

ON ARCHITECTURE — PHILOSOPHY OF ARCHITECTURE

PROCEEDINGS

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METHODOLOGY OF REPRESENTATION AND TRANSCRIPTION OF ARCHITECTURAL SPACE: DISCOVERING THE HYBRID MODEL OF ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING

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ABSTRACT

This paper problematizes the position of contemporary architectural drawing by examining its manifestations in new, hybrid forms and roles of drawing, as a consequence of the paradigmatic changes brought about by the digital revolution. Furthermore, it assumes that the drawing in the architectural design process becomes a versatile, multi-layered and hybrid tool, which has an increasingly important role in the field of architectural research. Digital technologies are influencing the way in which the architectural drawing participates in the design process and the process of representing architectural space by establishing different models of drawing. One of these models is based on the methodology of transcribing architectural space, which includes the simultaneous use of drawing as a means of research and representation. Selected model discussed in this paper, examines the use of traditional drawing techniques, everyday tools for documenting space and digital applications for simulating virtual reality experience. Combining these three, arises the possibility of creating a novel visual language in architecture, which is here to be discussed.

Keywords:

Architectural drawing, Visual language, Representation, Twenty-first century, Digital paradigm, Virtual reality

INTRODUCTION

This paper elaborates on the PhD research project developed at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture, assuming that the digital technologies are influencing the way in which the architectural drawing participates in the design process and the process of representing architectural space by establishing different models of research drawings. One of these models based on the methodology of transcribing the architectural space, which includes the simultaneous use of drawing as a means of research and representation, develops a hybrid "representationally-transcriptive" architectural drawing. Specified model combines the use of hand drawing techniques, everyday tools for documenting space and digital applications to simulate virtual reality experience used for perceiving the architectural space. In order to examine the relationship between traditional ("made by hand") drawing techniques and contemporary digital platforms, established methodology examines the possibility of developing a new visual language in architecture. The selected model of the architectural drawing is a result of a research art project created in the Architecture and Visual Language postgraduate course at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture, during the 2016/2017 academic year. It has been further developed as part of the extracurricular course at the student workshop in Rijeka in 2018 and exhibited within the Modern in Belgrade (MuBGD) art and architecture project in 2019. Since this research is also part of the paper titled "Discovering the Hybrid Model of Architectural Drawing at the Beginning of the XXI Century"1, which comprehensively explains the methodology of the drawing and its creative potential within the field of architectural education, this paper will only focus on drawing's developmental potentials and applicability within the field of research and exhibiting practice.

Developed methodology will be introduced by displaying two projects. The first project explains the process of establishing the methodology of spatial transcription, which results in representationally-transcriptive model of drawing. M.ethodology consists of seven steps divided into three phases of work, which will be presented in detail below. These steps result in a set of four large format hand drawings and one spherical digital drawing. In the second project, the established methodology is repeated in order to review and discuss on its developmental possibilities and the creative potential of the final digital drawing.

HYBRID PERSPECTIVES AND THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Architectural drawing has always had several roles, three of which it may be argued, are dominant today. The first is the role of an informant – an architectural drawing that bears information from different phases of architectural design process linking them with the construction phase, developing a common language of all disciplines involved in the process of designing an architectural space. The second role is the collaborative, or the associative role, when the architectural drawing embodies the thoughts of the architect and becomes an integral part of the design process, helping the architect to materialize all the thought processes related to the design of an architectural space. Finally, the third role is a representative role - an architectural drawing is used as a commercial product that follows the market needs for building the designed architectural space. For centuries the role of drawing as the architect's creative work had one aim, and that is to communicate the characteristics of the designed space. In that sense, during the twentieth century, drawing was dominantly used as the ultimate design product, most often taking the role of informant, and somewhat frequently the representational role.

Until the twentieth century paradigm shifts, the research role of drawing was minimised to the initial conceptions of space which were presented and communicated in the form of the first drawings of space sketches. With the development of society, its emancipation, the rise of avant-garde architecture, then the implementation of humanities and digital technologies into the discipline of architecture, the framework in which drawing plays a significant role is being expanded. The interweaving of digital and analogue tools in contemporary architectural practice, which can be named as an act of hybridity, accordingly emphasises research attributes of drawing. From a historical perspective, in the greatest extent of its implementation,

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¹This paper represents an excerpt from the research published in SAJ - Serbian Architectural Journal: Drawing in Action, which explains the theoretical framework of the paradigmatic shifts caused by the emergence of information technologies and its implications on the visual language of architecture; physical context of emerging digital platforms and applications with a high developmental potential for implementation in the field of architecture; as well as, the methodology of representationally-transcriptive model of architectural drawing and its creative and developmental potential. Considering that the established methodology is clearly defined and follows certain subsequent steps in the process of drawing, this paper borrows two sub-sections from the second chapter of this article, entitled Identifying the Hybrid Architectural Drawing: Representationally-Transcriptive Model.

drawing represented a communicative apparatus between the architect and the builder, which has the role of transmitter of all the objective characteristics of the designed space that are necessary for its understanding and construction. An architectural drawing can also convey objective or subjective characteristics of an existing space, as well as a space liberated from the possibility of being built. Such drawings have the ability to critically observe and represent concepts of certain architectural space. When these drawing gain the power to explore concepts of architectural space, that is, to direct critical thinking in the phase that immediately precedes the process of architectural design, they can be appointed research drawings. According to Robin Evans, relying on Alberti's statement that architects do not make buildings, but drawings of buildings², drawing as an architect's work has two genuine forms – first, the architectural, when it is created before what it represents, and second, when it is created on the basis of an existing object or space, thus when it gravitates towards fine or visual arts, and slightly loses its architectural attributes.(Evans, 2003:156) Speaking of research drawings, this kind of drawings often arise as autonomous and self-sufficient, and to add, are usually critically remote from the practice of architectural design. On the other hand, this distance opens up the possibility for complex interpretations, given that the information conveyed by the drawings do not refer to the future architectural space meant to be built. Such drawings usually take the form of speculative, hypothetical or visionary blueprints that undeniably unfold new subject for different discursive interpretations. This type of drawings could be explained by differentiating them from drawings used as instructions for building an architectural object. Since they are carriers of ideas about architectural space, they tend to be subjective and rather suggestive, unlike the latter, being characterized as objective and neutral. (Frascari, ____:108) During the twentieth century, a variety of research drawings can be recognized in the design practice of distinguished architects, in particular, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's representative collages, Yakov Chernykhov's axonometric drawings of imaginative constructions, Tadao Ando's atmospheric spatial fragments in his section drawings, Paul Rudolph's perspective drawings of city's mega-structures, then Superstudio's dystopian montages, Hans Hollein's collages conveying ideological messages, as well as the impossible spaces in axonometric drawings designed by Peter Eisenman, et cetera...

The development of information technologies in the last decade of the twentieth century changed the way the work of art is being reproduced. This led to the creation of variable products and the use of parameters in the architectural design process, thus placing architecture in the field of digital reality, unfolding a spectrum of new possibilities and the rise of a novel architectural language – shaped by the digital drawing. The overflow of information technologies in the architectural design process and their presence in everyday life have allowed the architectural discipline to once again reconsider, reshape and expand the field of architectural design. The influence of digital tools in the architectural discipline began in an atmosphere of global fascination and inspiration with new and yet undiscovered possibilities that digital tools were offering. Remaining in close relationship with electronic media, digital tools anticipated the future of architecture with the transition to virtual space as an alternative to the real and physical space. The first paradigmatic shift is characterised by the emergence of new software based on direct manipulation of curves constructed through vectors and points on a computer, and therefore of architects' pursuit of mastering them in order to expand the possibilities of drawing manipulation and then deriving certain, complex forms which were by the time unable to draw and build. (Carpo, 2011) This shift changed the way architectural objects are being built. The second digital paradigmatic shift resulted in developing new models of processing and distributing information using artificial intelligence. Building on the previous shift, this one changed the way of thinking about architectural objects. (Carpo, 2017) The consequences of the second paradigmatic shift in terms of digital technologies resulted in changes that affected the visual perception, enabling quick and easy access to virtual space as a new spatial or architectural field of experimentation. One could argue that the emergence of digital tools and applications allows present-day architect to balance between real and virtual environment and take constant leaps from one to another. This action, not only generates combined, hybrid perspectives of the physical reality, but it blurs the lines between architecture and its related disciplines, such as visual or graphic arts. From the perspective of perceiving, on one hand, and documenting, or rather representing physical space, on the other, it can be noted that a wide range of new media are emerging and extending the experimental field of architecture, particularly architectural drawing. One such medium, virtual reality, as one of the conveyors of the second digital turn has become widespread and easily accessible, thanks to social media. Virtual panoramic images, as a form virtual reality simulacrum, are more commonly being used in architecture in communicating with clients for presenting a newly designed or existing space, depending on whether it is a conceptual solution or an already constructed object.3

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² Stating Alberti, Leon Battista. On the Art of Building in Ten Books. (Cambridge, Mass. [etc.]: MIT Press, 1988).

³ Such virtual panoramas provide a complete, spherical view of the documented space (360x180°), where the perspective can be easily controlled and changed in all directions. Additionally, multiple panoramas can be

HYBRID MODEL OF DRAWING: INTRODUCING THE FIRST PROTOTYPE

The starting point for the project conducted in the Architecture and Visual Language post-graduate course in 2017 was to examine new possibilities for using digital tools in architecture, with the aim to explore how the use of new media inspires and participates in experimenting with drawings today. The chosen medium for this purpose was virtual reality, precisely a smartphone application for making virtual panoramic images⁴. This virtual reality tool was supposed to be combined with traditional ("made by hand") architectural drawing, with an aim to research and represent the existing physical space, chosen by the author. The selected case study for the first drawing experiment was the interior of the Reading Room at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture. It was important to build on the thesis of questioning the usability of traditional drawings in architecture, hence the methodology of manipulating the captured panoramic image. This manipulation was based on using various hand drawing techniques to explore the specific characteristic of the analysed space. Furthermore, experimenting with hand drawings shaped the whole process of the project, resulting in manually transcribing the captured panoramic image into a series of hand drawings, which were afterwards digitally processed and manipulated using computer-aided tools and finally presented as a virtual panoramic drawing.



Photo 1. Reading Room at UB-FA, virtual panoramic drawing

The applied methodology consisted of seven steps divided into three phases, following *pre-production*, *production* and *post-production*, in order of application. Used methodology combines a myriad of analogue and digital tools such as photography, ink on paper, marker pens, technical pens, Photoshop CS editing. The *pre-production* phase involves capturing a 360x180° panoramic image of a chosen physical space, in this case the interior of the Reading Room. The unwrapped two-dimensional image of the captured panorama is then used as the initial basis for the work. The *production* phase includes four groups of drawings done in different techniques - drawing on tracing paper using ink, technical and marker pens. The analysis of the obtained photographs determined four categories of space transcription that correspond to different layers of the spatial image, and which together, superimposed, give an abstract image of the same space. Each technique involves making 12 drawings which together form an image corresponding to the aforementioned unwrapped panoramic image. Each group of drawings represents one level of spatial transcription - *Edges, Surfaces, Light* and *Shadows*. The *post-production* phase involves translating hand

combined into a unique virtual promenade, which adds to the illusion of walking from one space to another, making the virtual tour appear less static.

⁴ In 2015, Google launched a free application *Google Street View* that enabled its users to browse 360°x180° panoramic images of every corner of the world or to contribute to the entire public database of panoramic images by creating personal panoramic images. The application enables capturing the 360°x180° image using a smartphone and viewing it as a spherical image or downloading and storing it in the phone as an unwrapped two-dimensional image. By doing so, this kind of image becomes easy to access and reproduce, unfolding a spectrum of new manipulative possibilities in the fields of visual and fine arts and architecture.

drawings (48 drawings in total) into digital form and assembling them into four corresponding spherical images. The obtained images are then being superimposed using computational tools, such as Photoshop CC 2015. As the final result, the obtained spherical image, must be added up with certain metadata, becoming suitable for wrapping back into the application as a new, transcribed, panoramic image or panoramic drawing.



Photo 2. Reading Room at UB-FA, unwrapped 360x180° panoramic image

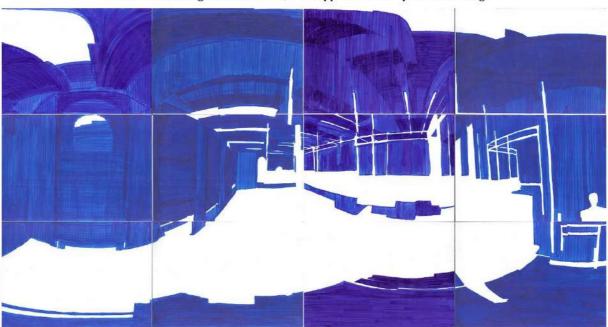


Photo 3. Second level of spatial transcription - Surfaces (marker pen on tracing paper).

The established drawing model resulted in four large-format hand drawings, i.e., 48 small-format drawings which were scanned, digitally post-produced, superimposed and merged into a single image. Finally, the two-dimensional image was made spherical using metadata and presented via the same application used for capturing the initial photo. The final result, a spatial drawing can be viewed by following the appropriate link⁵ which gives the observer the freedom to choose the vintage point and therefore, the most preferable fragment of the drawing as a separate image.

⁵ Project is available at the following link: https://roundme.com/tour/167963/view/425790/.

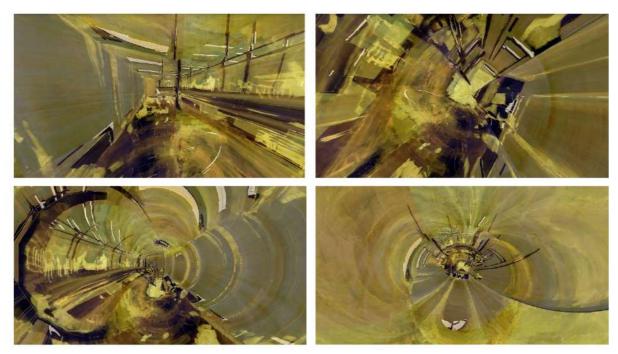


Photo 4. Reading Room at UB-FA, virtual panoramic drawing. Various fragments of a spherical image.

MORE ON METHODOLOGY: EXPLORING THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL

Being a member of Modern in Belgrade group,6 which held several solo exhibitions during 2019, the last exhibition in the series served as a testing ground for further research on the topic of presentational possibilities of the established drawing model. The exhibited work for the exhibition titled Black on White,7 represented the second drawing experiment, the interior of the Reading Room at the National Library of Serbia.⁸ The applied drawing methodology was repeated, following the example of the previous project – using four levels of spatial transcription (edges, surfaces, light and shadow). These levels correspond to the four stages of identifying the essential elements of space. While observing the drawing, the most dominant layer is recognised as the one representing the structural elements and the disposition of volumes in space presented with different nuances of drawn planes. The second notion is the overlapping of two closely related layers - one representing light, and the other representing shades. Their superimposition gives life to the drawing as it seems to document one precise moment in time of the observed interior. Finally, the last layer, playing hide-and-seek with the observer's eye, reveals itself very discreetly, like the author's signature - present but gently hidden. It subtly emphasises sharp edges providing stability to the structural elements holding the interior space. Nevertheless, the theme of the exhibition conditioned the final drawing to be presented as a digital grayscale print, lacking colour. Therefore, in addition to the link9 that provided visitors with a virtual experience of entering the drawing, the project was exhibited in the gallery space on a 200x100cm digitally printed poster and a video projection presenting fragments of virtual walks broadcasted in colour and overlapping with the poster.

⁶ The Modern in Belgrade (MuBGD) project, established in Belgrade, Serbia in 2018, brings together a group of architects (Iva Bekić, Petar Cigić, Dalia Dukanac, Stefan Đorđević, Irena Gajić, Mirjana Ješić, Hristina Stojanović, Snežana Zlatković) who share a particular interest in architectural illustration, graphic design and fine arts. Together, they launched the MuBGD platform as a means of promotion, but also critical analysis of Belgrade's architectural heritage within the field of visuasl representation.

⁷ Exhibition Black on white at gallery O3one Art Space, Belgrade, Serbia (29 November-05 December 2019).

⁸ National Library of Serbia (1966-1973) architect Ivo Kurtović, interior reconstruction by architect Zoran Radojičić.

⁹ Project is available at the following link: https://roundme.com/tour/523469/view/1734841/2



Photo 5. Reading Room at the National Library of Serbia. Exhibited poster at gallery O3one Art Space.

Repeating the established methodological steps once again, specified the basic features of the drawing, the usability of the hybrid model was confirmed and following observations were noted:

- The conducted drawing procedure focuses more on the development of the specific transcriptive
 technique than on the analysis of architectural space itself. Whilst the drawing process relies on the
 procedure, the analysis comes at the end. The drawing process in that sense can be claimed more
 artistic and less architectural.
- The three-dimensionality of the drawing and the use of virtual reality creates a switch in the context
 of image perception. It opens the possibility of viewing the represented space from infinite number
 of different angles and generates always new images of space, which makes image reading itself an
 architectural experience.
- It may be argued that a drawing refers to a specific moment in time in the life of an architectural object, showing it through the lens of the author's observation and virtuosity of drawing.
- Architectural drawing as the final result mostly relies on the traditional drawing techniques, and
 in that sense, is highly dependent on the author's sharp eye and skilful hand. On the other hand, the
 computer-aided manipulation generates a multitude of output images as final representations of
 the selected space. This gesture creates a scale of different levels of abstraction of selected
 viewpoints from unrecognisable images composed, it seems, only with a few hand strokes, to
 detailed, precise documentations contained in several layers of spatial transcription.



Photo 7. Reading Room at the National Library of Serbia. Fragment of a spherical image.

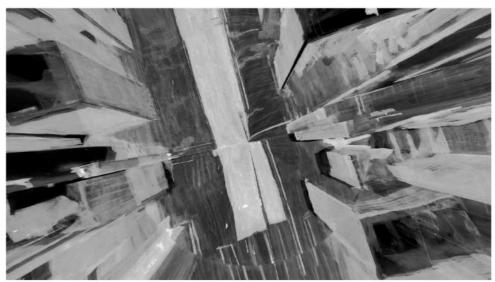


Photo 8. Reading Room at the National Library of Serbia. Fragment of a spherical image.



Photo 9. Reading Room at the National Library of Serbia. Fragment of a spherical image.

CONCLUSION

The examined hybrid model of drawing brings up two specific characteristics, one referring to the research, and the other to the representational attributes of the presented methodology. One part of the methodology relies on the absence of digital technologies in the process of drawing, which therefore emphasises the presence of the author of the drawing. Traces of manual work become embodied in lines and surfaces of the hand drawing suggesting to the unavoidable presence of the author, who emerges with every pen or brush stroke. Unforeseen mistakes made in the transcribing process are uncontrollable but unique expressions, and nevertheless, impossible to produce digitally. Finally, a question of preference arises - to choose between the conventional precision, computational glitches, or rather the uncontrollable aesthetics of the handwritten mistakes. On the other hand, digital space offers infinite possibilities in perceiving the work of drawing and finally emphasises the presence of the viewer offering him unlimited playground of different perspectives. In this way, the precision of drawing distributed with the use of software is avoided, which is bounded by the excessive limitation and control of the each of author's specific gestures, always present when using digital tools. However, in the context of its presentation, this drawing model offers a myriad of possibilities embodied in different mediums, as well as infinite observing options, as it is simultaneously present in real and virtual environment. In this sense, digital surrounding presenting the final image highlights the presence of the observer by offering him the freedom to find his own vintage point and experience the same image each time differently. In this way, the user is being placed in a partially authorial position as the creator of different, always new, worlds inside the given image. It may be argued that digital environment offers flexibility in the phase of post-producing the final drawing as it can easily be accommodated to different scale, format and media. Finally, the anxiety about the future of traditional drawing techniques in architecture is reduced as the presented project underlines the hypothesis that the emergence of digital technologies has emphasised and upgraded the traditional architectural tools, objecting them to constant development. It can also be noted that digital tools have, and still are, expanding the creative potential of architectural drawings as research tools. Therefore, the presented hybrid model of drawing offers a vast developmental potential that is yet to be discovered and explored. It is noticed that the established, representationally-transcriptive model of drawing is limited on its two iterations and needs further application and confirmation within different fields and environments of architectural design. Nevertheless, it is advised to expand the research carried out within different fields of architectural discipline. Complexity of the established methodology of drawing offers various exploratory possibilities of its different aspects - case study selection, drawing techniques, properties of spatial transcription, digital post-production techniques and last, but not the least, presentation of the final image. Once there is a variety of output results, they will be suitable for further development in multiple directions.

Ultimately, the elaborated architectural drawing can be positioned as a peculiar and idiosyncratic representation of ideas about physical space which frees the architect as the author, allowing him to step back from the physical space on the one hand, while, on the other hand, it brings him closer to it while affirming his distinct and very personal interpretation of space.

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