

Metropolis: Visual Dynamic and Democratic Ideals

Part 2, Editorial

Dear readers,

This second part of *Metropolis: Visual Dynamic and Democratic Ideals* addresses public space and its architectural structures and monuments with the following authors: Omar Cerrillo, Katarina Andjelkovic, Brandon Sward, Piper Prolago, Vera Ustyugova, and Mariya Mingalev. These authors are representative and complementary in their analyses of urban space and its sociopolitical and cultural meanings. In the sequence, the theme related to visual dynamics and democratic ideals embraces the image of comics and art history through the essays of Idah Razafindrakoto and Melis Avkiran. Finally, our senior editor closes with her writing on democratic values in all its possible extension, which discusses “responsibility.”

As an opening statement, I present “La Estela de Luz: Cultural Policies for National Identity through a Monument” by Omar Cerrillo a Mexican professor in cultural sociology and director of the Humanities School and School of Architecture, Art and Design at Campus Cuernavaca, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. His essay addresses the state’s cultural policies in generating a unique view of culture and Mexican national identity, and also discusses other cultural policies of that society. In this sense, his essay enables debates that favor a democratic scenario and presents new views on cultural policies related to national identity and contemporary democratic societies in a synthesis based on the analysis of Alberto Rosa, which concentrated on the symbolic philosophy of Patxi Lanceros and García Canclini on the notion of cultural policies, also considering other significant authors and, undoubtedly, his own critical analyses. Following this analysis of urban space and architecture is the essay “The 1970s Radical Rethinking of Architecture: Social Rebellion and Terms of Aesthetic Experience” by Katarina Andjelkovic, which discusses Gordon’s architecture and his provocative physical interventions oriented towards a rejection of architectural materiality. Andjelkovic’s writing shows how Matta-Clark’s “anarchitectural” environments contribute to socio-political, aesthetic, and cultural development. As the author explains, “Gordon Matta-Clark’s (1943–1978) art interventions during the 1970s challenged the materialist concerns of architecture as a radical struggle against the prevailing social structures.” Katarina Andjelkovic is a renowned architect and theorist whose research, writings, and teachings are transdisciplinary and span architecture, visual arts, and film. She has been a visiting professor at the University of Oklahoma (US), at the Institute of Form Theory and History and Institute of Urbanism and Landscape in Oslo, and the University of Belgrade.

How can we still see the meaning of architecture between the old and new worlds and between past and present? Moreover, how can we understand the political, cultural, and democratic meaning in this context? "Visions of Modernity: Architecture, Colonialism, and Indigeneity Across the Americas" by Brandon Sward concentrates on the history of Latin America and the Americas as a whole in their conception of the "new world." In this case, the author relates the city of Los Angeles and the California state to its past dominated by the Spanish and the architectural representation of this period—one of the earliest forms of conquest and transformation of the environment—and highlights the influence on Latin American history while outlining challenges for the function of architecture in the present and near future as regards to overcoming differences. Sward is an artist, writer, and scholar who lives and works in Los Angeles. He was a quarterfinalist for the VanderMey Nonfiction Prize, shortlisted for Disquiet International's Literary Prize, and honorable mention and finalist for the New Millennium Writing Awards.

Who among us has not followed the recent demonstrations in numerous metropolitan centers against the statues of personalities from a historical moment that did not value fundamental human rights? "Socializing Sculpture: Commemorative Public Art as a Pedagogical Tool" by Piper Prolago, from the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma and managing editor of *The Collegian*, shows a comparison between celebration and contemplation when dealing with the relationship between historical, figurative monuments, such as statues of people seen as heroes by history, especially national history. Her essay shows the significance of interactivity with the contemplation of the abstract artwork *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* by Maya Lin and the *NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt*. Masterfully, the author demonstrates the dynamics of art in public space and its possibilities to offer an aesthetic education and political awareness by analyzing the significant work of Paulo Freire for education. Piper Prolago also examines the legacy of the relationship between things and the social individual in public space for the universe of arts with Joseph Beuys' "social sculpture" with "the idea that everything is an art and in turn, everyone is an artist with the capacity to shape society through creativity."

The growth of large metropolitan centers involves diverse technological, economic, political, and social development, whereby the majority of factors saw their starting point from the first Industrial Revolution and the reproduction of all its effects on arts and culture. It is in this way that we can take the example of the Russian city, Perm, an important administrative, industrial, scientific, and cultural center with "Silent Witnesses of Art Nouveau in Perm, or the Story of One Treasure" by Vera Ustyugova and Mariya Mingaleva from the Department of Interdisciplinary Historical Studies of Perm State University. This article focuses on life in Perm as a provincial city in XIX and the beginning of the XX century, analyzing the history of the local culture and events in the Art Nouveau period. The article searches this analysis to conceive the development of the city and the authors emphasize the inherent infrastructural transformations. Furthermore, the authors bring Perm city closer to global societies as in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades*

Project (Le Livre de Passages, the French edition), which described the years from 1927 until the end of his life (1940). Thus, the historical analysis of Perm development is well constructed, while simultaneous analysis is conducted of the sociocultural context and representing cultural projects. Leaving Russia and arriving in Africa, we have the article “Construction of the Pacification through Comics in Africa” by Idah Razafindrakoto, which presents the security context of the African scenario and the state’s role in the exercise of power through political discourses and actions in the construction of governance and, consequently, the transition from this scenario to the arts. The central discourse of Idah Razafindrakoto’s article is the role of the cartoon as a form of “artivism” in the practice of artistic pacification manifested by protest tendencies. Many of Africa’s current problems are transferred from political discourse to social critique through “artivism,” a predominant feature of global urban culture. The focus is on comics as a medium of political communication. The article is significant because it is from this analysis of the discourses that African comics strengthen the construction of peace. Idah Razafindrakoto is a PhD student in Governance and Regional Integration, Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences, Pan-African University, Yaounde, Cameroon.

After the African context, let us always remember our ancestors and our origin. History is fundamental for us to understand and be aware of the values necessary to build a more inclusive, just, and democratic world in which we avoid the mistakes of our ancestors. “From Head to Toe: Visual Stereotyping as Practice in Pre-Modern European Works of Art” by Melis Avkiran, a PhD candidate and lecturer in the art history department of the Ruhr-University Bochum (Germany), discusses the representation, fragmentation, and integration of black people through iconographic analysis concerning the social and artistic aspects and the historical and cultural effects. The painting analyses are developed by comparing the different political and religious contexts between the 15th century in Spain and other regions of Europe. Finally, to conclude this issue, the essay “Responsibility: The Charge of Meaning in Art and Language” by Martina Sauer, from the Institute of Image and Cultural Philosophy (Germany) and senior editor of *Art Style, Art & Culture International Magazine*, deals with responsibility for what is produced, as an effect and influence on individuals and their actions. The author discusses responsibility and its consequences based on the theories of Ernst Cassirer, Aby Warburg, and Hartmut Böhm.

With this selection of articles presented, comprising parts one and two, the theme of this issue is explored through different points of view and thus contributes not only to further discussions and new publications, but above all to a reading and reflection on our metropolitan and global context.

Enjoy reading this second part,

Christiane Wagner
Editor-in-Chief