

Ana Skobe

Ana Skobe is a photographer with an architectural background who lives and works between Ljubljana and Zürich. She graduated in 2019 from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana, with a master's thesis on architectural photography, and is now continuing her theoretical endeavors in doctoral studies. Ana works both on personal research and commissioned projects. Her photographs have been exhibited and awarded, as well as published in domestic and foreign architectural and design magazines. In them, she conveys her experience of space, not only describing the architecture but combining the idea materialized in the object and its relationship to the space with her own idea of the same object. She is interested in how it can be perceived - what is the potential of its specific spatial solutions - and calls that (re)constructing the architecture.

CONTEMPORARY (ARCHITECTURAL) PHOTOGRAPHY AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE

“To think about modern architecture must be to pass back and forth between the question of space and the question of representation.” (Colomina, 1996: 13)

Throughout their collective history, photography and architecture share an ever-evolving relationship that began in the 19th century with the invention of photography. When Nicéphore Niépce discovered heliography, or ‘sun drawing’ in 1822, after 8 hours of exposure, the first light-resistant photographic image was created, which we know today as *View from the window*. Due to the long exposure, the procedures at the time were suitable for photographing static objects, so it is not unusual that the first photographers chose the built environment as their subjects. The ever-changing and multifaceted dynamic between architecture and photography further and extremely rapidly developed during the modernist era. At that time, it lastingly changed the conditions of architecture (Colomina, 1996). The first close collaborations between architects and photographers were established, buildings became valued objects of photographic images, and photography became an indispensable part of architectural production. In the 20th century, architecture became deeply, perhaps irrevocably, connected to its photographic image. In his book *A Concrete Atlantis*, architectural critic Reyner Banham pointed out that the modern movement was “... the first architectural movement in the history of art based on photographic evidence rather than on the ancient and previously unavoidable techniques of personal inspection and measured drawings” (Banham, 1989: 18). The work of many architects has become (worldwide) known and recognized precisely through photographs and printed media. Being a modern architect meant that your work was photographed and published. But the photographic image also needed an effective means of transmission - the mass media - in order to reach a wide audience. As architectural historian and theorist Beatriz Colomina noted, “Modern architecture becomes ‘modern’ not simply by using glass, steel, or reinforced concrete, as it is usually understood, but precisely by engaging with the mass media: publications, competitions, exhibitions.” (Colomina, 1996: 73). With the advent of mass media - and later the World Wide Web - there was a veritable expansion and hyperproduction of images. The problematic consequence of this is that the emphasis in the reception of the built environment began to shift from the built architectural object to its photographic image. According to Colomina, the processes of production and reproduction of architecture overlap within the continuous cycle: architecture is no longer produced only at the construction site, but more and more displaced into the rather immaterial sites of architectural publications, exhibitions, journals. (Colomina, 1996: 14) Photography was therefore one of the important modern conditions of architecture, so it is justified to claim that the understanding and designing of modern architecture is closely related to the understanding and practice of architectural photography. The close connection between architecture and architectural photography is still relevant today. This connection or more precisely - its specific dimension - is also the subject of this research. In the presentation, therefore, I will not focus on the relationship between modern architecture and modern architectural photography, nor will I emphatically explore the relationship between contemporary architecture and contemporary photography. I will focus on the discussion of modern architecture through the medium of architectural photography. I will be interested in the question of how we think modern architecture in contemporariness through the medium of contemporary architectural photography. In other words, **I will be interested in contemporary photography of modern architecture: its reconstruction of the space and materiality of modern architecture.**

Purpose and objectives

In the last decade, there is a resurgence of interest in the evaluation of the legacy of architectural modernism, its aesthetics and ideology. This manifests itself in various ways, such as a nostalgic preoccupation with the so-called 'remnants of the future'. Mass media, architectural exhibitions and social networks through which images spread with the speed of light and anchor in the popular culture

of today, contribute to this to a large extent. **My view is that architectural photography as a mechanism of depicting/viewing the world plays a key role in this. It arouses fascination with modern architecture all over the world again and again, so I will be interested in a specific way of returning to modern architecture, or the specific relationship of contemporary architectural photography to modern architecture. I will be interested in those works or those photographers who return to the idea of modernism or to a set of ideas that have been materialized to some extent in buildings and urban complexes, in such a way as to reveal those of their potentials that are worth pursuing. So, I am not interested in a sentimental return to the past, but in opening up architectural themes and questions relevant for contemporariness. Modern photography allows us to see modern architecture in a new way, in its power, its spatial and social potential.** Furthermore, the relationship between the two – contemporary photography and modern architecture - is not one-sided, but mutual and constantly complementary: architectural photography can develop its (photographic) potential precisely by engaging with modern architecture, while architecture is revealed through the medium of photography in its relevance for contemporariness. My purpose is therefore to define and explain the outlined specifics of the connection between modern architecture and contemporary photography. In doing so, I will originate from relevant literature in the fields of theory, history of architecture, philosophy, and architectural photography. I will define and explain three key concepts - **ABSTRACTION, HETEROTOPIA, MATERIALITY** - which act as a kind of intersection between the two practices - the practice of architecture and the practice of photography. My goal is to present these concepts and show how they are re-actualized through contemporary photography of modern architecture.

Banham, R., 1989. *A concrete Atlantis: U.S. industrial building and European modern architecture, 1900-1925*. Cambridge (Mass.); London: The MIT Press.

Colomina, B., 1996. *Privacy and publicity: Modern architecture as mass media*. London: MIT Press.

Design driven research

I understand design driven research as a possibility to develop the field of architecture further with new knowledge and collaborations. I am interested in the question of architectural photography as a specific viewing mechanism that not only represents but also actually co-creates an architectural object. I will try to show that today architectural photography can help not only to understand, but also to see as a starting point for further thinking, architectural ideas, and considerations of architecture from the period of modernism, which still inspire our contemporary visions of architecture and its role in society. This is the power of photographic (re)presentation - that it opens up questions and thoughts about architecture. The expected result is the consideration of the connection between modern architecture and (architectural) photography through selected concepts, which are re-actualized through contemporary photography of modern architecture. This will also be a kind of answer to the question of what photography brought to architecture and how the two creative thinking practices are connected.



1 Niépce: *View from the window*, 1826



2 Beate Gütschow: *S#14*, 2005; an example of returning to the ideas of modernism