

## The child and the city: the little *flâneur*.

### Preface

**Raffaele Milani**

University of Bologna

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Having become enormous habitats in the last decades the world over, can cities still express human qualities and beauty? And how can they meet the expectations of a child?

Throughout history, cities have been narrative and sign-producing machines, places endowed with sense and shaped by experience, real and imaginary places, canvasses for design and representation in a continuous poetic, symbolic, and fantastic process. This volume, which features an interdisciplinary approach, examines the importance of the child in the history of education and urban civilization. Various topics are explored, including the silences and cries of the street and square as educators, historians, linguists, sociologists, and city planners examine the old and new domains of the *polis*, offering up apt descriptions, observations, and analyses.

The result is a hermeneutics of city life from the perspective of childhood, aiming to understand the role that the new media, recreational activity, and creative participation can play. In a sense, everything revolves around the theme of the child's aesthetic perception of the city: how he/she sees, feels, knows, and moves, as well as how he/she is seen. Therefore, the city is where he/she lives and learns in a landscape of mental and emotional adventure, but also a space of citizenship and creativity directed toward attaining a sense of belonging. Old and new models of practice and doing, representing and feeling, alternate in a gigantic narrative of the past and possible futures.

This monograph, devoted to the topic of “the child's experience of the city”, presents a variety of modalities and visions that affirm the centrality of childhood, in the expectation of rediscovering a renewed and dignified humanity in spite of the deep, unpredictable cultural transformations occurring in the age of globalization. It seems an opportune time to discuss once more the spirit of the city that is capable of giving meaning to the lives of millions of children in the world, in the light of the teachings of Levi-Strauss, who always sought out the signs of communities in transformation, among both material and immaterial objects, as well as the practices of perception and forms of doing and organizing society. Thus, an informative study of actions, objects, and bodies is presented.

Reflection on actions related to sensibility and knowledge plays an essential role in creativity, understanding, and our relationship with the Other. It transforms the world by reshaping it in response to creative interventions in the workings of society. Hence, education and pedagogy, based on such observations, represent a fundamental approach to the topic of the historic city and the fluid city, the postmodern and the transcultural city, to construct a philosophy of the common good.

**Raffaele Milani** is Full Professor of Aesthetics in the Department of Education Sciences at the University of Bologna, visiting professor in different universities and the author of numerous books, including *The Aesthetic Categories*, *The Art of the Landscape*, *The Faces of Grace. Philosophy, Art, and Nature*, *The Art of the City*, some of which have been translated in various languages and awarded International Prizes. He has contributed widely to important Italian journals of aesthetics.

He is Director of the “Laboratory for Research on the Cities” and the Summer School: “Italian Design. Art, Society and Industry” (University of Bologna – Osaka University). He is also a member of the European Commission at the French Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development on the topic: “De la connaissance des paysages à l’action paysagère” (from 2004). He is the Italian delegate at the International Association for Aesthetics.