

Come Giano bifronte. L'ambivalente architettura di Hans Kollhoff

di Milena Farina

Città contemporanea
Isolato urbano
Involucro edilizio

Contemporary city
Urban block
Building envelope

À la Janus. The ambivalent architecture of Hans Kollhoff

Since the end of the Seventies, Kollhoff's work has taken on a particular value in the cultural reflection that positively reevaluates the forms of historical city and seeks a difficult dialogue between modernity and tradition. In particular, the qualities of the nineteenth-century block as the basic unit for the construction of the city and the value of the façade as a complex diaphragm expressing the urban role of the building are rediscovered. Inspired by the contemporary urban condition, his recovery of typical themes of the traditional city has assumed an ambivalent character. As a matter of fact, on the one hand the German architect seeks a relationship of continuity in the urban-fabric, on the other, he conceives the building as a large isolated object endowed with plastic potential and strong figurative impact. The search for a continuity with the characters of the historical city is also manifested through an attention to the envelope, oriented to express the tectonic value of the building with an "apparent" thickness that ambiguously declines the "semperian" and typically contemporary theme of the relationship between structure and cladding. Consistently with postmodern culture, continuity with the city is sought above all by working on the image, recalling a lost memory in the case of Berlin. The criticism of architecture and modern city, which Kollhoff shares with many architects of his generation, leads to a research rich in complexity and contradictions. Such research always tends to a synthesis between the reassuring features of the historical city and some themes which are still current and were introduced by the historical avant-gardes. Such themes include the foundation of contemporary urban and figurative culture.

Le importanti operazioni di trasformazione urbana avviate dalla fine degli anni Settanta nelle città europee, legate alla dismissione di grandi zone industriali e portuali o all'organizzazione di grandi eventi, offrono alla cultura architettonica l'occasione per sperimentare nuovi modelli insediativi che superino i principi modernisti di organizzazione dello spazio urbano. In una Germania ancora ferita dalle distruzioni belliche e dalle demolizioni dei decenni successivi, un'importante occasione di riflessione e sperimentazione è rappresentata dall'esposizione di architettura dell'IBA (1979-1987)¹, organizzata a Berlino

1 L'Internationale Bau Ausstellung si tiene a Berlino ovest nel 1984 e viene prorogata fino al 1987, anno del 750° anniversario della fondazione della città. L'IBA si articola in due sezioni: Stadterneuerung (Rinnovamento urbano) e Stadneubau (Nuova costruzione urbana).