Beatriz Colomina, Privacy and Publicity, The MIT Press 1996

Hi, this is Emanuela Giudice for Les Bijoux Indiscrets, this week about Beatriz Colomina “Privacy and Publicity” by MIT Press.

*Privacy and Publicity* has the duty to make the reader thinking about the relationship between architecture and mass media and also about the possibility of thinking the architecture as a mass media.

Presenting some houses and interiors of two architects of the Modern Movement, Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, Colomina tracks this argue starting from the role of the archive. There’s a story which begin in Vienna, a story of losses, of drawings and papers that must be forgotten. A story of archives, that in the case of Adolf Loos, are built with emptiness and removal.

Le Corbusier decides, instead, to build a different story, to fill the emptiness with so many hints.

Le Corbusier architectural discourse became the intersection of a number of systems of representation such as drawings, sketches, models, photographs, books, films (like *l’Architecture d’aujourd’hui*).

If Adolf Loos argues “The house does not have to tell anything to the exterior; instead, all its richness must be manifested in the interior”, Colomina says that the age of publicity corresponds to a transformation in the status of the private.

So, this is the attitude of Le Corbusier, who instead begins to train the eye of the viewer to an almost cinematographic sight of the space created by the architecture and by the windows and the vision they allowed.

The training must be done with the architecture project, so the vision of the observer is built, for example, through the window, that isn’t an element but it is “the most restricted organ of the house”. Colomina explains us: “be inside mean to see outside and look inside mean be seen, like see a movie at the cinema or a photo print on a magazine, it’s this that change the awareness that we can look at the architecture like something, change it in mass media. As the modernity matches with the private make it public, through one of the main medium, the photography”.

Le Corbusier has certainly understood the potentiality of the photographic medium in his *Esprit Nouveau* or in his *Oeuvre complète*. Architecture is photographed for been displaid in books, sometimes manipulated according to the modernity, so it happens that the photos of some first Le Corbusier villas are “under review” like the one at La Chaux–de-Fonds.
The book, which talks even about the 1932 MoMA of New York and even about the role of the museum, in the last chapter explains the extremely modern issue of the window. Here it plays the switch between privacy and publicity. At last, if the Adolf Loos’ man could say “A cultivated man does not look out of the window; window is a ground glass”, Le Corbusier replies gazing from his fenêtre en longueur and from the top of his roof garden in Ville Savoye. The possibility to watch and be watched is the pass to be engaged with the Modern.

EG