

■
Emmanuelle
Borne

EDITORIAL

SHORT MEMORIES

There is nothing new in the appeal of ruins. Although Piranesian landscapes remain the architect's reference, in the 21st century, there has been a change in our fascination for them, with a movement from contemplation towards what Harvard University professor Svetlana Boym, who passed away in 2015, referred to as "ruinophilia". Urbex, the urban exploration movement founded in the United States in the 1990s, is a testimony to this appetite for deserted and hidden sites. They range from roofs to catacombs and include wastelands and other contemporary ruins.

What do these modern explorers look for? Whether archaeological ruins or the ones of old slaughter houses, the vestiges are associated with a past world of which they are the remnants. "All Rome is found in the fold of a drape", wrote philosopher Anne Cauquelin over thirty years ago in her *Essai de philosophie urbaine*. "Industry's entire history can be seen in the depth of a span", we might go on to say.

Yet, the only meaning these remains have is the one we are ready to lend them. Although French political leaders agree on the need to "promote" architectural heritage, the reasons why they defend the restoration of old stones vary depending on their place on the political stage. From "adaptation to use" to the question of identity, the ways in which the remains of the past have served the present can act as a mechanism to understand future ambitions.

In dedicating an issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* to ruins, as well as to restoration and conversion projects, we show no objection to a romantic peregrination. In raising the question of planned obsolescence, *AA* also chooses to look through the prism of the contemporary ruin to refer to the very political subject of the architectural quality of our cities and regions. Caught up in the whirlpool of the present, in a society in which everything that is digital is instantly consumed and in which the tangible is increasingly temporary, our political leaders regard the past as sacred, without retaining the lessons it holds. And very often forgetting to build today the beautiful ruins of tomorrow.