



Contemporary issues on Alberti

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JOELHO

05

DIGITAL ALBERTI: TRADITION AND INNOVATION

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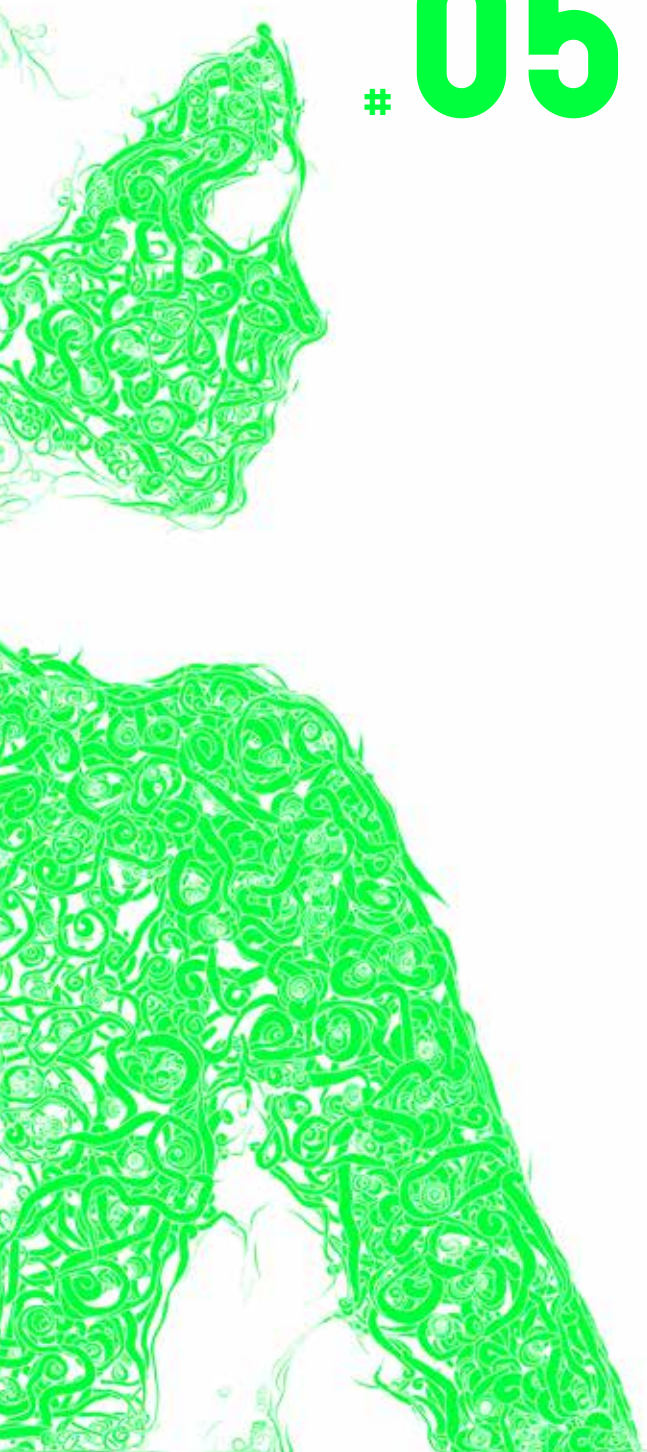
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José António Bandeirinha

Mário D'Agostino /

Andrea Loewen

Digital Alberti Exhibition



José António Bandeirinha
Contemporary Issues on Alberti

The thematic session “Contemporary Issues on Alberti”, included in the International Conference *Alberti Digital*, did not fail to meet the expectations evident in its title.

The presented papers are based in a broad range of authors and contemporary works, from Sol LeWitt (José Capela) to Le Corbusier (António Lousa) through Peter Eisenman and Anthony Vidler (Bruno Gil).

José Capela departs from the idea, proposed by Alberti, of the autonomic separation between the project and the work and reflects on the concept of “stated” work, ie the work that is preceded by a document that aims its prior representation.

For this purpose, he uses a grid for the artistic practices, proposed by Sol LeWitt in Artforum in 1967, which determines that conceptual art is planned in advance through a process of prior design, intended to monitor its execution.

Capela thus associates this systematization of Sol LeWitt with the autonomy of architectural design and discusses the social, ethical and procedural conditions that separate the architectural practice from the artistic practice, using an illustrative set of examples.

Autonomy is also the theme addressed by Andrea Buchidid Loewen, but autonomy of the ornament in the first instance, and beauty, through a more complex fabric of associations that makes the concept of *pulchritude* its base for further support. Without the differentiation of the idea of ornament, the idea provided by Alberti, subsequent treaties would not have been the same, says Andrea Loewen. The architectural debate, on one hand, and the practices of the masters of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, on the other, are clearly due to the albertian precepts. The humanist period thus corresponds to a grid of conceptual autonomy – ornament, nudity, *pulchritude* – interspersed by the deterministic mixture that precedes it and the unitarian integration that sequences it.

Bruno Gil, in turn, uses two research projects – *Alberti Digital*, coordinated by Mário Krüger, and *Palladio Virtuel*, coordinated by Peter Eisenman – in order to reflect about the contemporary research instruments in Architecture History. His intention is to use some of the tools proposed by Alberti in *De re aedificatoria* and fit them into a grid of contemporary research, to reflect on some controversial issues, such as the existence of a Portuguese Renaissance architecture, or the possibilities of formal codification of the albertian language. By following the analysis that Eisenman makes of the work of Palladio, through the project *Palladio Virtuel*, Bruno Gil is interested in studying the spatial organization of the work of the architect of Vicenza in an experiential parametric perspective, which sequential suggestions are endless, ie he is interested in the possibility to reflect historically on this work with an outlook that goes beyond the conventionality of a purely geometric analysis. *Virtuel* and *Digital* then become complementary conceptualizations, which are differentiated, the first as device for use, the second as device for building.

Although it has never been excessively studied, the cycle of complementarities between building and city developed firsthand by Alberti in the field of theoretical reflection, is widely known. It is precisely based on such cycle of complementarities, as well as its historical developments, that António Lousa intends to discuss some of the constraints related to the design of the contemporary city, particularly in the Portuguese context. In order to do so he uses a set of illustrative examples, such as the Hospital of Venice, designed by Le Corbusier in 1964. But Lousa also addresses, inevitably, the Malagueira project in Évora, by Alvaro Siza, and discusses the various conditions of the relations between the scale of the building and the scale of the city, in the contemporary context. The confrontation between city - building - object and the fragmentary individuality of the spread architectures, is the main idea as well as the primary motivation of the reflection proposed by António Lousa.

Based on albertian assumptions, some key issues were then outlined in order to understand our contemporary circumstances, some of which issues are related to architectural practices (Capela, Lousa), and some of which are framed in the Theory and History of Architecture (Loewe, Gil). It is not easy to synthesize this session, however, and without wishing in any way to force the mixing of the immiscible, it is quite clear that all interventions were built over the same foundation. All of them summon the other classic triad, the one which identifies the circumstances from which the Arts develop. Alberti states that it is common knowledge to consider that the Arts are originated by *chance* and by *observation*, are developed with *practice* and with *experience* and are consolidated through *knowledge* and through *reasoning*¹. Taking for granted the evident Renaissance intentions of this proposition that demands and tends to the institution of the *canon*, these three pairs of conditions/causes also determine the difficulty to establish strict parameters for an activity which ontological basis is eminently empirical. However, these three pairs of conditions/causes also declare, simultaneously, the obligation to move towards the establishment of systems of rules, or standards, in order to make it clearer and more explicit. Notice the order in which they are listed.

The proposals presented in this session were built on top of that foundation, their intentionality can only be made true through the building art, through architecture, in an absolutely exclusive way.

Regardless and beyond this intentionality, in pedagogical terms, what matters is the possibility to consider them unrelated to any precepts of cumulative order, though related to a constant evolutionary chain, a cyclic movement developed over time, but with no obsession to transcend time – the Theory and History of Architecture.

1 → Cf. Leon Battista Alberti, Da Arte Edificatória, [Tradução do Latim de Arnaldo Monteiro do Espírito Santo, Introdução, Notas e Revisão Disciplinar de Mário Júlio Teixeira Krüger], Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2011, [Livro Sexto, Capítulo II], p. 379.