

• BRUNA CANEPA'S 5 HOUSES •

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INTRODUCTION

Bruna Canepa's *5 Houses*, her BA thesis presented at Escola da Cidade on December the 11th 2013 under the orientation of César Shundi Iwamizu, makes one think about the meaning of the activities of teaching and work with architecture. In other words, her work reinigorates one's belief in both of these things.

To begin with, one ought to stress something: the production of such a work requires a pre-existing felling of discontentment that, given a sharp sensibility, activates the mentioned architect from the beginning, or even before that. There sensibility acts as a motor, whose fuel is anguish in the face of the narrow boundaries for an excessively pre-defined acting procedure; the lack of satisfaction in the face the hegemony of a purely technical and normative activity; the need that resents from the lack of a symbolic activity; in sum, the will not to content oneself with what is not enough. In other words, from what is distilled by sensibility the motor puts itself into motion and charges from the subject a corresponding reaction. The answer, if it is to be formulated in a strong manner, mobilizes the entirety of a propositional arsenal. But look out, for both expressions, sensibility and propositional arsenal, have breadth. In other words, they encompass a huge gradation, a variation of degree that define, on the one hand, say, a certain sensible intensity; and, on the other, the capacity to formulate an answer. It is in this breadth that one defines the density of the works produced in the process. For this reason, to be conscious of it, as if it corresponded to the material that fills up the immense distance separating the surface of a question from its core, is the main objective here. Besides, this point is of particular interest in an academic setting, for the role of an architecture school is only achieved by means of a commitment to elevate to its higher degree the quality of the architectonic propositions, and this presupposes that one identifies and works on the density of the terms, on the breadth that lies in the sensibility and in the propositional arsenal.

It so happens that that same discontentment, which foments the author's sensibility in the work in question, is also present in architecture school around the world. But they, the institutions, are in disadvantage, for they lack that sensibility and, therefore, they are incapable of coming up with a reaction by means of the senses.

Much on the contrary, they tend to be dominated by a diffused discomfort, in which both the provocative context and the capacity to answer are dulled.

It is through this road that *5 Houses* universalizes itself, i.e., it elaborates a unique and beautiful project in response to a discontentment that is shared by many.

The origin of that discontentment lies in the split that undoes a duality. That is, in the break of the tense bond that keeps two apparently opposed fields together. This duality is dynamic and is easily put off balance.

Therefore, it must be continuously renewed to re-establish the link that keeps both fields tied together.

This link is renewed in this work. The duality, in this case, is like a play that, at every moment, requires a new representation [make it present again], new actors that act [actualize] in order to renew its meaning.

The characters can change at each moment, but they always represent those two separate fields: letter and number, theory and practice, judgement and action, body and soul, music and lyrics, image and matter, art and technique and so fort; but the fields of knowledge that compose the duality are always the same, the only ones that organize all knowledge: the sciences of men and the sciences of nature. No word better represents the

link that unites these two worlds than the work that carries this duality in itself, but is neither one thing or the other, it was created exactly to designate the activity in which it supports itself, at the same time, in two different grounds: architecture is the link. In this sense, *5 Houses* becomes a synonym for architecture. It's not little.

But it is more. For, as we have seen, the duality is put off balance in cycles. Today, it is put under the hegemony of a technical and scientific kind of rationality. Thus, the link that guarantees the endurance of the duality is made fragile and that duality tends to crumble, or to reduce itself to only one of its components. One is expanded while the other is compressed, but of course, in this way both are symmetrically deformed. Abundant resources and scarcity of sense. Human reason is made dull. Discontentment to a sensible spirit. It is through this road that the work in question broadens our field of possibilities and reinvigorates our faith in the teaching and in the practice of architecture.

How did Bruna Canepa do this in *5 Houses*?

STRATEGIES

Knowingly, the work creates a method for traversing straight through everything that is opposed to its process of propositional elaboration as a paralyzing obstacle. Thus, it runs free over everything and, by means of a set of pre-defined procedures, it goes straight towards the target: the houses of human existence. In other words, Bruna's drawing puts the focus on life on an existential dimension.

Besides the very title, *5 Houses*, two strategies are worth mentioning.

The first is the very duality, or the link that guarantees it, which is a recurring aspect of the work.

General dualities, like text and drawings; the house and the city, the inhabited and the inhabitant, the home and the one who lives in it; and specific dualities, like the *plane that splits, but also unites* [plane house], *the sister houses* [museum house], *the wall and the window* [billboard house], *opposing balconies* [one-man building], the everlasting and the changeable [time house]. However, it is worth noticing that the duality in this work is not presented as a goal, it corresponds here to the consciousness of a condition, in the sense that it shapes each action in opposition to the other, as if every movement in a field echoed in its opposite field. It is as if the movements were actors that represented the apparent oppositions: to make larger and in miniature, to stretch and to shorten, to surround and to open, to section and to duplicate, to lift and to sink, and so fort. Thus, the duality is the background that shapes each sensible movement.

The second feature is, of course, the set of procedures, the house and seventeen actions, presented in a diagram, or better said, eighteen procedures. They are operations in the sense that they are not launched to produce a fixed result, but an open one, they are launched as a strategic way of acting. They correspond to propositional schemes that unfold both in the drawings and in the texts.

It is noteworthy that the first drawing in this diagram corresponds to the house, the only drawing whose title is a name, for all the other are verbs. They are indeed eighteen, for they represent eighteen ways of seeing, and of acting, therefore to the first also corresponds a verb.

It makes perfect sense, for an important goal of this work is to tease the look. And it does it when it says that to see one must look at the same thing in many different ways, as many as one can. It says so clearly proving it. In this sense, the five houses are only one, the same house, not necessarily the first shown in the diagram, seen through many different lenses.

But they are far more than houses, they contain the city that is represented by books, by the plane [the city that flies] and by the ship [the city that sails]. They contain the sky, which is brilliantly represented by the plane house: one room that has as ceiling the celestial firmament. They contain the present, the past and the future in the pace that forms the time house. In sum, the impression one gets is that everything that inhabits the imaginary universe of architects is present in the surprising approach to such an apparently simple theme, the house. Is it enough?

CONCLUSION

No, for it keeps on going. The whole set has linearity, form and narrative, which make one see the sequence of boards as something connected and entwined. It's true, the pieces together are such a cohesive set that they form a single work. On the other hand, and this is very surprising, each piece, when taken in isolation, is an autonomous work with respect to the others, i.e., it is a work that is enough in itself, without resentment from its lack of context. It is such a well-composed balance between the totality and its composing units that it makes us think that we are facing a model for the city as a built space and as a living together of people. Certainly, the city also informs it. The houses contain the city within themselves.

Evidently, Bruna knows the lyrics, the music and, most importantly, she knows what to say. She invents a impossible for an institution to do. Celebration to a good school that knows very well, it receives itself, coming from the students, its best lessons.

Bruna Canepa's *5 Houses* is a work to be remembered.