitalização dos espaços públicos", in *infohabitar* – revista do grupo habitar

2 "Evans's delight was in the particular. He perceived, as Atget had done, that we sense nothing in isolation, that we sense this for what it is only by reference to another thing which it is not." Photography: A Concise History; Ian Jeffrey; Thames and Hudson, 1981

3 "Gabriel Basilico, to whom Catrica may be compared... Catrica's vision, on the other hand, is altogether more enigmatic..." *Periferias: Fotografias de Paulo Catrica. Textos de Ian Jeffrey e Alvaro Domingues*; Edição 1998; ISBN 972-8451-02-04



Like in a work of fiction, Catrica makes us sense an alien *genius loci* coming from those *non-spaces* made up of confused constructions, abandoned places and anonymous buildings, which are revealed to us against grey skies and sometimes as odd sculptural forms. None of this an invention; it is the result of Catrica's vantage point, his choice of moment and light, which offers a novel perspective and experience of those places. Thus, the crystalline three-dimensionality of the images encourages viewers to enter inside the frame and to experience those sites, giving an interesting phenomenological effect to this process. Therefore, most of the frames in Catrica are passive, meaning that his photographs start within and work outward, implying a world extending beyond the frame, which, added to their clear formal structure and controlled compositions – that capture cars but not people –, have the effect of making us try to mentally fill the human gap of those unspecified

spaces⁵. Nevertheless, we cannot fail to recall that these images of the suburban areas that surround the old city of Porto are also an abstraction of reality, and, as Álvaro Domingues (Jeffrey et. al. 1998) rightly points out regarding this work, "Photography has the power to record the moment of these absences. If there were time, the pictures would be different. The pulse giving life to these and other places would be recorded". It should be interesting to see Catrica revisiting these suburbs and creating another *Periferias*, perhaps this time capturing the pulse of life and integrating colour, not only as an active vehicle of expression, but also to communicate something of today's culture, as we will refer further on in this text when talking about his more recent works.

5 "You could easily imagine yourself, for instance, in Rua Tenente Vandim in the Concelho de Gaia, 28.04.98, as a borough surveyor with special responsibilities for pavements, off-street parking, electricity provision, housing or refuse disposal," Newly Landed or The Earth From Far Away, in *Periferias*; Fotografias de Paulo Catrica; Edição 1998; ISBN 972-8451-02-04

Going back to the tectonic minutia and mood of both *Educational Spaces* and *Periferias*, we cannot help linking the two to the rich detail and attentive formalism of Atget and drawing parallels between those anonymous streets, the lack of human presence and the rigorous detail of 19th-century Parisian atmosphere. Atget was unjustly ignored in his time and lived as a poor and unknown artist in Paris, but, as Walter Benjamin noted,⁶ "He reached the Pole of utmost mastery; but with the bitter modesty of a great craftsman who always lived in the shadows, he neglected to plant his flag there". Nevertheless, Catrica is neither Atget nor Basilico and, as it can be seen, he has simultaneously learned from others and built his own path, where it is possible to detect a balance

6 Walter Benjamin "Rue Hautefeuille", Paris ca. 1900" in "100 for 2000: the Century of Photoart", David Faccioli, 2000, p.40; Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. by H. Zohn, ed. with intro. by Hannah Arendt, NY: Schocken, 1969. [Contains the essay by Walter Benjamin, A Short History of Photography]

between the search for continuity in certain methods and ways of seeing and the experimentation with the new.

Speaking about other formal and conceptual levels that characterize Catrica's work, we notice that his photographs appear to have somewhat stopped time, trying to rediscover things from the inside. Many of them also seem to show no particular preference and to exclude nothing of the urban sites depicted. These last formal and conceptual aspects, which can be pinpointed not only in *Periferias* but also in other works of Catrica as *Parks & Open Spaces* (2003), *Praha 7* (2005) or the *World is a Vampire* (2009), make us partly think of Gabriel Basilico's' aesthetics. In fact, we can establish some correspondence between these two authors: in their choice

7 Magia and Basilico (1999) Gabriele Basilico: Cityscapes, London, Thames & Hudson, pages 6, 7, 369 – 378; Basilico, G. (2006), *Arquitectura em Portugal: um roteiro fotográfico*, Porto, Dafne.

of subject (the transformation of today's urban landscape and the scenarios of confused and elusive urban sites), or in the way their images tell us, every so often, how little difference there is between the centre and the suburbs. Another thing in common is an aesthetic capable of making those commonplaces seem special and, most of all, the fact that both have a vantage point that creates images with more than one-point perspective, which does not focus on unusual objects out of the context but on all of them at once. The formal structure of many of their images seems to come from an obsessive interest on various elements at the same time, creating different tensions between them, not allowing any particular urban module or building to set the image on its own. In fact, some of Catrica's detailed images⁸ do not seem to give viewers any

specific preference for a single element, and it could be said that this way of structuring an image, this omniscient observer, is also the result of the quest for the visual recording of those places as unmediated experiences – an attitude that is closer to Basilico's aesthetics and differs from other more traditional ways of setting up space, which can be detected on some of the work of early modernist authors⁹. It is worth noting that the search for new formal structures is really something that defines the untamed soul of an artist and that we can fortunately trace on many authors who have pursued innovative ways of understanding and communicating the world we live in. Photographers like Stephen Shore are an example of this attitude, with all their conceptualism and rule-breaking, searching for new ways to visually record the places as unmediated experiences (Shore, 2011). It must be said that even though this *unmediated experience* vantage point may be understood as trying not to

project a predetermined formal structure on those places, it is still the mental model of the photographer at work.

Paulo Catrica has often made clear his concern for urban landscape photography and the interplay it can establish with our visual memory of urban and architectural places and their transformation along time¹⁰, as he stated in an interview for IN SI(s)TU, in 2002, to clarify his interest for urban landscape: "This impulse may have been triggered by the major changes in the urban landscape, especially in Lisbon where I started to think *how could a certain space and time, the past, which is what is left, or even its transformation, could be captured*. I was aware at that time of the landscape photography projects and photographers from other countries that worked seriously and seamlessly on this subject"¹¹. In this interview, some interesting and important issues regarding the

interference or conflicting interests between the authors' aesthetics or personal agenda and the ethical quest in documentary objectivity are raised. We cannot help but think of Roland Barthes and his seminal work *Writing Degree Zero*, which tells us how any author's discourse is imbued with social and historical aspects that may give unintended meanings to his/her work, and of the postmodernist viewpoint of the impossibility of objective truth, stating that realities are plural and relative, an idea which, nevertheless, many authors question¹². Catrica stated that this apparent conflict has always existed and he explained how he also wanted his work to give a different visibility to places which normally get nothing but bad press in the media, pointing out that results can be surprising and enriching as, for example, when he mentions people commenting his work, saying

8 As it can be seen, for example, in the following images: *Periferias* (1998) "Do largo do Centenario para a Rua de S. Mamede, Valongo, 19 de Abril de 1998, Concelho de Valongo"; *Parks & Open Spaces* (2003) "Lcf_170 Oeiras Office Park, Quinta da Fonte, Oeiras 13.07.2003, 19:40 hrs." or *The World is a Vampire* (2009) "Lcf_845" and "Lcf_850", that show a detailed observation of several elements of those places simultaneously, the tension, balance and articulation of those images are obtained by the relation that each of those spaces or elements establishes between themselves.

9 When adopting a one-point perspective view and set up space by highlighting a certain element of the image as, for example, *Walker Evans* Gas Station, Reedsville, West Virginia, 1936 in "The Nature of Photographs", Stephen Shore, Phaidon Press Limited, 2007, or *Bill Brand*, Prior Park, near Bath, 1936 in "Photography: A Critical Introduction", second edition Edited by Liz Wells, Routledge, 2000

10 Entre Vistas, conversa com Paulo Catrica, IN SI(s)TU, Novembro, Junho 2002; (a conversa com) Paulo Catrica, Mito, Nu, #37..., 2011

11 "O detonador desse impulso talvez tenham sido as grandes transformações na paisagem urbana, particularmente em Lisboa comecei a pensar como fixava um dos momentos, o anterior, o que sobra ou mesmo a transformação. Conhecia os projectos de fotografia de paisagem e fotógrafos de outros países que trabalhavam de modo contínuo, e serio."

12 "But as Dews has argued: 'while there has often been a *de facto* alliance between the intellectual left and recent French theory, with post-structuralism providing tools of analysis which have been widely applied, there has sometimes been little attempt to think through the ultimate compatibility of progressive political commitments with the dissolution of the subject, or a totalising suspicion of the concept of truth"', Steve Edwards "Snapshooters of History: Passages on the postmodern argument" in *The Photography Reader*, Liz Wells, Editor, Routledge, 2003.

that his images have given back dignity to the places they have lived in for many years³.

When looking more closely at some of Catrica's work as, for instance, *The World is a Vampire* (2009), again we sense both continuity and a search due to the way he uses colour and formal structures in his photographs. The title of this project, which is focused on contemporary suburbia, is a tribute to the *Smashing Pumpkins*' concert in 1996, at Praça de Touros, in Cascais. Located 30 km from Lisbon, the municipality of Cascais is set on the shoreline, right past where the river Tagus empties itself into the Atlantic. This work of Catrica is a project that was born out of an official commission of Cascais Municipality related to the Museum – *Casa das Histórias* – which opened in 2009 and was designed by the architect Souto Moura and was given the name of the artist Paula Rego, both of them internationally prized and well-known authors. Catrica focuses on the municipality's less acknowledged urban sites and constructions: the economic residential areas built during Estado Novo, the modern villas of the mid-20th century, the somewhat hybrid and chaotic suburban dwellings and the new urban settlements.

Besides giving the impression of an unmediated experience, these images can't be described, at first glance, as warm and close or even as beautiful. In fact, to the laymen, they might seem careless and created with no passion. It is possible to speak here of Catrica's link to the deadpan photography style, which is characterized, among other things, by images that seem to have no hint of rhetoric or persuasion and, so, differ from the more objective approach of other authors, like Thomas Struth, from the so-called Dusseldorf School. Indeed, when commenting this work, Catrica says that "Rather than formulating a position of authority on the subject, these photographs, subjective, partial and imperfect as they are, contemplate and intend to question a certain way of occupying the territory and to create landscape"¹³.

Colour also plays an important role here, along with the formal and content structure of the images, not only as a vehicle of Catrica's personal expression but also as a way of

13 Paulo Catrica in *The world is a Vampire*: "Mais do que formular uma posição de autoridade sobre o assunto, estas fotografias, subjectivas, parcelares e imperfeitas, pretendem contemplar e interrogar uma certa forma de ocupar o território e de criar paisagem."

expressing the hybrid atmosphere of those places, the combination of past and present age cultures of a suburban and rural mixed territory. While his personal aesthetic might be noticed by the use of light, which is most of the times simultaneously very clear and neutral, by the cloudless skies and by the colour of the photographs that seem old Agfa films, the overall pallet also helps in capturing "... the wonder of the man-made world in an elegiac manner"¹⁴. All this helps to create images, which are, as Catrica¹⁵ points out,

14 Charlotte Cotton in *The Photograph as contemporary art*, Thames & Hudson world of art, London, 2004, p. 93. "Deadpan photography has a great capacity for capturing the wonder of the man-made world in an elegiac manner."

15 Paulo Catrica in *The world is a Vampire*: "A alegoria perfeita da paisagem portuguesa contemporânea". "Referentes a um lugar e a um tempo preciso – Cascais 2009 – estas fotografias consideram a paisagem enquanto enunciado de expectativas culturais, históricas, sociais e económicas. Como um corte estratigráfico as fotografias revelam em simultâneo parte do presente e do passado ensaiando a hipótese de um espaço mnemónico."

"The perfect allegory of contemporary Portuguese landscape", and also images that "... consider the landscape as a text of cultural, historical, social and economic expectations. As a stratigraphic cut, the photographs simultaneously reveal part of the present and past, testing the hypothesis of a mnemonic space".

Speaking of the formal structure of the images, there is something interesting in Catrica's compositions, which along with their colour structure, reinforce a sense of time conflation. This means, above all, the power to evoke the history of those places, avoiding rooting them in our present times only. When looking for his preferred viewpoint, Catrica's historical background and architectural intuition are the ones that best describe what he finds in those places. This means he adopts a vantage point where time is layered, compared and mixed, making us engage not only with the moment when the photograph was taken, but also with

(previous pages)

PAULO CATRICA

Lcf 835 Rua Conde Monte Real, from series "The World is a Vampire", Cascais, 2009.
27.06.2009, 19:44 hrs

Lcf 845 Av. da Argentina, from series "The World is a Vampire", Estoril, 2009.
30.06.2009, 17:38 hrs

Lcf 838 Rua António da Nola, from series "The World is a Vampire", Cascais, 2009.
29.06.2009, 16:45 hrs

Lcf 854 Rua da Escolha Velha, from series "The World is a Vampire", Malveira da Serra, 2009.
01.07.2009, 11:40 hrs



PAULO CATRICA
 Lfc 595 Valle Way, from series "Subtopia", 2006–2010
 Pear Tree – Stevenage, 07.11.2006, 11:40 hrs

its representation of past and contemporary memories, and mixed signs of the present.

Finally, it is worth noting how Catrica creates urban landscape images that have a certain quality of stage sets from where the actors are absent. Time in these places seems to have a special quality and, even though you do not have the pulse of life, you can see the layered signs and memories of the several uses of those spaces. These qualities in Catrica's work, regarding how time is depicted and how space is staged, can in a certain way be linked to some of Basilico's¹¹ work. Then, the "significant spatial depth achieved by Catrica's skilful arrangement of objects in the foreground that provide links with the background is something that can also be related to Stephen Shore's work, specially to *Uncommon Places*.

So, as we have seen, if it is true that Catrica's work can be linked to a number of subjective and stylistic features of various significant authors of modern and postmodern photography, it is no less true that his work has been able to offer an original synthesis, giving us a fresh and insightful perspective of today's hybrid city spaces. In fact, Catrica's photographic descriptive and allusive complexity, his concept of history and the somewhat ambiguity between document and fiction, as well as his use of a very personal colour and light pallet reveal a postmodernist mark of their own that tell his work apart from others.

Catrica, Paulo: LICEUS, Assirio & Alvim, col. Livros de fotografia, n.º 39, 2005, texto de Antonio Nóvoa (Exp. Liceus de Portugal. Biblioteca Nacional, Lisboa, 1999

Evans, Walker: *The Hungry Eye*. Thames & Hudson, 2004 (1993)

Grosvenor, I., Lawn, M., Nóvoa, A., Rousmaniere, K. & Smaller, H. (2004). Reading educational spaces: The photographs of Paulo Catrica. *Paedagogica Historica*, XL (III), 315–332.

Jeffrey, Ian Domingues, Álvaro; *Periferias: Fotografias de Paulo Catrica*; Textos de Ian Jeffrey e Álvaro Domingues; Edição 1998; ISBN 972-8451-02-04

Shore, Stephen: *At Beverly and La Brea* (Two Pigment Prints), Limited Edition; Los Angeles: The Lapis Press, in collaboration with Schaden.com, Köln, 2011; See the one-point perspective of *Beverly Boulevard and La Brea Avenue, Los Angeles, California, June 21, 1975*, and look at the structure of the other image of the same crossroads with a different vantage point and a multiple point perspective.

Szarkowski, John: Introduction to "Walker Evans" (Museum of Modern Art exhibition, 1971; Out of print, ISBN 0-87070-312-9