The critical analysis of the architects’ handwriting has never received the in-depth analysis it deserved. For an architect, the act of handwriting can have two outcomes: a text without images, transcription of a verbal thought; a text that accompanies the images, integrates them and expands their meaning. In the first case, the analysis of writing falls within the scope of graphology. This discipline, despite the existence of historically consolidated schools (such as the Italian one, which refers to the work of Girolamo Moretti), is not considered scientific, as the validity of the methods of analysis used is not demonstrable. In any case, the method proposed by Moretti does not specifically address the characteristics of the architect’s handwriting; he associates it with that of other visual artists or with that of the engineer. In the latter, the handwriting is integrated into the image and its analysis is fully part of the iconographic studies. We will indicate these forms of handwriting-drawing with the term ‘graphism’. First, it is necessary to distinguish ‘autographic’ graphisms from ‘allographic’ graphisms. The first are addressed to the author himself; the latter, although made freehand, are intended for an external audience. Therefore, they have a more explicitly declaratory value. Regarding the function of handwriting in relation to freehand drawing we can distinguish: ‘didactic’ functions (handwriting adds information to an already completed drawing); ‘integrative’ functions (handwriting adds information that the drawing cannot provide); ‘rhetorical’ functions (handwriting emphasizes an author’s judgment in relation to the drawing or highlights a particular quality). A particular case of graphism is the calligram, in which the image and the handwriting are so intimately connected as to constitute an inseparable sinolo. Through this essay we will try to suggest a method for a first systematization of the handwriting accompanying the freehand architectural drawing, to subsequently be able to develop appropriate analyses depending on the type of graphism examined.

Keywords: autography, freehand drawing, graphism.

1. Introduction

The architect draws; drawing is the characteristic outcome of his creative activity. For an architect, drawing is the main tool for the analysis and interpretation of space: “drawing is the true vision of an architect” (Purini 2000: 99). Among the architects’ drawings, the freehand ones represent the most immediate and authentic outcome, thanks to that singular creative process that originates in the mind and is continually influenced by the sign itself which, growing on the surface of the sheet, stimulates the ideation.

The critical analysis of freehand drawing by architects, especially those of the twentieth century, has been the focus of in-depth studies (Di Napoli 2004: 75 e ss.) 1. Any idea, in fact, manifests and persists in the partial coincidences (Di Napoli 2004: 75 e ss.) 1. However, the terms “idea” and “image” are in great part coincident (Di Napoli 2004: 75 e ss.) 1. Qualunque idea, infatti, si manifesta e si riconosce in una parte coincidente (Di Napoli 2004: 75 e ss.) 1.

Parole chiave: autografia, disegno a mano libera, grafismo.

1. Premessa

L’architetto disegna: il disegno è l’esito esclusivo della sua attività creativa. Per un architetto, il disegno è lo strumento principale per l’analisi e l’interpretazione dello spazio: “la vera vista dell’architetto è il disegno” (Purini 2000: 99). Fra i disegni dell’architetto, quelli a mano libera rappresentano l’esito più immediato e autentico, grazie a quel singolare processo creativo che ha origine nella mente ed è continuamente influenzato dal segno stesso che, crescendo sulle superfici del foglio, stimola l’ideazione.

L’analisi critica del disegno a mano libera degli architetti, specialmente quelli del Ventesimo secolo, è stata al centro di studi approfonditi; non altrettanto è avvenuto per la scrittura degli architetti, probabilmente perché la grafologia è sempre stata considerata una disciplina autonoma, dotata di strumenti di indagine esclusivi. Ma i disegni a mano libera di architettura sono spesso accompagnati da testi più o meno estesi che raramente hanno uno scope accessorio; al contrario, hanno quasi sempre un rapporto strettissimo col disegno e sono funzionali ad esso. Questo contributo si propone di definire i modi in cui la scrittura interagisce con il disegno a mano libera, individuando al contempo un metodo di classificazione per una successiva analisi.

2. Dalle idee mentali alla trasformazione grafica. Disegno e scrittura

Per un architetto, l’atto di scrivere può avere due esiti materiali: un testo privo di immagini; trascrizione di un pensiero verbale; un testo che si accompagna alle immagini, le integra e ne amplifica il significato. Nel primo caso, l’analisi della scrittura rientra nell’ambito della grafologia. Questa disciplina, nonostante l’esistenza di scuole storicamente consolidate (come quella italiana, che fa riferimento all’opera di Girolamo Moretti), non è considerata scientifica in quanto la validità dei metodi di analisi utilizzati non risulta dimostrabile. In ogni caso, il metodo proposto da Moretti si basa su segni di grafologia della scrittura dell’architetto; a volte la associa quella degli altri artisti figurativi, altre volte a quella dell’ingegnere. Nel secondo caso la scrittura è integrata all’immagine e la sua analisi rientra a pieno titolo nell’ambito degli studi iconografici. Per indicare tali forme di disegno-grafismo useremo il termine “grafismo”.

Occorre innanzitutto distinguere i grafismi “autografi” da quelli “allograﬁ”. I primi sono rivolti all’autore stesso; i secondi, pur essendo realizzati a mano libera, sono destinati a persone di versi rispetto all’autore e, quindi, hanno un valore più esplicitamente declaratario. Per quanto riguarda la “funzione” della scrittura rispetto al disegno a mano libera possiamo distinguere: funzioni “didascali” (la scrittura aggiunge informazioni a un disegno già compiuto in sé); funzioni “integrative” (la scrittura aggiunge informazioni che il disegno non può fornire); funzioni “iperboliche” (la scrittura enfatizza un giudizio dell’autore in relazione al disegno o ne mette in evidenza una particolare qualità). Un caso particolare di grafismo è costituito dal “calligramma”.

In esso l’originario e il testo sono così intimamente connessi da costituire un sinolo inscindibile. Attraverso questo contributo proveremo a suggerire un metodo per una prima sistematizzazione delle scritte a corredo del disegno e a sfondo della letteratura grafologica, in modo da poter successivamente sviluppare analisi appropriate a seconda del tipo di grafismo preso in esame.

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2. From Mental Ideas to Graphic Transcription. Drawing and Handwriting

For an architect, the act of handwriting can have two material outcomes:
- a text without images, transcription of a verbal thought (fig. 1);
- a text that accompanies the images, integrates them, and broadens their meaning (fig. 2).
Both: drawing and handwriting represent the transcription of a mental idea. From the semantic point of view, as well as etymological, the terms ‘idea’ and ‘image’ are largely coincident (Di Napoli 2004: 75 e ss.).

Any idea, in fact, manifests itself and exists in relation to an image capable of representing and identifying it. “The soul never thinks without an image” (Aristotle, On the Soul III, 7, 431 a-b). Mental images are neither a definite form nor, obviously, a tangible configuration. If they stay in our mind, they don’t need them. But to communicate them to others, it is essential to give them boundaries, a form, and a structure. In other words: it is necessary to transform them into material images. “Thoughts need shape, and shape must be derived from some mediative quality that is separate as it might seem, but reveals numeric and structural connections with the idea itself, which is seeing with the mind’s eye” (Arnheim 1969: 226).

Material images can be schematically divided into two categories: graphic images (pictorial, photographic, sculptural, etc.) and verbal images. The latter are based on signs / sounds conventionally adopted by writing / language; their forms are necessarily different from the geometric-chronic-space attributes which, on the other hand, characterize the graphic images. Obviously, graphic images are more inclusive than verbal ones; they occur instantly, they are not subject to interpretation of meaning, or to linguistic obstacles, nor to alterations related to translation (Wunenburger 1999: 27 e ff.).

The transcription of a verbal image into words relies on qualities that are different from those typical of a graphic image. Any verbal description, even the most accurate, is an element of vagueness, arbitrariness, blur, but also of poetry. The process that gives shape to mental images - drawing or handwriting - does not consist in a simple transcription; handwriting and drawing impose the realization of a project, they are essentially creative activities. But to verbally express an idea it is necessary that it be perfectly specified in our mind, to draw it is not necessary that it be well defined before its elaboration. The drawing contributes to the formalization of the idea as it is through the development of the sign that the idea itself takes shape and is defined. The idea of space, and therefore its configuration, is constructed through drawing; it is the result of a progressive definitional process. Its image does not represent a thought-form that follows the idea; it comes to life and evolves with the idea itself (Ackerman 2000: 25).

Mental images and graphic transcriptions, drawing and handwriting, are not as clearly separated as it might seem, but reveal numerous points of contact, in the way that Wunenburger (Wunenburger 1999: 33) defines ‘verbal-iconic alliance’ (fig. 3). A modality already described by Aristotle: “I say that words paint, when they mean actual things” (Rheticus III, II, 1412 a 3). The hybrid forms, those in which drawing and handwriting overlap and integrate, represent a constant in the initial elaboration of the drawing that will be seen in more detail below. We will call these forms with the generic term of ‘graphisms’, relying on the double meaning that it can assume referring to both drawing and handwriting.

3. The Writing of the Architect According to Girolamo Moretti

The study and analysis of handwriting are the central theme of graphology, a discipline that includes different schools of thoughts and methods of analysis. The Italian school refers to the work of Girolamo Moretti (1879-1963), author of monumental studies who, however, never specifically dealt with the characteristics of the architect’s handwriting; in his mono-

1. “To see, from the Latin videre, comes from the Indo-European root *vaid-, which is found in the Sanskrit word ‘vid’ I know, I distinguish; knowing is seeing with the mind’s eye (svad-). In Greek, eidos means ‘I see’; eidos means ‘I know what I have seen’; eidos means ‘appear’ and eidos, which means ‘shape, image’, but also ‘intuition, concept, idea’, corresponding to an object. Also, in Greek the word idea is connected to eidos, the word ‘shape, sight, as well as of knowing: that, the word ‘knowing’ (eidos) derives from the word to see (eidos) so first you see and then you know. Nousmos first means perceiving with the eyes and then perceiving with the mind (apprehension), i.e., the highest form of thought” (Wunenburger 1999: 27 e ss.).

2. “As a sign, the convention ‘accurately’ represents the signified. If the drawing in graphic transcription (Wunenburger 1999: 33) represents an edifice existing in the mind of the architect, it is not necessary that it be well defined beforehand, but at the same time it must be precise, accurate, well defined; if to verbally express an idea it is necessary that it be well defined before giving it form, then it must be well defined in the drawing. The transcription of a mental idea into words, transcription of a verbal image into words, is not to say that either the word ‘to see’ or the word ‘image’, but also ‘aspect’ of the object it refers to. This can be defined in two different ways: a) the idea is seen and even represented; b) the idea is seen and even represented. If the drawing in graphic transcription is seen and even represented, then the same idea is seen and even represented. However, a visual representation of an idea is not the same as a graphic transcription of an idea” (Wunenburger 1999: 27 e ss.).
Daniele Colistra – Handwritings of Architects. The Verbal-Iconic Alliance

The sketch is the autograph graphics par excellence. It is divided into two categories: sketches and schemes.

3. Graphisms of Architecture

Those who succeed in sketching also have skills for architecture as aesthetics (Moretti 1968: 209). “The painter of genius who did not have innate skills for sketching and architecture could not be a true painter in the full sense of the word; thus, a sculptor, an architect of genius who did not have an innate skill for painting” (Moretti 1968: 200). According to the Morettian method, the indicative signs for figurative artists are ‘Methodically Unequal’, ‘Elegant’, ‘Fluid’, ‘Medium Calibre’ or ‘Above Average Calibre’ (Moretti 1968: 207); for the construction engineer the distinctive sign is ‘Elegant’ because building engineering requires a high level of attention to detail;

5. Drawing and Semantic Functions of the Handwriting. Hypothesis for a Classification

A handwriting next to a freehand drawing can have several functions that complement and expand the meaning of the drawing itself. Schematically these functions can be grouped into three categories:

- ‘didactic’ functions: handwriting adds information to an already completed drawing
- ‘integrative’ functions: handwriting adds information that the drawing cannot provide;
- ‘complementing’ functions: handwriting adds information to an already completed drawing;

other people, further clarifying aspects that are more evident; the text contains information for the purpose (fig. 4). We can immediately notice the use of different writing tools, the continuous alternation of italics and block letters, uppercase and lowercase; overlapping, deletions and by an arrangement that considers the overlapping italic and deep letters, the common elements and the peculiar characteristics of each of them.

Let’s consider an ‘autographic graphism’ in which the handwriting has a purely ‘didactic’ purpose (fig. 4). We can immediately notice the service of different writing tools, the continuous alternation of italics and block letters, uppercasing and lowercasing; overlapping, deletions, rethinking. In this case, the handwriting integrates the drawing and expands its communicative power, however the latter remains intelligible (at least to the author) even without the information provided by the written word which, therefore, are mainly didactic.

If we take into consideration an ‘allographic di-dactic graphism’ (fig. 5), the accessory function of the handwriting in relation to the drawing is more evident; the text contains information for other people, further clarifying aspects that are already well known to the author. It is also evident that the handwriting is clear and orderly, a quality further favoured using capital letters and by an arrangement that considers the overall composition of the graphics; the latter, as in the previous case, would still maintain its communicative autonomy and intelligibility even if totally deprived of the text.

The next example (fig. 6) relates to an ‘autographic graphism’ in which the text ‘integrates’ information to the contents of the drawing. The latter would be incomprehensible without verbal information; they take on a much more significant value than the two examples described above and are even more significant than the drawing itself. In cases belonging to this category, drawing and handwriting integrate and become complementary. The ‘allographic graphisms’ in which the handwriting has an ‘integrative’ role with respect to the image are not very different from those just described, except for the fact that the verbal information is more structured in the arrangement, in the stroke and in the content (which, obviously, must be perfectly intelligible to anyone). (fig. 7). The example in the figure could be autographs or allographs. Thanks to this additional distinction, the categories become six; we will see, with the help of some examples, the common elements and the peculiar characteristics of each of them.

As previously mentioned, the graphisms can be autographs or allographs. Thanks to this additional distinction, the categories become six; we will see, with the help of some examples, the common elements and the peculiar characteristics of each of them.

Se prendiamo in considerazione un grafismo di tipo “didascalico” ma “allografo” (fig. 5), è più evidente la funzione accessoria della scrittura rispetto al disegno; questa riporta informazioni per altre persone, chiarendo ulteriormente aspetti che invece all’autore sono già ben noti. È evidente anche il fatto che la scrittura risulti chiara e ordinata, qualità ulteriormente favorita dall’uso dello stampatello ma non di per sé. In questo caso, la scrittura integra il disegno e ne amplia la forza comunicativa, tuttavia quest’ultimo rimane interamente autonoma.

- ‘rhetorical’ functions: handwriting emphasizes an author’s judgment in relation to the drawing or highlights a particular quality.

- ‘didactic graphism’ (fig. 5), the accessory function of the handwriting in relation to the drawing is more evident; the text contains information for other people, further clarifying aspects that are already well known to the author. It is also evident that the handwriting is clear and orderly, a quality further favoured using capital letters and by an arrangement that considers the overall composition of the graphics; the latter, as in the previous case, would still maintain its communicative autonomy and intelligibility even if totally deprived of the text.

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Se la scrittura si integrano e divengono strettamente legate a qualsiasi descrizione (fig. 7). L'esempio in figura potrebbe trarre in inganno in quanto il disegno è già di per sé molto chiaro nella stesura e nei segni utilizzati; pertanto, risulterebbe comprensibile anche qualora venissero rimosse le scritte. Tuttavia, esso apparirebbe come la sezione trasversale di un edificio e si potrebbe completamente il senso delle scelte progettuali sostenute dall’autore e suggerire trame e illustrazioni della scrittura. Per questo motivo il testo in questione è da ritenersi integrativo e non semplicemente didascalico.

Un grafismo “auto-critico” contiene segni che rimandano a giudizi di valore o enfatizzano particolari aspetti o elementi, in vista di una rielaborazione futura (fig. 8). Oltre che al contenuto del testo, l’infersi è affidata al tipo di scrittura, all’uso di segni di interpunzione o ad altri elementi grafici che evidenziano ulteriormente il testo (cornici, sottolegature, colori, ecc.).

Nel caso in cui il grafismo “iperbolico” sia “allografico”, esso può mantenere uno stile in formato (fig. 9) oppure fare uso di segni connotativi che enfatizzano il testo e i disegni (fig. 10). Sia che siano destinati a sé stessi, che ad altri, i grafismi iperbolici spesso sono caratterizzati da un uso preponderante della scrittura rispetto al disegno; quest’ultimo può addirittura divenire accessorio rispetto
In a calligram there is the total integration between handwriting and drawing (fig. 11); the logical structure of the verbal forms gives full meaning to the system of signs in an image, and at the same time the geometric, chromatic and dimensional qualities of the drawing give further expressiveness to the words (fig. 12). In the calligram “signs, therefore, have no other laws than those that may govern their contents: any analysis of signs is at the same time, and without need of further inquiry, the decipherment of what they are trying to say” 4 (Foucault 1966: 80) and therefore its analysis can only be carried out by considering it a secum, in which verbal and spatial signs can never be separated.

6. Conclusions

The proposed classification constitutes the starting point for the development of a method of analysis of verb-spatial graphisms, both of those in which handwriting and handwriting, considered both in terms of overall dimensions of the sheet plane and of semantic value; - tools used for drawing and handwriting; - levels of complementarity (meaning of the text without image, and vice versa); - presence of further communicative elements (colour, photographs, collages ...); - codes used in the handwriting (upper / lower case, italics / block letters ...); - levels of overlap and integration between the signs (writing next to / above the handwriting); - rethinking and corrections; - subsidiarity of the handwriting regarding the drawing (and vice versa).

Using these analysis tools, the study of graphisms can be conducted with a comparative and quantitative method, alongside the purely qualitative methods, already widely developed in the history of art and architecture.

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4. “Les signes n’ont donc pas d’autres lois que celles qui peuvent régir leur contenu: toute analyse de signes est en même temps, et de plein droit, déchiffrement de ce qu’ils veulent dire”.

6. Conclusioni

La classificazione proposta costituisce il punto di partenza per un metodo di analisi dei gra-fismi verbo-spaziali, sia di quei in cui testo e immagine risultano separabili, sia di quelli in cui, invece, fanno relazione uno all’altro. La sviluppo del metodo si basa sulla valorizzazione di ulteriori aspetti, fra cui:

- parametri quantitativi (rapporto fra disegno e scrittura, considerato sia in termini di espressione che di portata semantica);
- strumenti utilizzati per il tracciamento dei segni;
- livelli di complementarità (valore semantico del testo privo di immagine e viceversa);
- presenza di ulteriori elementi comunicativi (colore, fotografie, collage ...);
- codici attinenti alla scrittura (maturi/minuscolo/mi-nuscolo, corsivo/stampatello);
- livelli di sovrapposizione fra disegno e testo (scrittura accanto al testo / sopra il testo);
- ripenamenti e correzioni;
- sussidiaria della scrittura rispetto al disegno (e viceversa).

Tramite questi strumenti di indagine, l’analisi dei grafismi può essere condotta in modo comparativo e quantitativo, affiancandosi ai modi prettamente qualitativi, già ampiamente sviluppati nell’ambito della storia dell’arte e dell’architettura.