

Laís Bronstein

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THE ALDO ROSSI AND JOHN
HEJDUK'S COLLECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

In an analysis of the proposals and architectural projects from the international debate of the 60s and 70s, it becomes apparent the recurrence in the creation of systems from a defined and limited formal repertoire. Among the architects who are part of this time, we distinguish Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk, whose working mechanisms reveal the existence of a specific and limited formal universe of figures and elements that reappear at every new design. A closely contact between these two architects took place in the mid-70s when Rossi spends a season in the US, and teaches at the Cooper Union in New York, then headed by Hejduk. Rossi makes use of pure geometric shapes and the mechanism of analogy in his sketches and drawings. Hejduk also uses pure geometric forms in building its unusual "structures", that reappear every new project. The idea of collection, such as building a system, is the interpretive key that allows the approach of these two authors, whose formal worlds appear to be, at first glance, so distinct.

KEYWORDS

Architectural theory. Aldo Rossi. John Hejduk.

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AS COLEÇÕES DE ALDO ROSSI E JOHN HEJDUK

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RESUMO

Em uma análise do repertório de propostas e projetos de arquitetura que povoaram debates nos anos 1960 e 1970 no cenário internacional, torna-se patente a recorrência dos autores na criação de sistemas, a partir de um repertório formal definido e limitado. Dentre os arquitetos que se inserem nesse momento, destacam-se Aldo Rossi e John Hejduk, cujos mecanismos de trabalho revelam a existência de um universo formal próprio e restrito de figuras e elementos que reaparecem a cada novo desenho. O contato mais estreito dos dois arquitetos acontece em meados da década de 1970, quando Rossi passa uma temporada nos EUA e leciona na Cooper Union de Nova York, então dirigida por Hejduk. Rossi utiliza as formas geométricas puras e o recurso da analogia em seus croquis e desenhos. Hejduk também utiliza as formas geométricas puras na construção de suas inusitadas “estruturas”, que reaparecem a cada projeto. A ideia de coleção, como construção de um sistema, é a chave interpretativa que permite a aproximação dos dois autores, cujos mundos formais aparentam ser, à primeira vista, tão distintos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Teoria da arquitetura. Aldo Rossi. John Hejduk.

I could not explain why, but looking at the drawings of Hejduk comes to mind the best, the most endearing of Aldo Rossi.¹

(USANDIZAGA, 2000, p. 5)

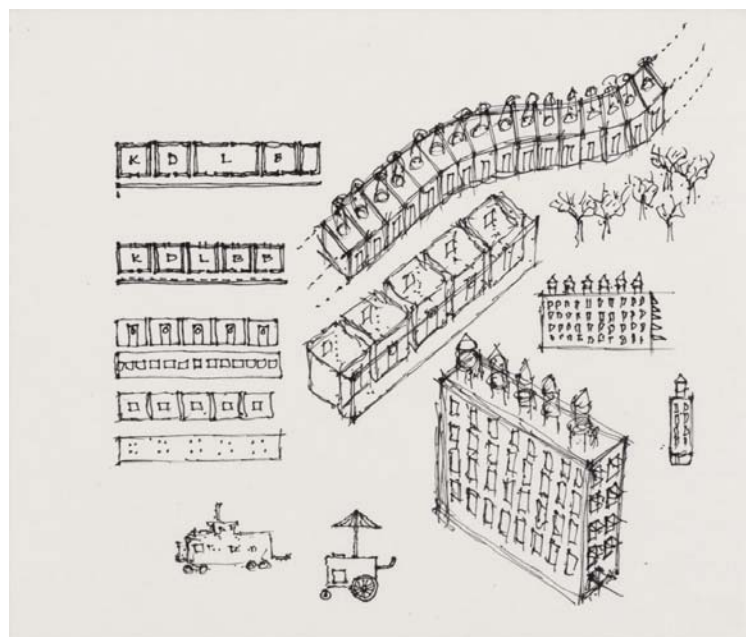
The theme intended to be addressed in this article started from the same distrust expressed in the epigraph above. But why do we find a strong familiarity with Rossi's universe in John Hejduk's drawings and images (Image 1)? Under which circumstances and from which aspects is it possible to make an analytical approach between two characters who are so unique and so distinct? Lastly, from which categories is it possible to outline a critical construction in order to enlighten, reveal and draft an existing complicity among his works?

Approaching the specificity of the formal universes of those two authors seems to be the way to unravel such issues. We suggest, then, an approach through the interpretative key of the idea of *collection*, as we interpret Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk as *architecture collectors*. At first their collections represent a rich material, which seem to belong to distinct categories of the collection. However, as we examine those collections thoroughly, it is possible to state that they strategically affect hidden and protected aspects in their universes of shapes and figures.

As we reveal the end of this story, all we have left now is to introduce the beginning and the steps of the way which allow us to come to this conclusion. In order to do so, it is necessary to decipher the character of those collections, retrieving, as much as possible, the structure, system and relations providing legal force to their internal organizations. Because it is such a complex task, our purpose is to proceed with a *curatorship* of those collections. As it is known, a curator is the professional in charge of the concept, set up and supervision of an exhibition, usually an art exhibition. In our case, the formal worlds of Aldo Rossi

¹"No sabría explicar por qué, pero al mirar los dibujos de Hejduk me viene a la memoria lo mejor, lo más entrañable de Aldo Rossi."

Image 1 – Author: John Hejduk
Title: Summer Visitor's Place, Row Houses, Apartment House, Butterplace and Useless House, from Lancaster/Hanover Masque 1980-1982
black felt-tip pen on paper
6.6 x 31.3 cm
DR1988:0291:037
Copyright: John Hejduk fonds – Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal



and John Hejduk will be presented side by side, in as many exhibition environments as there have been the intersections found among their private collections of drawings and figures.

I. FUNDAMENTALISMS

This first point of intersection arises from a stimulating observation made by Ignasi de Solà-Morales:

Ever since some theoretical speeches backed by prestigious professors from the influent Architecture College in Venice, Italy, but also since certain positions of the American architecture from the end of the 60s, by the FIVE group, the intention was being developed from which only returning to the essential, to the original and to the initial modern experience would be possible to recover the pace, to resume the true experience. There was, in my view, a fundamentalism of the modern, from Modern Tradition (SOLÀ-MORALES, 1996a, p. 71).²

²“Desde algunos discursos teóricos sostenidos por prestigiosos profesores de la influyente Facultad de Arquitectura de Venecia pero también desde ciertas posiciones de la arquitectura americana de finales de los 60, del grupo de los FIVE, se desarrollaba la pretensión de que sólo volviendo a lo esencial, a lo germinal y a lo inicial de la experiencia moderna, era posible recuperar el paso, volviendo a tomar el hilo de la verdadera experiencia [...] Había, a mi juicio, un fundamentalismo de lo moderno, de la Tradición Moderna.”

³“En la exposición se ha pretendido dar la máxima importancia al momento figurativo de la arquitectura, teniendo también en cuenta el valor autónomo, el producto en sí, del proyecto arquitectónico.”

A kind of “call for order”, as a fundamentalist answer to the noticeable modern architecture crisis, in fact was part of the first moment of both authors’ history, and it is clearly reflected in their formal answers.

At first, we find Rossi and Hejduk among the protagonists of the reviews in the 60s, when certain practices and the legitimating speech of modern architecture were questioned. A period of great effervescence which, although multitasking, shares certain common debates. One of those consists on claiming a “disciplinary autonomy”, a theme that has stressed the debate and the architectonic production of two circles, differentiated from the criticism after the 60s. On one side, the group started in Italy stands out after writings by Ernesto Nathan Rogers and associates from *Casabella Magazine*. A group auto-claimed *Tendenza*, gathered Aldo Rossi, Vittorio Gregotti, Giorgio Grassi, among others. In the United States, the work of professionals from *IAUS – Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies* stands out – a circle from the American critics gathering Peter Eisenman, Kenneth Frampton, Mario Gandelsonas, Anthony Vidler and Kurt Forster, whose ideas were widespread at *Oppositions Magazine*, where they were editors.

For the Italian group, the evident association of the architecture with the city represents a contribution, which started a number of interpretations where the urban context, its architecture, its history and memory used to consist of elements deriving from a private and autonomous tradition of its own. Dissociated from its historical time e its original ideologies, the shapes of architecture, its typologies and distinct urban morphologies gathered a vast material capable of being included in the existing reality. The exhibition taking place during the XVth Triennial in Milan, in 1973, whose architecture section - *Architettura Razionale* – was organized by Aldo Rossi, who was also the editor responsible for the homonymous catalogue, is of special importance. Here, the issue of architecture autonomy and its formal specificity become clear.

The intention of this exhibition was to provide the maximum importance to the figurative moment of the architecture, also taking into account its autonomous value, the product itself, of the architectural project (ROSSI, 1980, p. 20).³

Rossi's claim for "another" rationality – the rationality of history and culture in face of science and technique, and for "another logic" – the logic of continuity in face of rupture, is already clear in his introduction text on the Italian version of the Boullée by book, published in 1967, and stresses the formal specificity of discipline:

Only an authentic rationalism, as a construction of an architectural logic, can put an end to the old functionalist impasse debate and to the new architecture fables as an interdisciplinary issue; architecture has always been presented as a practical and theoretical well defined disciplinary body, constituted by compositive, typological, distributive problems, of a city study etc, it's up to us to take it forward. (ROSSI, 1975a, p.218).⁴

In the American context, the *Five Architects* exhibition taken place in 1969 in Nova York MoMA, is a reference to the debate about the so called "conceptual architecture"⁵. The exhibition is a result of part of one of the group CASE meetings (*Conference of Architects for the Study of Environment*), formed by young architects in 1964, such as Peter Eisenman, Kenneth Frampton, John Hejduk, Michael Graves, Richard Meier, Stanford Anderson and Colin Rowe, whose goal was to rethink the criticism, the practice and the teaching of architecture. It is also in the environment fomented by those meetings that the IAUS (*Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies*) was created in Nova York, in 1967. Its journal, the *Oppositions* (1973-1984), becomes the main medium for discussing those years, promoting debates about the autonomy in the architecture field, with studies exploring the possibilities of its disciplinary vocabulary and its own tradition, dissociated from any reference or determinism unrelated to its specificity (HAYS, 1998).

For the *Five* group, the formal repertoire of modern architecture represents a system that is capable of being continuously worked on, once it is separated from its ideology, its time and place. The complicity among the five authors is stressed in the catalogue of the aforementioned exhibition, where its organizers find common characteristics in their projects, deriving mostly from the reinterpretation of the avant-garde architectonic works from the years 20s and 30s, under the formal experimentation point of view.

"It is only about architecture" says Arthur Drexler (1975, p. 1) in the prologue of the aforementioned catalogue. In fact, a self-absorption of the geometric possibilities of the shape is at the root of the works presented by the *Five* group. Especially in John Hejduk and Peter Eisenman's projects, the obsession in explaining the generative process needs no reference to a context or user, leading to the understanding of those objects strictly from a formal autonomy point of view.

The autonomy theme in the work of the *Five* is stressed by Ignasi de Solà-Morales:

At the moment that Arthur Drexler, Colin Rowe or Kenneth Frampton identify some common scratches in the architecture of five New Yorker architects, we watch a manifest in favor of disciplinary autonomy and the exclusive dependency on architecture to its essential images. (...) It doesn't matter that, after that, this same autonomy have been disregarded through

⁴"Sólo un auténtico racionalismo, como construcción de una lógica de la arquitectura, puede poner fin al viejo impasse funcionalista y a las fábulas de la arquitectura como cuestión interdisciplinaria; la arquitectura ha sido presentada siempre con un cuerpo disciplinario bien definido, práctico y teórico, constituido por problemas compositivos, tipológicos, distributivos, de estudio de la ciudad, etc, que a nosotros toca llevar adelante."

⁵The conceptual architecture theme is approached by Peter Eisenman in his articles *Notes on conceptual architecture* (1970) and *Notes on conceptual architecture: towards a definition* (1971), where the author claims a similar statute to conceptual art for architecture, and a more discrete correspondence to linguistic structures. Both articles have been clearly inspired on the article *Sentences on conceptual art* by Sol Lewitt, written in 1969.

different ways. (...) In all of them, architecture was a sufficient universe in itself, which used to be fed by its own history and that emerged from inside of its own rules and protocols, like Minerva, recreating the myth of hermaphrodite in the elegance of classical world, born from Jupiter's head (SOLÀ-MORALES, 1996b, p. 89-90).⁶

In this first moment of their personal history, it is possible to find, in Rossi and Hejduk, this common affiliation in their projects, the one that refers to Solà-Morales.

⁶“En el momento en el que Arthur Drexler, Colin Rowe o Kenneth Frampton identifican unos rasgos comunes a la arquitectura de cinco arquitectos neoyorkinos en la exposición y catálogo titulada *Five Architects* (1971), asistimos a un manifiesto en favor de la autonomía disciplinar y de la dependencia exclusiva de la arquitectura de sus figuras esenciales. [...] No importa que después esta misma autonomía se haya dispersado por caminos distintos. [...] En todos ellos la arquitectura era un universo suficiente en sí mismo, que se alimentaba de su propia historia y que surgía desde el interior de sus propias reglas y protocolos al modo como Minerva, recreando el mito de hermafrodita en la elegancia del mundo clásico, nació de la cabeza de Júpiter.”

⁷ A deep and criterious study of Hejduk teaching practice can be found on the master dissertation by Jonas Delecave de Amorim, *In search of disciplinary autonomy. John Hejduk and his teaching at Cooper Union, 1964-1971*, written for the Post Graduation Program in Architecture at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, in 2015.

Rossi starts building his typological repertoire from the historical city, which considers the delimitation of a system of shapes abstracted from its respective contexts and historic time. Even if his writings were directed at the elaboration of an *urban science*, leading to an exhaustive study about the various aspects and relations that form the cities, his projects and drawings become unique, essentially, by the arrangement and return to images and elementary archetypes. Cylinder-column, prismatic pillar, solid wall, limited openings for shape and measure, via the bridge of a triangular section, flat, conic or dome shaped roof are some components of his figurative lexicon (Cf. BONFANTI, 1992, p. 17).

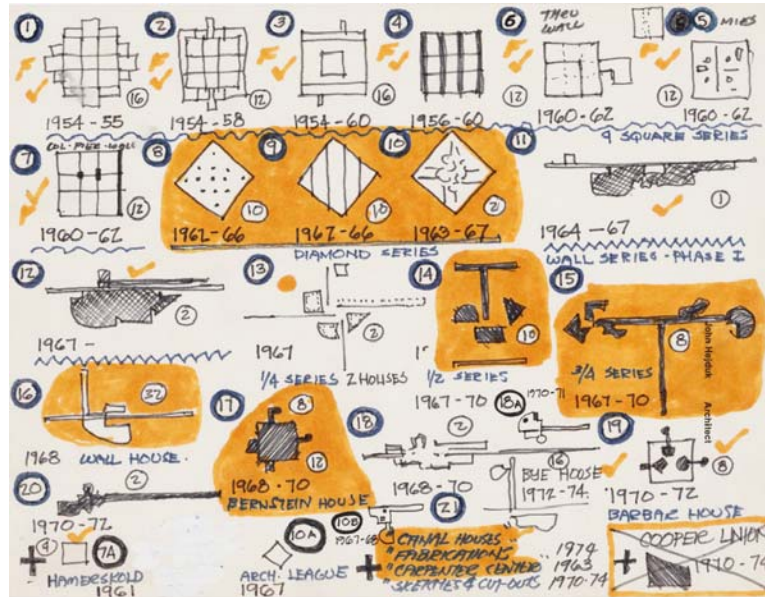
John Hejduk, in turn, searches for a formal structure, of an original and pure image. Since his time as a teacher at the University of Texas in Austin (1954-1956), where he formulated the *nine-square grid problem* – in which insertions are made on the checkered mesh, allowing it to be transformed into a complex spatial scheme – until the projects from the mid 70s, Hejduk explored a number of arrangements and displacements of simple geometric elements to its limit. The exercises suggested to the students in Austin, as well as during his long term teaching at Cooper Union, were rehearsed at the same time in his private professional practice.

At Texas, I had to teach for the first time; that led me to the invention of the nine square problem. It was always na architectonic problem. Parallel with the formation of the nine square problem I moved into the Texas Houses.[...] I had to get things into order. To order one's teaching, in a rational basis.. (HEJDUK, 1985, p. 35)

Also, the “cube” and “Juan Gris” exercises aimed to explore the formal and spatial possibilities of the simple geometrical figures. The first exercise starts from a pre-established form, a 9 meter cube, where the program should be freely inserted. According to the author, this is an exercise which would work on universal and timeless problems, applicable to any architecture program. The second exercise abandons the *grid* of columns and beams structuring the previous exercises, in order to work with specific issues in a three-dimensional space, that have already been tried in two dimensions by cubist painting.⁷

This search also appears in his house projects: the *one-half house* (1966) starts with the concept of $\frac{1}{2}$ square, $\frac{1}{2}$ triangle and $\frac{1}{2}$ circle; House 10 (1966), from the series *Wall houses*, starts with the concepts “point-line- plane-volume”, “ $\frac{3}{4}$ of figure” and “horizontal extension”; the *Diamond Houses* explore the 45° rotation, overlapping a diagonal mesh to the object. All of them consist on tireless self-centered exercises, which explore the possible combinations and rearrangements of geometrical figures and patterns (Image 2).

Image 2 – Autor: John Hejduk
 Título: Chronology of projects by John Hejduk: 1954-1974 between 1974 and 1979 orange, black and blue ink and white correction fluid on pre-printed paper 21.6 x 27.9 cm DR1998:0084:001
 Copyright: John Hejduk fonds – Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal



2. AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The autobiography theme seems to be a second intersection point found on the history of those two authors. This distrust emerges as we verify a slowdown of the fundamentalist appeal, which highlighted their production from the decade of the 60s and early 70s.

Hejduk's work already presents a more apparent change by the mid 70s, with projects called *Masks* and the publishing of the book *Mask of Medusa*, in 1985. From this moment on, it was no longer a formal experimentation *per se*, as all his production was then moved to drawing and detailing elaborate *structures* (objects/characters), always followed by texts and narratives with a strong poetic charge. According to K. Michael Hays (2010), this change seems to have been leveraged by Hejduk's closer contact with Aldo Rossi's drawings in 1973, when he travels to Zurich for an exhibition with his works and pieces by an Italian artist from ETH, where Rossi used to teach. From that moment on, Hejduk rethinks his work, after finding a dimension that evokes much more than the strict geometric and closed combination of types and figures, in the projects of the Modena cemetery and in the drawings of the "analogue cities" that were exposed. This issue also authorizes him to take one step further, incorporating a narrative value to his new projects⁸. It is also after this moment that Hejduk understands that his work moves from an "Architecture of Optimism" to an "Architecture of Pessimism" (HAYS, 2010, p. 108-109).

Another point to aggregate to this equation is Aldo Rossi's trip through the United States, in 76, 77 and 78, teaching at Irwin Chanin School of Architecture at Cooper Union, directed by John Hejduk and at IAUS. The fact that this encounter coincides with the years immediately before those *Masks* projects is, for some authors, also decisive in appreciating the work of Hejduk.

⁸Hays approaches this change in his Project *Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought* (1975), where Hejduk incorporates, as a kind of "character", his drawing of the Wall House 3, de 1974.

Rossi's influence over Hejduk is evident – says Maurice Plà – Rossi teaches Hejduk the value of drawing and its enormous possibilities, influencing him to start then his long career as an architect-designer.(...) Hejduk becomes, therefore, an architect able to convert each drawing into a totally finished project (PLÀ, 2000, p. 31-32).⁹

In Rossi's case, it is also possible to notice a softening on the rigid posture exposed in the book *Architecture of the city* and at the 1973 Milan Triennial. In 1981, he writes *Scientific Autobiography*. Paradoxically, it is an essayistic and subjective work, very far from the intended rigor of his book from 1966.

The transition from this first moment of necessary formal "purification" to a phase of an apparent "distension" of convictions is, undoubtedly, an aspect that allows us to bring the work of those two architects closer with more consistent data.

Regarding this, it is worth it to make a deeper analysis on a key aspect of Rossi's work, already exposed in *Architecture of the city*, which is the subjective step the author takes at the moment of the project itself. After detailing his purpose of an *urban science*, which consists of an analytical and conceptual identification and stratification of the city, Rossi pursues by the field of *analogy*, a little compatible mechanism with an argument intended to be "rational". At this point, his purposes make the issue of *authorship* evident, in a process that so far could be carried out anonymously. Also at this point, Boullée's compositive process helps him justify his method of project, based on the so called *exalted rationalism* of that author, which, differently from *conventional rationalism*, assumes an emotional and autobiographical dimension for the architecture project. *There is no such a thing as art that is not autobiographical*, says Rossi, in his article about Boullée (ROSSI, 1975a, p. 222). The figurative step in Rossi's work that clearly relates to this opening on the project, to a private interpretation – including the use of images, metaphors and personal poetics in his analogical game (Cf. ROSSI, 1975b).¹⁰ This is linked to a process that is absolutely individual and becomes central for everyone that intends to get closer to his universe – an elaborate construction, after selected records in his memories. In the beautiful prologue by Peter Eisenman, for the British version of *Architecture of the city*, this clue is given to us: *"memory starts when the story ends"*¹¹ (EISENMAN, 1982, p. 158). In his drawings, and in his later work, this issue becomes clear. Therefore, it is not so surprising that Rossi starts to explain his work as an autobiography in 1981.

It is also this aspect in Hejduk that becomes key for the approach on his latest work. The autobiographical issue and the personal records create the raw material for excellence in his work. Such an autobiography, in the case of this American author, is intermediated by mechanisms of the poetic language, which also explains the recurrence to the *Masks* author.

*If the poetic language hides instead of revealing itself, the architectonic poetic shall work strictly according to the same mechanism. (...) This way, if the poet always hides himself behind the mask of the poem, Hejduk in turn, hides behind the mask of each one of his projects*¹² (PLÀ, 2000, p. 32).

His structures/characters called *masks* can then be interpreted as an attempt on the *objectification* of the thought, or just like the remaining material of the narratives and thoughts that populate the places of his projects.

⁹ "La influencia de Rossi sobre Hejduk es evidente: Rossi enseña a Hejduk el valor del dibujo y sus enormes posibilidades, iniciando de este modo a Hejduk en su larga carrera de arquitecto-dibujante. [...] Hejduk se convierte de este modo en un arquitecto capaz de convertir cada dibujo en un proyecto totalmente terminado."

¹⁰ The concept of analogical city is described by Rossi through "Analogical Venice" by Canaletto, in 1755, an imaginary landscape in which is the bridge project of Rialto in Palladio, the Basilica in Vicenza and the Chiericati Palace are placed side by side. Such structure allows him to get to a "formal-logical" operation, applicable to the architecture project, an operation that would allow him to work after a distinctive association of images.

¹¹ "Cuando la historia termina la memoria comienza."

¹² "Si el lenguaje poético oculta en vez de revelar, a su vez la poética arquitectónica deberá funcionar estrictamente según el mismo mecanismo. [...] Así, si el poeta se oculta siempre tras la máscara del poema, Hejduk se oculta a su vez tras la máscara del poema."

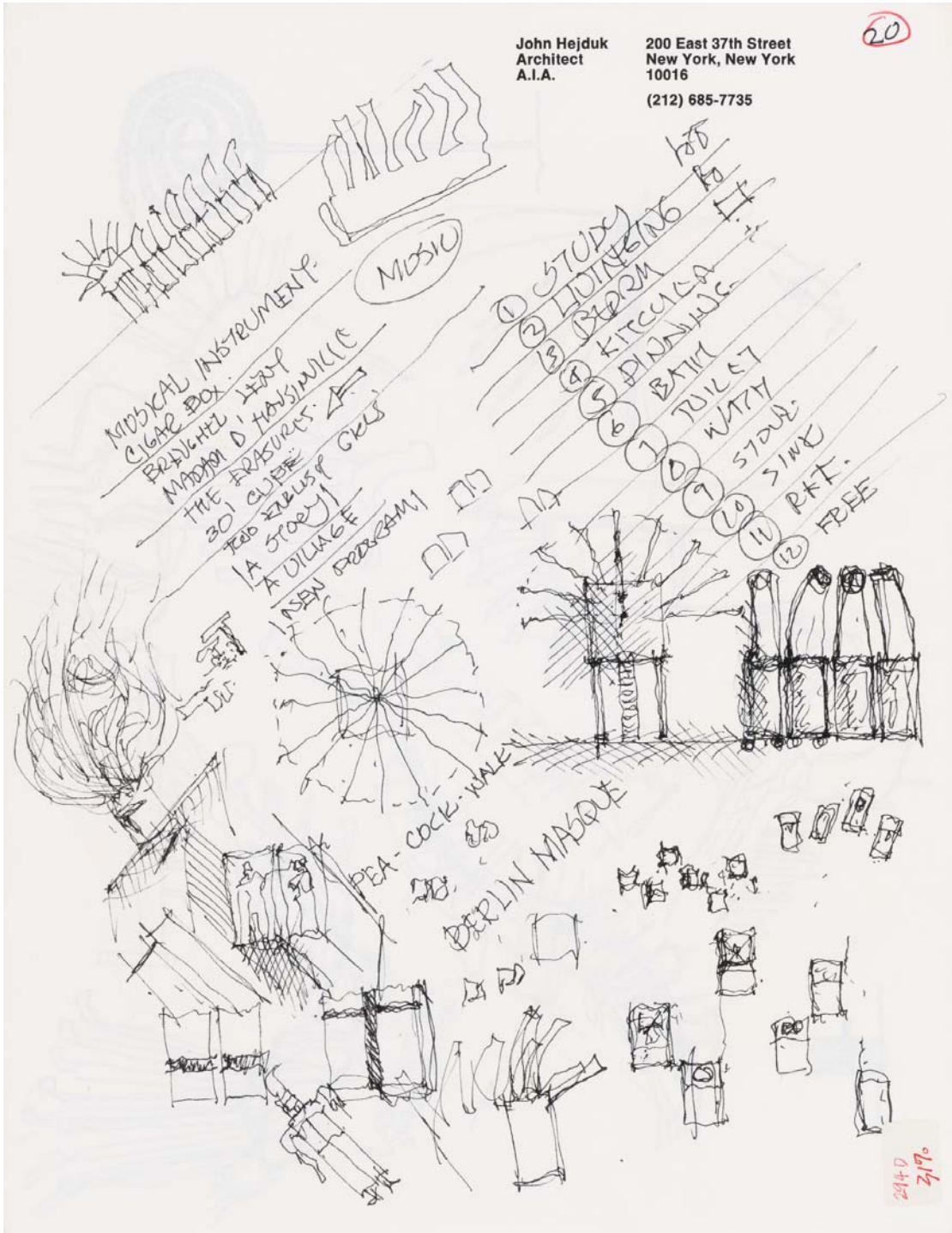
Hejduk works exhaustively on the construction of private worlds, aggregating his interpretation to the demanded theme/program. He creates a repertoire of objects/characters that temporarily populate the cities wherever he goes. Those are itinerants, and can acquire different names and functions, according to the visited place: Vladivostok, Riga, Berlin, New York, Venice, London, Prague, Oslo, Atlanta, Groningen, Buenos Aires, Philadelphia; the *Masks* belong to everyone and, at the same time, to none of those places. This is about a private collection of 400 pieces by Hejduk, made along 15 years of work (1975-1990). As independent and decontextualized objects, such pieces set a catalogue that he prepares as far as it is demanded by a certain community. Just like the case of the temporary construction of the “House of the Painter” and “House of the Musician” in Berlin, the “Collapse of Time” in London and the “Home of the Poet” in Barcelona.

I have established a repertoire of objects/subjects, and this troupe accompanies me from city to city, from place to place, to cities I have been to and to cities I have not visited. The cast presents itself to a city and its inhabitants. Some of the objects are built and remain in the city; some are built for a time, then are dismantled and disappear; some are built, dismantled, and move on to another city where they are reconstructed. I believe that this method/practice is a new way of approaching the architecture of a city and of giving proper respect to a city's inhabitants (HEJDUK, 1989, n/a).

In fact, different from the analogical operation in Rossi's drawings, here we face a function that is essentially *allegoric*, in which the object/meaning relationship is deliberately ineffable. It is also the allegory of the mechanism that authorizes Hejduk to use the poetic language resource in many of his projects. Regarding this concept, João Adolfo Hansen clarifies:

The allegory (from the Greek allós=other; agourein= to speak) says b meaning a. Ancient rhetoric then sets itself, theorizing as an elocution modality, that is, like ornatus or ornament of the speech (...) it is a constructive procedure, creating what Greek-latin and Christian Antiquity, continued by Middle Ages, called it 'allegory of the poets': allegoric expression, metaphoric technique of representing and personifying abstractions (HANSEN, 2006, p. 7)

In Hejduk's work, just like in Rossi's, it is possible to cast a big part of the elements that form his unusual collection. However, differently from the Italian author, the archetypes by Hejduk are allegories that relate to rituals, symbols, machines, institutions that populate the great “masquerade ball” of human existence in their brief spell in this world (Image 3). The typological variations of theaters, periscopes, water tanks, chimneys, towers, traps, labyrinths, aggregated the author's preference for basic geometric forms mixed with an elemental biomorphism (eyes, nose, mouth, legs), also including angels, animals and machines and a few “human” characters (the Man with the Identity Record, the Guardian of the Mask, the Woman of the Lottery etc) represent a great part of the structures that wander through his projects (HAYS, 1996, p.109).



John Hejduk
 Architect
 A.I.A.
 200 East 37th Street
 New York, New York
 10016
 (212) 685-7735

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Image 3 – Author: John Hejduk
 Title: Conceptual sketches for Lancaster/Hanover Masque 1982 or 1983 ink on paper 21.7 × 28.1 cm
 DR1998:0102:027 Copyright: John Hejduk fonds
 Collection - Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal

3. PERMANENCE

*I have always stated that places are stronger than people, the scenario is stronger than the event itself*¹³ (ROSSI, 1984, p. 63)

The issue of permanence highlights Rossi's work since his first writings, in aspects related to the transcendence of the urban facts over his original uses and ideology. It is possible then to make a link here to the aforementioned idea of autonomy. His study of primary elements, especially the one on monuments, pays particular attention to those urban typologies and shapes, which provide individuality and relevance to the observed areas.

However, the permanence of the shape in its integrity is not only part of Rossi's universe. In *Scientific Autobiography*, the author also flirts with the possibility of transcendences and a change in the shape, after the use of his fragments.

*It is likely that I estimate the fragments, for the same reasons that I have always thought about how breaking the relations with a person may represent a favorable condition at the moment of the reunion (...). The possibility of using pieces of mechanisms, whose general sense I have partly lost, have always interested me, even formally*¹⁴ (ROSSI, 1984, p.18).

This condition can be evident, as we analyze Rossi's drawings. In a certain way, the fragment, as an incomplete piece, in the necessary element for the author to proceed to his compositive mechanism, characterized, mostly, by a *sum* of parts (Cf. BONFANTI, 1992).

In the case of John Hejduk, the issue of the permanence occurs in a more subtle way. This is about the permanence of the narratives and ghosts that populate the places of his projects with no reoccurrence of physical references. This was the case in his project *Victims* for Berlin, where the author said he projected an "elliptical approach" to horror (Cf. HEJDUK; SHAPIRO, 1991).

What struck me was, although the buildings had been destroyed, and had disappeared the aura came through the ground. In other words, the physicality of the buildings were not there, but one could feel the sense of structures having been there. (HEJDUK; SHAPIRO, 1991, p.63)

In his opinion, capturing the atmosphere of each place and its transformation into project possibilities, is the work that the architect has to offer. In this case, also, for Hejduk, the answer means the arrangement of a set of fragments, not necessarily formal ones – Rossi's way – but the idea of unity of the proposed objects. Objects/characters, programs/names; machines/subjects, Hejduk's structures are occupied by intensities, desires, in bodies emptied in their tectonic condition, which only serves as a provisory support for the accomplishment of a limited and repetitive number of tasks and rituals related to his interpretation of place, to his "aura". Likewise in this aspect, where the idea of permanence also implies the illness of its meanings, the allegoric character can be attributed to the Hejduk's work. Just like Walter Benjamin has observed in his study about the German Baroque, in 1928, "*the allegory sets itself more durably, where the ephemeral and the eternal coexist*" (BENJAMIN, 1984, p.184).

¹³ "Siempre he afirmado que los lugares son más fuertes que las personas, el escenario más que el acontecimiento."

¹⁴ "Es probable que estime a los fragmentos por las mismas razones que siempre he pensado que el haber roto las relaciones con una persona constituye una condición favorable en el momento del reencuentro. [...] Siempre, incluso formalmente, me ha interesado esta posibilidad de utilizar pedazos de mecanismos cuyo sentido general en parte ya se ha perdido"

Differently from Rossi, where the fragment calls for its unity and is used to add, to compose, in Hejduk, any apparent unity rapidly dissolves, decomposes. The errant character of its structures confirms this deliberate fragmentation. This is the case of his project *Victims*, where the need for gathering all 67 structures among them, at least in one common point, seems to be the last gesture of resistance to this imminent dissolution (Image 4).

Image 4 – Author: John Hejduk
Title: Victims: sketches of structures 1984 pen and ink on yellow ruled paper 27.7 × 21.4 cm
DR1998:0109:002:001
Copyright: John Hejduk
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4. STILL LIFE

The notion of continuity and its translation for both authors on the persistence of fragments of systems or earlier conditions is a point that indicates an approach to the work of Rossi and Hejduk in the category of “still life”. The representation of objects or inanimate and still beings, which brings the idea of passage of time, temporariness and death are characteristics of this genre of painting. The definition of still life is also strictly linked to the idea of collection, once different objects are moved from their respective productive and functional circuits, taking the reason of their existences, in order to create another system. Paradoxally, continuity and still life are two faces of the same currency of the figurative world of Rossi and Hejduk.

The constant relation and between Rossi’s drawings and De Chirico’s “metaphysical” painting is part of this kind of approach. Deliberately incongruent objects are placed side by side in a rigid composition, creating a world that gets closer to the fantastic, the dream. In Rossi’s drawings we often find a juxtaposition of architecture fragments with objects of daily use taken from their contexts, in compositions that lead the observer to look for new and hidden aspects in those immutable elements.

A similar relation is also attributed to Hejduk’s works. In fact, *still life* is a random theme in his speech. In his *wall houses*, the author believes to have found an answer for the search of that inherent aspect, though “elusive”, of the architecture (Cf. OCKMAN, 1997, p.13). Also in his books *Adjusting foundations* and *Architectures in love* the ambiguity of the term “*still life*” and its possible translation in architecture is part of his obsessions.

Image 5 – Author: John Hejduk
Title: Object/Subject,
drawing from the “Riga”
sketchbook 1985 watercolour
on paper 21 x 26.5 cm
DR1998:0113:009
Copyright: John Hejduk
fonds – Collection Centre
Canadien d’Architecture/
Canadian Centre for
Architecture, Montréal



If the painter could by a single transformation take a three-dimensional still life and paint it on a canvas into a natura morta, could it be possible for the architect to take the natura morta of a painting and by a single transformation build it into a still life? (HEJDUK, 1995a, p. 48)

Hejduk's own strategy of emptying the productive content of each one of his characters/object, in order to launch them in a world of masks/appearances, seems to be an attempt to build a great still life, in its more literal sense (Image 5).

* * *

In his book *Passages*, Walter Benjamin stresses, in the image of the collector, a class of an interested observer, that takes the chosen objects from their functional bonds, in order to insert them in a new historical system, his own collection. This look is compared to the one of a great spotter, able to find a whole world behind the appearance of each object, a character that has a magical ability of observation. To do so, it is only necessary to appreciate how he manipulates the object on a showcase, how he holds it in his hands, as if he would receive some kind of inspiration from it, watching the furthest of the worlds through it. The art of collecting is, for Benjamin, also a form of "practical recall".

In his autobiographical report, Rossi gets closer to Benjamin's collector:

*Probably observing things is my best formal education, this same observation has sooner been converted into the memory of things. Now I believe I can see them all, graciously disposed in line, aligned as in a herbarium, in a catalogue, in a dictionary. Such a catalogue, though, placed in an intermediate point between imagination and memory cannot be neutral, except to what concerns to the preference of some objects, from which it is a deformation, or, somehow, to the evolution.*¹⁵ (ROSSI, 1984, p. 33)

Hejduk also shares a devotion to the work of the collector/spotter with Benjamin. He gives a name, number, function and dedicates a text to each one of his objects. He carefully catalogues and orders all of his characters. He seems to then resign himself to his true task in life.

The most ulterior motive of whoever collects could maybe be explained in this way: he agrees to undertake a fight against dispersion. The great collector, in its origin, is faced with the confusion and how things are spread in the world (BENJAMIN, 1989, p. 228).

EXCURSUS

The proximity of Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk's formal worlds with ideas of "fundamentalism"; "autobiography"; "continuity" and "still life" is only a critical rehearsal of a possible curatorship from part of his drawings and formal worlds. Once it deals with two unique characters in the history of architecture, whose resources are broadly studied, there are a number of intersections, and also the differences, that could be cast. Among the more explicit antagonisms, it is possible to highlight the nearly umbilical relation that Rossi's work keeps with the city and

¹⁵ "Probablemente la observación de las cosas ha constituido mi mejor educación formal; esa misma observación se ha convertido luego en memoria de las cosas. Ahora creo poderlas ver a todas, hermosamente dispuestas en hilera; alineadas como en un herbáreo, en un catálogo, en un diccionario. Pero tal catálogo, situado en un punto intermedio entre la imaginación y la memoria, no puede ser neutral, sino que se refiere con preferencia a algunos objetos, de los que es una deformación, o, de alguna manera, la evolución."

the indifferent posture to urban themes, which is a characteristic of Hejduk's drawings. There are many aspects that bring those authors closer, but also, after different interpretative keys, they could have many dissonances.

An expressive part of Aldo Rossi e John Hejduk's collection currently lays at the *Canadian Centre for Architecture* (CCA). Aldo Rossi's file covers his production from 1960 to 1997, over 9000 drawings and models, mostly manuscripts. John Hejduk's file include approximately 4000 manuscripts documents, among drawings, notebooks and models made between 1947 and 1996. It is hard to believe that they were placed together purely by chance. Lonely and dormant, those collections call for many other curatorial projects.

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Lais Bronstein

Programa de Pós-graduação em Arquitetura. Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo. Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, RJ.
laisbronstein@hotmail.com