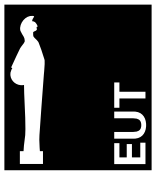
IL CORPO DELLA CITTÀ TELO MESTA

RRR LAB GO/N.GO COL GO!

EUT

Quelli che vediamo contenuti in questa pubblicazione sono gli esiti di un esperimento-esercizio doppio, che quest'anno accademico 2023-2024 abbiamo affrontato con l'obiettivo di studiare la città, ma anche di "farci studiare-informare" dalla città. Il primo aspetto dell'esperimento riguarda il fatto che il laboratorio si è cimentato in questo esercizio di indagine al contempo scientifica e poetica, che ha richiesto l'applicazione di strumenti e metodi oggettivi e soggettivi contemporaneamente per scoprire e dissezionare il corpo di queste due città, producendo l'anatomia di un'immagine, direbbe Zigaina, che però non è solo indagine architettonica, urbana e urbanistica didatticamente fine a se stessa, ma è invenzione, ricerca di ispirazione poetica, libertà di espressione e formulazione di un linguaggio, quello che possiamo vedere e "ascoltare" nelle pagine che seguono. Il secondo aspetto dell'esperimento riguarda la modalità con cui è stata affrontato l'esercizio dal Laboratorio. Gli studenti del Laboratorio di Progettazione Integrata dell'Architettura e del Costruito – RRR International Lab quest'anno si sono autocostituiti in un "collettivo" (COLGO!) ed hanno lavorato assieme, con uno spirito attivo e libero d'altri tempi, lavorando come un corpo unico. E questo, soprattutto oggi nell'ambiente universitario, per quella che quest'anno registriamo come la *Koinè* del Laboratorio, non è poco.

Adriano Venudo



IL CORPO DELLA CITTÀ **TELO MESTA**

COL GO! | RRR LAB GO / NGO

A cura di: Thomas Bisiani e Adriano Venudo

Il corpo della città. Telo mesta

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Il volume raccoglie gli esiti del primo workshop per l'inizio delle attività didattiche del Laboratorio di Progettazione Integrata dell'Architettura e del Costruito – RRR International Lab a.a. 2023-2024 all'interno della "Convenzione Quadro Istituzionale RRR-LAB 2022-25 tra il Dipartimento di Ingegneria e Architettura, il Comune di Gorizia, il GECT, l'ATER di Gorizia e il CONSUNIGO. Questa pubblicazione, **Il corpo della città. Telo mesta**, che è anche il catalogo della mostra che si è tenuta dal 31.10.2023 al 19.01.2024 presso il Conference Center del Polo Universitario di Gorizia, come primo esito didattico e scientifico di RRR-LAB, è stato realizzato dagli studenti costituiti nel **collettivo COLGO!** e coordinati dai docenti Thomas Bisiani, Alessio Bortot, Luigi Di Dato, Claudio Meninno, Sonia Prestamburgo, Adriano Venudo (coord. Laboratorio LPI_AC - RRR LAB).

Il **collettivo COLGO!** è costituito dai seguenti studenti del Laboratorio di Progettazione Integrata dell'Architettura e del Costruito – RRR International Lab a.a. 2023-2024:
Simone Biasiol, Victoria Boljesic, Sara Cantarutti, Giulia Ceciliot, Alessandro De Cesaris, Valentina Esposito, Alessia Giacomini, Marta Grimolizzi, Yana Kalynovych, Isabella Leiter, Martin Predan, Matilda Sain, Davide Stefani, Raffaella Terracciano, Ivan Vinciguerra, Sara Zuppin.

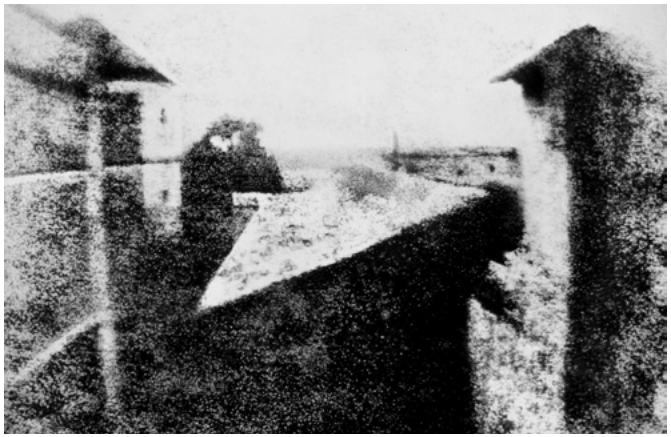
The mechanical eye in the history of urban investigation and its representation

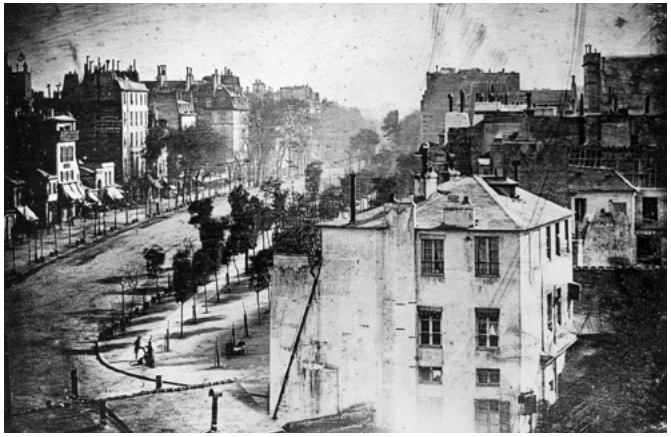
Alessio Bortot

Photography has always been a tool used for the documentation of cities, as a matter of fact the urban settlement was among the first subjects preserved over time thanks to this apparatus starting from the 19th century. The historians of photography attribute the primacy of the first heliographic image to a city view (fig. 1), the *Point de vue du Gras* (1826) by Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833). The image was obtained using a camera obscura able of impressing a sheet of pewter sprinkled with Judean bitumen. The photosensitive emulsion used by the French researcher was evidently not able of recording what was framed in a short time, so that the exposure might have lasted for eight hours or perhaps more. This process produced an image with a strongly dreamlike appearance, the roofs and facades of the buildings in fact present surreal luminosity and shadowy effects because they are produced by sunlight throughout all day. As we know, about a decade later, the evolution of the technique led Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851) to use copper plates covered with thin silver sheets, certainly more sensitive to the action of light. As is known, with the new technique the plate was made photosensitive through iodine vapours and, subsequently, mercury vapours had the task of revealing the image; the photograph was finally fixed - even if not a perfect way - through immersion in a solution of sodium iodide.

Daguerreotypes represented a significant evolution, although they were not yet entirely suitable for guaranteeing the instantaneousness of the image, as can be seen in the view of the ***Boulevard du Temple*** (1838) in Paris: the ten minutes of exposure only show the presence of a man stopped to have his shoes shined (fig. 2). In those years the photographic representations of cities are therefore able to immortalize only what is still, the city reveals itself as an ecstatic place, free of the anthropic component, surrounded by an atmosphere suspended in an ethereal light. If in the beginning this representation of cities was determined by a technical limit, in the following decades it became a style, a taste for abstraction, according to a sort of unwritten rule, as highlighted for example by the photographs of the Alinari brothers «'designed' according to the schemes of Renaissance perspective, inspired by the iconography of engravers and painters, above all by isolating the building from the context, in shots from about three meters high to guarantee the orthogonality of the vertical lines. The scenes are illuminated with generic and widespread light and freed of every distracting element, even road traffic, also when the technique, optimised, would have allowed it to be involved in the image».[1]

Another element that immediately proves to be significant is the photographer's gaze, the observer's point of view, a gaze educated for centuries, thanks again to the studies and views of painters. Experiments on optics and vision had supported the birth of perspective and the camera obscura, before becoming the photographer's instrument, had been the painter's *oculus artificialis*. Canaletto's views of Venice or the representations of Northern European cities are an example of the use of this tool to show reality objectively or, better said, as it is perceived by man through the





1: N. Niépce, *Point de vue du Gras* (1826).

2: L.-J. M. Daguerre, *Boulevard du Temple* (1838).

3: Nadar, *Aerial view of Paris* (1859).

4: J. W. Black, *View of Boston* (1860).

5: an example of a stereoscopic view of the Colosseum, (second half of the 19th century).

6: a viewer for stereoscopic images from around 1870 (National Museum of Science and Technology "Leonardo da Vinci", Milan, inv. no. 6055).

sense of sight. In addition to the usual shots of squares, streets or individual buildings with related details, were experimented points of view able of capturing the urban organism in its completeness and complexity. In this context we can quote the experiments of Gaspar Felix Tournachon (1820-1910), better known as Nadar, the first to understand the great potential of aerial photography. In 1859 he employed a hot air balloon suspended at 80 meters in height to obtain an aerial view of Paris (fig. 03). Experimentation with this pioneering shooting method had begun many years earlier, but the results were often unsatisfactory: the images were rather blurred due to the chemical effect produced, on the collodion photosensitive plates, by the hydrogen escaping from the balloon valve. The hot air balloon basket, converted into a flying darkroom, would have the merit of resolving with great precision «the huge work of the land register»,[2] as Nadar himself would say. Another famous image of this kind is due to James Wallace Black (1825-1896) who in 1860 photographed the city of Boston using a hot air balloon fixed at the dizzying height of 360 meters (fig. 4). It is therefore clear, a few decades after its birth, how this new representation technique is conceived as a documentation tool and not just for entertainment; this is also demonstrated by the task given to Nadar by the municipality of Paris, to carry out a photographical exploration of the city's catacombs, moving from the sky to the underground. For the first time, the photographer will leave a memory of the hidden city using artificial lights designed to guarantee short exposures (ten minutes) and mannequins on a human scale to account for the dimensions of the tunnels.

The method for obtaining these representa-

tions of the city, was certainly unprecedented, but the same cannot be said about the chosen point of view. Bird's-eye representations of buildings have appeared since medieval times (or perhaps before?) in graphic and pictorial form in pseudo axonometries and perspectives, among the most famous we could mention *Venetie MD* (1500), or the *View of Venice*, created by Iacopo De Barbari (circa 1460/70-1516) during the government of the Serenissima.

Other forms of experimentation were aimed in the 19th century at giving to the observer an 'immersive' experience, to use a word that is too abused today. The realism of the photographic image in perspective, however effective, still required a monocular observer, as indeed predicted by the geometric constructions of perspective images of the 15th century. Binocular stereoscopic vision, typical of human vision, was a phenomenon known from a theoretical point of view since the time of Euclid (4th-3rd century BC).[3] This theory of vision was simulated in the first half of the 19th century by Charles Wheatstone (1802 -1875) through 'twin' images placed side by side, drawn from a point of view slightly shifted on the horizon, to simulate what each of the two single eyes sees separately and which the brain will then recompose into a single image. The transition to photography was almost immediate: in 1849 David Brewster (1781-1868) had the idea of mounting two stereoscopic daguerreotypes inside a viewer equipped with lenses; the first subjects of the new support have been once again the main European cities with their most iconic monuments, following a widespread and still felt passion: the eighteenth-century fashion of the grand tour (fig. 5 and 6).

Another peculiar photographic practice, also inspired by the attempt of and making perspective painted images less static, deserves to be mentioned in this context: large format panoramic images. The first to produce them and coin the term was the painter Robert Barker who created a view of Edinburgh composed of a series of perspective images that could be aligned to form a single stripe along a semicircle or an entire circumference (whose diameter could measure even many metres). In this way the visitor found himself inside the image, at the centre of a platform, surrounded by the urban context. The rigid point of view characterizing Renaissance painting is now overcome, the gaze gains a certain dynamism, able tho 'embrace' the reality, becoming consubstantial with it. An Austrian photographer, Joseph Puchberger, in 1843 filed a patent of a photographic device for the creation of 150° panoramas using curved daguerreotypes, but the great revolution of this technique occurred at the end of the 19th century with the use of flexible films, evidently more suitable for image projection on cylindrical surfaces. F. J. Bandholtz's *View of Davenport* (1906) is highly distorted, but able of bringing together multiple points of view (and as many vanishing points) in a single mounted image (fig. 7). In the 20th century appeared, among other photographs, those showing the skyline of cities, so that the panorama became a photographic format (no longer necessarily conceived in cylindrical projection). These photograph highlighted the profile of buildings, theirs silhouette, they were obtained from a point of view as distant as possible and they wished, once again, to grasp the complexity of the *body of the city* (fig. 8).

Notes

[1] I. Zanier, *L'occhio della fotografia. Protagonisti, tecniche e stili dell'"invenzione maravigliosa"*, La Nuova Italia Scientifica, Rome 1988, p. 142.

[2] M. Rago, a cura di, Nadar, *Quando ero fotografo / Nadar*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1982, p. 59.

[3] Three-dimensional visual perception was dealt with by Leonardo Da Vinci, Giovanni Battista Della Porta (1535-1615) in his *De Refractione Optices* (1593) and François D'Aguillon in his treatise *Opticorum libri sex* (1613), just to quote the main scholars who worked on this subject, see: M. Kemp, *The Science of Art. Prospettiva a percezione visiva da Brunelleschi a Seurat*, Milan, Giunti, 2009, pp. 185-245.

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7: F. J. Bandholtz, *View of Davenport*, IA, 2nd & Harrison Sts. del 1907.

8: I. Underhill, *New York Skyline*, (1960).