

### *The Thinking Eye*

In the early seventies, historian Colin Rowe, together with Robert Slutzky<sup>1</sup>, described the difference between literal and phenomenological transparency. For Rowe, transparency may be an inherent quality of substance or it may be an inherent quality of organization, allowing one to distinguish between literal, or real, and phenomenological, or apparent, transparency. It is possible, Rowe adds, that our attitude regarding the literal variety is derived from machine aesthetics while it is likely that our feeling towards phenomenological transparency comes from cubist painting. Frontality, suppression of depth, contraction of space, definition of light sources, and a growing accentuation of gridding appear. Thus, transparency means the simultaneous perception of different places. Whereas for Gyorgy Kepes<sup>2</sup>, it implies something more than a mere optical characteristic; it supposes a much broader spatial order: it ceases to be that which is perfectly clear and becomes instead that which is clearly ambiguous.

As Moholy-Nagy<sup>3</sup> points out “The transparent qualities of the superimpositions often suggest transparency of context as well, revealing unnoticed structural qualities in objects.” In other words, through a process of distortion, recomposition and double entendre, linguistic transparency can be achieved and whoever experiences one of these connections will enjoy the sensation of looking through a first plane of significance and transposition to others lying behind.

Through a catalyzing analytical process, photographer Erieta Attali proposes new atmospheres that weave and generate complex spatial orders, simultaneous perceptions where transparency and carefully contrasted light occasionally manage to tell a story that is conveyed continually, but not always correlatively, through her work. Elements of nature such as light, dust, rock, water, desert and extreme landscapes, an interest that stems from her early work photographing archaeology and then landscapes, seem to fuse with meticulously selected architectonic parameters that are abstracted thanks to her particular eye. Thus, through diaphanous work, the panoramic lens used captures and conjugates the subtleties of a wide range of lighting qualities and careful attention to the darkness reflected in mysterious contrasts between light and shadow. The darkness then evokes a relationship with the mystery while the splendid light forms part of an exalted mixture between stone, striking shapes, spaces and landscapes that seem to blend into a synthetic abstraction that conveys a narrative with which Erieta seems to evoke and, at the same time, provoke. Her phenomenological work poses both contraction of space and liberation through superimposition and constant change of figure and background.

As Roland Barthes observed, the relation between a condition of sensuality in clothing is pronounced in the edges where garment meets skin; such as where a glove ends and the arm begins or where a sweater ends and the neck begins. Likewise, Erieta Attali's work enhances the boundaries between landscape and architecture with no intention of fusing them, but rather highlighting those points of friction, those boundaries that far

from framing the functional condition of the photographed elements predefined as a door or a window, aim to energize the work's erogenous zones, those moments defined by edges that create friction within the image. Aside from the facet that she develops photographically consisting of the lightness or transparency of the architectural work, dematerializing in some cases the work's material condition, presenting it as a more abstract and undefined space, it is the multiplication of these points of friction as multiple "mirrors" or reflections that ultimately invigorates the image and transforms it into living nature. In those echoes is also where the image multiplies the points on which the observing eye falls, creating a new situation for the observer no longer from one fixed position but from various locations, and at times situating him simultaneously within and without.

In his well-known video "The Looking Glass" (1982), Chilean artist Juan Downey highlights, from a historical perspective, a relationship between image and eye, a lengthy tension built by the comprehension of the visual phenomenon. Erieta's work undoubtedly sits along one of those edges described by Downey as a "Thinking Eye" which consists of the architectural work, removed from its objective condition as a landscape under tension.

<sup>1</sup> Transparency: Literal and Phenomenological, Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky (Perspecta, 1963)

<sup>2</sup> El Lenguaje de la Visión, Gyorgy Kepes. (Ediciones Infinito, 1969)

<sup>3</sup> Vision in Motion, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (Paul Theobald & Company, 1947)