

Mariana Kubištová

CZECH ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE 1920s TO THE 1950s

Abstract

The thesis *Czech Architectural Photography in the 1920s to the 1950s* presents the theme of architecture photography, from the 1920's to the 1950's, focusing on Czech cultural setting, observing photography meeting contemporary acts in the field of architecture, thus the photography of modern architecture. It methodologically researches the theme from a visual study viewpoint; however it applies a little more traditional approaches, which try to define architecture photography depending on functions it carries out; to demarcate its various categories, describe its history and name some of its important representatives. Each of these approaches is able to capture a different aspect of the observed theme.

The first part of the thesis attempts to answer what architecture photography is, what we can qualify as architecture photography and how we can approach and interpret it. It summarizes research and knowledge of this field up till now, not just within Czech cultural setting but also abroad. Last but not least, it tries to outline historical, social and artistic context of the researched era.

The second part counts with the presumption that the core and the biggest volume of visual material lies in the field of professional photography. Researching the field of professional photography of architecture grants a lot of valuable information on professional progressions and institutional circumstances of this field, which often revealed itself in specific photographs. Therefore the second part is dedicated to the photography of architecture coming from professional photographic studios in general, and then specifically in the works of three photographic studios (Atelier de Sandalo, Josef Sudek's studio and František Illek and Alexander Paul's photographic company). Their work had been the most crucial in this discipline. This dissertation also aims to capture the characteristic style of these photographers.

The third part is dedicated to some thematic groups, which are characteristic for the pursued era. I point out questions regarding production of architecture photography in the context of typical modern phenomenon (e.g. flourishing of urban culture, enhancement of leisure that binds with growth of tourism, or technical improvement of reproducing techniques, which link to development of printed media and its rich visual content). Some of these modern methods of media presentation are characteristic to war propaganda and propaganda of totalitarian regimes. Therefore the thesis also elaborates the role which photography of architecture played during the Second World War and in the 1950's. To comprehend the visual strategies of architecture photography and its mission it had in the process of presentation, propagation and popularization of new architectonic forms, it might also be contributive to track the iconography of these shots, which have, in many cases, historical background, and also forms that persevere to current days. These topics are elaborated in the final part of my work.

The thesis is completed with an anthology of texts on architecture photography, which emerged in the 1920's to 1950's.