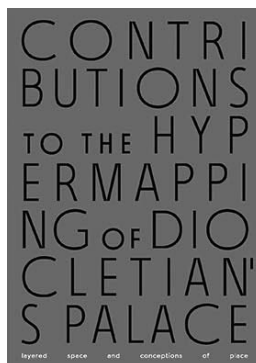


KARIN ŠERMAN

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HYPERMAPPING OF DIOCLATIAN'S PALACE

## LAYERED SPACE AND CONCEPTIONS OF PLACE

ESSAYS BY DAMIR GAMULIN, LESLIE LOK, ANA ŠVERKO, SASA ZIVKOVIC

Publisher: Institute of Art History  
Zagreb, 2023On behalf of the Publisher: Katarina Horvat-Levaj  
Edited by: Anči Leburic, Leslie Lok, Ana Šverko  
Executive Editor: Tomislav BosnićReviewers: Josko Belamaric, Maja Furlan Zimmermann,  
Tadej Glazar, Ana Grgić, Ivana Mance, Goran Nikšić, Ivan  
Rupnik, Karin Šerman, Frano ViolichTranslation: Sarah Rengel  
Design and layout: Damir GamulinCopyright 2023 by Institute of Art History Zagreb  
ISBN 978-953-7875-64-0

Every new research on Diocletian's Palace demonstrates, times and again, how much there is still to learn about, and from, this unique living urban monument. The Palace figures as a conceptual mine one can endlessly and productively dig, but to which one can also endlessly and profitably add, discovering ever new layers while reinforcing its underlying conceptual structure. It proves a true spatio-temporal palimpsest against whose rich urban polygon one can test and hone ever new theoretical concepts.

The new book on Diocletian's Palace fits into such line of productive digging, mapping, and hypermapping of this fecund urban field. It consists of four essays, all distinct and specific in themselves yet also indicatively interconnected. The first two essays are by scholars from Cornell University – Sasa Zivkovic and Leslie Lok, while the other two are studies by Croatian researchers and designers – Ana Šverko and Damir Gamulin.

When invoking the concept of collage as his central interpretative tool, Zivkovic in his "Ultimate Collage City" performs, in a sense, a most logical choice, logical not only because of the huge explanatory potential of that very tool, but logical also considering the author's academic affiliation. Namely, it was precisely Cornell University where that concept was initially launched, in the late 1970s, by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, in their celebrated *Collage City* book. Building on that concept, Zivkovic promotes Diocletian's Palace as an "ultimate collage city". Not, of course, in a sense that the Palace in its original state followed the logic of collage, but that with its historical structure the Palace formed preconditions for the creation of a continuing, ongoing, transhistorical collage, manifested in various aspects – collage of forms, spaces, ambiances, materials. Yet for such intense bricolage to be successful, what is necessary – as Rowe himself insisted – is an underlying "systemic fix", some sort of "balancing act" – a precise fixed system, which, precisely because of its fixity and rigidity, might enable all sorts of variables and differences.

The potentials of this historical structure to sustain transformation and change is at the core of Leslie Lok's investigation too. Looking into the urbanism of Diocletian's Palace, in her "Figure to Mat" she explores how an initial clear architectural "figure" – the historical castrum itself – set in relation to the surrounding landscape as its neutral "ground", transformed through history into an intense urban "mat", characterized, in contrast, by a certain "formlessness", as a formless network defined by heightened interconnectivity and horizontal density. Noticing this shift – from figure to mat – Lok searches for preconditions that triggered and enabled such change, as a sort of the DNA of the Palace that permitted such unexpected development into mat-building-urbanism. If – as Lok proposes – the conditions that propelled such unlikely evolution were a series of bottom-up densifications that occurred through history, the elements that enabled such densifications were the Palace's own key elements – its original hybrid function, its implied grid organization and the fixed boundary wall. Such fixed elements were then, paradoxically, potent enough to guide the Palace's urban development toward a mat-building principle, i.e. toward "close-knit patterns of neutral collectives open to growth and change", as Alison Smithson introduced and described it.

The ability to navigate smoothly through the Palace's intricate spatial fields and corresponding theoretical complexities are demonstrated by Ana Šverko in her "Time-Inclusive Design". She creatively remixes various theories and creates interesting theoretical collages, to explain the Palace's various aspects and phenomena. In a manner of a skilful bricoleur, she pulls from the rich modernist/postmodernist/contemporary theoretical repositories useful conceptual tools and follows their productive encounters. She relies primarily on the insights of the renowned scholars of Diocletian's Palace – Robert Adam, Aldo Rossi, Herman Hertzberger and Jaap Bakema – to whom she joins the researchers of recent urban phenomena, such as Koolhaas, Otero-Pailos, Kevin Lynch, primarily along the lines of the topic of preservation, protection, and critical con-

servation. Through their instructive interference, Šverko promotes an interesting proposal of the necessity of a "time-inclusive design", the one that might guarantee the qualities of lasting, enduring, controlled change and sustainability, where *lasting* here refers not only to that of forms, but also of overall systems, integral ambiances, spatial essences and urban identities.

Along the similar lines of suitable contemporary interventions in such valuable historical spaces, reasons also Damir Gamulin. In his "Thinking Shadows, Drawing Place", he commits to devising a design method that would be inspired, or even generated, by that very historical context, by way of creating a site-specific conceptual model as an integral and inseparable part of the very design process. In doing so, he turns to the immaterial element of shadows as an ephemeral yet real layer of the overall atmospheric quality, as intimate outcome of the interplay between light and architecture and as such an indispensable segment of the integral spatial experience. The idea is to reach a new method of creation that would "integrate classic methods of design with more developed atmospheric approaches such as the techniques of scenography, film and choreography", and that would use both tangible and intangible elements such as light, shadow, scent and movement, in responding to new needs while preserving the registered *genius loci*. Gamulin's profound analysis sets the track for such sensitive, inclusive and responsible design method.

With all these new insights, built invariably on the layers of existing mappings, this new hypermapping of Diocletian's Palace proves extremely valuable, introducing new interpretative perspectives and understandings, and indicating new veins of projective design procedures. This in turn confirms that the Palace is not only a fabric that attracts and receives new layers of explication, but also a platform that launches and projects new design methods, aims and procedures. And it is precisely this active, future-oriented aspect that is particularly interesting, proving to be the Palace's uniquely potent legacy.