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Editorial

The Life of a Building

Enrique Walker



We know the bunkers on the Atlantic coast from a series of photographs by Paul Virilio; we know the Tour Saint-Jacques in Paris from a night photograph by Brassai; we know the Les Halles market in Paris by Victor Baltard from the psychogeographical description by Abdelkhalid Khatib in 1958, and from the images of its demolition in 1971; we know the Pruitt Igoe housing complex in Saint Louis by Minoru Yamasaki from the photographs of its destruction of 15 July 1972, and the World Trade Center in New York, also by Yamasaki, from the image of Philippe Petit walking a tightrope strung between the Twin Towers on 7 August 1974; we know the Battersea Power Station in London by Giles Gilbert Scott from a photograph of Mark Fisher's inflatable pig floating between its chimneys; we know the Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo by Kenzo Tange from the images of the Metabolist declaration at the World Design Conference in 1960, and the Yamanashi Press and Broadcasting Center in Kofu, also by Tange, from images of the installation of seismic dissipators in its foundations in 2016; we know the Lieb House by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown from the documentation of its relocation from New Jersey to Long Island in 2009; we know the Teatro del Mondo by Aldo Rossi from images of its relocation from Venice to Dubrovnik in 1979; we know the Basilica of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice by Baldassare Longhena from the paintings by Canaletto, and the razed historic center of Warsaw from the twenty views by his nephew, Bernardo Bellotto, on the basis of which it was reconstructed from 1953 onwards; we know the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris from the recording of the fire that consumed its transept and the spire by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc on 15 April 2019, and from its representation, as a classical building, in the painting by Jacques-Louis David of the coronation of Napoleon on 2 December 1804; we know the Reichstag in Berlin from the photographs of the fire that destroyed its dome in

1933, and from those of its wrapping by Christo and Jeanne-Claude in 1994; we know the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank building in Hong Kong by Norman Foster from a night photograph by Andreas Gursky; we know The Economist building in London by Alison and Peter Smithson from the sequence of mime artists at the start of the film *Blow Up* by Michelangelo Antonioni; we know the Malaparte House in Capri by Adalberto Libera from the shooting of *Le mépris* by Jean-Luc Godard and the staging of *The Odyssey* by Fritz Lang in the same film; we know the house in Bordeaux by Rem Koolhaas from the recording of its cleaning in a documentary by Ila Bêka and Louise Lemoine; we know the Kyoto International Conference Center by Sachio Otani from photographs of the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on 11 December 1997; we know the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning in São Paulo by João Batista Vilanova Artigas from the photograph of a crowd in its central square; we know the Teatro Oficina in São Paulo by Lina Bo Bardi from the recording of the restaging of *Roda Viva* by Chico Buarque in 2019; we know Parc de La Villette in Paris by Bernard Tschumi from photographs of the fireworks that Tschumi himself designed in 1992...

We invite architecture writers to submit essays on the life of a building; in other words, to select, describe, narrate, examine, and problematize a particular building through one or a series of moments in its life.

Image

Fireworks, Parc de la Villette, 1992.

© Bernard Tschumi

01

‘Gedächtniskirche’ a la carta (postal)

Notas sobre la fortuna política de “montón de piedras”

Stanislaus von Moos

El ciclo de vida de un edificio común normalmente comienza con un plano y termina con un silencioso proceso de decadencia. No es así, cuando están en juego intereses nacionales, como es el caso de la *Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche* (iglesia en memoria del Kaiser Wilhelm, consagrada en 1895). En tales casos, el colapso de un edificio, especialmente si es causado por una ruina deliberada, tiende a implicar una *damnatio memoriae* radical o una segunda vida en la forma de su reconstrucción física (un proceso ominoso demostrado en la demolición y posterior reconstrucción del Berliner Schloss 1951-2023). En el presente caso lo que ocurrió fue la monumentalización de los restos que documentan su decadencia. El ensayo intenta resaltar algunos momentos de ese proceso. Que la larga historia de la Gedächtniskirche coincida aproximadamente con el crecimiento y declive de la postal ilustrada como medio de comunicación de masas es quizás una coincidencia. Sin embargo, si podemos decir que el simbolismo político de un edificio es el resultado de dinámicas complejas de producción y recepción, entonces la magnitud del archivo visual que dejan las postales, “la primera red social mundial” (Lydia Pyne, 2021), resulta ser un registro visual sorprendentemente vivo de tales procesos. Es especialmente así en el caso de la iglesia Memorial, dada su posición clave en la turbulenta historia de Alemania, de sus ambiciones imperiales y subsecuente despertar como democracia occidental moderna.



Aunque la discontinuidad es inherente a una tradición conformada, ¿qué es lo que impulsa a un turista a escoger una postal en lugar de otras en el expositor de una tienda de recuerdos? Allí delante, lo representado, muy a menudo un edificio, puede seducir por unas condiciones de luz determinadas, el atractivo del entorno o la presentación gráfica (“moderna” o “nostálgica”), dependiendo de la colección de la que formará parte, o del grado de complicidad con un destinatario ya prefijado. Más allá de todo esto, lo que cuenta es el papel que puede desempeñar en una narrativa que el comprador considera relevante o, al menos, razonablemente entretenida. En este sentido, la elección depende del gusto y de sus vaivenes respecto a recuerdos personales, preferencias estéticas o sentimientos patrióticos. En lo referente al legionario archivo (aunque inevitablemente disperso) de “imágenes cotidianas del poder” del artista On Kawara, no solo nos recuerda la función más básica de la tarjeta postal (traer a la memoria una localidad visitada) y su cualidad propia del objeto *ready made*, es decir, un artefacto industrial producido en masa; al hacer esto, también escribe un punto final, quizá involuntariamente irónico, a una cultura de comunicación de masas que es, sin posible vuelta atrás, cosa del pasado¹ (fig. 01).

Las ruinas de la Gedächtniskirche (Iglesia Memorial del Kaiser Guillermo) de Berlín, junto con la nueva iglesia y el campanario diseñados por Egon Eiermann en la década de 1950, es un claro ejemplo. Nadie sabe a ciencia cierta qué representa la combinación entre lo antiguo y lo moderno: ¿la nostalgia por la gloria imperial perdida, romantizada en términos de la estética de la ruina, el lamento y la introspección respecto a la responsabilidad alemana en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, o el resurgimiento, cual ave fénix, de lo nuevo entre los restos de lo antiguo? Para algunos se ha convertido en sinónimo de la identidad berlinesa en cuanto capital caída del Tercer Reich; para otros, su mera ubicación en Berlín Oeste y el entorno “moderno” planificado a toda prisa del complejo es un recordatorio del papel de la ciudad como principal escenario de la Guerra Fría. Considerada “intencional y conmemorativa” por haber sido concebida y construida en homenaje al Reich, la iglesia es ahora un monumento “involuntario”, en la medida en que se ha convertido en testigo de su hundimiento².

Sin embargo, teniendo en cuenta lo complicada que resultó su finalización, quizá deberíamos considerar la “piedra angular de las reflexiones introspectivas de Berlín Oeste”³ el perfecto ejemplo de las dificultades de alcanzar un acuerdo cuando se trata de la representación pública en la democracia⁴. Después de todo, es la naturaleza difusa de sus mensajes, junto con el poder plástico del signo como tal (para Alexander Calder, las ruinas de la iglesia eran “probablemente la mayor escultura abstracta del mundo”), lo que han convertido la Iglesia Memorial en paradigma edificatorio de lo que algunos han llamado la “nueva monumentalidad”⁵.

ARQUITECTOS FRENTE A LA CÁMARA

La arquitectura y la fotografía han formado un frente común al menos desde la década de 1870, cuando la prensa profesional comenzó a adoptar sistemáticamente la fotolitografía. El resultado fue una conspiración tácita entre ambos medios:

una reacción en cadena de producción arquitectónica y reproducción fotográfica que funcionaba en ambas direcciones. Mientras que la imagen fotográfica se ha convertido en un formidable vehículo de promoción arquitectónica, la propia arquitectura —más concretamente, la arquitectura del “movimiento moderno”— empezó a asumir los imperativos del medio (se ha dicho que la arquitectura de Le Corbusier fue, en gran medida, “el resultado de su posición detrás de la cámara”⁶). En cuanto a la imagen de postal, la hermana pequeña de la fotografía, su plan de acción estaba vinculado al sector turístico y por tanto tenía, en comparación, una finalidad más inespecífica y abierta. Apenas cuenta la “buena arquitectura”, o lo que consideren los arquitectos

como tal. “Las postales revelan no solo una mezcolanza de información topográfica, gusto y sensibilidad [...], sino también un orgullo regional del que no siempre se es consciente, que en ocasiones raya en la autoparodia y que refleja lo que se cree de interés para los visitantes”⁷.

Exprimir el jugo a los antojos del comercio y al valor de entretenimiento de unas postales que reproducen edificios convertidos en escombros (y viceversa)⁸ también sintetiza el espectro completo de los géneros artísticos. Visto a través de la cámara del fotoreportero, lo que sigue en pie de la desfigurada Iglesia Memorial podría recordar a una de las ruinas de Roma tal como las retrató Piranesi (fig. 02), mientras que, en una postal publicitaria de cerveza de los años cincuenta, las ruinas de la iglesia terminan formado parte de un *capriccio* que podría ser tanto de Canaletto como de Aldo Rossi (fig. 03). Como telón de fondo de la ajetreada escena urbana de la avenida de Kurfürstendamm, por último, sobreviven como un sencillito, aunque amenazante, punto de referencia (fig. 04).

CRUZ, CORONA Y ARQUITECTURA

De estilo neorrománico, la Iglesia Memorial del Káiser Guillermo (o, como bromeaba Siegfried Kracauer en 1928, “este edificio cúpula donde cohabitan la espada y el altar”⁹) había sido planificada y construida por Guillermo II como monumento nacional

en homenaje a su abuelo, Guillermo I, fundador del Reich alemán (1871-1945). Sin duda, las postales que conmemoraban su consagración (1895) supusieron un porcentaje considerable de la producción alemana anual. Solo nos es posible elucubrar sobre qué fascinaba más a los compradores: ¿la magnificencia del boato imperial y la sensación de formar parte de ella?, ¿o quizá la seducción como de cuento de hadas de los precitados símbolos soberanos? En una de ellas, los emblemas del káiser ocupan hasta un tercio del espacio reservado para la propia iglesia: la espada imperial, parcialmente cubierta de armiño, así como la corona, presentada sobre una servilleta, como si fuera una tarta. La sagrada cruz que emerge tras toda la composición es casi tan grande como la torre del crucero a su derecha (fig. 05). No parece que la editorial Langenscheidt y los libreros hayan tenido reparos en adoptar esta combinación de cruz e iglesia como logo para promocionar diccionarios (fig. 06).

La idea de un monumento a la unidad germánica había sido clave en la exacerbada búsqueda nacional de la identidad a lo largo de todo el siglo XIX. Hacía ya más de un siglo de la célebre propuesta de Friedrich Gilly de un monumento a Federico el Grande en forma de templo dórico (1797). Iba a ser erigido en medio de la Potsdamer Platz. Unos diecisiete años después de su concepción, el triunfo militar de las fuerzas alemanas sobre Francia en la batalla de Leipzig (1814) había sido el detonante del resurgimiento de esta idea en toda la nación. Ya por aquel entonces, muchos parecían visualizar la iglesia como aliado natural para tal empresa. Era el caso de Karl Friedrich Schinkel, quien propuso construir una *Denkmalkirche* [iglesia monumental] a modo de catedral gótica ante las puertas de Berlín (efectivamente, en la Leipziger Platz) para conmemorar las guerras de Liberación (1814-1815). Nunca se construyó, y tampoco hubo reconfiguraciones similares del templo dórico que sí fueron planteadas posteriormente por toda Alemania. La idea de instrumentalizar el entusiasmo religioso para rendir homenaje a la unidad nacional (y viceversa, instrumentalizar el orgullo nacional en pro del fortalecimiento del fervor religioso entre la población) había encontrado un nuevo epicentro en lo que estaba llamado a convertirse en una de las obras con más carga emocional de Alemania: la renovación (o, de facto, reinención) de la catedral de Colonia¹⁰.

Guillermo II estaba obsesionado con cerrar filas entre el imperio y la iglesia. Con la catedral Alemana, el gigante neobarroco

próximo al Palacio Real de Berlín, y la Iglesia Memorial lo consiguió al menos en dos ocasiones en esta ciudad. En 1895, Guillermo II celebró la inauguración de la Iglesia Memorial el día del cumpleaños de su querido abuelo (el 1 de septiembre) y, lo que es más importante, en conmemoración de la batalla de Sedán, que, de manera similar a la batalla de las Naciones de Leipzig, de 1814, había consumado la derrota francesa y, por tanto, el triunfo de Alemania en la guerra franco-prusiana un cuarto de siglo antes (1870). Si Gilly se había valido del templo griego como modelo para su santuario y Schinkel de la catedral gótica, Franz Schwechten, el arquitecto de la Iglesia Memorial, había recibido del emperador instrucciones de emplear el románico. Suele decirse que Guillermo II había seguido estudios de arquitectura románica en Renania, en el sur de Italia y en Sicilia, entre otros lugares. Esto debió de ser alrededor de 1889-1890. Entre todas las épocas de la historia alemana, parece que se decantó por la dinastía Hohenstaufen de los siglos X y XI como modelo de su propio tiempo, dado que la expansión de la cristiandad en Europa tenía muchos puntos en común con los rápidos avances del Reich en aquella era¹¹. Por este motivo, al recurrir a las formas de las iglesias de la región de Baja Renania como las de los Santos Apóstoles, San Martín el Grande o San Pantaleón, en Colonia, la iglesia parroquial de Sinzig o la catedral de Bonn (fig. 07), todas ellas construidas en tiempos de los Hohenstaufen, la arquitectura, además de alimentar un repentino florecimiento de la fe religiosa, también reactivaba la sensación de pertenencia al imperio¹².

LA METÁFORA DEL JARDÍN

¿Debemos dar por sentado que Schwechten defendía el urbanismo “pintoresquista” o que, al menos, la Iglesia Memorial es un arquetipo en la historia moderna de presentar los monumentos públicos pictóricamente, con vistas

oblicuas, en la línea de la tradición de Camillo Sitte¹³? El propio arquitecto declaró que quería que la iglesia se apareciera al espectador como la catedral de Bonn “vista desde las Neutörchen”¹⁴ (fig. 07). Dicho esto, quizá no tuviera mucho que decidir sobre el emplazamiento. Dado que la iglesia debía erigirse en la plaza de Augusta Victoria, al sur del parque de Tiergarten, justo donde cinco potentes arterias de tráfico convergen con ángulos irregulares (algunas de ellas en proceso de desarrollo durante la construcción de la iglesia), dar preferencia a un ángulo de aproximación habría desmerecido los otros cuatro (fig. 10).

Nacido en una generación anterior a Schwechten, Napoleón III no habría estado muy de acuerdo con ubicar uno de los grandes monumentos imperiales en un emplazamiento tan poco distinguido, excepto por su condición de nudo circulatorio, si consideramos que en París, como escribe un ferviente admirador de Haussmann, “tradiciones, que luego se academizaron, quieren que toda avenida recta concluya, con apoteosis, muy pronto, sobre una pieza montada: la Ópera, en el extremo de la avenida de ese nombre; la iglesia Saint-Augustin en el extremo del boulevard Malesherbes”¹⁵. En comparación, la plaza de Augusta Victoria era un emplazamiento extraño, incompatible con cualquier noción de *embellissement* estratégico y bastante menos espectacular que la Leipziger Platz y la Potsdamer Platz, donde Gilly y Schinkel habían pretendido que descansaran sus monumentos en 1797 y 1815 para que pudieran ser vistos desde lejos, tanto dentro de la ciudad como desde las vías de acceso. Aun así, esta vista “oblicua” que tan extraña se hacía a los parisinos era muy adecuada para su reproducción masiva en postales (especialmente en su edad dorada, entre 1905 y 1920¹⁶), y es que hay que reconocer que dos de las cinco vistas resultaban privilegiadas respecto del resto; en primer lugar, la vista de la Hardenbergstrasse, desde donde los visitantes que llegaban por la estación de tren de Zoologischer Garten podían ver la portada y el rosetón desde una considerable distancia (figs. 05; 06; 08). En segundo puesto está la vista desde la Wittenbergplatz a lo largo

de la Tauentzienstrasse hacia el coro; en algunas imágenes la calle aparece decorada con guirnaldas (quizá con motivo de alguna fiesta o conmemoración) que resaltan su carácter rural, como si quisiera ser el sendero de un parque (fig. 09). No es de extrañar que las imágenes más "pintorescas" nos lleguen de la Budapest Strasse, que discurre a lo largo de la arboleda del Tiergarten; por supuesto, la inclinación de Schwechten por el pintoresquismo alcanza su máximo efecto cuando se utilizan técnicas "pictóricas" en la representación fotográfica. Algunas de las primeras imágenes de la iglesia recuerdan a Alfred Stieglitz.

Si bien representar la iglesia en medio de los árboles, rodeada por guirnaldas de vegetación, cual *folie* en un parque, parece haber sido el pasatiempo favorito de los fotógrafos y los editores de postales después de 1900, el emperador y su arquitecto tenían otras prioridades: para ellos, la principal necesidad de la implantación era un lecho arquitectónico digno. Esta es la razón de que, mientras avanzaban las obras de la iglesia, el emperador encargara un gran edificio residencial y otro de oficinas (uno próximo a la portada de la iglesia, el otro entre la Budapest Strasse y la Tauntzeinstrasse, cruzando la calle desde el coro, y ambos de estilo neorrománico imperial) para configurar el foro románico¹⁷ (figs. 08; 09).

OBSTÁCULO PARA EL TRÁFICO Y RESPLANDOR DE LA VIDA NOCTURNA

Al terminar la Primera Guerra Mundial, el cuento de hadas imperial se había quedado sin público. A los intelectuales de la república de Weimar no les gustaba demasiado el edificio y Franz Schwechten, el arquitecto, prácticamente desapareció de las referen-

cias culturales de la ciudad¹⁸. El hecho de que el neorrománico haya sido en muchos sentidos la puerta de entrada a nuevos conceptos de configuración espacial y de uso en encargos de edificios públicos como iglesias, escuelas, bibliotecas e incluso estaciones ferroviarias, tiendas, bancos y grandes almacenes (como demuestra especialmente bien el poderoso organicismo de las bibliotecas y residencias privadas de Henry Hobson Richardson en Nueva Inglaterra) no fue percibido y analizado hasta mucho más tarde (no debemos olvidar que el empleo del estilo románico por parte de Richardson en la iglesia de la Trinidad de Boston es dos décadas anterior a la Iglesia Memorial). Por tanto, aquellos que mostraban interés por el neorrománico en la arquitectura de finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX dirigían la vista hacia arquitectos americanos como Richardson o Frank Furness y su considerable influencia en los países escandinavos, el sur de Alemania y Suiza. Diferenciar esta tradición "progresista" dentro del neorrománico resultó ser una forma de relegar la Iglesia Memorial, e incluso todo el legado arquitectónico de Schwechten, a un reaccionario "sin más del montón", que dejaba totalmente fuera de los anales obras tan innovadoras como la Anhalter Bahnhof de Berlín¹⁹.

Pero el golpe de gracia a la Iglesia Memorial como parte del circuito cultural de la metrópolis fue su torpe ubicación en el centro de una glorieta de circulación en medio de "Berlín Oeste" que, por otra parte, era uno de los puntos de mayor actividad comercial y nocturna de la ciudad. Conviene recordar que esta iglesia nunca fue muy popular entre los círculos "ilustrados" de Berlín: ya en 1907, Karl Scheffler describía el edificio como el símbolo de una "estricta religión de estado que actúa de policía moral y exhibe el telón de fondo de su iglesia lujosamente decorada frente al abismo social de los tiempos"²⁰. Kracauer consideraba el edificio "una gigantesca obstrucción al tráfico" y se mofaba de la suave luz que emanaba de ella por la noche "como si se creyera el Sanctasanctórum" (en realidad, era "un reflejo de la fachada ligera que convierte la noche en día" desde el Ufa Palace hasta más allá del Capitol). Sobre la Iglesia Memorial del Kaiser Guillermo, escribe: "Cualquiera que la vea al aproximarse desde la estación de tren del Zoo (y el habitante de la ciudad únicamente la ve de noche, puesto que durante el día

no es más que una gigantesca obstrucción al tráfico) es testigo de un espectáculo extraño, casi sobrenatural. La masa del edificio religioso irradia un suave resplandor que resulta al mismo tiempo tranquilizador e inexplicable, un brillo que no tiene nada que ver con el profano fulgor rojizo de las farolas de arco voltaico y cuya singularidad destaca en el ambiente como si brotara de los propios muros de la iglesia del Kaiser Guillermo". De este modo, apunta Kracauer, la iglesia transforma la noche en día "como si quisiera ahuyentar el horror de la noche lejos de la jornada laboral de los visitantes"²¹ (fig. 11).

La vida nocturna y la congestión viaria fueron el caballo de batalla de la Iglesia Memorial durante la república de Weimar. ¿Puede que la ironía del equivoco resplandor nocturno sea en cierto modo una sombra respuesta a la fascinación por el flujo del tráfico y los destellos de sus luces, que en 1930 y muy especialmente en Berlín ya se habían comenzado a infiltrar en el imaginario arquitectónico de las vanguardias? Da la sensación de que, en su propuesta para rediseñar la Alexanderplatz, Hans y Wassili Luckhardt y Alfons Anker hubieran aspirado a sublimar y transfigurar la paradoja de la Breitscheidplatz en una estrategia de diseño urbano como medio de orquestrar visualmente el tráfico rodado, una estrategia de "optimización" llamada a reconfigurar las ciudades del mundo germanohablante desde Berlín hasta Zúrich²² (1929) (fig. 13). En cuanto a la pesadilla de la estrangulación por un flujo viario en continuo crecimiento, ha seguido presente en la visión de la Iglesia Memorial, aunque los tubos peatonales propuestos por Kohlmaier y Sartory para facilitar la circulación probablemente nunca hubieran llegado a los expositores de las tarjetas postales (1972) (fig. 14).

LAS RUINAS COMO ESPECTÁCULO

Nadie sabe a ciencia cierta hasta qué punto películas como *Berlín Occidente* (1947), de Billy Wilder, por no mencionar *Alemania, año cero* (también de 1947), de Rossellini, contribuyeron al "turismo de ruinas" que empezó a proliferar poco después de la

Segunda Guerra Mundial. Suele decirse que Wilder, al montar *Berlín Occidente*, principalmente había recuperado grabaciones documentales sobre la destrucción de Berlín que él mismo había rodado para el ejército estadounidense a finales de la Segunda Guerra Mundial²³. Siguiendo los pasos más de cerca que ningún otro medio, los documentales proporcionados por la fotografía y el cine resultaron ser una extraordinaria fuente de entretenimiento. Como escribe el gran poeta inglés Stephen Spender: "El Reichstag y la cancillería del Reich son ya atracciones turísticas y probablemente lo sigan siendo después de quinientos años [...]. Uno mira a las ruinas con el mismo sobrecogimiento que ante el Coliseo romano"²⁴. En lo que respecta a la Iglesia Memorial del Kaiser Guillermo, que hoy es una extraña superviviente en medio de un distrito comercial reconstruido a toda prisa, entonces todavía formaba parte de un paisaje de escombros que se extendía por toda la ciudad (fig. 04). El historiador cultural Wolfgang Schivelbusch ha descrito así los modos tan contradictorios de representar Berlín y sus ruinas después de 1945: "Para la visión histórico-romántica, se asemeja a un gran campo en ruinas de antigua majestuosidad, atemporal como el Foro Romano. El punto de vista alternativo podría calificarse de moderno-surrealista: las viviendas y calles destruidas no se perciben como testigos atemporales de la transitoriedad, sino más bien como criaturas sintientes caídas en el campo de batalla, una destrucción que sigue su curso en un estadio todavía humeante. 'Masacradas y desventradas' fueron los términos que utilizó Johannes R. Becher para describir estas viviendas, cuyas habitaciones se presentaban ante el espectador como un escenario teatral naturalista"²⁵. A su vuelta a Berlín en 1947, Walter Gropius resumía, de hecho, sus impresiones con estas palabras: "Berlín ha sido. Un cadáver en descomposición"²⁶.

La Iglesia Memorial del Káiser Guillermo fue gravemente dañada en un bombardeo aliado en noviembre de 1943. Pero, mientras que con la reforma monetaria de 1949 los hoteles, las tiendas y las empresas de negocios y seguros del vecindario comenzaron a sacudirse los ya polvorientos restos, las autoridades eclesiásticas no podían decidirse sobre cómo abordar la reconstrucción. El mero amasijo de ruinas y la falta de recursos económicos y de capacidad de decisión de los encargados de la iglesia la convirtieron en un símbolo que ocuparía el imaginario de los ciudadanos durante décadas. Por su parte, en 1950 el típico encuadre de postal hacia la iglesia se había desplazado poco a poco desde la Hardenbergstrasse hasta la Tauentzienstrasse y de ahí a Kurfürstendamm (figs. 02; 15; 16). En esta zona, más que en ninguna otra de los sectores occidentales de la ciudad, los signos de la vitalidad comercial y de la vida nocturna habían comenzado a reelectrificar la vida en la calle y a devolverle parte de su antiguo y terrenal glamur. En muchas de las nuevas postales, la amputada torre del crucero aparece retroiluminada y, por lo tanto, en una oscuridad que acentúa el contraste con la resplandeciente vida nocturna del fondo (figs. 02, 15), algo que tiene muy poco que ver con 1930, cuando los muros de la iglesia todavía funcionaban como perverso reflector de las luces de los cines próximos (fig. 11). A medida que Kurfürstendamm, que poco a poco iba asumiendo su papel de “Campos Elíseos” de Berlín occidental, es recogida en miles de postales en blanco y negro o en color a partir de los primeros años cincuenta (un precioso archivo de las diversas iconografías comerciales y de la historia de los edificios de esta calle), la Hardenbergstrasse parece no despertar ya mucho interés. A comienzos de los sesenta, el Palast am Zoo, un edificio en forma de pastilla de dieciséis plantas de altura de los arquitectos Paul Schwebes y Hans Schoszberger²⁷ que coquetea tímidamente con los *pilotis* de la Unidad de Habitación de Le Corbusier y con la sola ligeramenta posterior Schimmelpenning-Haus (1957-1959) al otro lado de la calle, había transformado toda la zona en una obra de “urbanismo moderno”. Sus exentos “volúmenes en el espacio”, en clarísimo contraste con las manzanas cerradas anteriores a la guerra y el modelo de “calle-corredor”, atrajeron el interés de los inversores, ingenieros y arquitectos, por mucho que ya no encajaran en el canon de la imagen de postal convencional de una calle o avenida urbana. De hecho, los edificios en altura de la “Neues Zoo-viertel” quizá sean el origen de una nueva técnica para plasmar las ciudades en una postal, al menos en lo referente a Berlín. A partir de entonces, el paisaje urbano de esta ciudad, incluidas la Breitscheidplatz y su Iglesia Memorial, se reproduce, la mayoría de las veces, a vista de pájaro. Conforme el punto de visión, por tanto, se acerca más y más a la altitud que mantiene el arquitecto urbanista o el legislador cuando examina una maqueta de yeso en una reunión, el ojo distraído del *flâneur* que observa desde la acera se va sustituyendo por el del águila de la autoridad, o al menos por el del cliente de un hotel que disfruta de las vistas desde su habitación en el Europa Center. O, mejor aún, en el más reciente Zoofenster (fig. 17)²⁸.

¿RUINA ACUSATORIA?

Imbuida del aura de su emplazamiento en el corazón de Berlín Oeste, la ruina de la Iglesia Memorial atrajo inevitablemente atribuciones semánticas que iban más allá de las intenciones de sus promotores. Verla como un ejemplo de lo que Albert

Speer describía como “el valor de la ruina” destinado a todos aquellos que se dedicaban a construir para el Tercer Reich es tan obvio como, a la postre, inútil: “A Hitler le encantaba explicar que él construía para legar su tiempo y su espíritu a la posteridad. En última instancia, las grandes épocas de la historia solo se recuerdan por sus edificios monumentales [...]. Pero entonces, tras un largo período de declive, se reaviva el sentido de grandeza nacional y aquellos monumentos de nuestros ancestros constituyen el más impresionante de los recordatorios”²⁹. Si

realmente la intención del káiser Guillermo era que sus edificios hablaran algún día en estos términos a la consciencia de sus paisanos, las ruinas de la Iglesia Memorial conseguían, más bien, el efecto contrario. Al menos a corto plazo.

En cuanto productos de una demolición intencionada, las ruinas no pueden evitar que surjan en torno a ellas cuestiones sobre culpa y vergüenza. En 1944, tras la destrucción aliada del centro de Fráncfort, el periódico del partido nacionalsocialista, el *Völkischer Beobachter*, proponía que los hitos calcinados de la ciudad no debían restaurarse, sino que había que preservarlos “como ruinas eternamente acusatorias” (“als ewige Anklage erhebende Ruine”). Se crearía, por tanto, un “foro romano cuyos monumentos podrían ser vistos en medio de espacios verdes [...]”. En su estado ruinoso, los monumentos seguirían ofreciendo un testimonio que sería nostálgico para nosotros y vergonzoso para nuestros enemigos”. Estamos hablando, como digo, de 1944³⁰. ¿Pero quién era responsable del ruinoso estado de la Iglesia Memorial unos años después, en 1952, cuando finalmente se decidió preservar la ruina (una ruina ubicada, dicho sea de paso, en el sector británico de Berlín)? ¿La Real Fuerza Aérea del Reino Unido, que había lanzado las destructivas bombas, o la Wehrmacht, que había iniciado la guerra unos años antes?

En una historia, todavía por escribir, de los monumentos reducidos a ruinas durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la Iglesia Memorial del Káiser Guillermo en su estado actual es un elemento tardío. No sabemos si en el Berlín de mayo de 1945, durante los últimos días de la contienda, hubiera sido posible (o si alguien le hubiera hecho caso) que un historiador del arte proclamara que “en sí mismos, los daños de la guerra son pintorescos”, como había manifestado abierta e impunemente el director de la National Gallery, Kenneth Clark, un año antes en Londres. Es interesante recordar que en julio de 1941, unos meses después del Blitz, *The Architectural Review* había insistido a sus suscriptores en que apreciar las ruinas de la guerra como un “fenómeno arquitectónico de pleno derecho” era algo obvio para los arquitectos³¹. Algo más tarde, en uno de sus artículos para la misma publicación, el pintor John Piper profetizaba que la Christ Church de la Newgate Street, St. Albans en la Wood Street y St. Mary Aldermanbury podrían beneficiarse de un inesperado efecto por su proximidad a grandes y nuevos edificios de oficinas. De hecho, la Iglesia Memorial y sus adyacencias actuales son, con toda probabilidad, la demostración más certera del tipo de *collages* urbanísticos que podía tener en mente (figs. 01; 25).

EL OCTÓGONO Y EL “MONTÓN DE PIEDRAS”

Sin lugar a duda, la conquista de la Breitscheidplatz por parte del movimiento moderno alcanzó su punto álgido con la misteriosamente “sencilla” caja octogonal de vidrio de la nueva Iglesia Memorial de Egon Eiermann (1959-1963) (fig. 18).

Setenta años después de su finalización, el oscuro resplandor azul del interior de la iglesia sigue haciendo de ella uno de los espacios más logrados de la arquitectura moderna de Berlín. Con una estereotomía elemental que recuerda a los bloques de construcción de Froebel, la iglesia habla en un lenguaje universal mientras parece presentar cortésmente sus respetos a una elegante sombrerera. Por su parte, la elección del octógono recuerda la capilla Palatina de Aquisgrán del siglo IX, arquetipo de la arquitectura carolingia, y resuena después de todo con el programa original de la Iglesia Memorial. En términos de diseño urbano, igualmente, la expresividad del proyecto radica en su contención. Tan discreto que en un primer momento apenas se deja ver en la vorágine de carteles comerciales, el mudo campanario hexagonal señala el punto de fuga hacia el este de Kurfürstendamm³² (fig. 21). Su implantación pasaba por eliminar los afectados restos del transepto y el coro, lo que a su vez potenció la singular potencia visual de la ruina.

La composición dialéctica de Eiermann entre lo viejo y lo nuevo fue el resultado de complejas negociaciones. Antes de 1952, en Berlín a nadie se le pasaba por la cabeza una iniciativa distinta a la reconstrucción integral de la arruinada iglesia con sus formas románicas. La comunidad eclesial había designado inicialmente para los trabajos a Werner March, el proyectista del Estadio Olímpico de Hitler, aunque no llegó a ejecutarse nada. Cuando las cosas empezaron a moverse de nuevo tras 1950, la arquitectura moderna ya había ganado una relativa soberanía en el discurso cultural de Alemania, que vino acompañada de un creciente escepticismo respecto a la idea de reconstruir integralmente los edificios dañados o destruidos durante la guerra. En Colonia, Rudolf Schwarz acababa de incorporar la ruina de la iglesia de San Albano en el nuevo complejo de Gürzenich, la casa consistorial de la ciudad, mientras que Gottfried Boehm estaba a punto de acondicionar los restos de la capilla de Santa María como "iglesia de emergencia", sobre la que Peter Zumthor construiría tiempo después el museo diocesano de Kolumba. Entre tanto, Berlín parecía haberse estancado en una empecinada cultura de exorcizar las ruinas. En las bases del concurso para la nueva iglesia memorial la ruina ni siquiera se mencionaba, por mucho que para entonces miles de postales la hubieran convertido en el emblema oficioso de la ciudad (figs. 03, 04 y 12). Considerada por Eiermann una "trivialidad arquitectónica", el arquitecto defendía en los primeros momentos de su trabajo para la parroquia (había ganado el concurso en 1957) que aquel "montón de piedras" solo significaba algo para aquellos que habían vivido la guerra en primera persona (fig. 15), y accedió a que permanecieran en su sitio solo durante un breve tiempo³⁵. Tan solo después de meses de agrios enfrentamientos con la prensa, y cuando ya estaba claro que la iglesia solo se levantaría si la ruina formaba parte de ella, Eiermann se mostró dispuesto a integrar una parte sustancial de los restos en su proyecto edificatorio (hubo de sacrificarse el coro para el nuevo campanario) (figs. 01; 02; 03; 15; 16; 18; 21; 25). Tiempo después reconoció que, al fin y al cabo, la iglesia que había proyectado podía erigirse en cualquier lugar, y que era la combinación con los restos lo que hacía de ella algo excepcional, únicamente concebible como un conjunto en Berlín.

SEÑALES DE HUMO DE LA GUERRA FRÍA

Aunque el Europa Center, un edificio de oficinas y complejo hotelero en forma de pastilla que ahora domina la Breitscheidplatz desde su extremo oriental, no era ya ninguna novedad cuando On Kawara visitó Berlín en 1976 (se había

terminado en 1963), las postales siguieron ensalzándolo como emblema de la integración de Berlín en el universo de la modernidad, en ocasiones incluso exagerándolo de manera surrealista (fig. 01). Se entendía que este universo recibía su impulso desde Estados Unidos, incuestionable líder entre las fuerzas aliadas que habían liberado y ocupado lo que para muchos era el auténtico corazón de Berlín: Kurfürstendamm y su gran faro, la Iglesia Memorial. A ambos lados de la división política, la pastilla de oficinas representaba una insignia de progreso infalible en 1963. Cuando el arquitecto polaco Edmund Goldzamt decía del recién inaugurado edificio de la Secretaría de las Naciones Unidas en Nueva York que "se estira hacia el cielo como una enorme caja de cerillas sobre unas bases más anchas" (1956), y su colega suizo Hans Schmidt insistía en que "un edificio en altura debería ser algo más que una caja de cerillas puesta de pie con *n* plantas de oficinas", tales comentarios suponían en cierto modo un rechazo al imperialismo estadounidense³⁴.

Las cajas de cerillas pueden emplearse para enviar señales de humo, pero también pueden ocasionar un peligroso incendio. Cuando el editor Axel Springer decidió trasladar la sede general de su empresa de Hamburgo a Berlín y construir una torre de oficinas en el antiguo distrito periodístico de Kochstrasse, justo en el límite entre los sectores Este y Oeste, todo el mundo comprendió desde el primer instante su intención de utilizar la arquitectura

como una declaración política³⁵. Según afirma Springer, no merece la pena construir "altos edificios para periódicos sin una idea que sea más grande que nosotros mismos. Una idea que quiere decir: libertad para todos los alemanes en una única patria con capital oficial en Berlín, como parte de una Europa en paz"³⁶. El edificio Springer, de setenta y ocho metros de altura, construido entre 1959 y 1962 perpendicularmente a la Kochstrasse y cubierto por una piel resplandeciente de aluminio dorado, debía entenderse como un "grito contra el viento", un "poderoso signo de admiración arquitectónica [...] por el convencimiento de que Berlín y Alemania volverían pronto [...] a estar unidas"³⁷. Su ubicación sobre el límite entre los dos sectores le confería la visibilidad necesaria para este objetivo e incluso la arquitectura de Müller y Sobotka añadía una impúdica apariencia de lujo. Tan solo dos años después de la construcción se levantó el Muro entre los dos sectores. Entre las innumerables fotografías que recogen este momento, se encuentra una que tomó Rem Koolhaas en 1971 y que muestra el edificio Springer por encima del muro al caer la noche³⁸ (figs. 22; 23).

La decisión de edificar el Europa Center se tomó "unos días después de levantar el Muro"³⁹, por lo que el proyecto, ejecutado en un plazo extraordinariamente corto entre 1961 y 1963, se vio inmerso en connotaciones políticas desde sus primeros momentos. Con sus ochenta metros de altura, que lo convertían en el edificio de oficinas más alto de Berlín (dos metros más alto que la ligeramente anterior torre Springer), el complejo reclamaba sin lugar a duda la centralidad dentro de la ciudad, en claro contraste con los edificios de posguerra más antiguos de la Breitscheidplatz. De hecho, el día de la inauguración, el *Tagesspiegel* informó de la "fantástica conclusión urbana" que proporcionaba el edificio en Kurfürstendamm. No era solo un "signo de admiración de la libre empresa" en Berlín, sino también "el proyecto comercial más importante del período de posguerra en nuestro continente". De hecho, era la "primera respuesta al famoso Rockefeller Center de Nueva York"⁴⁰.

No hay duda de que el edificio de la Secretaría de las Naciones Unidas era uno de los proyectos que Helmut Hentrich, el arquitecto director del Europa Center, estudió detenidamente durante su viaje de 1954 a Nueva York, por mucho que sea otro edificio el que se lleva todo el protagonismo en sus memorias: la Lever House, situada en Park Avenue en diagonal con el edificio Seagram (que aún no existía)⁴¹. La Lever House había sido construida entre 1949 y 1952 por SOM (Skidmore, Owings y Merrill). La vertical pastilla de oficinas se combina con una pastilla horizontal a sus pies, una combinación de gran expresividad de la que se hizo eco el Europa Center, aunque con unas proporciones algo más toscas⁴² (figs. 24; 25; 26). Desde el punto de vista del inversor, el complejo del centro comercial, con todas sus tiendas, bares, casinos y demás atractivos en la base de la torre constituían el corazón del edificio. No es extraño que la pista de hielo cubierta del segundo patio se presentara como la versión europea de la pista de patinaje del Rockefeller Center, aunque finalmente fue el *Tagesspiegel* quien acertadamente la describió como un mero apéndice del climatizado "paraíso comercial de las damas"⁴³. En un intento por subrayar la autonomía del carácter genérico de la oferta arquitectónica de locales respecto a otros edificios existentes, el centro comercial llegó a comercializarse como una adaptación de las galerías comerciales de Berna (en realidad, el único modelo comparable eran los centros comerciales que Víctor Gruen comenzó a levantar por todo Estados Unidos alrededor de 1950)⁴⁴.

SIGNIFICACIÓN ARQUITECTÓNICA Y COMUNICACIÓN DE MASAS

Dejando de lado sus cuestionables iniciativas comerciales, lo cierto es que Karl H. Pepper, promotor y constructor del Europa Center, tiene toda la razón cuando escribe que la iglesia y el monumento solo se convirtieron en el centro de la plaza una

vez estuvo completo el rascacielos (fig. 25). Si la exquisitamente proporcionada nueva iglesia de Eiermann añade una sensación de espiritualidad al complejo, el Europa Center consigue otorgar unidad a la zona dentro del conjunto del paisaje urbano de la ciudad y de su lógica económica. A modo de tesis y antítesis, la ruina y la pastilla consiguen caracterizar la fisonomía del lugar a la vez que, de hecho, definen los dos extremos del rango de posibilidades de la significación arquitectónica disponibles en las primeras décadas tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Cada uno parece dirigirse dialécticamente al otro, y sobre ambos recae la presión ideológica: más elevado que la ruina y estableciendo un diálogo con ella, el edificio de oficinas se convierte en un paradójico *alter ego* de la Iglesia Memorial, e incluso recrea la desaparecida cruz de la torre en forma de una colosal estrella de Mercedes⁴⁵.

Puede que el mucho más reciente compañero del Europa Center en el extremo oeste de la Breitscheidplatz, el complejo Zoofenster (Christoph Mäckler, 2008-2012), se yerga todavía con más altura que su predecesor del otro lado de la plaza, pero no le es posible atribuirse ningún papel en un conflicto que divide el mundo en dos. Tampoco ha dejado una impronta destacable en la historia de las postales, ya que en los tiempos de su finalización el negocio de las ilustraciones arquitectónicas para turistas había sido definitivamente superado por la vorágine digital de las páginas web de los hoteles. Así que la Breitscheidplatz, junto con su Iglesia Memorial y el Europa Center, sobrevive al menos como máximo exponente de los lejanos días de gloria de las imágenes de postal y de su posterior declive y final extinción como medios de comunicación de masas.

La serie de cuatro postales en color que On Kawara envió a Ellie Siegel, en Nueva York, entre el 17 y el 20 de septiembre de 1976, dan cuenta de todo esto. Parece seguir un guion cinematográfico: tras aproximarse al Europa Center desde la Hardenbergstrasse, el visitante recula paso a paso por la Tauentzeinstrasse hasta sobrepasar la Wittenbergplatz. Después, la cuarta postal muestra la vista "canónica" del complejo desde Kurfürstendamm, con un imposible primer plano de un avión de pasajeros dominando la escena⁴⁶ (fig. 01). Con un carácter cinético, la serie rinde un homenaje, y al tiempo un lamento, al ocaso de una era en la que objetos físicos y palpables como aquellos rectángulos de cartulina servían como uno de los principales medios de comunicación, junto con las ruinas de las iglesias y las pastillas de oficinas.

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Notas

01. Para más información sobre las "Berlin series" de las postales de On Kawara, véase ERDMANN, Larkin, *On Kawara*, Larkin Edmann Gallery, Zürich, 2018. La expresión "imágenes cotidianas del poder" está extraída de DENIZOT, René, "Les images quotidiennes du pouvoir. On Kawara au jour le jour", en DOUROUX, Xavier, y GAUTHEROT, Franck, *On Kawara. Whole and Parts 1964-1995*, Les Presses du Réel, Paris, 1996, pp. 375-395.

Las presentes notas han sido recopiladas sin perder de vista el memorable ensayo de BOYARSKY, Alvin, "Chicago à la carte. The City as an Energy System", *Architectural Design*, diciembre de 1970, n.º. 7/8, pp. 595-622. Si bien Boyarsky ha conseguido que sus postales sirvan para reconstruir la historia de la urbanización de un continente completo, yo me doy por satisfecho con utilizar las mías de trampoline para comentar un único complejo edificatorio.

02. Los términos están tomados de RIEGL, Alois, "Der moderne Denkmalkultus", ahora fácilmente accesible en CONRADS, Ulrich (dir.), *Georg Dehio und Alois Riegl - Konservieren, nicht restaurieren. Streitschriften zur Denkmalpflege um 1900*, en la colección Bauwelt Fundamente, vol. 80, Vieweg, Braunschweig, 1988, pp. 43-87. Acerca de Riegl y de la modernidad, véase el fundamental ensayo de FORSTER, Kurt W., "Monument/Memory and the Mortality of Architecture", *Oppositions*, 1982, n.º. 25, pp. 2-19.

03. ZILL, Rüdiger, "A true witness of transience: Berlin's Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche and the symbolic use of architectural fragments in modernity", *European Review of History*, 2011, vol. 18, n.º 5-6, pp. 811-827 (820).

04. Véanse FROWEIN-ZIROFF, Vera, *Die Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche. Entstehung und Bedeutung*, Gebrüder Mann, Berlin, 1982 (sobre la polémica acerca de si mantener o derribar el edificio —que se remonta a la década de 1920— véanse, especialmente, las páginas 333-340); y WARNKE, Stephanie, *Stein gegen Stein:*

Architektur und Medien im geteilten Berlin 1950-1970, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt, 2009, pp. 220-231.

05. FROWEIN-ZIROFF, V., *op. cit.*, p. 340; la cita se menciona en una carta de LUCKHARDT, Wassily, a *Der Tagesspiegel*, 14 de marzo de 1957 ("Demokratisches Forum"). La expresión "nueva monumentalidad" se refiere a GLEDION, Sigfried, "The Need for a New Monumentality", en ZUCKER, Paul (ed.), *New Architecture and City Planning*, Philosophical Library, Nueva York, 1944, pp. 549-568.

06. COLOMINA, Beatriz, *Privacy and Publicity. Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1994, p. 134 (traducción de Isabel Hortal, *Privacidad y publicidad: la arquitectura moderna como medio de comunicación de masas*, CENDEAC, Murcia, 2010, p. 103).

07. BOYARSKY, A., *op. cit.*, p. 600.

08. Para algunas notas acerca de la obra de construcción como tema fotográfico, véase mi anterior ensayo "'Ruins in Reverse', Notes on Photography and the Architectural 'Non Finito'", en VON MOOS, Stanislaus (ed.), *Chandigarh 1956*, Scheidegger & Spiess, Zürich, 2009, pp. 45-66. Sobre la ruina como objeto de la arquitectura moderna en una perspectiva más amplia, véase FORSTER, Kurt W., "Die Ruine Als Nachklang, Vorbild oder Zukunftsbotin", en BLÜMLE, Claudia, y LAZARDZIG, Jan (eds.), *Ruinierte Öffentlichkeit. Zur Politik von Theater, Architektur und Kunst in den 1950er Jahren*, Diaphanes, Zürich-Berlin, pp. 182-206.

09. "Kuppelbau, der Schwert und Altar miteinander verkuppelt", KRACAUER, Siegfried, "Ansichtspostkarte", *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 26 de mayo de 1930. Citado en FROWEIN-ZIROFF, V., *op. cit.*, pp. 335-336.

10. Para un análisis riguroso de estos temas en los años siguientes a 1800, véase NIPPERDEY, Thomas, "Kirchen Als Nationaldenkmal. Die Pläne Von 1815", en GRISEBACH, Lucius, y RENGGER, Konrad (eds.), *Festschrift für Otto von Simson zum 65. Geburtstag*, Propyläen Verlag, Berlin, pp. 412-431.

11. FROWEIN-ZIROFF, V., *op. cit.*, p. 40.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 169-170 y *passim*. La primera aplicación de las formas románicas, es decir, del "estilo nacional de los mejores tiempos del imperio" a las campañas de construcción de iglesias de Guillermo II tuvo lugar en la "Gnadenkirche zum Andenken an Kaiserin Augusta" (+1890), en la Invalidenstrasse de Berlin Mitte, poco antes de comenzar las obras de la Iglesia Memorial (*ibid.*, pp. 91-108).

13. SITTE, Camillo, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundlagen betrachtet*, Graeser, Viena, 1889 (traducción de Emilio Canosa, *Construcción de ciudades según principios artísticos*, Canosa, Barcelona, 1926).

14. FROWEIN-ZIROFF, V., *op. cit.*, pp. 168, 170.

15. LE CORBUSIER, *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches*, Plon, Paris, 1935 (traducción de Julio E. Payró, *Cuando las catedrales eran blancas*, Poseidón, Buenos Aires, 1948, pp. 79-80).

16. PYNE, Lydia, *Postcards. The Rise and Fall of the World's First Social Network*, Rektion Books, Londres, 2021, p. 14.

17. FROWEIN-ZIROFF, V., *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 174-175.

18. Todavía en 1979 la voluminosa obra de POSENER, Julius, *Berlin auf Dem Wege zu einer Neuen Architektur (Studien zur Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 40), Prestel Verlag, München, (una obra incuestionable sobre la arquitectura guillermina de la ciudad) menciona la iglesia solo marginalmente, en las notas biográficas sobre Schweghten, p. 631.

19. Véase EATON, Leonard K., "Karl Moser and the German Richardsonian", en *American Architecture Comes of Age. European Reaction to H. H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan*, MIT Press, Cambridge-Londres, 1972, pp. 56-108, donde se menciona tan solo de pasada a Schweghten como un exponente del "Reichsstil" románico (pp. 94-97). El libro que dio a conocer entre los arquitectos alemanes y escandinavos las obras estadounidenses fue HINCKELDEYN, Karl, y

GRAEF, Paul, *Neubauten in Nordamerika*, Becker, Berlin, 1897. Para un intento de restituir la figura de Schweghten en la historia de la primera arquitectura moderna en Europa véase ZIETZ, Peer, *Franz Heinrich Schweghten: Ein Architekt zwischen Historismus und Moderne*, E. Menges, Stuttgart, 1999.

20. FROWEIN-ZIROFF, V., *op. cit.*, p. 333.

21. KRACAUER, S., *op. cit.*

22. Véase KIL, Wolfgang, y KÜNDIGER, Barbara, "Alexanderplatz - drei Wettbewerbe, drei Weltstadtvisionen", en PYSALL, Hans-Joachim (ed.), *Das Alexanderhaus. Der Alexanderplatz*, Jovis, Berlin, 1998, pp. 77-95.

23. Véanse VON MOLTKE, Johannes, "Ruin Cinema", en HELL, Julia, y SCHÖNLE, Andreas (eds.), *Ruins of Modernity*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2010, pp. 395-417; y VON MOOS, Stanislaus, *Erste Hilfe. Architekturdiskurs nach 1940. Eine Schweizer Spurensuche*, gta Verlag, Zürich, 2021, pp. 56-58.

24. Cita extraída de SCHIVELBUSCH, Wolfgang, *Vor Dem Vorhang. Das Geistige Berlin 1945-1948*, Carl Hanser Verlag, München-Viena, 1995, p. 13.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 29, citado en ISAACS, Reginald, *Walter Gropius. Der Mensch und sein Werk*, vol. 2, Ullstein, Frankfurt, 1987, p. 935.

27. Como escribió el *New York Times* en 1957, "es uno de los primeros edificios modernos del 'Berlín libre'"; véanse VON BUTTLAR, Adrian, "New Urban Spaces in West Berlin: Breitscheidplatz and Kulturforum", en KÖHLER, Thomas, y MÜLLER, Ursula (eds.), *Radically Modern. Urban Planning and Architecture in 1960s Berlin*, Wasmuth, Tübingen, 2015, pp. 62-71; y HOH-SLODCZYK, Christine, en VON BUTTLAR, Adrian, WITTMANN-ENGLERT, Kerstin, y DOLFF-BONEKÄMPER, Gabi (eds.), *Baukunst der Nachkriegsmode: Architekturführer Berlin 1949-1979*, Reimer, Berlin, 2013, pp. 182-183.

28. Sobre la fascinación del movimiento moderno con la "vista desde arriba", véase LUGON, Olivier, "Vue aérienne, vue en plongée, Nouvelle Vision", en LAMPE, Angela, y BONNEVIE, Claire (eds.), *Vue d'en haut*, Éditions du Centre Pompidou - Metz, Metz, 2013, pp. 208-227.
29. SPEER, Albert, *Erinnerungen*, Propyläen Verlag, Berlin, 1969, p. 68.
30. VOIGT, Wolfgang, "Ruf Der Ruinen' Oder Rekonstruktion - Altstadt, Paulskirche und Goethehaus nach den Luftangriffen des Zweiten Weltkriegs", en STURM, Philipp, y CACHOLA SCHMAL, Peter (eds.), *Die Immer Neue Altstadt. Bauen zwischen Dom und Römer seit 1900. Forever New: Frankfurt's Old Town. Building between Dom and Römer since 1900*, D. A. M. - Jovis Verlag, Fráncfort - Berlin, 2018, pp. 64-73 (71).
31. Nota de la redacción en *The Architectural Review*, julio de 1941, vol. 90, nº 535, p. 20. La cita de Clark proviene de WOODWARD, Christopher, *In Ruins*, Vintage, Londres, 2002, p. 212. Para más referencias, véase VON MOOS, Stanislaus, *Erste Hilfe...*, op. cit., pp. 30-36, 47-53 y *passim*.
32. Cumple la misma función como punto de fuga hacia el oeste de la Tauentzienstrasse. Acerca de la iglesia de Eiermann, su aceptación popular y su explotación comercial se podría hablar largo y tendido. Sobre la arquitectura de Egon Eiermann, véanse HILDEBRAND, Sonja, *Egon Eiermann. Die Berliner Zeit. Das architektonische Gesamtwerk bis 1945*, Vieweg, Braunschweig-Wiesbaden, 1999; y PEHNT, Wolfgang, "Sechs Gründe, Eiermanns Werk zu lieben und einen, es nicht zu tun. Notizen zu einer grossen deutschen Architekten", en JAEGLI, Annemarie (ed.), *Egon Eiermann (1904-1970). Die Kontinuität der Moderne*, Hatje-Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2004, pp. 17-29.
33. KAPPEL, Kai, "Raster Versus Ruine", en JAEGLI, A., op. cit., p. 55. Todavía en 1962 Ulrich CONRADS atacaba a Eiermann por haber accedido a preservar la ruina; véase CONRADS, Ulrich, "Die Neue Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin", *Bauwelt*, 1962, nº 53, vol. 4, pp. 95-98.
34. Algunas partes de las siguientes notas se basan en VON MOOS, Stanislaus, "The Monumentality of the Matchbox", en KÖHLER, T., y MÜLLER, U. (eds.), op. cit., pp. 28-43.
35. SCHWARZ, Hans-Peter, "Politisierung in der Frontstadt Berlin", en Axel Springer: *Die Biografie*, Propyläen Verlag, Berlin, 2008, pp. 271-424. Véase también SPRINGER, Axel, *Von Berlin aus gesehen: Zeugnisse eines engagierten Deutschen*, Seewald Verlag, Stuttgart, 1972.
36. HENSELEIT, Felix, ... und doch ist dies der alte Schauplatz noch. *Das Berliner Zeitungsviertel damals und heute*, Ullstein, Berlin, 1965.
37. SCHWARZ, H. op. cit., p. 296 (he abreviado ligeramente la cita). La propia inauguración del edificio fue todo un acontecimiento político, como muestra la lista de invitados: acudió Heinrich Lübke, presidente de la Confederación Germánica; también estaba el ministro de Defensa, Franz Josef Strauss, junto a Herbert von Karajan y Günter Grass. El alcalde de Berlín Oeste, Willy Brandt, y el vicecanciller Erich Mende alabaron el edificio en sus discursos; véase SCHWARZ, H. op. cit., p. 383.
38. La fotografía fue tomada como parte del "trabajo de campo" de 1971 de Koolhaas en Berlín. Véase KOOLHAAS, Rem, *Field Trip: [A] A Memoir. The Berlin Wall as Architecture* (1971), publicado más tarde en KOOLHAAS, Rem, y MAU, Bruce, S, M, L, XL, Monacelli, Nueva York, 1995, pp. 212-233.
39. (Anónimo), "Mensch, Pepper", *Der Spiegel*, 1963, nº 39, pp. 97-100. Según *Der Tagesspiegel*, "la ejecución de este proyecto [...] quiere demostrar la fe en el futuro de la ciudad y las hazañas de la libre empresa, especialmente en oposición al sistema comunista" (extraído de "Mensch, Pepper"). Para más información sobre su arquitectura, véase WEGENER, Charis, en VON BUTTLAR, A., WITTMANN-ENGLERT, K., y DOLFF-BONEKÄMPER, G. (eds.), op. cit., pp. 187-189.
40. SACK, Maria, "Erster Spatenstich im Juni 1963. Zwischen dem ersten Projekt und dem letzten Hammerschlag", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2 de abril de 1965. Felix-Erik Laue incluso lo define como uno de "los mayores volúmenes contruidos en el continente"; véase "Anatomie eines Giganten. Summe konstruktiver Möglichkeiten und Umfang einer Stadt", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2 de abril de 1965.
41. HENTRICH, Helmut, *Bauzeit. Aufzeichnungen aus dem Leben eines Architekten*, Droste, Düsseldorf, 1995, p. 222.
42. Conviene recordar que Gordon Bunshaft, que había sido responsable del proyecto de la Lever House, tuvo después un papel crucial como asesor del edificio Thyssen de Dusseldorf (diseñado por Hentrich, Petschnigg & Partner, HPP). Está claro, por otra parte, que el espectacular edificio de tres pastillas de Dusseldorf tuvo que ver con el que Karl-Heinz Pepper los eligiera como arquitectos para su prestigioso proyecto berlinés; véase HENTRICH, H., op. cit., p. 224.
43. SACK, Maria, "Ein Shopping-Paradies der Damen. Kleiner Einkaufsbummel im großen 'Center': Zwischen Eisbahn und Blumen", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2 de abril de 1965.
44. *Ibid.* Respecto a Gruen, véase especialmente su proyecto para renovar el centro de Fort Worth (Texas) en GRUEN, Victor, "Urban Designs of Today: Fort Worth", *Progressive Architecture*, agosto de 1956, nº 8, pp. 110-111; y GRUEN, Victor, y SMITH, Larry, *Shopping Towns USA: The Planning of Shopping Centers*, Reinhold, Nueva York, 1960.
45. PEPPER, Karl H., "Erfüllter Traum", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2 de abril de 1965.
46. Véase la nota 1 de este artículo. El envío de una serie de postales a un amigo en orden cronológico, de modo que formen una secuencia "cinética" en el tiempo fue, aparentemente, una práctica iniciada por On Kawara con las "UN Headquarters series" (cuyo destinatario era Roger Mazarguil). Véase DOUROUX, Xavier, y GAUTHEROT, Franck, op. cit., pp. 218-232.

Imágenes

01. On Kawara. "I got up at 10 a. m.". Series de cuatro postales de 1976 mostrando la iglesia memorial Kaiser Guillermo y el Europa Center de Berlín (anverso) y las indicaciones y señas del remitente (reverso). Cortesía de Larkin Erdmann Fine Art, Zurich.

02. Berlin. Postal mostrando Kurfürstendamm y las ruinas de la iglesia memorial (fotografía de los primeros años 1960).

03. „Ein Pilsner - aber Engelhardt!". Postal publicitaria de mitad de la década de 1950 mostrando la ruina cerca del Funkturm (construido entre 1925-26) y la cercana Messegebäude en Berlín Charlottenburg (1935-37).

04. Berlin. Iglesia memorial Kaiser Guillermo como ruina, c. 1948. (Foto archive Landesbildstelle Berlin)

05. „Gruss aus Berlin". Postal mostrando la iglesia memorial desde Hardenbergstrasse junto con la insignia imperial. (litografía a color, producida por Kunstanstalt Kettner & Co.; c. 1895)

06. „Lerne Sprachen...". Postal publicitaria de Langenscheidt'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung mostrando la iglesia memorial desde Hardenbergstrasse. (litografía a color producida por Kunstanstalt Kettner & Co.; c. 1898)

07. Bonn. Münster, s. XII. Vista noroeste desde Neutörrchen. (Frowein-Ziroff, Die Gedächtniskirche..., Fig. 145)

08. Berlin. Postal mostrando la iglesia memorial desde Hardenbergstrasse remarcando „Romanische Häuser". (fotografía coloreada; c. 1914)

09. Berlin. Postal de la iglesia memorial desde Tauentzienstrasse. (fotografía; c. 1914?)

10. Franz Schwechten. Plano de situación. Iglesia Memorial (1891). (Frowein-Ziroff, Die Gedächtniskirche..., Fig. 126)

11. Berlin. Postal mostrando una visión idealizada de la iglesia memorial rodeada de tráfico y una galería comercial diseñada por Poelzig al fondo. Reproducida de un poster de Reichsbahn-zentrale für den

Deutschen Reiseverkehr (c. 1936).

12. Berlin. Postal de la iglesia memorial desde Tauentzienstrasse, con luces de tráfico. (fotografía, c. 1935?)

13. Hans y Wassily Luckhardt con Alfons Anker. Proyecto de reorganización de Alexanderplatz en Berlín (1929). (Luckhardt-Anker-Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlín)

14. Kohlmaier & Sartory. „Rolling Sidewalks on Breitscheidplatz". Foto-collage, 1969. (Berlinische Galerie, Berlín)

15. Berlin. Postal de la iglesia memorial desde Kurfürstendamm con el Café Kranzler (izqda). (fotografía, c. 1958?)

16. Berlin. Postal mostrando la iglesia memorial desde Kurfürstendamm con el Café Kranzler (izqda). (litografía de color, ligeramente difuminada c. 1958?)

17. Berlin, Neues Zooviertel. Postal del edificio Zoo-Palast (arriba derecha) con Schimmelpfenghaus y los complejos de oficinas adyacentes a lo largo de Hardenbergstrasse, Kant-Strasse y Kurfürstendamm. (fotografía, c. 1960)

18. Berlin. Postal. Kaiser Wilhelm- Gedächtniskirche, Egon Eiermann, con el "edificio Bikini" de Schwebes & Schoszberger (izquierda). (Fotografía aérea, c. 1960)

19. Egon Eiermann. La nueva iglesia memorial (proyecto de concurso, 1957). (fotografía de maqueta mostrando el campanario a eje con Kurfürstendamm)

20. "Tormenta de protestas contra la nueva Gedächtniskirche". Proyecto revisado de Eiermann preservando la ruina. Tomado de Bild-Zeitung, Feb.10, 1958.

21. „Viele Grüße aus Berlin". Postal mostrando la iglesia memorial con el campanario de Eiermann (centro), el Café Kranzler (izquierda) y la columna de la Victoria(derecha). (Fotomontaje de color, c. 1965)

22. Berlin, Kochstrasse con las oficinas de Axel Springer (1959-1962). (Portada; Ullstein Verlag)

23. Berlin, vista del muro hacia las oficinas de Axel Springer. Fotografía de Rem Koolhaas (1971).

24. New York. Lever House (Gordon Bunshaft). (Halsey Taylor Fountains, página de publicidad de Architectural Forum, 1953)

25. Berlin, Breitscheidplatz por la noche con el edificio Bikini (abajo izquierda), el Europa Center y Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche. Fotografía aérea, c. 1970.

26. Berlin Spielbank. Postal del Europa Center y una planta del hotel (centro) con interiores del casino. (Foto-collage a color, c. 1965)

02

El American Bar, de Adolf Loos, Viena, Austria, 1907

Fabrizio Gallanti

El American Bar de Adolf Loos, inaugurado en Viena en 1908, es un pequeño oasis, frecuentado desde hace tiempo por la intelectualidad de la ciudad. Aunque de espacio reducido, contiene numerosos elementos arquitectónicos, desarrollados más tarde por Loos en su obra, estableciendo muchos tropos de la arquitectura moderna: el cuidadoso control de los afectos, el uso de materiales en crudo, la incorporación de características técnicas avanzadas. El texto analiza las numerosas analogías y referencias que se pueden identificar dentro los cánones de la arquitectura occidental.



Cuando uno pasa algunas horas bebiendo sorbos de un cóctel en el American Bar, de Adolf Loos, en Viena (1907), se da cuenta de algunos detalles que no se perciben en las fotografías.

El primero es que detrás del rótulo del bar, justo encima de la puerta de entrada, hay una superficie compuesta de una retícula con cuadrados de ónix. Las delgadas láminas de mármol de ónix son translúcidas, de modo que, aunque este filtro matiza la luz del día e inunda el espacio de tonos ámbar, también permite conservar la noción del paso del tiempo. Esta pantalla rinde homenaje al propio concepto de bar americano, el tugurio donde beber alcohol separado del ajetreo de la calle, pero al mismo tiempo niega ese mismo concepto, ya que no termina de desvincular el interior del exterior. El mejor momento para pasarse por allí es al caer la noche, cuando el ocaso se cuela lentamente en el interior de la pequeña estancia.

La incorporación del mármol de ónix sobre la entrada se inscribe en la tradición de la arquitectura occidental desde las antiguas Grecia y Roma, donde las piedras exóticas eran particularmente apreciadas. Uno de los casos más conocidos de este material concreto en la arquitectura moderna se encuentra en dos proyectos cruciales de Ludwig Mies van der Rohe y Lily Reich, el pabellón de Barcelona (1929) y la villa Tugendhat, en Brno (1930). El mármol de ónix rojo y dorado de Barcelona fue extraído en las montañas argelinas del Atlas para dar forma a unas losas que provocaban un efecto especular tipo Rorschach. En Brno, el mármol de ónix, también proveniente del Atlas, tiene un tono marrón crema y se utiliza como muro exento. Debido a la delgadez

de las losas, el muro es translúcido y podría decirse que brilla bajo la incidencia del sol.

El mármol de ónix y el ónix no son el mismo material. Según la Encyclopædia Britannica, el ónix es “una variedad semipreciosa de ágata mineral compuesta de sílice con bandas alternas blancas y negras”, mientras que “los llamados mármoles de ónix están formados por zonas concéntricas de calcita o aragonito depositadas en soluciones de agua fría en cuevas y grietas, próximas a los nacedores de agua. En sentido estricto, no son ni ónix ni mármol, ya que el verdadero ónix es una calcedonia a bandas compuesta, en su mayor parte, por dióxido de silicio”. Así que el mármol de ónix es, de hecho, una falacia. Aunque la ideología de la verdad y la honestidad en el empleo de materiales, propia de la retórica de la arquitectura moderna, parece haber sido la norma, los arquitectos han recurrido a la imitación durante siglos y continúan haciéndolo. Andrea Palladio, por ejemplo, ideó sistemas constructivos a base de ladrillos triangulares especialmente manufacturados con lados curvos (a modo de porción de pizza) para obtener columnas recubiertas de yeso mezclado con partículas de mármol. Quizá uno de los más asombrosos ardis sean las gigantescas columnas del pórtico de la capilla de la Resurrección de Sigurd Lewerentz en el cementerio de Skogskyrkogården (1925), en Estocolmo. En este caso, son unas monolíticas piezas de granito gris las que parecen ejecutadas con hormigón *in situ* y que, según cuentan por aquellos lares, conforman una irónica broma en la que un costoso material se hace pasar por uno más barato.

Es interesante subrayar cómo el mismo Adolf Loos que refutaba la idea de ornamentación era capaz de desplegar una magistral habilidad al utilizar materiales poco comunes: latón y bronce, vidrio, espejos, maderas pulidas y finos revestimientos de mármol y otras piedras. Todos estos materiales se exhibían sin tratar, aunque con una predilección casi obsesiva por aquellos que mostraban veteados naturales complejos.

A poca distancia del American Bar, el edificio residencial y comercial de Michaelerplatz 3, apodado la “casa Loos” (1912), ofrece a la vista un impresionante pórtico de dos plantas recubierto de mármol verde *cipollino*, una piedra que presenta unas densas y onduladas vetas verdes entre las que se intercalan otras de mica blanca y que ya mencionaba Plinio el Viejo en sus escritos.

Loos se valió de la misma piedra para el empanelado de la villa Müller (1930), en Praga, donde el concepto de *raumplan* está potenciado por un acabado brillante y podría decirse que sensual.

El segundo hecho que pone de manifiesto la absoluta genialidad de Loos es que las paredes del bar están completamente recubiertas con paneles de caoba de mayor altura que una persona. Sobre los paneles de madera discurre un espejo por todo el perímetro del bar, de manera que refleja los pilares de mármol verde oscuro situados en las esquinas y a lo largo de los dos muros más largos, perpendiculares a la entrada, así como el artesonado. A causa de estos reflejos, la sensación de tamaño del recinto se amplía de inmediato, lo que nos causa la impresión de encontrarnos en un espacio mayor de los veintisiete metros cuadrados que ocupa realmente. Las imágenes multiplicadas por los espejos insinúan que podía haber algo más tras los muros, pero, como gracias a la disposición estratégica del revestimiento de madera y los espejos no llegamos a vernos reflejados, el truco no llega a revelarse.

Adolf Loos ha sido bautizado como una especie de “fundador” del movimiento moderno arquitectónico por su polémica postura en sus textos para los únicos dos números de la revista *Das Andere* (1903), editada y escrita completamente por él mismo. La modernidad implicaba un rechazo radical del pasado. Sin embargo, su hábil manejo de los efectos, reflejos y visuales del American Bar corroboran que contaba con un profundo conocimiento de la arquitectura histórica. Engaños, mimesis, copias, la búsqueda de la sorpresa y el asombro habían formado parte del arsenal de los arquitectos durante siglos. La manipulación de los efectos de la

perspectiva en el falso ábside de la iglesia de Santa María presso San Satiro de Milán (1482), de Donato Bramante, donde un trampantojo da sensación de profundidad en tan solo noventa centímetros, o la perspectiva forzada de la galería del palacio Spada (1632), en Roma, de Francesco Borromini, probablemente estén entre los ejemplos más conocidos.

En el American Bar, Loos es extremadamente sutil, ya que no engaña los sentidos por mostrarles algo, sino por ocultarlo, como ocurre con el reflejo de las personas. En otras circunstancias su empleo de los espejos crea un resultado muy diferente. El estrecho pasillo que conecta un acceso lateral con la escalera principal y el ascensor de la casa Loos presenta dos muros recubiertos de espejos que no son perfectamente paralelos y crean, por tanto, una infinita multiplicación de reflejos, igual que en el laberinto de los espejos de cualquier parque de atracciones. Cabría preguntarse si Loos vio uno de estos laberintos durante su estancia en Estados Unidos o en el parque Prater de Viena y si podría ser ese el origen de esta elección. Al final del pasillo es preciso empujar una segunda puerta para acceder al edificio. Ese momento de pausa es suficiente para ver tu reflejo cientos de veces.

También podríamos elucubrar sobre si el uso de los espejos para multiplicar elementos arquitectónicos mientras esconde a los clientes del bar, que no se ven reflejados a sí mismos, podría responder a tres razones. La primera tiene que ver con su exquisitez. Durante siglos, los espejos fueron objetos muy poco habituales, que solo los más afortunados podían permitirse (como muestra la galería de los Espejos de Versalles, obra de Jules Hardouin-Mansart, 1684), pero tras la Revolución industrial su fabricación era mucho más barata. Loos nunca habría sido tan vulgar como para hacer ostentación de un material que ya había perdido su aura. La segunda es que los espejos se utilizaban para multiplicar la luz de las velas y, con la iluminación eléctrica, ese efecto ya no era necesario. Y la tercera es que quizá tratara de evitar la contemplación narcisista de los clientes al enfrentarse repentinamente a su propia imagen. Un artesano que trabajaba para un afamado sastre de trajes a medida en la calle Jermyn de Londres me contó en cierta ocasión que habían quitado los espejos de los probadores, pues los clientes —masculinos— solían pasarse el rato regodeándose en su propia figura sin prestar atención al sastre. Loos quería que, mientras se tomaban una copa, los asistentes se relacionaran con “el otro”: el camarero, el conocido o el amigo, no con su propia imagen.

En líneas generales, lo que consigue Loos en este lugar es una sensación única de intimidad y comodidad. Parece que nuestros sentidos estuvieran adiestrados para reducir la profundidad de la atención y limitarla a la cápsula de una crisálida, donde caben dos o tres personas, unas bebidas y, esperemos, una agradable conversación. Todo se resuelve en cuestión de centímetros. Para ser un espacio tan pequeño, es asombroso cómo se compone de múltiples ambientes diferenciados. Puedes sentarte en un taburete junto a la barra o, si tienes suerte, en uno de los bancos de cuero de respaldo alto que forman los dos “reservados”. Sobre uno de ellos, al fondo del bar, colgaba el retrato del escritor y poeta Peter Altenberg, pintado por Gustav Jagerspacher, señalando el lugar donde solía sentarse. Ya no está, quizá a causa de alguna renovación. Los reservados se organizaban alrededor de tres mesas: dos al fondo y una en el reservado más próximo a la entrada. Toda la composición genera una fuerte sensación de proximidad.

En el ensayo del filósofo italiano Massimo Cacciari titulado “Adolf Loos e il suo angelo” (1981), los interiores encapsulados de la tienda de ropa para caballeros Knize (1913) se describen como un recurso espacial donde la calma, el lujo y una atmósfera relajada eran capaces de contrarrestar la ansiedad y el estrés de la vida metropolitana que transcurría al otro lado de la puerta. Esta yuxtaposición entre los interiores, ya sean domésticos

o comerciales, como lugares reparadores para el caballero urbano frente a presión del bullicio de la ciudad parece ser típica de Viena. Basta con recordar las larguísimas escenas de la novela *El hombre sin atributos* (1934), de Robert Musil, o la vivienda diseñada en 1929 por el filósofo Ludwig Wittgenstein junto al arquitecto Paul Engelmann, un antiguo colaborador de Loos y secretario de Karl Kraus. Pero la quintaesencia del interior protegido de Viena era el estudio en el que Sigmund Freud recibía y trataba a sus pacientes en el número 19 de Berggasse.

Muchos de estos lugares se encuentran también bastante próximos: se tarda apenas tres minutos en llegar a pie desde la tienda Knize al American Bar.

Loos ponía sumo cuidado en todos y cada uno de los componentes de sus diseños. Las mesas del American Bar son una pequeña maravilla: se componen de una superficie octogonal de vidrio sobre un pie central recubierto de caoba que se ancla en una base de bronce con cuatro patas. El vidrio blanco de la mesa está iluminado por una bombilla que se esconde en el pie, convirtiéndola en una caja de luz. El resultado es hipnótico: la luz provoca un resplandor especial en los líquidos contenidos en los vasos, cuyo efecto en los licores y alcoholes transparentes es particularmente maravilloso. El *whisky*, el *coñac* y el *ron* se hacen eco de la melosa luminiscencia de la pantalla de ónix, mientras que la ginebra y el *vodka* parecen tan puros como el agua de las montañas. En sus conocidas *Observaciones sobre los colores* (1977), Ludwig Wittgenstein escribió que no existe el blanco transparente, una verdad asombrosamente simple que nadie había detectado. El vidrio lácteo de las mesas del American Bar permite que la luz se filtre, pero es opaco, lo que genera el contraste con una cristalería que, al contener bebidas, debía alterar su color y su aspecto lo menos posible. Quizá no sea coincidencia que fuera en Bohemia, por entonces parte del imperio de los Habsburgo, donde la técnica para obtener cristal completamente transparente se desarrollara por primera vez, en el siglo xvi, mezolando la caliza con potasa. Creo que esta transparencia es bastante loosiana, ya que los recipientes muestran los colores de las bebidas sin alterarlos ni falsificarlos, mientras que, durante siglos, los cálices y las copas eran de vidrios tintados o de plata u oro y, por tanto, opacos. En la teoría arquitectónica ha habido una dicotomía entre la transparencia, como en el famoso ensayo “Transparencia literal y fenomenológica” (1963), de Colin Rowe y Robert Slutzky, y una cierta traslucidez borrosa, descrita por Anthony Vidler en “The Architectural Uncanny. Essays in the Modern Unhomely” (1992), más próxima a la contemporaneidad, detectada por el autor en proyectos de OMA o de Toyo Ito. En el American Bar cada mesa reúne ambas experiencias.

La atención de los clientes queda cautivada por ese pequeño paisaje que se crea en cada mesa, que les hace olvidarse del bar y del resto de los consumidores que los rodean. Este efecto de concentración cuasirreligiosa alrededor de cada una de las tres mesas está potenciado por el cuidadoso control acústico de la estancia, donde el cuero de los bancos y el empanelado contribuyen a amortiguar el ruido, que no es muy alto, pero tampoco demasiado bajo. En sus buenos tiempos, quizá olvidados para siempre por haber sido víctima de su propia reputación, solo se oía el perfecto murmullo de conversaciones civilizadas. Que yo recuerde, no había música.

Raras veces las sustancias embriagadoras pueden ocultar una amenaza tan reconfortante.

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Imagen

01. American Bar, Adolf Loos.

03

The New Life of the GHJ Building in *Cité Balzac*

Marta García Alonso

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Some remains of the GHJ building in *Cité Balzac* rest in the studio of the architect and artist Daniel Purroy, preserved as part of an artistic project exhibited at the 2013 *Nuit Blanche* in Paris. Elements of its prefabricated façade and pieces of debris evoke, on the one hand, the rationalist origin of the building, as anonymous as the acronym with which it was baptised; and on the other, through the remains of different decorative papers that adorned its interior, they reveal the personal life of each of its inhabitants. In 2012, many of them witnessed the demolition of the building in which they had spent part of their lives. The article recounts the life of this building which overcame its own disappearance and whose remains were part of a collaborative artistic work in which its last inhabitants played a leading role.



The 2013 edition of the *Nuit Blanche* in Paris featured a surprising installation in the gardens of *Hôtel d'Aumont* and *Cité Internationale des Arts*, located in the *Saint Paul* district of *Le Marais*, on the banks of the Seine. On a plane parallel to that of the monument which today houses the administrative court of Paris, a fragment of a façade was reconstructed from prefabricated modules salvaged from one of the many demolished buildings in the urban belt of Paris (*La Banlieue*) (fig. 01). This was the GHJ building in the *Cité Balzac* housing estate, built in the 1960s on the outskirts of the town of Vitry-sur-Seine.

In addition to the public who contemplated the varied cultural offerings of the Parisian evening event, the intervention in the gardens of the *Hôtel* was attended by some very special visitors. Many of the building's former inhabitants attended the inauguration of the installation, some as mere spectators and others as actors involved in a performance that used the reconstructed façade as

a stage. Meanwhile, in the background, recordings taken from the neighbourhood itself could be heard on a loop, as a soundtrack to the life that went on there in parallel to that of central Paris.

With the arrival of nightfall, the illumination of the windows which still had their curtains in place produced a magical effect. That night the GHJ took on a new life, in other circumstances, in another context and, in a way, it was redeemed by the memory of the lives it once housed (fig. 02).

THE GHJ BUILDING AS AN ARTISTIC PROJECT

The artistic operation was the result of a project entitled "*La Cité Balzac de Vitry-sur-Seine à Paris*" led by Daniel Purroy¹, an artist from Navarre who trained as an architect. In 2007 he set up his studio in Vitry-sur-Seine, attracted by the vastness of the old industrial spaces that could be found on the periphery, as well as by the intense transformation that the neighbourhood was undergoing following the decision to demolish some of its buildings. The proximity of his place of work to *Cité Balzac* allowed him to make contact with the neighbours and learn first-hand about the process of stigmatisation to which they, as inhabitants of the buildings, had been subjected. This contact gave rise to the idea of displacing the negative connotations that the image of the building had acquired and transforming it into something new, into something with a very different meaning, such as a work of art. He proposed to do so, moreover, by using the architecture of the building itself; in this case a fragment of its façade, whose transfer to the heart of Paris would seek to establish a double relationship of otherness between the terms *capital/banlieue* and *cultural/social*².

For Purroy, beyond its status as a symbol of a social problem that was to be overcome by its demolition, the GHJ was a collective housing project in a socially marked context that was inextricably linked to the people who lived in it. It was a living space through which a whole generation of individuals had lived and evolved. The traces of this movement, elements with acquired social and political connotations, were preserved in his project in order to develop their value as a representation of these lives. Thus, the event designed by the artist took on the double dimension of an artistic and political gesture at the same time.

Of the various actions undertaken in the project, the most ambitious one, with the greatest media impact, was undoubtedly the rescue of a large fragment of the prefabricated façade (fig. 03). This was a delicate operation that Daniel was able to undertake with the logistical support of the demolition company. However, beyond the spectacular nature of the operation devised by Purroy and its technical difficulty, it was the neighbourhood collaboration that provided the social dimension of the project. The mobilisation of the former inhabitants of the GHJ to recover parts of the building that had housed their lives for years (more than 40 in some cases) was, in itself, an awakening, a tribute and a dignification of their personal memory, which was inevitably linked to the structure that the authorities had decided to demolish and reduce to rubble.

Work to restore the façade began in July 2012 and its modular fragments were carefully transferred to the artist's workshop in *Les Ardoinnes* where they were stored. Subsequently, thanks again to the work of the local residents, the remains were given the necessary framework for their subsequent reconstruction. Shortly after the demolition of the building on 5 September 2012, one of the façade's modules was erected in the void left by the missing building as an initial artistic gesture. Individually, in groups or in families, the former residents wanted to immortalise their image next to this remnant of the façade, expressly signifying their connection with the memory of the building (fig. 04).

It is within this personal dimension that another of the rescue operations undertaken as part of the project makes sense: the recovery of wall fragments from different dwellings, still covered

by the wallpaper with which the families had personalised their homes. If these large housing structures had been accused of being alienating because of their abstraction and repetition, the presence of these wallpapers, in all their variety and figuration, signified their inhabitants' resistance to the uniformity that came with this extreme vision of the rational city.

A careful photographic reportage by Corinne Janier Colombel³ documented the variety and disparity with which the tenants of the GHJ had decorated their homes. After the demolition of the GHJ, the remains of pieces of concrete bearing fragments of wallpaper were collected, as if from an archaeological site, and once separated from their context, inside storage boxes, they acquired the strange condition of artistic objects charged with meaning (fig. 05).

The final point of the whole operation was, as already mentioned, the reconstruction of part of the façade in another context in order to address the cultural dimension of the project and its conception as an art installation. Initially, Daniel Purroy's idea was to link centre and periphery by taking the material to the Louvre Museum. The artist envisaged the transfer being made on a barge along the Seine, taking advantage of the fact that it flows in that direction, from Vitry towards the centre, thus staging the project's desire to connect centre and periphery (fig. 06). The reconstruction was finally housed in the gardens of *Hôtel d'Aumont*, a site that was perhaps less critical from a social point of view but undoubtedly more fortunate. Its smaller size allowed the monumentality of the three floors that were reconstructed for the occasion to attain a spectacular artistic autonomy and, in this gentler setting, to take on a strange beauty while maintaining the contrast of scales and the different conception of domestic life that the project proposed.

The success of the project's presentation at the *Nuit Blanche* was such a success⁴ that one year later, in May 2014, the work was exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo as part of the exhibition "*Banlieue is beautiful*"⁵ promoted by the American artist Monte Laster. This new exhibition of the monumental work of the GHJ façade had the effect of consolidating the proposal's status as an artistic object, thus exhibited in a museum, even though it was dressed in the same experimental and unconventional ways as those of the regenerated building by Lacaton and Vassal in which it was housed (fig. 07).

Once the exhibition tour was over, the pieces of the great puzzle of the GHJ façade returned to Daniel Purroy's atelier in *Les Ardoines*, in *Vitry-sur-Seine*, where they remain perfectly stored to this day. They accompany the development of other projects by the artist who, in a certain sense, has become the custodian of the archive which contains the memory of a building demolished just over ten years ago.

CITÉ BALZAC

Beyond the greater or lesser appeal of Purroy's installation, it is worth asking about the background and objectives behind the artistic project that took place in the GHJ building in Cité Balzac.

Cité Balzac was built between 1964 and 1968 by the Italian-born architect Mario Capra to house a thousand families who had immigrated from the former colonies to the Parisian suburbs in response to the urgent need for labour that the French capital was experiencing at the time.

It was part of the ambitious programme of social housing construction that led to the appearance of a number of similar examples which were built, as in *Vitry-sur-Seine*, in many other towns in *L'Île-de-France*. They were all designed with the same parameters: high density and functional design using large prismatic concrete blocks and serial façade solutions. These sadly famous '*barres HLM*' (*habitations à loyer modéré*) would end up becoming symbols of marginality and delinquency⁶.

Mario Capra, an admirer of Oscar Niemeyer's work in Brasilia, designed *Cité Balzac* as a fragment of the city which was created *ex-novo* to be the political capital of Brazil. Niemeyer himself, then in exile in Paris, was present at the inauguration of the neighbourhood and, accompanied by the project's architect, visited the large exhibition on the urban planning of *Vitry-sur-Seine* that was organised for the event⁷ (fig. 08).

The typologies used in the dwellings, with all exterior rooms, cross-ventilation and terraces, and the large, tree-lined adjacent public spaces, welcomed their new inhabitants by offering them a new way of living that they had not known in their countries of origin. The operation was an early success. The neighbourhood offered good standards of liveability and older residents recalled, on the occasion of the demolition of the HLMs, how in the early years the neighbourhood had been highly valued by its residents, both for the quality of its modern accommodation and for the fertile coexistence that had developed between the different social groups.

The first problems arose in the early 1980s. Fifteen years later, the spatial quality of the housing was not enough to alleviate the precariousness of the inhabitants' lives. The slow development of the urban transport system and the lack of facilities did not help either. In addition, the first pathologies began to appear as a result of deficient construction using prefabricated concrete systems that were not sufficiently tested and even the presence of asbestos. All this, together with a lack of maintenance, meant that the initial idyllic image was gradually tarnished⁸. The administration then launched a project to rehabilitate the complex, directed by the architect Guy Duval, with the intention of restoring some of the district's former splendour and putting an end to the physical and social ruin that it was suffering.

However, this renewal was not very successful and by the end of the century the image of *Cité Balzac* had deteriorated even further. The loss of clear horizons for the new generations, faced with the monsters of unemployment and school failure, ended up pushing the neighbourhood as a whole towards marginality with a consequent increase in delinquency and conflict in its streets. Added to all this was the growing difficulty French society was having in accommodating certain groups, such as Muslims, who were on the rise and drifting towards radicalism, which even today threatens to end in a violent cultural clash.

THE GHJ BUILDING

The GHJ building was one of the three '*barres*' built by Mario Capra in 1967 in *Cité Balzac*. It housed 168 families on fourteen floors above a high ground floor (45 m high in total). Like the rest of the neighbourhood and with the objectives already mentioned, it was renovated in 1989; a prefabricated cladding was installed on its original façade to correct the damp and improve energy performance.

However the episode that most marked the GHJ occurred on 4 October 2002, when the burnt body of young Sohane Benziane was found in the building's bin room. Although she fought for her life, she died in hospital just two hours later. Her killer, a 19-year-old North African, tried to defend himself by claiming that it was a crime of passion, but the courts did not believe him and society mobilised against the disregard for life that was revealed by the brutal murder. The fact that the victim was a woman especially galvanised the female community, not only Muslims, and Sohane became a symbol for the feminist movement that launched the slogan "*Ni Putes Ni Soumises*" which eventually spread beyond the borders of France to the rest of Europe⁹.

The decline of the neighbourhood, pushed further by these events, led to the demolition of the ABC and DEF *barres* in 2007 and 2010 respectively¹⁰. In the case of the GHJ, marked by the cruel murder of the young woman, the first evictions began in 2005

and the building remained empty long before its demolition. By the time it was demolished in September 2012, it had long since achieved the status of a sad symbol of a social initiative, full of good intentions, which had ended in total failure¹¹.

DEMOLITION OF CITÉ BALZAC AND OTHER SIMILAR NEIGHBOURHOODS

Although the demolition of the GHJ was strikingly symbolic and its media repercussion was highly significant (fig. 09), it was by no means an isolated case. Many of the housing estates built around the same time and with the same parameters

on the outskirts of Paris followed the same path, with the demolition of their larger buildings and a profound remodelling of the rest of their layout. This was something that had also happened outside of this setting. In the last quarter of the 20th century, numerous urban developments on the outskirts of large cities, built according to the radical directives of the Modern Movement and intended for social use, entered a spiral of degradation that turned them into veritable ghettos of marginalisation whose radical solution was demolition. The best known case is the *Pruitt-Igoe* complex in St Louis, Missouri, whose total demolition in 1972 was hailed by the British critic Charles Jenks as the end point of Modern Architecture¹².

In the Paris area, the demolition of *Cité Balzac* and other *grands-ensembles* built around the same time was part of a broad urban renewal plan that sought to break with the status of unhealthy ghettos for the underprivileged classes. It aimed to replace them with new housing developments with a much lower density and a new design that would make them attractive to the middle classes and thus move towards a more open and diverse profile for their inhabitants, even allowing the possibility of access to property ownership.

To this end, the PNRU (*Plan National de Renovation Urbaine*) was created in 1996, which identified a total of 751 urban areas affected by the same problems¹³. Although social measures were initially implemented, it soon became clear that a spatial reconversion of the different neighbourhoods was necessary and in 1998 the alternative of demolishing the most problematic buildings was approved. This operation was combined with comprehensive rehabilitation work, such as that led by Frédéric Druot, Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, and a facelift for buildings with a friendlier volumetry¹⁴ (fig. 10).

Thus, in *Cité Balzac*, the successive destruction of the three original *barres* was accompanied by a radical transformation of the neighbourhood's physiognomy: the linear *Malleret-Joinville* block was cut back, a new avenue was opened and the urban voids were filled with new, lower-density built-up areas. Today the neighbourhood has a different image, with a markedly residential character, and its population has been renewed in part because, although many of its former inhabitants have moved away, a significant number have also decided to remain in the remodelled development¹⁵.

ON THE LIFE OF BUILDINGS

Based on his experience in areas similar to those of *Cité Balzac*, Jean-Philippe Vassal stated that "people do not want to be evicted from large housing estates, they feel deeply attached to their flat"¹⁶. This was one of Lacaton and Vassal's most important

premises in their struggle within the PNRU for a different response to the systematic demolition of buildings, based on economic, social and ecological arguments that advocated transformation by making existing buildings better. At that time, this strategy marked a change of trend towards a more sustainable architecture which was awarded the Pritzker Prize in 2021.

Nonetheless, many buildings were demolished and thousands of families were displaced from their homes in the

Paris area alone. For those who suffered, for all those demolished buildings, the story in this article describes an artistic process that tried to mediate by focusing on the battered building and, once its demolition had been carried out, on the inevitable mourning of its inhabitants. Artistic actions were used in order to deal with healing the relationship with their memories¹⁷. The fact that in this event the building was once again present, represented by its fragments, and the neighbours were also present in each stage of the project, is related to the aesthetic-pedagogical thinking of the German Joseph Beuys and his view of art and the artist as a social transformer¹⁸, which Daniel Purroy himself refers to as an influence.

Another possible reflection derived from Purroy's work with the GHJ is related to the suitability of the social space for fostering an encounter between art and architecture. By focussing on the destination of the work of both disciplines and underlining their shared condition as a service, the tools that correspond to each of them become blurred, as do their limits or frontiers. The capacity to influence social construction, which both artists and architects have, implies a responsibility that should act as a brake on the narcissistic temptations that often assail them.

In this way, in recovering some of the architectural elements of the '*barre*' of *Cité Balzac* and in establishing a new relationship between them, a modification of their meaning is achieved, eliminating the negative connotations attached to the original object. A new recomposed image is offered which is capable of acquiring new meanings of a very different order from the previous ones, which even allow the new object to be considered as a work of art, as it was presented in the exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo.

All this means that, returning to the question of the life of buildings and their memory, we can affirm that the GHJ shows us, perhaps too emphatically, how buildings, once built and inhabited, have their own life which gives them a symbolic significance or reduces them to anonymity due to circumstances that rarely have anything to do with the intentions that guided the architects in their design process.

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Notes

01. <https://dpurroy.wixsite.com/projets> (ac **02.** In the process, Purroy was accompanied by Charles Robinson <http://charles-robinson.blogspot.com/> (consulted on 13 February 2023) and Pasquale Calone <https://www.pasqualecalone.com/video> (consulted on 13 February 2023), an Italian writer and filmmaker-photographer. The presence of these two artists, together with some other collaborators, gave the initiative a plural and multidisciplinary dimension.

03. <https://www.instagram.com/corinnejanierceramique/?hl=es> (accessed 4 February 2023).

04. The project was reported in various media: "Un mur de cité reconstitué devant la façade de l'hôtel d'Aumont" in *Le Parisien* iv, 21 September 2013; "Offrez à Paris un morceau de la cité Balzac" in *Val de Marne Matin*, 21 September 2013; "Quand la cité Balzac s'installe rive droite" in *L'humanité*, 4-5-6 October 2013, p. 23; "Un mur de cité Balzac reconstitué devant la façade de l'hôtel d'Aumont" in *Le Parisien* iv, 21 September 2013; "Offrez à Paris un morceau de la cité Balzac" in *L'humanité*, 4-5-6 October 2013, p. 23. "A piece of suburb transplanted to Paris" in *Diario de Navarra*, 11 October 2013, p. 61.

05. Palais de Tokyo, "Banlieue is beautiful", <https://palaisdetokyo.com/evenement/banlieue-is-beautiful/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgNOOGPURIM> (accessed 19 January 2023).

06. On the importance of the HLM institution in France and the current state of social housing in France, see STÉBÉ, Jean-Marc, *Le Logement social en France*, PUF, Paris, 2022.

07. Cfr. INGLEZ DE SOUZA, D., *Tumulte dans l'ensemble. Logement, utopie et urbanisation dans les limites de deux métropoles contemporaines*. PhD Thesis, São Paulo-Paris 2014, p. 8.

08. MANZANO's text gathers testimonies from the neighbours of *Cité Balzac* which show its first sweet moment "it was a good time (...) there were always people outside, I remember, in summer the mothers used to

make us go out, and they would sit outside until 11 o'clock at night (...) yes, it was nice" as well as its subsequent degradation "there was vandalism, broken shop windows, (...) They would race motorbikes through the aisles, cars would go inside the shopping centre" in MANZANO GÓMEZ, Noel Antonio, "Espacio Público en una periferia de París: Vitry-Sur-Seine", in *Ciudades*, 2014, 17, pp. 208-211.

09. The slogan became the name of the movement led by Fadela Amara, under which she published a book on feminism in 2006. AMARA, Fadela, *Ni Putas ni Sumisas*, ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 2006.

10. Le Parisien, "Démolition d'une tour de la cité Balzac à Vitry", *Journal de Paris*, <https://www.leparisien.fr/val-de-marne-94/demolition-d-une-tour-de-la-cite-balzac-a-vitry-02-01-2007-2007643642.php> (accessed 19 January 2023).

11. *Le Moniteur*, "Fin des démolitions dans la cité Balzac", Newsletter Grand Paris - Ile-de-France, <https://www.lemoniteur.fr/article/fin-des-demolitions-dans-la-cite-balzac.1403869> (accessed 19 January 2023).

12. "Modern architecture died in St. Louis, Missouri, on 15 July 1972 at 3:32 p.m. (or thereabouts), when several blocks of the infamous Pruitt Igoe project were shot to death with dynamite. Prior to that, they had been vandalised, mutilated and disfigured by their black residents and, although millions of dollars were invested in trying to preserve the place (repairing lifts, windows or repainting everything) it was put out of its misery" JENCKS C., (1978) *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, New York: Rizzoli, p. 24.

13. On the work of the PNRU see ANRU (Agence Nationale pour la Rénovation Urbaine), *Le Programme National de Rénovation Urbaine* (PNRU), <https://www.anru.fr/le-programme-national-de-renovation-urbaine-pnru> (accessed January 19, 2023).

14. On the results of the Renovation Plan, see CASTRILLO ROMÓN, María, "El urbanismo de renovación de grandes conjuntos de vivienda social en Francia, 2004-2008"

in *Revista Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura*, 2, 2010, pp. 54-67.

15. EPSTEIN, Renaud, "ANRU: mission accomplie?" in DONZELOT, Jacques -dir.- *A quoi sert la rénovation urbaine?* PUF, Paris, 2012.

16. DRUOT, F.; LACATON, A.; VASSAL, J. P. *Plus*, Ed. Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2007, p. 92.

17. The process of the artistic work in relation to the GHJ building was, at all times, documented by the artist himself and his collaborators. On the YouTube platform, it is currently possible to access the documentary that was made with the different photographs and recordings that were collected during its development <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzQZrthUzac> (accessed on 19 January 2023).

18. See BODENMANN-RITTER, Clara; BEUYS, Joseph. *Joseph Beuys: Every Man, an Artist; Conversations in Documenta 5-1972*. Visor, 1995.

Images

01. (corresponds to the image that opens the article)
Image of Daniel Purroy's installation in the gardens of Hôtel d'Aumont. Source: Archive of Daniel Purroy.

02. Images of the performance in the gardens of Hôtel d'Aumont. Source: Archive of Daniel Purroy.

03. Sequence of images of the dismantling of the façade of the GHJ building. Source: Archive of Daniel Purroy.

04. Sequence of images of the first assembled module and its protagonists. Source: Archive of Daniel Purroy.

05. Wallpapers and rubble that form part of La Cité Balzac project. Sequence of images of the interior of the dwellings. Source: Archive of Daniel Purroy and Corinne Janier.

06. Initial proposal for the Cité Balzac installation in the courtyard of the Louvre Museum. Source: Archive of Daniel Purroy.

07. Façade of the GHJ building in the exhibition "Banlieue is beautiful", Palais de Tokyo, 2014. Photographer: Christophe Fillieule.

08. The visit of Georges Gosnat, Oscar Niemeyer and Mario Capra to the Vitry Urban Planning Exhibition. Source: *Tumulte dans l'ensemble*, Diego Beja Inglez de Souza.

09. Footage of the demolition of the GHJ. Source: Archive of Daniel Purroy.

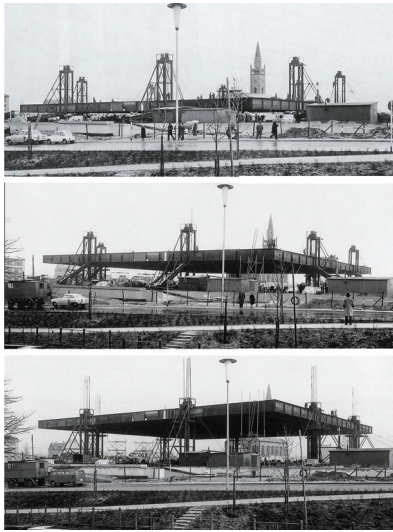
10. Image of Cité Balzac. In black, the original buildings still standing; in white, the demolished ones. Source: own elaboration.

04

Dialogue of Opposites. Greek Stories in the Mies Museum in Berlin

Ángel Martínez García-Posada

Through a review of some ephemeral occupations of the entrance floor of the Mies' Neue National Gallery in Berlin, inaugurated in 1968 with an exhibition dedicated to Piet Mondrian designed by Mies, some singularities of this construction are unravelled, and some stories about the relationship between the architect and some artists are threaded together. In this way a sketch is drawn of the life in time of this museum, which finds in David Chipperfield's recent double work, that of his temporary installation *Sticks and Stones* before its closure for a few years to carry out the renovation work on the building, and that of this long process that ended with the museographic repartition with the significant exhibition of Alexander Calder; a way of interweaving temporary narratives about architecture, construction and art.



In the summer of 2021 the Neue National Gallery in Berlin, the last major project of Mies van der Rohe's career and at last his first major work in his city, opened to the public in 1968, just a few months before his death. We know those images in which the German architect, aged, without the strength to direct the works, contemplates from the car the evolution of the works, with that singular hydraulic mechanism that would make the project appear in a slow dance: on the great podium, the reticular metallic platform of the roof had been placed, then it would be raised with cranes, one for each of the eight pillars that today support it, escaping from the corners, two on each side of the quadrangular perimeter of this cover that surpasses the inner square of glass that closes the access floor. (fig. 01).

This structural choreography made it possible for the roof to be detached from the paradigm of the plinth in the manner of a canopy. Between one plane and another, the air that appeared, as if separating the plates of a condenser, gave volume —life— to the museum's famous lobby, a sublimation of the notion of neutral and potential vacuum. The duality of the Modern Movement, between

functionalism and rationalism, could be explained in the conversation between the two almost neighbouring pieces in the Kulturforum, Hans Scharoun's Berliner Philharmonie, completed five years earlier, and Mies's national gallery. Scharoun's building, which some say was expressionist, was a functionalist display, its form was indebted to its function, the arrangement of its trays in the auditorium or the silhouette of the building were a response to the study of the propagation of sound, so that expressionism would be nothing more than the expression of wave mechanics, in an architectural demonstration of that verse by Baudelaire, "music digs up the sky"; Mies' work, in its Cartesian regularity, in its abstraction, in its structural clarity, configured a space available for any occupation.

I often point out to my students the wisdom of William Curtis's difficult choice of a single cover for his seminal book *Modern Architecture Since 1900*. Invariably in the various editions, the 1923 Miesian drawing for his theoretical proposal —like a manifesto— of the brick house in the countryside (fig. 02) appears as the façade. With its escape inwards or outwards, the plan summarises in its ambiguous indeterminacy some of Mies's lessons about fluid space, open and closed at the same time, like a temple made of walls that would have swirled together, diluting any idea of enclosure until it embraces the floor of the world that continues where the lines are interrupted only because the graphite of three of them reaches the end of the paper. At the same time, the drawing embodies the current between avant-gardes, recalling that Mies saw in Piet Mondrian's graphic order the seed of a new architecture. It may also be that Mondrian, who had begun by painting trees, intuited that new order by looking at the drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright —his German portfolio spread throughout Central Europe in the second decade of the century was highly appreciated by that generation of artists - and his eagerness to break out of the box. More round trips between architecture and art. If we could accompany that foundational floor plan of the brick house in the territory with a photograph, to resonate this thread between creative disciplines, it could be that of the recently opened Berlin gallery, hosting the inaugural exhibition dedicated to Mondrian, in a thrilling coherence: the culminating work of the architect who had built his avant-garde by knowing how to see a clue in the neoplastic grids, then served to pay tribute to the Dutch painter. It was, of course, Mies himself, in whose career exhibition design would play a key role, who designed this installation: He himself would thus prove the capacity of his clearing in the Berlin forest to accommodate heterogeneous uses, arranging a series of planes that hung from the ceiling, giving meaning to his steel grid, and flew over the floor, occupying the intermediate strip of air between one and the other, as the roof once did in the process of construction, architecturing a Mondrian of white panels where, as still today in the snapshot, some of his paintings could be seen, inviting the viewer to make the journey from the three dimensions of the project to the two of the canvases, in the opposite direction to that which Mies had discovered by looking at Mondrian half a century earlier (fig. 03).

After that first scenography on the entrance level of the Berlin museum, several others were to follow, as well as other artists in dialogue with Mies and other architectural exhibitions, such as those of Rem Koolhaas or Herzog and de Meuron, who designed the staging to tell the story of their own work. The series has produced some interesting encounters. Throughout, a single work has remained a witness to this sequence, Alexander Calder's *Head and Tails*, which Mies placed on the museum's stone pedestal, offset from one of the corners of the roof, in a three-way carom that stitches together Calder's steel piece, Mies's modern temple, and the nineteenth-century church of St. Matthäus (fig. 04).

The contrast between the organicity of nature, here evoked in the figuration of the title of Calder's work, was one of Mies's permanent quests: the artist's enormous *Flamingo*, which looks like a creature paused between the geometric purity of the vertical prism and Mies's horizontal one in Federal Plaza in Chicago (fig. 05); the

woman shielding her eyes from the morning sun in George Kolbe's *Sunrise* between the tense walls of the Barcelona pavilion, as in other earlier exhibition projects Mies had tried placing a sculpture on the other side of a pane of glass, sketching this same contrapuntal exercise; nature contemplated, through or reflected, in the glass of the Farnsworth House. It is true that Kolbe's sculpture had been intended for placement in a Berlin garden alongside another sister figure, the *Sunset*, and that it was Lily Reich who called Mies, who was on a site visit to Barcelona, and announced that he had found a figure that would be perfect in the smaller of the two ponds in his exhibition architecture in Barcelona; it is also true that some of Mies's preliminary drawings for the German pavilion did point to a sculptural presence in that space, as yet without a clear form, not even indisputably human, but organic. If the relationship with the figure of Kolbe was thus supervening, by virtue of Reich's intuition, it is conceivable that already at that last moment of his life, when the museum was being completed, it was Mies who chose Calder's work, perhaps seeing in it a suitable conciliation between nature and abstraction, which synthesised his enquiry into the duality between geometry and organicism.

There is in this conversation between Mies and Calder a beautiful dissociation between the mobile and the static, which at the same time refers to the entente between Calder and Mondrian: the American sculptor recounted that he had found his artistic path the day he visited Mondrian's studio, as neatly ordered as one of his paintings, and imagined that a sudden wind began to move those masses of colours through the air and kept them in suspension, as Mies's Berlin roof seemed to be for a few hours. Calder's static steel pieces, like the one that still stands outside the Mies museum, seem to me to be less successful than his mobiles, perhaps because I am attracted by the artist's narrative fiction that situates the magical idea of a sculpture that moves in the reverie of a painting that takes flight, also because of its agreement of opposites. It is difficult to escape the childish fascination aroused by these context-sensitive artefacts, like toys in cradles, to which one as an adult adds the constancy that this requires a structural calculation that guarantees the miracle of orbiting equilibrium. While that of the flamboyant red creature from Chicago is accomplished, some of the others seem to me to be over-inflated in their barracks, welds and rivets, over-muscled, less challenging and playful than the wiry rods that can change direction or speed depending on the atmosphere. Although their form is beautiful, I do not find them so much merit, beyond the exercise, in the wake of Paul Klee, of being between abstraction and the figuration of organic rumour.

The two Calderian families, the rigid steel works and the wire mobiles, operate on the idea of estrangement, that of the connection of one thing with its opposite: some, by their stillness, unlike the fauna or flora to which they allude; others, in captivating metalinguistic intensity, for having given movement to the traditional immobility of sculpture, which is essentially static. We could also evoke the exceptional nature of *Mercury Fountain*, which in 1937 was exhibited alongside Picasso's *Guernica* in José Luis Sert's Paris pavilion for the Spanish Republic: by replacing water with mercury, by tricking the expected weight, the movement of the drops in the sculpture's basins would give rise to a hypnotic contemplation, as is still possible today in Sert's building for the Miró Foundation in Barcelona; the idea of drops with the appearance of molten metal, another way of undermining the idea of stability, would then have an added semantic charge in those times of conflict.

If the celebration of Mondrian's exhibition inaugurating Mies's museum was symbolic, it would also be symbolic if after the new opening in 2021, almost half a century after Mies's death, Calder was the first artist to be exhibited in a new occupation of that square covered on the plinth (fig. 06). Mondrian and Calder are seemingly antithetical extremes in the line of abstraction: in one of them this essentialisation pretends to be orderly but is playful, like Mondrian

trying out American ribbon paintings in New York towards the end of his life; in the other it is seemingly unruly, like the American sculptor's eternal big-boy smile, and yet involves great rigour, so that the cut-outs remain on the ground as if that wind had not ceased. When we see Calder's forms fluttering, making the conventional idea of sculpture move, we are reminded of Isadora Duncan —like a classical statue come to life— dancing between the columns of the Parthenon, prolonging the static building with the breeze that stirred her clothes and her arms swaying like the columns. Verlaine described Rimbaud as the man with the soles of the wind. If it seemed to Calder that a current was entering Mondrian's studio, it is as if it were still passing, just as in that Dylan Thomas proclamation in which, like an anti-gravitational incantation, he defined poetry thus: "the ball I threw when I played in the park has not yet touched the ground".

Between the first Mondrian exhibition with the inauguration and the Calder exhibition after the new opening, there have been other subtle presences in that framework. Keith Sonnier's intervention in 2002 sought to make explicit, perhaps quite literally, Mies's connection with Mondrian, using the lines of the porticoes to draw fibre mondrians with tubular lights in primary colours. Jenny Holzer's used those same lines of steel ribs on the roof to parade messages in flashes that seemed to write words that were also reflected on the floor and on the glass. Of all of them, Mark Wallinger's *Sleeper* in 2004 is dear to me because it was both endearing and provocative, because it made nods to other Duchampian moments in art, such as Joseph Beuys and the coyote performance in downtown New York, and because it seemed to understand well the uniqueness of the building. In it, Wallinger disguised himself as a bear, and looked himself in solitude in that fishbowl that could be the upper floor of the museum, interacting with the visitors on the other side of the glass, or strolling on the floor, in an animal longing for the absent forest (fig. 07).

For ten nights in October, between 10:00 and 1:00, the artist walked that stage. He would later shoot a video that he would present at the Venice Biennale in 2005 and which would later win the Turner Prize; you can imagine the reaction in the British tabloids, with the play on words with the English infinitive "to bear", which was skilfully translated in the Spanish paragon with the verb "osar", the most daring prize. Wallinger's action was full of suggestive clues, while still being the defiant deed of a guy who disguised himself as a bear and engraved himself in a museum, more fire for the notion of art as displacement of context. The title alluded to the term by which in the Germanic socialist regime people called police informers, veiled as hibernating witnesses. The figure of the bear was also the emblem of the city, and this tourist icon is still almost everywhere. The site-specific accent of his confinement was clear: in another building, his fierce disguise would have been very different. In some of his comments in those days Wallinger seemed to be critical of the idea of transparency of the Miesian project, his discourse was somewhat alien to the architectural, uninteresting, somewhat cryptic; a pity, I still see virtues in the corporeality of the bear, precisely in that building, although they seem unsuspected for its author, bent on other causes.

In the succession of temporary occupations of that space, it is suggestive that a few months before the Mies museum was temporarily closed for a total of seven years, in 2014, the architect in charge of the building's renovation work, David Chipperfield, devised an intervention that came to blow in all these paradigms, intertwining, like Mies with Mondrian or Calder, architecture with art. The installation *Sitoks and Stones*, surreal and at the same time material, was powerful and attractive in both the artistic and architectural registers, for here they were one and the same. In this Berlin roofed void, which we have already described as a clearing in the forest, the British architect came to recover the lost forest, which Wallinger's bear longed for, by placing a trunk, shod with

stone slabs, at each intersection in the metal checkerboard of the roof, opposing the rusticity of the irregular wood of each stalk with the smooth perfection of the steel (fig. 08).

Seen from the perspective of the trunk, it is as if the tops were now the canopy. Seen from nature, it is as if the forest that was emptied had reappeared. Seen from the skin of a bear, perhaps that environment was now a less ungrateful place. Seen from quantum physics, it is as if the temple were both there and not there, as if the forest were both alive and dead. Seen from the theory of relativity it was as if time was both eternal and transitory. Seen from the Zen continuum, emptiness and forest were the same. Seen from the point of view of art, between minimalist and conceptual, the trunks made that void visible, which was now temporarily absent, like those actions in which Martin Creed introduced balloons into the volumetry of certain museums until they occupied a percentage of the air stated in the title of each piece in the series. Seen from the complicity with Beuys, if Wallinger's was associated with the action with the coyote, this is comparable to his *7000 Oak Trees*. Seen from the pictorial decoy, it is as if we were returning not from Mies to the Mondrian of the plots, but to the Mondrian of the trees first. Seen from the immediacy of the work, it was as if it were finished or as if it were about to begin. Seen from the translocated masonry, it was like attaching props to a material that doesn't need them, or like contrasting the simplicity of wood with the technology of steel. Seen from Mies' research, the dissimilarity between nature and artifice appeared sublimated. Seen from the history of architecture, the Mosque of Cordoba was brought to the Germanic cultural epicentre, or allusion was made to the Japanese temple that is built in wood and leaves a small wooden pillar on the adjoining empty space as the only pattern of the fallow area, where the new one will be built when the existing one is dismantled, or the mutual appreciation between Wright and Mies was again hinted at, evoking the Johnson Wax hall in Wisconsin.

From the ancestral architectural paradigm, it is as if the connection between Mies's project and the church had now been underlined in this crossroads of hypotheses: Mies's structural premise was transposed by the removal of the pillars from the inside to the outside, as if the interior of Peter Zumthor's Bruder Klaus Chapel in the countryside had been reattached to the trunks that gave it form and then burned, referring with their absence to the material invisibility of spirituality; the engraving on the cover of Marc Antoine Laugier's *Essay on the Origin of Architecture*, in which the goddess pointed out to the angel the origin of the temple by observing the trees, became literal; it was evident from the metaphorical verse that Mies was a temple builder, because the rows of trunks now resembled columns around a cella, among which Duncan could have danced. It is worth remembering that the archetype of the Greek temple, in a centuries-long decantation, ended up as a result of the properties of wood, which made it necessary to overhang the roof beyond the walls to protect them from the dampness of the heads of the beams, or which had that exact slope to prevent the slabs that made up the roof from falling; later on, when the improvement of the construction process made it possible to build it in stone, the slope and the angle would remain, no longer as a logical reason but as an attribute, even an ornament, as was the case with the triglyphs and metopes, which made sense when the wooden pieces had to be fastened together like carpentry knots. Mies, on the other hand, did make his timeless temples different in form but not in essence, making the most of steel, hence the flat roof, hence the eight pillars where they were.

We also find in Chipperfield's intervention prior to the closure another suggestive ambivalence: the English architect's work to renovate Mies's project was intended, in commendable discretion, to leave no trace of authorship that would eclipse the original project, as would be verified as soon as the museum reopened, and yet it is already difficult to avoid the memory of this ephemeral

action of a few days prior to the seven-year intervention —three months as opposed to three years, that was the initial estimate of the calendar— even though the studied fixing of those sticks and stones was intended to leave no trace, and indeed they did not leave any physical mark. With his installation Chipperfield was assembling the forest that progress had been dismantling, recovering the value of the column, inventing rooms and settings where before and after would have been clear, making complementary truths coexist: in his elegant diplomacy of wood and stone —*sticks and stones* is the beginning of a popular rhyme among British children— before dismantling and reassembling Mies's work, he was shaking up the very concept of that space, recalling what Saenz de Oiza said: "An architect, when he has true inner strength, has to say with García Lorca I will break all the Parthenons at night and raise them every morning".

We continue to inhabit a land of paradoxes: the architectural renovation operation has rejuvenated the building, going back up to half a century, renovating the steel or the stone, and although it seems that nothing has been done, it has been a long and arduous job, updating the original building with as little visual and structural impact as possible, dismantling the stone cladding and other interior elements, removing thousands of pieces to restore them before returning them to their original position, introducing new installations and improving the technical functions of the original building; the artistic intervention —as much artistic as architectural— has allowed a return to the very conceptual origins of the architecture.

Chipperfield has played with time. With his work of seven years he has achieved the fiction that time had not passed in Mies's project, that the wind had continued to blow, while in his ephemeral installation he has played at turning back the clock by many centuries. A little less than Chipperfield's installation, in 2017, Anna and Eugeni Bach carried out a fortunate manipulation of Mies' project, of which I would also like to write sometime, that in certain significant and metarchitectural keys, is not far removed from this one in Berlin, when they achieved the alchemy of making the materiality of the German pavilion in Barcelona disappear, as if they could go back in the almanac, to the moment when the project was just a paper model on the table of their studio. In the dazzling opening of Anna Michaels' *The Winter Vault* we read this subjugating passage, which also hovers over this convulsion in the timeline that changes direction as the air changes direction: "Perhaps we painted on our own skin, with ochre and charcoal, long before we painted on stone. But forty thousand years ago, in any case, we left handprints painted on the walls of the caves of Lascaux, Ardennes, Chauvet. The black pigment used to paint the animals at Lascaux was composed of manganese dioxide and ground quartz, and almost half of the mixture was calcium phosphate. To make calcium phosphate you have to heat bones to four hundred degrees centigrade, and then grind them. We made paint from the bones of the animals we painted. No image forgets this image. The future casts its shadow on the past.

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Images

01. Elevation of the roof of the Neue National Gallery, Berlin. Mies van der Rohe. 5 April 1967.

02. Mies van der Rohe. Brick Country House. 1923.

03. Mies van der Rohe. Montage for the inaugural exhibition at the Neue National Gallery in Berlin dedicated to Mondrian. 1968.

04. Alexander Calder. *Heads and Tails*. Berlin. 1965.

05. Alexander Calder. *Flamingo*. Federal Plaza, Chicago. Mies van der Rohe. 1974.

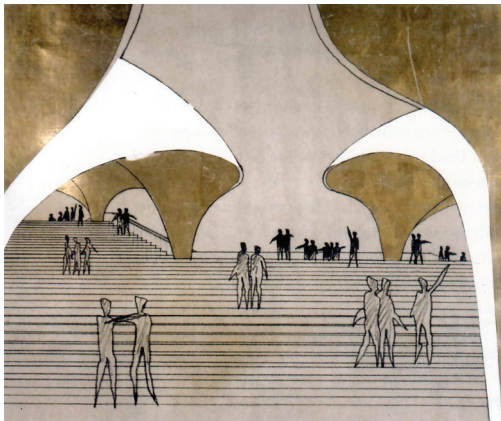
06. Alexander Calder. 3 *Segments*. 1973. Alexander Calder exhibition at the Neue National Gallery, Berlin. 2021.

07. Mark Wallinger. *Sleeper*. Neue National Gallery, Berlin. 2005.

08. David Chipperfield. *Sticks and Stones*. Temporary installation at the Neue National Gallery, Berlin. 2014.

05 The Life of a Design: the Sydney Opera House Carles Muro

The Sydney Opera House is capable of representing not only the city of Sydney, but also the whole of Australia. It is also one of the most unique works of architecture to be built in the third quarter of the 20th century. However, the process by which Jørn Utzon's brilliant competition entry was transformed into an internationally recognised building was far from smooth. Taking the Sydney Opera House as a case study, this article explores how architecture is brought to life and argues that a design is not necessarily a closed, sealed, lifeless document that enables a fully defined building to be constructed with no alterations, but that the construction of a work of architecture inevitably entails changes as part of a process of negotiation shaped by multiple parameters, some of which are impossible to foresee. Utzon's design for the Sydney Opera House not only met the competition requirements but also raised questions. The answer to these questions only became apparent in the process of implementing the design.



1. On 20 October 1973, Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom, who was also the Sovereign of Australia, officially inaugurated the Sydney Opera House. The ceremony brought a symbolic end to the beleaguered saga of its construction and marked the start of its life as a building, which would serve as an opera house¹ and concert hall.

From that point on, the Sydney Opera House could be said to have had a good life, filled with satisfaction and recognition. In a very short space of time, it became the most striking symbol of the city of Sydney and, more broadly, of a still young Australia. Few architectural works have come to represent a city, much less an entire country, quite so intensely².

In her short inaugural speech, which she struggled to deliver due to the strong winds blowing that austral spring morning, Elizabeth II rightly declared:

¹“The Sydney Opera House has captured the imagination of the world, though I understand that its construction has not been totally without problems.”³

Indeed, from the moment when the winning tender project was announced in late January 1957, the distinctive silhouette of its roofs, the founding force of the platform above which they stood and even the way in which the competition entry was portrayed captivated people's imaginations around the world and served as a source of inspiration for many architects.

Meanwhile, as Queen Elizabeth II noted in her speech, the process by which the impressive competition entry was transformed into a robust building was long and difficult. The chaotic story of the construction of the Sydney Opera House is well-known today. Its leading character is heroic architect, Jørn Utzon, who gained almost legendary status with his resignation as project manager for the construction works before they were completed and his departure from Sydney, never to return again.

The aim of these notes is not to reiterate the extraordinary adventure of the Sydney Opera House's construction, but to draw on several key points in this epic saga in order to reflect on one of the meanings of the concept of life applied to architectural design⁴.

2. In December 1967, *Arquitectura* magazine published an article by Félix Candela titled “The scandal of the Sydney Opera House”⁵. The text presents a controversial account of the almost ten-year period between

Utzon starting work on his competition entry in summer 1956 and being forced to resign as project manager of the construction works in February 1966.

Two particular excerpts from the article cast light on the struggle to understand the Sydney Opera House project and, by extension, architectural design as a specific form of knowledge. In the first excerpt, Candela explains:

Nobody had ever constructed a building of the shape and size proposed by Utzon, a monumental sculpture on such a gigantic scale. And nobody —including Utzon himself— had the faintest idea of how it could be built, or even *if* it could be built.

Candela first emphasises the exceptional characteristics of the design in terms of its shape and size, before stating that neither the author of the design nor the jury that selected it knew exactly how it could be built when the winning entry was announced.

What might have been no more than the mere statement of a fact that would be entirely understandable in a project of this scale and character becomes the central focus of a harsh critique by the article's author due to the tone employed, the context and the paragraphs that follow⁶. These words from Félix Candela —whose work forms part of one of the most interesting lines of research on the relationship between form and structure to emerge in the mid-twentieth century— are surprising, as, in my view, they are based on a series of prejudices and misunderstandings regarding what architectural design should or can be.

Candela appears to understand a design to be a series of precise, unalterable instructions for constructing a building. In his eyes, it is a closed, sealed, lifeless document. By extension, the trajectory from design to construction is a linear process that progresses with certainty, without hesitation, along well-trodden paths. These paths lead to a building that yields no surprises and coincides exactly with the architect's original design. In my view, this is a very narrow way of understanding architectural design. This is how it might be understood by a judge or a notary, for example.

However, there are other ways of conceiving what architectural design could or should be. On the one hand, a design is not so much a series of instructions as a set of rules, which are just as precise but open up opportunities rather than shut them down, setting the game in motion and enabling play. On the other, a design is also the seed or embryo of the building, which lies in a dormant

state within it. Here, it is important to recognise that a design has a life of its own and that the architect's main task is to accompany and nurture that life. With his customary poetic precision, Álvaro Siza described this way of engaging with design:

There are times when the design takes on a life of its own. Then it becomes a fickle animal, with restless paws and hesitant eyes. If its transfigurations are not understood or its desires not satisfied beyond its most basic needs, it turns into a monster. If everything in it that seems evident and beautiful is made static, it becomes ridiculous. If it is too constrained, it stops breathing and dies⁷.

In a display of talent, intelligence and determination, Utzon accompanied the life of the Sydney design for as long as he was able, trying to prevent it from turning into a monster, becoming ridiculous or ceasing to breathe. Despite all the struggles he faced, he was able to preserve the intensity that his brilliant competition entry promised and demanded at every stage of its development.

Indeed, as we saw above, nobody knew exactly how to put his design into practice. Both Utzon and the competition jury, however, were completely convinced that it was possible to do so. The main (or at least the most obvious) challenge posed by the design was establishing the geometry of the roofs and identifying a construction system that would allow them to be executed. A few days after the winning entry was announced, the two non-Australian jury members, Eero Saarinen and Leslie Martin, who were aware of the significance of the project and its implementation, showed an unusual degree of engagement when they met with Utzon in London to convey their enthusiasm, offer their support and discuss what to do next. During their meeting, Saarinen and Martin suggested that Utzon contact Ove Arup for support with the design and calculation of the roof structure. Arup enthusiastically joined the project, marking the start of a partnership that was long and fruitful but not free from problems.

It is important to understand that Utzon's design is not only a brilliant response to the competition requirements, it is also a major question mark. Some designs (and architects) raise questions and the Sydney Opera House certainly belongs to this category. At the very least, the questions posed by the project caught the attention of an exceptional jury and one of the best engineers working at the time.

In the second excerpt from the aforementioned article, Félix Candela declares:

But Utzon – unfortunately for him and for the population of Sydney – had to build his design and this is where the problems, which proved almost insurmountable, began.

Unlike Candela, I myself am convinced that the best thing that could have happened to Utzon – and to the population of Sydney – was that his design was built.

No architectural design is without difficulty. Design is a constant negotiation with all the factors (technical, economic, regulatory, programmatic, etc.) that influence it. This process of negotiation does not come to an end when construction begins, much less when new difficulties emerge. In contrast to Candela, the Sydney Opera House design seems to me to be an exemplary case study. The way in which Utzon responded to and resolved the constraints (both external and self-imposed) affecting the conversion of design into building, one by one, merely enriched the design and gave it greater depth.

It is also worth considering a small yet important detail in Candela's text, where he describes the difficulties faced as "almost insurmountable". Indeed, they proved *almost* insurmountable, but they were not ultimately insurmountable. The difference between the two is no trivial matter. Utzon took a series of risks but remained deeply convinced that he and his teams of partners and advisers

would be capable of responding to each and every one of the questions raised. Risk-taking is not synonymous with irresponsibility. On the contrary, it was most likely a sense of responsibility that prompted Utzon to continue to pursue his endeavour. A project that raises questions and opens up new paths must also be able to take certain risks. While the Sydney Opera House was being built, Utzon frequently found himself on the brink of the abyss but he displayed the confidence, training and determination shown by the very best mountaineers as they seek to conquer unexplored peaks, driven by the desire to reach the summit and the conviction that they are capable of doing so.

As we saw earlier, Utzon immediately set to work with Ove Arup's team to address the problem of the roofs⁸. None of the solutions proposed by the engineers was to the architect's complete satisfaction, but Utzon remained convinced that together they would find a solution that would fulfil both the statics requirements and the standards that he himself had imposed. In the meantime, more and more problems built up. Not only was the plot chosen for the Opera House far less suitable for the building than was originally believed when the competition was organised, but in March 1958, after the design development had been submitted⁹ and when the geometry of the roofs had not yet been resolved, it was decided that construction had to begin at the start of the following year for political strategy reasons.

While continuing to work hard on the roofs, Utzon turned his attention to the platform. I would go as far as to say that what interested Utzon the most was the construction of the ground and the precise definition of the large, tiered platform where people could walk around and gather to enjoy concerts and shows¹⁰. The solution adopted for the platform improves and enriches the diagrammatic section of the competition entry. Whereas the architect achieves an impeccable, ample horizontal plane in the upper part, which is surfaced with large slabs of natural stone, the geometry of the large beams supporting it, with a section that changes according to the bending moment, creates a powerful yet delicate texture akin to an immense coffered ceiling above visitors arriving at the theatre by car. This combination of face and underside is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful aspects of the design.

While the platform was being built after more than three years of frequent discussion between the architect and the engineers, who tried out numerous geometric and construction solutions, Utzon finally found a way to solve the issue of the roofs once and for all in October 1961. The roofs could all be made from spherical triangles taken from a single sphere. This solution not only established a geometric relationship between all the elements, but also allowed the structure to be prefabricated, standardised and, eventually, clad in tiles. The conceptual beauty of Utzon's solution is reminiscent of some of the most brilliant mathematical equations¹¹.

Candela criticises Utzon for having to change the profile and the geometry of the roofs, yet architecture must inevitably be transformed as it is built. Utzon did not intend — as Candela appears to suggest, his bias causing him to mistake Utzon's tenacity for petulant, wilful obstinacy — the engineers to find a way to build the exact profile that he had designed for the competition entry. Instead, he was looking for complete convergence between the invention of the form and the solution employed to construct this form. Despite the pressure and difficulty he faced, he never gave up. Utzon managed to find the solution to a problem that he himself had created.

Once the works were underway, Utzon solved the issues raised by the design one by one. Despite varying degrees of difficulty, he remained convinced that the project would come to fruition. First came the platform, then the roofs, and finally the enclosures and the interior finishes in the halls. Although Utzon had already prepared a strategy for both, they were not executed according to his design. When Utzon left Sydney on 28 April 1966, the large platform and

roofs were already in place. Utzon never saw his project completed. However, I would venture to say that the fundamentals of Utzon's architecture for the Opera House were already in place by the time he left Sydney.

The fundamentals of Utzon's architecture are embodied by the relationship between the construction of a horizontal plane suitable for different activities and the roofs floating above the platform at different heights, compressing and dilating the space to create different zones within it. Were it not for climate control, acoustic and safety considerations, the project might well have been completed earlier.

The architecture left behind by Utzon when he left Sydney coincides with his competition entry to a surprising degree. Unlike the other entrants, Utzon opted not to submit an image of his overall design and instead included a wonderful perspective of the space between the two halls, which is shown as a cascade of steps and stands, partially covered on both sides by large white shells with the intrados coated in gold leaf. If Eero Saarinen had returned to Sydney in the middle of 1966, he would no doubt have recognised the space. Were he to have walked across the platform, climbing towards the sea before taking a seat in the highest stands for a rest, I am convinced that he would have deemed the decision he made almost 10 years earlier to have been the right one¹².

3. Since it was inaugurated in 1973, hundreds of concerts, plays and events have been held at the Sydney Opera House. Naturally, the venue's programme has been dominated by opera from the outset and the voices of the best sopranos in the last 25 years of the twentieth century have rung out in its halls, from Jessye Norman to Kiri Te Kanawa. In 1974, the great Australian soprano Joan Sutherland performed for the first time at an opera hall that would eventually come to bear her name¹³.

The best classical and jazz orchestras and soloists have filled the halls of the Sydney Opera House with their music, from the Berlin Philharmonic and the Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields to Ella Fitzgerald and Keith Jarrett. Many of the most well-known figures on the contemporary music scene have also performed at the venue¹⁴.

However, the halls are not the only place where concerts and performances have been held. On many occasions, the large platform has been used for all kinds of shows and events, with its rich topography accommodating a wide range of performers and the crowds who gather to see and hear them. The mood at this open-air stage is often processional, as the performer climbs the platform among the crowds. Besides Queen Elizabeth II, other noteworthy visits to the Sydney Opera House include that of Pope John Paul II in 1986 and Nelson Mandela's speech to 40,000 people a few months after his release from prison in 1990.

Finally, the sheer size of the building has made it suitable as a venue for unique art interventions¹⁵. The Sydney Opera House has always played a central role on occasions when the eyes of millions of viewers around the world have turned to Sydney and Australia. The Opera House was the venue and backdrop for the spectacular firework display held to mark the new millennium. A few months later, in September 2000, Marc Newson created an attractive lighting show on the roofs of the Opera House during the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games. The building's location in Sydney Harbour has contributed to the immense popularity of its nocturnal projections, which can be seen from different parts of the city¹⁶.

In her inaugural speech, Queen Elizabeth II also said:

"The human spirit must sometimes take wings or sails, and create something that is not just utilitarian or commonplace."¹⁷

Almost 50 years after the building was inaugurated, the city of Sydney, which opted to take those wings or sails, paid a unique tribute to the late monarch by projecting her face onto the largest of the sails that Jørn Utzon had unfurled with such great effort in Sydney Harbour¹⁸.

Carles Muro

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Notes

01. The first public performance at the opera house — a production of 'War and Peace' by Sergei Prokofiev — had been held almost a month earlier on 28 September 1973.

02. Perhaps the only constructions to have succeeded in playing a similar role in the public imagination were the Statue of Liberty in New York (1886) and the Eiffel Tower in Paris (1889). However, neither of them is a building as such. It would take an additional 25 years after the inauguration of the Sydney Opera House for another work capable of achieving similar status to appear: the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1997).

03. <https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/our-story/50-years-extraordinary-moments>

04. This essay explores just one possible meaning of the life of a design: the trajectory leading from design to construction. A specific way of translating or converting drawing into substance, in constant negotiation with the constraints imposed by the construction process. What we are talking about here is more commonly referred to as design development. I will address other ways of developing and prolonging the life of projects in which the Sydney Opera House has played a productive role at another time. Every design encompasses and prolongs the life of other designs. It is born of previous designs and serves as fuel for those that come after it. Designs continuously appear, one after the other, changing every time the baton is passed. The Sydney Opera House encompasses and prolongs the life of many other architectural designs. Above all, it prolongs the life of the Maya cities of Uxmal and Chichén Itzá, as well as that of the great platform of Monte Albán, the ancient Zapotec capital, which Utzon discovered during his first trip to Mexico and the United States in 1949. As Utzon's first non-domestic project, the Sydney Opera House is also extended through his own work, with the Elviria competition entries (1960), the theatres in Zurich (1964) and Wolfsburg (1965) and the pared-down Bagsvaerd

Church (1968-1976), among many other projects. Finally, when the winning competition entry was published, it was also extended through the work of many other architects. Identifying traces of Utzon's design in the work of these other architects is an endeavour that I will embark upon at a later date.

05. *Arquitectura*, n.º 108, Madrid, December 1967, pp. 29-34. The text had already been published in the Mexican magazine *Arquitectura* (n.º 298, 1967).

06. Candela describes what happened in Sydney as evidence of "unbridled arrogance" and "disdain for even the most obvious laws of physics". The article was so aggressive in tone that the young Rafael Moneo, who was a member of the magazine's editorial board, published an article defending Utzon in response to Candela's critique in the following issue. In his text, Moneo describes Candela as displaying "premeditated hostility". Rafael Moneo had first-hand knowledge of the episode because he worked with Jørn Utzon at his Hellebaek studio in 1961 and 1962 [see: Moneo, Rafael, "Sobre el escándalo de Sidney", *Arquitectura*, n.º 109, Madrid, January 1968, pp. 52-54].

07. Siza, Álvaro, "Ein Haus zu bauen... / Building a house...", *Daedalos*, n.º 5, Berlin, September 1982, pp. 42-43.

08. The team was initially led by Ronald Jenkins, one of Arup's partners — and "the firm's main theorist", according to Candela — and, later on, by Jack Zunz, who drew up the proposal using spherical triangles. A very young Peter Rice (1935-1992) provided practical support for the project from the outset.

09. The lengthy document submitted by Utzon in March 1958, which contained updated project plans, the development of the platform structure and contributions from different branches of engineering, is equivalent to the design development. The document is known as the "Red Book" due to the colour of its cover.

10. The most significant text written by Utzon conveys his evident fascination with the use of platforms in the history of

architecture. Starting with the Maya constructions at Uxmal and Chichén Itzá, he touches on the Jama Masjid mosque in Delhi and presents an extraordinary reflection on the role of the ground in Japanese architecture, before discussing the Sydney Opera House and the potential held by platforms in contemporary architecture. Utzon, Jørn, "Platforms and Plateaus: Ideas of a Danish Architect", *Zodiac*, n° 10, Milan, 1962, pp. 113-117.

11. Aware of the strength and brilliance of his solution, Utzon commissioned a series of scale models in which spherical triangles were cut out of a spherical shell made from solid wood and painted white to make up half of the roofs. Like a magician, Utzon redesigns the profile of the roofs by hand in a beautiful series of 16 black-and-white photographs [see: "The Sydney Opera House", *Zodiac*, n° 14, Milan, 1965].

12. The competition rules required an image "of the elevation considered by the entrant to be the main facade and/or entrance to the building". The majority of the entrants submitted general views of their designs, but Utzon opted instead to present a fragment of the processional route along the platform. According to the legend surrounding the project, Eero Saarinen played a major role in the jury's selection of Utzon's design. Saarinen's enthusiasm even prompted him to produce a colour view of the Danish architect's design, which he based on the elevations from the competition entry and a walk around Sydney Harbour. This was used by Arthur Baldwinson – an architect who had worked with Maxwell Fry and Gropius in London in the 1930s and who was a colleague of Henry Ingham Ashworth, one of the main proponents of the project and a member of the jury, at the University of Sydney at the time – to create the image that would be used to announce the winning design in the press [*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 January 1957]. The competition rules, known as "The Brown Book" due to the colour of the cover, can be viewed at <https://www.utzon-archives.aau.dk/documents/Folios/the-brown-book/>

13. In October 2012, two years after the Australian soprano singer had died, the opera hall was renamed the "Joan Sutherland Theatre".

14. Prince, Sting, Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson, Patti Smith, Björk... and the list goes on.

15. In March 2010, Spencer Tunick covered the platform at the Sydney Opera House with a thick carpet made up of more than 5,000 naked bodies.

16. In May and June 2009, for example, Brian Eno projected a version of his "77 Million Paintings" onto the roofs of the Sydney Opera House. These projections have become extremely popular and are now a kind of night-time attraction, which are often used for major celebrations in the city.

17. <https://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/our-story/50-years-extraordinary-moments>

18. Queen Elizabeth II died on 8 September 2022 and the projections were on display during the two nights following her death.

Images

01. Perspective of the competition proposal (1956).

02. Queen Elisabeth II during the open ceremony of the Sydney Opera House (October, 20 1973).

03. Drawing of Sydney Opera House by Eero Saarinen in January 1957. The drawing is dedicated to John Joseph Cahill, prime minister of South New Gales between 1952 and 1959 and main promoter.

04. The four jury members in front of a competition perspective by Utzon. From left to right, Henry Ingham Ashworth, Cobden Parkes, Eero Saarinen and Leslie Martin (January 1957).

05. Jørn Utzon hands showing how all roofs have their origin in a single sphere (*Zodiac*, n° 14)

06. Status of works in the moment Utzon leaves Sydney. Photo by Mogens Prip-Buus, one of the main Jørn Utzon collaborators.

07. One of Jørn Utzon's drawings illustrating his essay "Platforms and Plateaus: Ideas of a Danish Architect" [From *Zodiac*, n° 10, 1962].

08. Queen Elisabeth II on display over the roofs of the Sydney Opera House (september, 9-10 2022).

06

Se acabó la fiesta

Kersten Geers



Una fotografía de Bas Princen muestra el rincón de una sala del Pabellón Belga de Venecia. No se ve gran cosa: muros blancos, un suelo cubierto de confeti, sin sillas ni personas. Lo que se echa de menos en la foto es el muro exterior al edificio que hizo de su austera arquitectura (la del pabellón) la protagonista durante la Bienal de Venecia de 2008. El pabellón fue construido en 1907 por Léon Sneyers, un arquitecto belga *art nouveau*. Emulando el edificio de la Secesión de Viena, consistía en un muestrario de tropos arquitectónicos "contemporáneos" en el que no faltaban las pilastras, los frontones y los frescos. Pero sus formas y decoraciones originales no sobrevivieron mucho tiempo. Diversas transformaciones, al principio a manos del propio Sneyers, fueron simplificándolo sucesivamente hasta el punto de dejarlo sin apenas arquitectura, tan solo un cadáver, un marco de re-presentación, un "telón de fondo" profesionalizado para eventos artísticos y arquitectónicos. El muro que levantamos a su alrededor va a su aire respecto del contexto predominante de la Bienal. Construimos un nuevo pabellón que encuadra el Pabellón Belga original. La rampa y el muro perimetrales impiden a los visitantes entrar al edificio desde el eje principal de los Giardini. Una vez dentro, dos o tres

salas dispuestas axialmente, un lucernario al que le retiramos la protección solar, una secuencia, una espacialidad: el edificio como tipo. El muro perimetral estaba compuesto por paneles metálicos galvanizados, y todo el suelo entre sus límites, tanto dentro como fuera del pabellón de Sneyers, cubierto de confeti. Toneladas de confeti por el suelo transmitían a la vez alegría y tristeza. El confeti, al fin y al cabo, solo descansa en el suelo "después de la fiesta". Así era exactamente como nos sentíamos en 2008, ya que, tanto para el pabellón como para nosotros, *la fiesta había acabado*.

Imagen

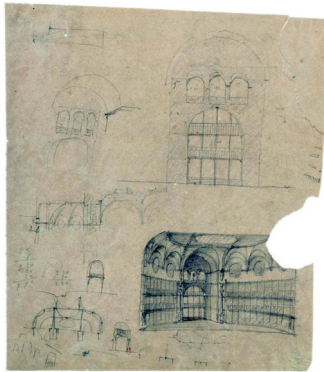
Esquina del Pabellón de Bélgica en Venecia. Fotografía de Bas Princen, 2008.

07

The National Library of France: all the Memory in the World

Gabriela García de Cortázar G.

Through a short documentary film made by Alain Resnais in 1956, titled *Toute la mémoire du monde*, we discover the National Library of France. In the synopsis, the documentary is described as an essay film, while critics hold it up as a lesson in cinema due to its use of tracking shots and its “systematic exploration of the site” in particular. The topic of this essay film is the library as a technique to prevent forgetting, as a repository of ‘all the memory in the world’ and as a mechanism for accessing this memory. This article, meanwhile, reflects on the role of the building itself in this endeavour: how does it convey a specific idea of the library? What is the role of objects, devices and spaces in the life of the library, which revolves around the accumulation, organisation and operation of knowledge? With reference to *Toute la mémoire du monde*, this article not only describes how we know the building designed by Henri Labrousse for the first Imperial Library and for the National Library in the mid-20th century (which welcomed Resnais almost 100 years after Labrousse’s important intervention), but also suggests how we can interpret the relationship between institution and building and the crucial role of architecture in shaping this relationship.



Toute la mémoire du monde is a twenty-minute documentary film in black and white about the Richelieu site of the National Library of France, which occupies a building that was largely designed by Henri Labrousse between 1858 and 1868. The short film was directed by Alain Resnais in 1956. Alain Resnais is better known for his subsequent film, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (with a script by Marguerite Duras), which was awarded the International Critics' Prize at Cannes in 1959, making him a prominent figure in the independent film world. *Toute la mémoire du monde* was commissioned by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is the fifth part in a series titled 'The Encyclopaedia of Paris', which was co-produced by the French national public broadcaster RTF¹. Resnais was named director after Films de la Pléiade had agreed to partially fund the project¹ and the participating institutions (the Ministry, RTF and Julien Cain, director of the National Library of France) had agreed on a documentary format for the film. Resnais based his work on two synopses written by Remo Forlani in 1955, which presented the

National Library through the notions of universal memory and quick access to it via information systems, and of the fortress or prison guarding this memory³. At the time when Alain Resnais was filming *Toute la mémoire du monde*, his most well-known, controversial short film was *Nuit et bruyard* (1956), which explored the German concentration camps, combining devastating black-and-white archive material with new, colour shots of the ruins of the camps. Memory is a recurring theme in Resnais's work.

In *Toute la mémoire du monde*, there is only one shot of the entirety of the National Library of France. A fleeting bird's eye view captures the elongated block that is home to the library. The narrator exclaims: “The library is a model memory, a store for everything printed in France”. The block containing the library is foreshortened, rectangular and divided into six parts, three of which are voids (the Cour d'Honneur, the Jardin —or Carré— Vivienne and the Cour Tubeuf) and three solids: the Oval Room by architect Jean-Louis Pascal and the building by Henri Labrousse, which features two parts: a reading room and a repository. In Resnais's shot, the latter are situated in the nearest corner. The image of the building as a whole is passing and largely irrelevant to the short film. In *Toute la mémoire du monde*, Resnais focuses on everything else instead: fragmented interiors, convoluted passageways and unexpected juxtapositions.

The fragility of human memory, says the narrator, forced people to develop *aides-mémoire* to counter it. For Resnais, these memory aids are specific objects: papers, files, books, medals, cloths, pitchers, games, stones, maps and even records like his documentary (hence the camera and microphone at the start). A documentary must be specific rather than general; it must film *something*. As such, when the narrator reveals the treasures hidden within this “silent citadel”, he shows us the manuscript of the Goncourt Journal, the Codex Peresianus, lost editions of Harry Dickson, the manuscript of Pascal's *Pensées*, the collection of Émile Zola's writings, the Rock of Baghdad, drawings by Villard de Honnecourt, royal medals, a lengthy manuscript by Victor Hugo and Cabot's mapamundi, among other items. Humans poured ideas into these *aide-mémoires* —some good, others bad; some true, others invented. Together, this is how knowledge is formed: something was thought of and recorded, to be revisited and expanded upon or instead refuted. Accumulated objects, ideas and knowledge need a fortress to protect them and *mots-clés* or keywords to allow them to be accessed.

The library is the sum of a series of isolated, repetitive processes: prints are transported, stamped, labelled, classified and catalogued, before being distributed and moved around the library space. These actions can be seen on several occasions in *Toute la mémoire du monde*. Each of these processes gains meaning when they are understood to be connected to others, when they form part of a system. The system for adding newspapers to the library is based on a repetitive process whereby three men carry sacks from outside the building into the basement, transporting a total of 200 kilos of paper each day; a library employee receives the sacks; another places each newspaper into an envelope; each item is stamped by a library employee; and another three people place the envelopes onto the shelves. Each individual carries out a single part of the process. The sequence must be meticulously followed because “a collection loses value if it is incomplete” and everything is important “even if an item is only requested once”.

Meanwhile, the system for expanding the collection (via gifts, purchases, exchanges and, above all, legal deposits) means that every print that enters the library must be stamped, its index card must be completed, it must be assigned a place according to its thematic field, its position within this field must be indexed, it must be added to the catalogue and, finally, it must be placed on the appropriate shelf. These actions each take place in different parts of the library: Resnais follows the trajectory of the book *Mars*, which is

exactly the same as any other⁴, and the book is passed from hand to hand by library employees, travelling on a trolley past uniformed men wearing caps, women in light-coloured dresses and men in protective gowns who repeat a series of processes in the intermediate space between outdoors and in.

A request from a reader triggers another set of processes, which make up the consultation system: the request form is received at the desk; the librarian identifies the thematic field to which it corresponds (and/or the section of the repository where it can be found, which amounts to the same thing); the librarian sends the request to the section via pneumatic tube; the form is received by a repository employee, who identifies and collects the book required, leaves a 'ghost' index card in its place, transports the book on a trolley and sends it to the librarian via the lift or service lift to the area where it is handed to the reader. Millions of index cards have changed hands; millions of messages have been sent via the tubes; millions of prints have been transported along the library's corridors; millions of books have been opened and consulted over and over again. Isolated processes have been repeated and strung together into systems. These systems make up some of the stories told by Resnais in his short film. There is nothing special about these processes, systems or stories, yet the history contained within the library is truly epic. Beyond all the possible epics of human thought recounted in books, the ultimate epic story is that of the library as an artefact.

The library as an artefact is the physical counterpart of the processes, systems and stories that organise and preserve all the memory in the world. We can see this material universe in Resnais's film: desks, chairs, shelves and drawers; trolleys, lifts, service lifts and pneumatic tubes; corridors, staircases, mezzanines and repositories; courtyards, anterooms, rooms and halls. Rather than a backdrop or inert frame, this material universe is a device. The reception desk at the legal deposit library is a device allowing a print to enter the knowledge system; the shelf where a book stands is a device allowing it to occupy a precise location within its field; the trolley transporting a book to the reading room is an obvious device as it moves and operates, just like wheeled chairs, lifts and stairs, which connect different areas. Each device is specialised: activated by an instruction, it performs its task, regardless of its size or complexity.

It is not only *furniture* that is a device; the *building* itself is too. In the case of the National Library, Henri Labrouste's building is a device in itself as it can function even without the rest of the (pre-existing and post-existing) building. It is made up of two parts: a reading room and a repository. Both parts have been specialised: the reading room is only for reading, while the repository serves for storage purposes. Although Resnais's shots are always in black and white, narrated by the same narrator and set to music alternating long, low tones with shorter, higher tones, they are effective in conveying this specialisation. The music becomes airier when we find ourselves inside a large room with high ceilings. A gentle light filters down from up high and is reflected and expanded by the domes. Impartial, it descends to the hustle and bustle at floor level. We move closer: people are busy with their books, queries and problems. Although the camera moves, it observes from a distance, from up high. This is the Labrouste Room, with its four free-standing pillars, nine domes, nine oculi and familiar (due to the wooden bookshelves), accessible (by the library employees, not by readers) perimeter.

Resnais employs a different approach when filming the repositories. The narrator's voice warns: "The repository is a labyrinth of shelves, more than 100 kilometres long". The images are sombre, grainy, ponderous: the black iron, the obvious weight of the grates on the floors of the repository, the vibration when the camera is abandoned on top of a moving trolley. The labyrinth is apparent in the conflicting trajectories of the library employees (there is no single correct direction), in the transparency of the repository building

(there are only grates, stairs and shelves; nothing is solid, except the books), in its apparent infinity (only apparent: any calculation of completeness is based on a mistaken premise), in its propagation *ad infinitum* through the "dolly in" and "dolly out" amid shelves laden with books. The camera follows employees, books, trolleys. It follows them from up close, without showing everything; it is impossible to show everything in a labyrinth.

Is it a machine? Without a doubt, the building is operated. Its different parts function in specific ways. The sum of the parts gives rise to systems (of knowledge or information), which are made up of specific, repetitive, reliable processes. Yet Resnais's metaphor is organic: the library is the *memory of the world*, or in other words, the brain. The shots taken by Resnais in the catalogue – a room devoid of decoration and excess, tidy and white, with several pillars, numerous wooden chests of drawers and a few people moving discreetly from one to another – provide proof: the narrator says that *this* is the brain. Further proof can be found in Resnais's images from the control room: a metal panel the size of a whole room, covered in buttons, knobs, switches, lights, indicators and clocks, with an operator monitoring every detail (and, by extension, controlling the organism's temperature and fluids). Drawing on a literary, nautical metaphor, the narrator suggests that this is Captain Nemo's control room, but we know that he is referring to the hypothalamus.

Toute la mémoire du monde presents a history of the organism that contains all the world's knowledge, unveils the machine that systematises human ideas and records the devices employed to bring order to the objects of memory. The short documentary combines and assembles small fragments (static shots, pans, travelling shots, dollying shots, high-angle shots, low-angle shots, bird's eye views, close-up shots; script, music, sound; information, description, interpretation, fiction) into a collage of the life of the library in 1956 and the finished product is a whole made of parts that work together. Since film administers time (just as architecture administers space), Resnais's re-presentation of the library builds on the storyline hinted at in the title: *this* is all the memory in the world. In his eyes, the memory of the world is not abstract but tangible; it is not a general category, but a specific, tactile, quantifiable thing. This material memory, however, exceeds the volume of the library building (or buildings), both literally (the repository always lacked space) and metaphorically (the "world" in the title is always larger than this Parisian block). Consequently, just as the building cannot be understood through its spaces and can only be explained by their functions, the library as an institution cannot be explained by its mission, organigram, laws or customs and can only be fully comprehended through its physical form.

The library as an institution is the building housing the National Library of France on the Richelieu site after Labrouste's intervention. Labrouste gave material substance to the "Imperial Library" project at the request of the director Jules-Antoine Taschereau between 1858 and 1868. Taschereau's focus was on centralising the library, echoing the instructions of the Empire⁵, and on making it expeditious through an emphasis on cataloguing⁶. Labrouste's work defines the place occupied by the library (and its boundaries⁷), as well as influencing its functioning⁸. He designed his exterior buildings on the existing complex (preserving the Cour d'Honneur, the Jardin Vivienne and what was then the Cour de l'Administration but is now Cour Tubeuf, with its perimeter buildings), corrected the bar over Rue Richelieu, cleared the block of private properties on the corner of Rue Vivienne and Rue Colbert to make space for Pascal's Oval Room and cleared the corner between Rue Richelieu and Rue des Petits-Champs. In this empty space, he placed his strategic rooms: the reading room and the repository. Occupying inner areas of the block, they were lit from above⁹: the reading room is a single large space (the pillars are 10 metres tall, while the total surface area of the room is 1,150 m²) and the total

height of the repository is divided into four levels that are each 2.3 metres high, with floors made from metal grates to allow the light to pass through. Labrouste opted for a cast iron structure due to its fireproof qualities, in conjunction with masonry walls like those he had used at the Sainte-Geneviève Library (1844-1850). Unlike the latter, however¹⁰, Labrouste created a dense repository of books, a busy beehive that freed up the remaining space for visitors to consult and quietly read the volumes¹¹.

Despite being interdependent, the reading and repository areas are separate to allow them to be specialised. The form of each of the two spaces reflects their use, although one is decorated and the other is not. With this project, the focus of the architect's work shifted from the urban form (which is also present) to the interior: indeed, Labrouste's most strategic, enduring work is primarily interior. Countering the *dictum* of classical architecture that emphasises the discipline's representational role, Labrouste treads a different path. Although the building *represents* something, it does so not through a single external form but through a series of lived, used, connected interiors. In other words, Labrouste's building not only reshapes the site and use of this block on Rue Richelieu, but also establishes an eminently modern approach by designing specialised, separate yet interdependent interiors, making a typological contribution that transcends the building itself¹².

Resnais captures both Labrouste's library and the library as it appeared following the process of *aggiornamento* led by the architect Michel Roux-Spitz during his time at the National Library between 1932 and 1953¹³. Julien Cain, who was director of the library from 1930 to 1940 (and is mentioned by Resnais in the acknowledgements at the start of his short film), said in the magazine *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in 1938 that the renovation sought "to adapt an ancient institution" more than two centuries old¹⁴. By the time this issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* had been published, much of the work was already complete despite the ongoing war interrupting the renovation process¹⁵. Cain encouraged the idea of the World's Brain and his plan for the library reflected this concept: it was to be "a sort of mental clearinghouse for the mind: a depot where knowledge and ideas are received, sorted, summarised, digested, clarified and compared"¹⁶. This notion was central to the first World Congress of Universal Documentation, which coincided with the Paris Exposition of 1937¹⁷. The modernisation of the building and especially the new communication technologies seen in Resnais's documentary are the product of this idea and heighten the impact of Labrouste's approach.

The National Library of France captured by Resnais is, therefore, the sum of a series of buildings added together over time. Its final form is a rather haphazard balance between asymmetrical solids and voids entrapped in an eternally provisional layout, which, nevertheless, preserves the constant flows (of things, information and ideas) circulating within it. *Toute la mémoire du monde* portrays both the content and the container, revealing how they both take shape: it depicts a sum of parts that weigh down and occupy the space and the abstract, alphanumeric index that brings order to them. *Toute la mémoire du monde* reveals the building and institution simultaneously. The documentary serves as a humble key to a door that allows us to glimpse "...this and other worlds" or tiny fragments of human knowledge, upon which we can draw every time we embark on a search of all the memory in the world.

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Notes

01. Steven Ungar, "Scenes in a Library: Alain Resnais and 'Toute la mémoire du monde'", Johns Hopkins University Press, SubStance, 2012, vol. 41, n° 2, issue 128: Between the Essay Film and Social Cinema: The Left Bank Group in Context (2012), p. 62.

02. Among those involved in the short film were Chris Marker (film director), Jean Cayrol (writer), Agnès Varda (film director) and Maurice Jarre (musician and father of Jean-Michel Jarre).

03. *Op. cit.* p. 65.

04. "[...] the book being processed was not a real book, but a non-existent title in the real *Petite Planète* (Little Planet) series of travel guides edited at Éditions du Seuil by none other than Chris Marker. Physical details of the book seen in the film included a cover photo of the Italian actress Lucia Bosé and a table of contents with possible references to André Breton's *Le point du jour*, H. G. Wells (or Orson Welles), Jean-Marie Domenach, Agnès Varda and *The 39 Steps*." *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

05. Taschereau took over as director in 1858, having been appointed as deputy director of cataloguing in 1852. A "practical man" (rather than a "man of letters" from the Collège de France), Taschereau planned not only to consolidate the institution locally but also to reposition it internationally, particularly with regard to the library at the British Museum, now the British Library. Marie Galvez, "Jules-Antoine Taschereau. 'Un grand administrateur', 1858-1874", *Revue de la BNF* 2012/1, n° 40, pp. 50-55.

06. "To this end, Taschereau imposed a highly rigorous system for monitoring request forms [for books] on a daily basis. Meanwhile, he continued to work actively to prepare catalogues, remaining loyal to the methodical system and refusing to heed the comments made by the Minister of Public Instruction, who recommended the alphabetical system". *Ibid.*, 11, my translation. From the late 17th century to 1996, the Library used the Clément system (named in honour of

Nicolas Clément, guardian of the Royal Library, who drew up his first catalogue between 1675-1684) for prints. The Clément system established 23 systematic divisions "from the letter A, sacred writing, to the letter Z, polyphonies and mixtures". When the François-Mitterrand Library opened, the prints were inventoried and assigned a year and a serial number. Other departments use other classifications (the National Library currently has 14 departments): Arsenal adopted the Brunet system (five categories: Polite Literature, History, Sciences and Arts, Jurisprudence, Theology), the prefix 'Ge' for geography, etc. Meanwhile, the library also uses an analytical indexing system, RAMEAU (Unified Encyclopaedic and Alphabetical List of Subject Authorities), and the Dewey system for open-access materials and legal deposits. See <https://www.bnf.fr/fr/la-cotation-la-bnf> and <https://www.bnf.fr/fr/indexation-sujets-lf-referentiels-utilises-par-la-bnf>. My translations.

07. "[...] The Royal Library was transferred to Rue Vivienne in 1666 by Colbert, to the building at number 49..."; "[i]n 1724, the Regent [Philippe of Orléans] transferred the Royal Library to the old Mazarin Palace"; "[i]n 1834, the layout of the buildings had not changed in a century, with the exception of the large courtyard, which had been closed on the Rue Colbert side (...) This was the state of the buildings before the radical transformation embarked upon by Labrousse", writes Michel Roux-Spitz in "La Bibliothèque Nationale de France", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, year 9, n° 3, March 1938, p. 30, my translation. Until Labrousse's intervention, it could be considered that "the Library did not yet [form] a circumscribed quadrilateral..." because several private properties continued to occupy the northeastern corner of the block. Galvez, *op. cit.*, note 26, my translation.

08. Labrousse refused to share his plans with his client, Taschereau, who "would never forgive him for not informing him of the layout of the future buildings from the start of the works", *Ibid.*, p. 12, my translation. None of Labrousse's plans for the project were

preserved, except one small plan of the whole site. When Roux-Spitz's team embarked upon the renovation of the Library, they had to survey and plot the existing site before they could design their interventions. Roux-Spitz, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

09. Natural lighting had to be used to avoid the risk of fire.

10. At Sainte-Geneviève, the repository is on the lower floor and the reading room on the *piano nobile*.

11. The repository at the National Library prefigures later high-rise repositories: "We have already pointed out... the value of the approach taken by Labrousse to building the large central repository of prints. His bold use of cast iron [*de la fonte et du fer*], the innovative layout of the shelves, the lighting via the glazed roof and translucent slabs created a true silo of books (the first in the world)... [T]his large-scale approach has been taken to the extreme by the Americans, who have expanded upon Labrousse's original idea...". *Ibid.*, p. 39, my translation. The high-rise approach to repositories ("the American model") refers to the "library towers" found at the universities of Pittsburgh, Rochester, Nashville and Yale in the United States, as well as the Ghent, New Bodleian and Cambridge University libraries, among others. André Hermant, "Les grandes bibliothèques modernes", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, year 9, n° 3, March 1938, pp. 19-29. Labrousse's building also prefigures repositories in which the shelf as *furniture* is replaced by the shelf as *building*, such as the American Lipman system, which differs from the European system (in which a building is equipped with shelves) in that the building is constructed *from* shelves. André Hermant, "Procédés modernes de construction et d'aménagement utilisés pour la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, year 9, n° 3, March 1938, pp. 56-57. The densely packed, high-rise repository system is used at the François-Mitterrand site of the National Library of France, although it is divided into four parts (Dominique Perrault, 1989-1995).

12. Before Sainte-Geneviève

and the National Library, libraries traditionally featured books and reading tables within a single space: "[F]rom the Renaissance to the 19th century, two main types of traditional libraries [emerged], libraries with parallel shelving (...) and hall-style libraries (with staircases or galleries) (...) Our modern repositories of books are directly related to the first type." André Hermant, "L'Évolution des bibliothèques", in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, year 9, n° 3, March 1938, p. 4, my translation. Labrousse travelled to London in 1851 to discover the library at the British Museum and the Panizzi tower repository project, which was never built. Roux-Spitz, *op. cit.* p. 30.

13. Roux-Spitz was awarded the Prix de Rome in 1920 and held the positions of chief government architect, editor of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and lecturer at the École Nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts.

14. Roux-Spitz's main task at the time was to build new repositories for books (at Versailles), which freed up space to reorganise the Richelieu site in order to "consolidate the book repositories again" in the print section according to "Labrousse's original plan". Julien Cain, "Bibliothécaires et architectes", in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, year 9, n° 3, March 1938, p. 3. According to Cain's list, two basements were to be built beneath Labrousse's repository, as well as two floors above it; the administration was to be reorganised in the basement; a power plant was to be built; the buildings were to be equipped with electricity and air conditioning, and mechanical means of transport were to be installed, among other requirements. The upward extension of Labrousse's repository was not implemented in the end but the basement extension was completed, along with new foundations to allow the new upper floors to be built.

15. The war also interrupted Cain's time as director. As a Jew, he was deported to a concentration camp in Eastern Europe following a decree from Vichy, as José Meyer reports in "The Bibliothèque Nationale during the Last Decade: Fundamental Changes and Constructive Achievement", *The*

Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy, University of Chicago Press, vol. 12, n°. 4, October 1942, p. 826. The text by Meyer dates from 1942 so it does not include the happy news of the liberation of the concentration camp where Cain was being held (Buchenwald) in 1945, nor of his return to the National Library and continuation as director from 1945 to 1964.

16. H.G. Wells, cited in Mariana Siracusa, "Paul Otlet's Theory of Everything", in *AA Files*, n°. 73 (2016), p. 50.

17. "During the Paris Exposition in 1937, a World Congress of Documentation was held" begins a short note signed by "P. R." in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, year 9, n°. 3, March 1938, p. 8. Paul Otlet was among the participants. On this occasion, the library exhibited part of the surveying work that informed Roux-Spitz's renovations (*op. cit.*, 3), my translation.

Images

01. National Library, lecture hall. Preliminary Design of the Hemicycle. Some plan and elevation details, elevation of the central shop door and perspective view of Hemicycle. Henri Labrouste. Courtesy (BnF / Gallica)

02. National Library, general plans. Ground floor plan, 1858. Buildings prior to the work by Henri Labrouste. Courtesy (BnF / Gallica)

03. National Library, general plans. Reconstruction draft. Ground floor plan. Ensemble plan with the planned intervention by Henri Labrouste. Courtesy (BnF / Gallica)

08 Mendelsohn y su barco sin timón Tim Altenhof

En 1921, el arquitecto judío-alemán Erich Mendelsohn diseñó y construyó su importante fábrica de sombreros Steinberg, Herrmann & Co. Transformaciones y los cambios en la propiedad acabaron por estado de obsolescencia. Tras los primeros intentos de reconstruir las instalaciones a partir de la década de 2000, el edificio sigue en desuso, con el riesgo de caer de nuevo en el abandono. En lugar de centrarse en cuestiones de estilo, composición o materialidad, este artículo examina la vida de este edificio y su estado actual, tratando así de rastrear algunos de los aspectos que están imbricados en su arquitectura: cuestiones de raza, guerra, política, economía, conservación, clima y función.



Uno de los tejados más espectaculares de la arquitectura moderna tuvo una vida más bien corta. Atrevida en su trazado e ingeniosamente concebida, la cubierta de la famosa fábrica de tintes de Erich Mendelsohn en Luckenwalde se erigió a principios de la década de 1920 para ser derribada en 1935, después de que los terrenos de la fábrica pasaran a manos de una empresa de construcción de maquinaria controlada en gran parte por las fuerzas aéreas alemanas bajo el mando de Hermann Göring, antiguo piloto de caza y uno de los dirigentes nazis más poderosos (fig. 01). La transformación de lo que fue una fábrica de sombreros en una planta de guerra supuso la eliminación de su componente más destacado: el tejado negro trapezoidal, que habría sido un blanco demasiado fácil para los ataques aéreos previstos; y también significó que la estructura perdiera su propósito original (fig. 02).

Luckenwalde había sido durante mucho tiempo un centro de la industria textil alemana, cuyos orígenes se remontan a finales del siglo XVIII, y las empresas locales empezaron a fabricar sombreros a partir de la década de 1870. Tras cierta rivalidad inicial, dos de los principales empresarios, Friedrich Steinberg y Gustav Herrmann, fusionaron sus empresas competidoras y encargaron al joven Erich Mendelsohn que ideara una nueva planta de fabricación en las afueras de la ciudad: la fábrica de sombreros Friedrich Steinberg, Herrmann & Co.¹ Desde el principio, la fábrica cosechó elogios, gracias a una confluencia sin esfuerzo de forma arquitectónica y proceso de producción fluido. Muestra de modernidad, se convirtió en una de las expresiones paradigmáticas de una industria del futuro, y críticos como Adolf Behne destacaron la disposición funcional y su convincente traducción en una forma arquitectónica ajustada². De hecho, Mendelsohn convirtió el proceso de producción de sombreros de lana y fieltro en una secuencia espacial convincente: los trenes suministraban carbón a la central

eléctrica que contenía la caldera y la sala de turbinas, el cual se calentaba y se convertía así en energía cinética para poner en movimiento las correas de transmisión dentro de las cuatro naves de producción que antes se utilizaban para el procesamiento en húmedo (fig. 03). Aunque la tintorería marcaba el final del proceso de producción de un sombrero, esta parte de la estructura daba rostro a la empresa: al entrar por el portal (que ya no existe), la tintorería era lo primero que se veía. Sin embargo, lo que no estaba a la vista del público era su fisiología: la geometría de su tejado ayudaba hábilmente a disipar los humos tóxicos que salían de las cubas, que los trabajadores utilizaban para teñir el fieltro necesario para la última moda alemana en sombreros (fig. 04). En otras palabras, el tejado funcionaba por dentro. Debido al efecto chimenea, el aire caliente se elevaba por encima de las cabezas de los trabajadores, transportando así los humos tóxicos hacia arriba y hacia fuera a través de la cubierta³. Las rejillas de la parte superior permitían un flujo de aire calibrado con precisión. La producción comenzó en 1923, no sin antes declararse un gran incendio en febrero de ese año, que destruyó la estructura de madera del tejado, cuya reconstrucción acabó siendo más cara de lo que había costado inicialmente todo el complejo⁴. De hecho, la estructura del tejado de la antigua fábrica en particular no es más que una historia de destrucciones y reconstrucciones periódicas, al igual que la del complejo en general, que vio las primeras modificaciones en el momento en que las fuerzas aéreas alemanas se hicieron con el control⁵. Con la muerte de Herrmann en 1932 llegó también el fin de la empresa, de modo que su socio Friedrich Steinberg tuvo que vender los terrenos de la fábrica en 1934, mientras que en 1935 se expropiaron las acciones de Herrmann⁶.

De origen judío, Luise y Erich Mendelsohn no fueron los únicos en abandonar Alemania. La familia de Gustav Herrmann también partió en 1933 para escapar de los inminentes progromos antijudíos. Donde antes los trabajadores teñían fieltro, la materia prima de los sombreros, otros pronto empezaron a fabricar cañones antiaéreos, la materia prima de la guerra moderna. Entre esos otros, de hecho, también había trabajadores forzados. Una vez convertido en lugar de producción de la floreciente maquinaria bélica, el efecto chimenea se hizo gratuito y el tejado cayó en desuso. Pronto fue desmontado (fig. 05). Así decapitada y desfigurada, la fábrica de tintes se transformó en un presagio involuntario de la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Incluso en retrospectiva, es difícil determinar si este acto de violencia arquitectónica podría haber salvado al complejo de una demolición más severa a causa de los ataques aéreos, pero está claro que invadió fuertemente un complejo finamente calibrado. Y lo mismo ocurrió con una serie de adiciones construidas en 1935, incluidos los tabiques interiores de los cobertizos, así como dos alas adyacentes que empezaron a delimitar las fábricas de tintes a partir de 1940⁷. Después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, en 1945, las máquinas restantes sirvieron como reparación y fueron trasladadas a la Unión Soviética, que a su vez convirtió la estructura restante en un taller de reparaciones. En 1957, una empresa de cojinetes de rodillos se hizo cargo de los terrenos de la fábrica, transición que dio lugar a nuevas modificaciones que marcaron fuertemente el carácter original de la fábrica, hasta el punto de que la composición era cada vez menos identificable. La antigua central eléctrica, por ejemplo, se transformó en espacios de oficinas distribuidos en losas recién insertadas. Las ventanas de acero se sustituyeron por ventanas con marcos de madera; aparecieron huecos donde nunca los hubo; otros simplemente se cerraron; y la sala de calderas se resintió sustancialmente⁸. Además, el suelo estaba muy contaminado.

La historia del edificio, que comenzó con la desaparición de la empresa en 1933, es una historia de apropiación sin fin, de desprecio, pero también de pragmatismo y aprecio. Cuando la llamada VEW Wälzlagerwerk, una antigua empresa de

la RDA, tuvo que declararse en quiebra en 1991, poco después de la reunificación alemana, la estructura pasó a manos de otra empresa, que pronto se retiró ante la caída de los mercados en el Este⁹. Así abandonada durante una década, la antigua fábrica de sombreros cayó prácticamente en el olvido y en 2000 acabó finalmente en manos de un empresario textil berlinés, que compró la estructura de Mendelsohn tras años de obsolescencia. Las ideas iniciales de revitalizar el edificio con fondos de distintas oficinas de conservación histórica, como la Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege y la Deutsche Stiftung für Denkmalschutz, desembocaron finalmente en una reconstrucción en el curso de la cual el inversor también restauró el famoso tejado con su dinero privado¹⁰. Esto permitió a la fábrica abandonada recuperar gran parte de su “enorme poder expresivo”, la “notable funcionalidad” sin embargo sigue sin explotarse.¹¹ Los planes iniciales de reconvertir la estructura en una planta de reciclaje textil nunca llegaron a buen puerto. Dado que el edificio está inundado de luz diurna, se habría ahorrado una cantidad considerable de energía por el uso de iluminación artificial (y así seguiría hasta hoy); a su vez, un reprocesado de tejidos habría realineado la fábrica con su función original como planta de producción de fieltro.

Pero fíjese en lo condicional de este empeño. Situada a sólo 50 km al sur de Berlín, Luckenwalde es la capital de un pequeño distrito de Brandeburgo, uno de los 16 estados federados alemanes. Antaño floreciente núcleo industrial, la ciudad ha experimentado un descenso de población especialmente tras la reunificación alemana y cuenta hoy con unos 20.500 ciudadanos. El impacto de la II Guerra Mundial, la división de Alemania durante la Guerra Fría y décadas de cambios estructurales provocaron un estado de incertidumbre económica, hasta el punto de que el edificio empezó a tambalearse. Situado en lo que fue Alemania Oriental, Luckenwalde tiene una desventaja de ubicación especialmente para proyectos empresariales y, a menos que este problema estructural remita, la única forma de poner a salvo el edificio podría ser su inclusión en la Lista del Patrimonio Mundial.

Si la fábrica de sombreros fue en su día “la estructura industrial más divulgada en Alemania desde la exposición Werkbund de 1914”¹², ahora sólo hace apariciones ocasionales en periódicos y medios de comunicación locales alemanes para mantenerla discursivamente viva, sólo para que no se disuelva del todo en otro estado de decadencia. Y sin embargo, tras los primeros intentos de reconstruir el conjunto, el entusiasmo inicial se ha desvanecido y el edificio parece caer de nuevo en el olvido. Aunque en 2012, al parecer, el complejo fabril se ofreció en línea por 2,2 millones de euros, desconozco su propietario actual¹³. Durante una visita a principios de este año, cuando un fino manto de nieve cubría gran parte de los sombríos alrededores, uno de los trabajadores de una metalúrgica cercana se me acercó, preguntándome por el modelo de mi cámara. Su coche y otros habían dejado huellas de neumáticos en la nieve, marcas de actividades recientes que poco tienen que ver con la antigua fábrica y su rica historia de producción (fig. 06). Me dirigía a abrir la fábrica de tintes —que, por desgracia, ya no está abierta al público— para pasar una hora a solas bajo el techo reconstruido. En 2004, la historiadora de la arquitectura Regina Stephan comisarió una pequeña exposición con una maqueta de madera que aún puede verse en el interior de la fábrica de tintes. Construida en 2003 con motivo del 50 aniversario de la muerte de Mendelsohn, estudiantes de la Universidad de Stuttgart crearon una versión de la fábrica a escala 1:100 (fig. 07). La maqueta se encuentra dentro de una vitrina ligeramente cubierta de polvo, tanto que al principio mi cámara no podía autoenfocar. Una única silla de plástico negro estaba inquietantemente colocada en medio del espacio, como si alguien se hubiera sentado allí recientemente a contemplar la maqueta. Si entonces, hace unos veinte años, una confrontación directa entre la maqueta arquitectónica y el ruinoso original podría haber causado algún disgusto, hoy sigue haciéndolo,

aunque la estructura está en mucho mejor estado. Un ramo de flores artificiales de color naranja brillante y rosa pálido surgen de cajas de madera y no hacen sino aumentar la sensación de un interior abandonado y sin vida. Y sin embargo, al otro lado del muro, oí el sonido de transpaletas y palés moviéndose de un lado a otro. Aunque no era exactamente el paisaje sonoro de la producción, al menos había algo de vida en el interior y, por un momento, el espacio se sintió utilizado y animado. Mientras tanto, una empresa cercana de transformación de metales alquila las antiguas naves de producción como almacén de materiales (fig. 08).

Después de que distintas partes interesadas invirtieran millones de euros en financiación, sigue sin haber una estrategia para un uso a largo plazo. Aunque los grandes esfuerzos por insuflar vida a la estructura a principios de la década de 2000 condujeron finalmente a su exitosa reconstrucción, la antigua fábrica de sombreros sigue buscando un nuevo programa, quizá incluso un nuevo propietario¹⁴. Hace unos dos años se desprendieron segmentos de papel de alquitrán de la chimenea de escape, condición que se ha arreglado entretanto¹⁵. La política en torno a este edificio sigue siendo la misma: sin una función adecuada, es difícil que se mantenga. Puede que la estructura haya recuperado su capó y, sin embargo, parece que tras décadas a la deriva sigue flotando como un barco sin timón directo hacia la decadencia. Sin relación con la realidad, uno podría imaginar muchas cosas en esos espacios: un invernadero; una planta de fabricación de todo tipo de cosas, desde vacunas hasta robótica y paneles solares; quizá incluso una nueva escuela de arquitectura (fig. 09). De hecho, en su día se plantearon ideas muy diversas, como una pista de karts, un centro de información sobre el modernismo o una sala de exposiciones para ferias¹⁶. Una combinación de intentos poco entusiastas, tiempos económicos difíciles, complicados enredos entre organismos públicos de financiación y propiedad privada, y lo intrincado del emplazamiento han hecho hasta ahora imposible que ninguna hipótesis se haga realidad. Sin embargo, la estructura sigue despertando la curiosidad del público en general, y el entusiasmo de arquitectos, estudiantes y admiradores de Mendelsohn se traduce en proyectos de investigación ocasionales. En 1998, un grupo de estudiantes de la Architectural Association de Londres reflexionó sobre las opciones de reutilización creativa y la vida posterior de la fábrica. Estos trabajos y los ensayos que los acompañaban dieron lugar a un pequeño folleto en el que se presentaba la estructura como una “ruina de la modernidad” y se planteaban importantes cuestiones sobre el destino de los clásicos olvidados en relación con su función potencial¹⁷. Otra publicación de 2006 reunió más contribuciones académicas a un simposio Mendelsohn celebrado dos años antes, una de las cuales analizaba la estructura y su estado como “caso de enfermería” en el contexto del patrimonio cultural¹⁸. Una reciente tesis de máster presentada en la Universidad Bauhaus de Weimar examina el potencial de la fábrica como campus satélite para Berlín o Potsdam, con el fin de incentivar el intercambio entre locales, estudiantes y visitantes¹⁹. También presta atención a la historia textil de la estructura. Hoy en día, o eso parece, muchas de estas premisas y observaciones previas siguen vigentes, y aunque ya no podemos entender la fábrica como una ruina de la modernidad, sigue siendo, no obstante, un caso de enfermería. La falta de entusiasmo local junto con las difíciles condiciones económicas previas convierten cualquier concepto de reutilización en un empeño difícil.

Como en el caso del campus Mies van der Rohe, una antigua fábrica de tejidos de seda convertida en parque empresarial, una serie de programas más pequeños podría ayudar a aliviar la presión de encontrar una única función para su reutilización. Las instalaciones de la llamada VerSeid AG, la empresa textil que ya no existe, albergan hoy espacios de oficinas en la antigua fábrica de tintes, un local en la antigua sala de calderas, así como restaurantes y diversas actividades de ocio, desde el clásico

boulder al parkour. Este conjunto fabril también está situado en uno de los antiguos centros de la industria textil alemana: Krefeld, conocida a menudo como la Ciudad del Terciopelo y la Seda, fue el centro de la producción de seda alemana desde principios del siglo XVIII. Actualmente, su población es más de diez veces mayor que la de Luckenwalde. Una combinación de factores geográficos y demográficos garantiza una mayor fluctuación, y la estructura también se presta a diversos usos, ya que está más compartimentada que la fábrica de sombreros de Luckenwalde, cuya disposición axial y cobertizos simétricos proporcionan un espacio central coherente sin separaciones interiores.

Hace falta una confluencia de esfuerzos globales y locales para encontrar un nuevo programa, idealmente empleando el efecto chimenea bajo el tejado. Todavía hoy se está sorprendentemente fresco en el interior de la antigua fábrica de tintes, un espacio que pronto podría acaparar una nueva atención ante el aumento de las temperaturas: son el flujo de aire caliente y las personas que trabajan en su interior lo que, en conjunto, ha dado sentido a este famoso tejado. Cuestiones como la raza, la guerra, la política, la economía, la conservación, la fabricación, la propiedad público-privada, el clima y la función están imbricadas en la historia de este edificio, del que la cubierta es sólo el componente más pronunciado. Parte integrante de la fábrica de tintes, la campana, en su estado actual, sólo sirve para mantener fresco y seco un edificio vacío. Sin embargo, es asombroso (fig. 10).

Tim Altenhof

Es arquitecto y ayudante universitario de Teoría de la Arquitectura en la Universidad de Innsbruck. Es doctor por la Universidad de Yale, donde su tesis, titulada *Breathing Space. The Architecture of Pneumatic Beings*, fue galardonada con el Premio Theron Rockwell Field en 2018. Un extracto de este trabajo, que se publicó en inglés e italiano con el título *The House-As-Chimney. Breathing Space at Luckenwalde, de Erich Mendelsohn*, obtuvo el Premio Bruno Zevi 2018. Durante el semestre de otoño de 2022, Tim fue becario internacional en el Instituto de Estudios Avanzados en Humanidades (KWI) Essen, donde trabajó en el manuscrito de su libro, una monografía sobre las formas en que las diferentes concepciones de la atmósfera y una mayor conciencia por la respiración afectaron a la arquitectura moderna a principios del siglo XX. Sus escritos han aparecido en *21:Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual, Log, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *La Rivista di Engramma* y *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, entre otros.

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Notas

01. La bibliografía sobre este edificio es bastante extensa. Véase, por ejemplo WHITTICK, Arnold, Eric Mendelsohn, F. W. Dodge Corporation, New York, 1956, pp. 54-67; ACHENBACH, Sigrid, Erich Mendelsohn 1887-1953: Ideen — Bauten — Projekte, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, 1987, p. 64; JAMES, Kathleen, Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 79-88; STEPHAN, Regina, "Frühe expressionistische Bauten in Luckenwalde, Berlin und Gleiwitz," in Erich Mendelsohn Gebaute Welten - Arbeiten für Europa, Palästina und Amerika, Verlag Gerd Hatje, Ostfildern-Ruit, 1998, pp. 47-55; ZEVI Bruno, Erich Mendelsohn - The Complete Works, Birkhäuser Publisher, Basel, 1999, pp. 74-77; DRACHENBERG, Thomas, "Die Hutfabrik von Erich Mendelsohn in Luckenwalde," in kunsttexte.de - Journal für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte, 2002, 2, pp. 1-7.

02. El libro de Behne Der Moderne Zweckbau incluía una imagen de la tintorería. El libro se publicó en inglés como BEHNE Adolf, The Modern Functional Building, trans. Michael Robinson, The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, 1996.

03. Sobre este aspecto, véase ALTENHOF, Tim, "The House-As-Chimney: Erich Mendelsohn's Breathing Space at Luckenwalde," Bruno Zevi Prize, November 2019.

04. Esta explosión de los precios fue consecuencia directa de la inflación. See DRACHENBERG, T., "Die Hutfabrik," cit. p. 2.

05. Un buen resumen de esta historia puede encontrarse en JUNG, Karin Carmen Jung and WORBS, Dietrich, "Funktionelle Dynamik. Die Hutfabrik Steinberg-Herrmann & Co. in Luckenwalde von Erich Mendelsohn," Bauwelt, 1992, 83, 3, pp. 116-21.

06. VON KAEHNE, Gerald Kühn, LEBEK, Christoph, and NOELL, Noell, "Luckenwalde - Die ehemalige Hutfabrik Friedrich Steinberg, Herrmann & Co. von Erich Mendelsohn," Brandenburgische

Denkmalpflege 1, 1992, 1, p. 75. Este artículo documenta los resultados de una primera encuesta sobre la construcción tras la reunificación alemana.

07. Sobre esta historia véase KARG, Detlef, "Pflegefälle - Anmerkungen zur Denkmalpflege," in Erich Mendelsohn - Wesen Werk Wirkung, ed. STEPHAN, Regina, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern, 2006, pp. 99-103; JUNG, C. J., "Funktionelle Dynamik," *op. cit.*, pp. 116-21.

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10. WENKE, Elinor, "Abbas Ayad nimmt seinen Hut," Märkische Allgemeine, 2012, February 22.

11. STEPHAN, Regina, "Frühe expressionistische Bauten," *op. cit.*, p. 54.

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13. WENKE, E., "Abbas Ayad nimmt seinen Hut," *op. cit.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. HAHN, Margrit, "Hut der Mendelsohnhalle blättert ab," Märkische Allgemeine, 2019, <https://www.maz-online.de/lokales/teltow-flaeming/luckenwalde/hut-der-mendelsohn-halle-blaettert-ab-Y2IVSU22L-DFSXFWVU4HMCCR53Q.html>

16. WENKE, Elinor, "Abbas Ayad Nimmt Seinen Hut," *op. cit.*

17. BARKOW, Frank and TASHIMA, Charles, eds., Ruins of Modernity: Erich Mendelsohn's Hat Factory in Luckenwalde, AA Documents 4, London, 1998.

18. KARG, Detlef, "Pflegefälle," *op. cit.*

19. https://www.uni-weimar.de/uploads/tx_showcase/BEHNETEN_Barbe_einzelnePlaene.pdf

Imágenes

01. Vista exterior de la fábrica de tintes reformada, febrero de 2023, foto del autor.

02. Vista exterior de la fábrica de tintes reformada, febrero de 2023, foto del autor.

03. Plano de la fábrica de sombreros, Erich Mendelsohn, Das Gesamtschaffen des Architekten - Skizzen, Entwürfe, Bauten, Rudolf Mosse Buchverlag, Berlin, 1930.

04. Vista interior de la fábrica de tintes, February 2023, photo by the author.

05. Tintorería mostrando el tejado demolido, sin fecha, Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege.

06. Vista exterior de la fábrica de tintes reformada, febrero de 2023, foto del autor.

07. Maqueta en el interior de la tintorería, febrero de 2023, foto del autor.

08. Vista interior de los cobertizos, febrero de 2023, foto del autor.

09. Sección en perspectiva de la estructura, dibujo del autor, 2017.

10. Vista interior de la fábrica de tintes, febrero de 2023, foto del autor.

09

Inner Life. Sweden House. Madrid, 1950s-60s

Ismael Amarouch García

This article focuses on the interior life of the Casa de Suecia (Sweden House), a building in Madrid designed by Mariano Garrigues in 1953, completed in 1956, and now damaged beyond repair. It is therefore a matter of recovering a lost reality; of studying the building as it was originally conceived, based on the few interior images that have been preserved. The analysis is carried out from the experience of use and goes from general to specific considerations. Firstly, the physical space of large group meetings in the assembly hall is portrayed; secondly, the social space of small informal gatherings in the hotel lounge and bar, and finally, the emotional space of Ernest Hemingway in one of the hotel suites. The text claims the movement of bodies, the recreation of environments and the activation of memory as evidence of the art of inhabiting.



INTRODUCTION

Alvar Aalto was one of the first and most distinguished visitors to the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition. In response to criticism of the radical style of the pavilions, he argued that it was not so much the architectural language as the living environment, created for the occasion by his admired Gunnar Asplund¹. In fact, Aalto's review, written in Swedish in the historic Turku newspaper *Åbo Underrättelser*, was aimed at recalling his pleasant experience in Djurgården Bay: the summer festival-like atmosphere that only transparent and to some extent weightless architecture could offer at its best; an intense but fleeting experience.

A few years later, in August 1955, Carl Theodor Dreyer explained in Edinburgh his craft as a filmmaker, following the premiere of his film *Ordet*. In this event, later transcribed in the Copenhagen newspaper *Politiken*², Dreyer defended the artistic renewal of cinema in the transition from silent to sound; a quiet evolution which, in his opinion, should be introspective: carried out from a certain abstraction or disconnection from reality, in order to delve into what is really important to convey: the emotions of the characters.

These two Nordic references would be used to introduce the Casa de Suecia (Sweden House): the Madrid building designed by Mariano Garrigues in the 1950s, of which today only part of the façade remains. Although it is an architecture strongly rooted in the place, it reproduced a dynamic, vibrant, and welcoming atmosphere inside, suitable for everyday and special moments. This

atmosphere has gone unnoticed by academics and researchers, mainly due to the successive renovations that have stripped the building of its character since 1975, but also due to its secondary location in the city, which for many years fuelled myths and legends about the activities that took place behind closed doors (fig. 02).

In this context, we propose to recall the Casa de Suecia as it was conceived, using interior images, the few that remain, from its early years. The analysis will refer to the most representative spaces: the public rooms on the ground floor and basement, and one of the suites on the fifth floor, where Ernest Hemingway stayed (fig. 01). The research, thus approached, complements other studies carried out on the building in general³ or on the ground floor in particular⁴.

BELLMAN

One of the first signs of life in this building were newspaper advertisements for the Bellman Restaurant. This use was located on the upper-ground floor, with direct access from Madrazo Street or through the hotel's common areas. The culinary

attraction was the Swedish traditional *smörgåsbord*⁵, which was not served in the main room, but in a multi-purpose room six metres below, in the first basement (fig. 03).

This multi-purpose room was firstly conceived as a hall for celebrations, without natural light, but totally open-plan and of regular dimensions. It was based on a rectangle measuring 15.75 x 7 m, connected at its ends to the dais and one of the three rooms of the Scandinavian Centre. Acoustically prepared for conferences and other solemn events, its walls were entirely clad in wood, making use of decorative marquetry on the side front.

In addition to special events, the room was soon used as the restaurant's reserved area, taking advantage of the location of the kitchen in the basement. The *smörgåsbord* was usually served on Thursdays and Fridays during the winter season. It was one of the first *buffets* in Madrid. Despite the novelty of the self-service system for the Spanish customer, the Bellman's *smörgåsbord* eventually became one of the most popular gastronomic destinations in Madrid, chosen by those who worked in the city centre and were looking for a break from the hustle and bustle.

We do not have any photographs of the *smörgåsbord* in Bellman, but we do have photographs of one of the highlights of the Swedish calendar, the *kräftskiva* (fig. 04), which marks the start of the crayfish season in Sweden at the end of summer. Both festivities have their own rituals. In the case of the *kräftskiva*, the tables are arranged lengthwise, one next to the other, covered with tablecloths decorated with cheerful patterns of crustaceans. Luminous paper moons can hang from the ceiling, just as bright as the Swedish summer nights are. The guests should also wear white. When seated, they complete their attire with a white cloth bib, also printed with crab motifs, and a cardboard hat, different for each guest. With bowls or trays overflowing with the delicious food and *aquavit* ready to drink, the ritual begins. First with a toast, *skål!* Second, with applause and thanks. Third, with everyone saying in unison *att äta!* ("let's eat!") It is then that the typically Swedish formality and sobriety break down, giving way to a rowdy and noisy environment that keeps the memory of the distant homeland alive.

Three reflections can be drawn from this episode of life in the Casa de Suecia. The first has to do with the hidden nature of this canteen-like room. On traditional Swedish farms it was customary for there to be a type of room, called a *herrstuga*, which, being close to the dwelling, usually in a separate building, was reserved for special occasions. As these rooms were closed for long periods of time, their interiors, in many cases, remained untouched, decorated with frescoes, stencils or wallpapers⁶. The furnishings were minimal: just a wooden bench running along the wall, a few tables or chairs and the ubiquitous fireplace. If the room was

sufficiently clear, the guests could dance after the meal, but if not, and when the weather conditions were favourable, as in *Midsommar*, the dancing took place outdoors. As these celebrations usually lasted for several days, some rooms near the *herrstuga*, usually on the upper floor, were reserved for the accommodation of the guests. In the building under consideration here, the Casa de Suecia, the 63 rooms available between the fifth and tenth floors certainly fulfilled that function.

The second reflection concerns the extension of the public space on the ground floor to a higher level in the case of the Bellman restaurant (+2.00 m) and a lower level in the case of the assembly hall (-4.07 m). Access to these rooms through the interior of the building led to immersion in a particular atmosphere where architecture takes on its most stage-setting aspect, bringing about episodes of warm welcome (fig. 05). Taking advantage of the absence of vehicles, the stairs replaced the parking ramps in the back-and-forth movement above or below the ground line; a movement which, together with the immersive experience, prepared the guest for the collective ceremony, making the difficult transition between exterior and interior more bearable.

The third reflection requires some clarification beforehand. These itineraries through the interior of the building were the consequence of a previous functional approach, in which the celebration hall shared the surface of the first basement with a sports and bathing area, which in turn led to the consideration of a certain ritual of preparation. In that initial design, the canteen was located well above ground level, on one of the upper floors, in the transition between the offices and the hotel. But the project for a sports and bathing area was cancelled and this decision led to the relocation of all the representative functions of the building around the street level. The idea of standing water would remain, however, as a sign of life for which it is possible to dive into the depths.

IKEA

On the way between the first basement and the ground floor, there was a lower half-floor that housed the *bastu* (Swedish sauna), replacing or rather compensating for the more ambitious bathing and sports programme that had preceded it. Next to

the *bastu* was an agora or meeting space: the hotel lounge and bar. Due to its strategic location around a central vertical space, to which the courtyard of the upper floors gave continuity, this agora served as a resting place on the itineraries going up or down.

Concerning the Greek agora, the Swedish academic Gregor Paulsson argued that the difference with the Roman forum, being both two public typologies of Antiquity, lay in the fluid and disorderly character of the agora: a place for democracy⁶. This description of the agora, understood as expanded domesticity, would be validated by the expression of another academic, Witold Rybczynski: "homeliness is not neatness"⁷.

Following this idea, the agora of the Casa de Suecia became a curved, interface-exchanging space. As such, it lacked formal unity, and its limits were blurred. For Maurice Holland (fig. 06), the Swedish interior designer who collaborated with Garrigues in its design, the agora was organised into two concave environments in continuity: the lounge area, vertically elongated, and the bar area, somewhat more secluded. The floor, carpeted throughout, reinforces the union. Its texture incorporates the light filtered by the skylight on the upper floor. The flowerpots, which overlook this void, show that this space, the true heart of the building, is not only home to gravity and light, but also to an intense shared life.

The furniture in the agora creates small, cosy rooms within the collective one. Most of them are of Nordic origin. Following one of Paulsson's mottos, *better things for everyday life*⁸, they combine modern design with simple lines and a sense of craftsmanship. Ergonomic surfaces and a mix of natural and

industrial materials delight the senses. Each piece of furniture has been purposely designed with these qualities of beauty and functionality in mind. However, their labels do not name the authors of the designs, only their generic designation of origin: Nordiska Kompaniet (NK)⁹.

Although the black and white of the photographs (fig. 07) unifies all the furniture under a single chromatic appearance, we notice a variety of colours and a lively and cheerful character of these designs in later catalogues or museum exhibitions. In terms of colour, the same applies to finishes and coatings in general: the green of the carpets, the black of the pillars, the white of the walls, etc.

In the lounge area, the easy chairs, with or without armrests, arranged individual or in series, were designed by Bengt Ruda. Very characteristic of all of them is the angular, inverted V-shape of the legs and the beech wood material. In the case of individual armchairs, the armrests rest on the upward extension of the rear legs. The coffee tables and floor lamps, designed by Yngvar Sandström and Alf Svensson respectively, are placed next to these various seating arrangements. The coffee table design features four tapered legs on which rests an elongated top beautifully crafted from solid birch and teak strips. Like the Ruda armchairs, the floor lamps are made of beech wood.

In the background of the image, in the bar area, two sets of furniture stand out: the spherical lamps hung at different heights from the ceiling and the wicker chairs. The first group corresponds to the *Pia* model, a sphere of about 50 cm in diameter, framed with silver wire and covered in white cotton fabric with small, embroidered holes. It was designed by Tore Ahlsén for the firm Gärnsnäs. The second group corresponds to *Stora Kraal*, a model designed by Kerstin Hörlin-Holmquist that combines lightness, ergonomics, and simplicity, where the shell-shaped seat is fixed to the black lacquered metal base by means of leather straps. *Stora Kraal* was launched by NK in 1952, but it was after its exhibition at the *Design in Scandinavia*¹¹ show in 1954 that it achieved international fame. The presence of this piece of furniture in the agora of the Casa de Suecia highlights a way of life for which the sleepy post-war Spanish society was probably not yet prepared.

Most of these objects were part of the *Triva* or *Triva-Bbygg* series: a path-breaking collection of knock-down furniture launched in 1944 by Elias Svedberg, Lena Larsson, and Erik Wortz, with the emerging working class in mind. This furniture left the Nyköping workshops flat-packed, with the necessary tools and assembly instructions, thus anticipating what IKEA would develop a few years later. By doing so, *Triva-Bbygg* not only reduced transport costs, but also fulfilled an important social function: it was the customer who ultimately closed the assembly line¹².

But the agora of the Casa de Suecia was much more than the objects kept inside. Above all, it was a social and meeting space, where a group of architects (fig. 08) could have a friendly chat after attending a talk on the future of Madrid in the assembly hall; a strategic place where after a delicious *smorgasbord*, and before playing *bridge* at the Scandinavian Centre, business initiatives such as Tafisa¹³ could be launched; a place where the writer Ernest Hemingway used to arrive punctually at the bar in the evening.

HEMINGWAY

Hemingway stayed at the Hotel Suecia several times between 1959 and 1960. The last of these was a year before he ended his life at his home in Ketchum, Idaho. The reason for these visits was a commission from *Life* magazine to examine the rivalry

between the two most famous Spanish bullfighters of the time: Antonio Ordoñez and Luis Miguel Domínguez¹⁴. At first glance, the hotel must have been a good choice for him, not only because it was part of a new building with modern facilities, but above all because of

its central location¹⁵. Walking down Madrazo Street, he would soon reach the Prado Museum to enjoy Goya's paintings. In addition, near the Casa de Suecia, there was the Bar Chicote, the restaurant El Callejón or the Cervecería Alemana, places with a long tradition where he is credited with being present, either alone or in the company of Dominguín or Ava Gardner. Finally, taking a taxi on Alcalá Street, he would soon arrive at the Las Ventas Bullring¹⁶:

"(...) But if you really want to learn about bullfighting, or if you ever get to feel strongly about it, sooner or later you will have to go to Madrid".

The assignment for *Life* magazine led Hemingway to travel to different parts of France and Spain during the summer of 1959. Once the bullfighting season was over, Hemingway travelled to Cuba and New York, but at the end of the summer of 1960 he returned to Casa de Suecia to complete some editing aspects of his reportage. He remained there for a few months, secluded among books and bottles of whisky, suffering from depression, insomnia, and delusions of persecution. It would be difficult to gauge to what extent the hotel room conditioned his seclusion, but perhaps the quiet and cheerful atmosphere, more typical of the country house than of the dense city, helped the writer to find his peaceful solitude.

Such a room was probably the corner suite on the fifth floor (fig. 09), the one furthest away from the lifts and stairs. As in the rest of the rooms, the transition between the collective common space and the private one was made by a filter: a threshold space equipped with a bench or cupboard area for taking off one's shoes, leaving one's umbrella or coat. This type of airlock also served to connect the entrances to the bedroom on the right-hand side and the living room opposite. In fact, the two routes were subtly distinguished by the opening of the doors: always outwards, to enter the living room; outwards and inwards, to enter the bedroom.

As a photograph from 1956 (fig. 10) shows, the living room of the suite is divided into three zones: one for reading, next to the window; another for dining, next to the door leading to the terrace; and a final one for resting, next to the entrance. Although the city skyline can be seen in the background, both the Nordic design of the room, with the carpeted floor throughout, the dotted curtain in front of the wall unit and, of course, the individual pieces of furniture, reveal the high degree of comfort of an interior warmed by the midday sun.

In the reading area, in the middle distance, both the high-backed reclining chair and the floor lamp, two objects with a presence in the agora, were designed by Alf Svensson. This armchair, named *Contour* and launched by Fritz Hansen in Malmö, was available in different fabrics and colours, but always maintaining the delicate, lightweight beech wood base. Unlike Bengt Ruda's low-backed chair that accompanied it, the legs of the *Contour* chair do not intersect or articulate at a central point but are joined by a lower bar and a sinuous armrest. In one of its commercial variants, the *Contour* chair also featured an adjustable headrest cushion. Hemingway would sit in this armchair when he received visitors, and the conversation would go on until the early hours of the morning¹⁷.

In the lounge area, in the foreground, the coffee table that accompanies a three-seater sofa is a work of shared authorship, signed by David Rosén and Stig Lindberg: the *Vågor* model, "Waves" (fig. 11). Formed from an oak frame, this table was enriched by the marine-themed pattern enamelled directly onto the tabletop. Rosén was responsible for the overall joinery and Lindberg for the artistic motif. In their collaboration for NK, Lindberg's designs were always characterised by bright, cheerful colours and a childlike or surrealistic style, as if with a tender freshness¹⁸. Who knows, perhaps for this drawing, in which the effect of the waves is nothing more than a poetic undulating representation of the movement of the fish, Lindberg was inspired by reading *The Old Man and the Sea*.

EPILOGUE

The three life episodes narrated in the Casa de Suecia outline a vertical itinerary, which begins in contact with the earth and ends in the air, towards a distant horizon. This route invites an architectural reflection, no longer from formal premises, but from the experience of life, as Aalto recommended in relation to the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930. In the first episode, "Bellman", the focus was on the role of custom and celebration in the collective rootedness of a particular community, the Scandinavian community in Madrid in 1950. In the second, "IKEA", the relevant role played by objects in generating small, improvised, non-exclusionary meeting places was studied. Finally, in the third, "Hemingway", one of the hotel's rooms has been described, based on one of its most renowned guests.

The loss in terms of modern heritage of these interiors also entailed the complete erasure of the human activities that gave meaning to each space, to the interrelationship between house and city, between private and public, something that only such a building can offer. It is true, as Christopher Alexander explains, that a living building begins to be alive precisely through the everyday acts of the people, just as "A building or a town will only be alive to the extent that it is governed by the timeless way"¹⁹. As it is also true that everyday life in the Casa de Suecia unfolded internally within the strict and straight exterior limits, hidden beneath the severe and abstract appearance of its façade, acquiring over time an aura of affection and mystery that would be linked to the very phenomenon of inhabiting. Inhabiting, which is basically what Aalto, Dreyer, and Garrigues proposed²⁰:

"What a beautiful project for those who have a real feeling for architecture to show off civic ensembles in which the architectural background, the symbolism of the artists and the people can enjoy a great celebration".

We would close the essay by saying that the great issue of interest in the Casa de Suecia, what we have sought to reflect here, is not that it was conceived in a particular style or styles, nor even that it was built with imported materials. None of these considerations would have as much value as the fact that the traveller, the Swedish businessman or the casual visitor would feel at home when crossing the threshold; a house where the world is intimacy and intimacy is the world.

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Notes

01. AALTO, Alvar, "The Stockholm Exhibition I", in *Sketches*, Göran Schildt (ed.), Stuart Wrede (trans.), MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1985, p. 16.

02. DREYER, Carl Theodor, "Fantasi og farve", in *Politiken*, Copenhagen, 30 August 1955.

03. AMAROUCH, Ismael, "The Art of Discretion. Casa de Suecia in Madrid", in *Pioneers of Modern Spanish Architecture: architecture as inclusive work*, Teresa Couceiro (coord.), Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, Madrid, 2017, pp. 190-209.

04. AMAROUCH, Ismael, "The Ground Floor Arrangement in the House of Sweden", in *VAD: veredes, arquitectura y divulgación*, 2020, n.º. 3, pp. 60-71.

05. SAVARÍN, "Bellman", in *ABC*, Madrid, 18 January 1970, p. 25.

06. It was for this good state of preservation that the farms in the province of Hälsingland were declared a World Heritage Site in 2012. Of the 1,000 farms in the area, seven were chosen as the most representative: Kristofers in Järvsö, Gästgivars in Vallsta, Pallars and Jon-Lars in Långhed, Bortom Åa in Fåglesjö, Bommars in Letsbo, and Erik-Anders in Söderala.

07. PAULSSON, Gregor, "The Past and the Present", in *CIAM 8. The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life*, J.L. Sert (ed.), J. Tyrwhitt (ed.), and E. N. Rogers (ed.), Lund Humphries, London, 1952, p. 26. Together with Uno Åhren, Gunnar Asplund, Wolter Gahn, Sven Markelius and Eskil Sundahl, Paulsson was a signatory of the *Acceptera* (1930), the manifesto of Swedish functionalism.

08. RYBCZYNSKI, Witold, "Intimacy and Privacy", in *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, Penguin Books, New York, 1987, p. 17.

09. PAULSSON, Gregor, "Better Things for Everyday Life", in *Modern Swedish Design. Three Founding Texts*, Lucy Creagh (ed.), Helena Kåberg (ed.), Barbara Miller Lane (ed.), and David Jones (trans.), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2008, pp. 72-125.

10. Nordiska Kompaniet

was (and still is) a Swedish department store. With a factory in Nyköping (1904) and main business in Stockholm (1915), from the 1950s onwards it focused on furniture and interior design for the up-and-coming working class, establishing a specific department within NK: NK-bo.

11. A.A.V.V., *Design in Scandinavia: An Exhibition of Objects for the Home*, Arne Remlov (ed.), Kirstes Boktrykkeri, Oslo, 1954.

12. BRUNNSTRÖM, Lasse, "Prominent Defenders of Good Taste", in *Swedish Design: A History*, Bloomsbury Visual Arts, London, 2019, pp. 76-79.

13. Tafisa (Tableros y Fibras, S.A.) was a company dedicated to the production of pine wood insulation boards from pruning waste and forest thinning. The company had several factories in Spain, the most significant of which were those located on the banks of the rivers Lérez in Pontevedra and Pisuerga in Valladolid. It was founded in the Scandinavian Centre by the Spanish businessman José M^a Pena Rich and the Swedish engineer Folke Pehrzon, the first president and main active member of the Casa de Suecia.

14. The story became the book *The Dangerous Summer*, published later posthumously in 1985. Hemingway immersed himself so deeply in the story that he far exceeded the planned length: of the 10,000 words agreed with *Life*, he submitted a first draft of 120,000 words in May 1960.

15. On his previous trips to Madrid, Hemingway stayed at the Hotel Florida as his first choice and the Hotel Palace as his second.

16. HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Death in the Afternoon*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1932, p. 41.

17. HEMINGWAY, Valerie, "Spain", in *Running with the Bulls: My Years with the Hemingways*, Ballantine Books, New York, 2004, p. 27.

18. Lindberg was also the artistic director of Gustavsberg. He assumed this role between 1949 and 1980, continuing the legacy of his master, Wilhelm Kåge. Gustavsberg was one of the Swedish firms most firmly

committed to the commercial purpose of the Casa de Suecia in Madrid. For this reason, the company offered to supply and install all the sanitary fittings for the building, free of charge.

19. ALEXANDER, Christopher, "The Timeless Way", in *The Timeless Way of Building*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1979, p. 1.

20. GARRIGUES, Mariano, "La Arquitectura en Suecia", in *Boletín de Información de la Dirección General de Arquitectura*, January 1950, N.º 13, p. 18.

Images

01. Hemingway in the bar of the Casa de Suecia, seated in one of Kerstin Hörlin-Holmquist's *Stora Kraal* chairs, September 1959. Marino Gómez-Santos documentary collection, Rey Juan Carlos University, Madrid.

02. Illustration "Las noches del Suecia" by Mikel Casal. *ABC Cultural*, May 2006.

03. Casa de Suecia. Left: first basement and mezzanine. Right: ground floor. *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*, February 1957.

04. Casa de Suecia. *Kraftstskiva* in the assembly hall. Photograph by Luis Millán. EFE, July 1964.

05. Casa de Suecia. Foyer leading to the assembly hall. *Boletín de Información de la Cámara de Comercio de Suecia en España*, 1956.

06. Casa de Suecia. Hotel lounge and bar. Drawing by Maurice Holland. *Boletín de Información de la Cámara de Comercio de Suecia en España*, 1956.

07. Casa de Suecia. Hotel lounge and bar. Photograph by Martín Santos Yubero, September 1956. Archives of the Community of Madrid.

08. Casa de Suecia. Architecture meeting in the hotel lounge. Photograph by Martín Santos Yubero, ca. 1960. Archives of the Community of Madrid.

09. Casa de Suecia. Left: fifth floor, hotel rooms. Right: detail of the corner suite. *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*, February 1957.

10. Casa de Suecia. Living room of the Hemingway Suite. *Boletín de Información de la Cámara de Comercio de Suecia en España*, 1956.

11. Stig Lindberg & David Rosén. Vågor Table, Nordiska Kompaniet, serie Futura, 1956. Board Assembly, present image, on an advertisement of the magazine *Form*. *Magazine for Nordic Architecture and Design*.

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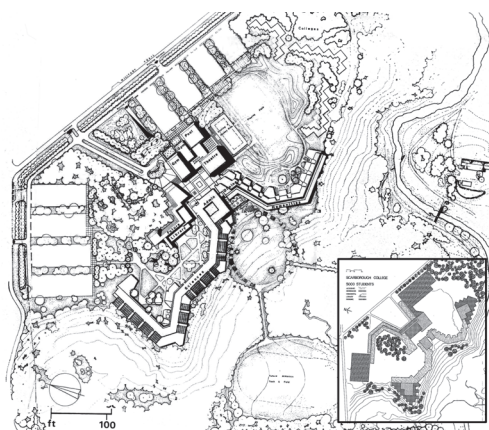
Brutalismo, cine y distopía: las múltiples vidas cinematográficas del Scarborough College de John Andrews

Luis Miguel Lus Arana

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Desde su apertura al público en 1965, el megaestructural Scarborough College de John Andrews -actualmente Universidad de Toronto, Scarborough- disfrutó del reconocimiento universal. Saludado por Kenneth Frampton como "con mucho el más atrevido, completo y radical... de todos los complejos universitarios completados en los últimos años", Scarborough ha disfrutado, a diferencia de muchas otras estructuras brutalistas, de una existencia pacífica y exitosa: impoluto, pese a ampliaciones posteriores, el Andrews Building, como se lo conoce hoy, no solo ha sobrevivido hasta nuestros días, sino que se ha convertido en el núcleo reverenciado de un emblemático campus universitario. Sin embargo, junto con su próspera historia como instalación universitaria, Scarborough también ha disfrutado de una prolífica doble vida como localización cinematográfica, prestando sus rasgos arquitectónicos a una variedad de perversas corporaciones, prisiones futuristas o instalaciones gubernamentales. En este artículo se examinan algunas de las muchas apariciones de Scarborough en la pantalla, así como las diferentes formas en que el cine ha representado, apropiado, recontextualizado, transformado e incluso ampliado el edificio más allá del diseño construido por Andrews.



A fines de la década de 1960, la apreciación de la arquitectura moderna por parte del público general alcanzó su punto más bajo, al tiempo que el brutalismo alcanzaba su máxima popularidad entre los arquitectos. Si las ideas utópicas de la modernidad fueron "originalmente vistas como un reflejo de las actitudes democráticas de una poderosa expresión cívica: autenticidad, honestidad, franqueza y fuerza", con el tiempo esta "llegó a significar precisamente lo contrario: hostilidad, frialdad,

inhumanidad", y el cine ayudaría a cimentar este significado sobrevenido¹. La adaptación de Stanley Kubrick en 1971 de *La Naranja Mecánica* (1962) de Anthony Burgess llevó esta percepción un paso más allá, ayudando a forjar, en el imaginario colectivo, la indisoluble asociación entre brutalismo y sombrías distopías futuras. En cualquier caso, Kubrick no había sido el primero en utilizar la arquitectura modernista como imagen de futuros totalitarios o asfixiantes: Jean-Luc Godard ya había transformado París en una distopía tecnológica en *Alphaville* (1965), y François Truffaut haría lo mismo en 1966 con su adaptación del *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) Ray Bradbury, filmada en el Alton Estate de Londres. También George Lucas, de nuevo en 1971, transformaría algunos de los modernos edificios de Los Ángeles en el futuro alienante de *THX 1138*.

La Naranja Mecánica capturaría, sin embargo, el espíritu distópico de las estructuras brutalistas como ningún otro film antes, y lo haría, paradójicamente, con una sorprendente austeridad: el 'brutalismo'², en su acepción más convencional como 'arquitectura tardomoderna de hormigón visto', está representado por dos únicas estructuras en la película: la aún en construcción 'megaestructura habitacional' del *Thamesmead Estate*, y una visión fugaz del recientemente terminado aulario del nuevo campus de la Universidad Brunel³. Sin embargo, las icónicas vistas de ambas estructuras, pasarían a representar la película en su conjunto especialmente esta última, que, como imagen del *Ludovico Medical Facility*, centro especializado en la aplicación de terapias de aversión para los socialmente conflictivos, adquiriría un interesante subtexto adicional. La presencia del aulario, por otra parte, no resulta especialmente sorprendente, habida cuenta de que Kubrick realizaría una búsqueda exhaustiva en diferentes revistas de arquitectura, en busca de ubicaciones cercanas a su propia casa en Londres. Como explica Paul V. Turner en *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (1987), el aumento exponencial de la población universitaria en la década de 1960 había fomentado un auge paralelo en la construcción de nuevas instalaciones universitarias, o incluso campus de nueva planta, lo que puso muy a mano a Kubrick estructuras apropiadas para sus propósitos.

Los nuevos programas de educación superior reclamaban un fomento de intercambio de estudiantes y profesores, la interdisciplinariedad, la investigación y desarrollo, así como la posibilidad de un crecimiento y evolución continuos. Esta filosofía se solapaba a la perfección con las preocupaciones del pensamiento arquitectónico de la época, dando como resultado una proliferación de equipamientos educativos que adoptarían la estética brutalista en sus múltiples formas y facetas. No obstante, si bien una nutrida lista de edificios brutalistas continuaría personándose en filmes realizados desde comienzos de los 70 en adelante —generalmente como estética por defecto de un futuro distópico, o prestando su arquitectura, normalmente percibida como opresiva por el público, a comisarías de policía, instalaciones gubernamentales, recintos militares o siniestras corporaciones— los edificios universitarios permanecieron, salvo por unos pocos ejemplos, obstinadamente ausentes de esta lista⁴. Tan sólo dos notables excepciones escaparían a esta regla: los 'megaestructurales'⁵ campus de la Universidad Simon Fraser en Burnaby, de Arthur Erickson y George Massey (1963-1965), y el *Scarborough College* de John Andrews en Toronto (fig. 01), cuyo éxito en la vida real se extendería a las múltiples vidas alternativas de que ha disfrutado en el cine⁶.

EL MAÑANA YA HA SIDO: SCARBOROUGH COLLEGE Y EL FUTURO

Al igual que James Stirling antes que él, en sus últimos años Andrews se opuso frontalmente a la clasificación de Scarborough como 'brutalista'⁷. Es difícil, sin embargo, no ver en las 'calles' internas y multiniveles de Scarborough ecos de las

estrategias neobrutalistas, o desvincular el edificio dentro de la fiebre megaestructural de finales de los 60, como certificaría el

propio Banham en su tratado sobre el fenómeno⁸. Por otro lado, seguramente Andrews no había tenido nada que objetar a los elogios casi universales que había recibido de compañeros y críticos. Completada en menos de dos años, la 'Folly Monumental'⁹ de Andrews fue inmediatamente aclamada como un éxito educativo y arquitectónico adorado por los medios. Así, Aparecería no sólo en las principales revistas de arquitectura, a las que se sumarían otras locales, sino también medios generalistas como *Time* (dos veces) y *Harper's*¹⁰. Después de una visita al campus, el arquitecto de local Ray Affleck escribió que "Scarborough College no es solo un edificio, es un evento... de considerable importancia tanto para la profesión arquitectónica como para el público en general... que responde a una gran cantidad de problemas, posibilidades y potencialidades urbanas contemporáneas."¹¹ Incluso Kenneth Frampton, en una reseña un tanto pasiva-agresiva para *Architectural Design*, admitiría que "de todos los complejos universitarios construidos en los últimos años, es con mucho el más atrevido, completo y radical, y como tal merece ser atención crítica"¹². Elogios similares vinieron de todas partes: Scarborough parecía una forma apropiadamente progresista para albergar lo que pretendía ser un programa pedagógico diseñado mirando al futuro¹³.

Ciertamente había algo *intrínsecamente* futurista en Scarborough. Con sus fachadas inclinadas, conducciones exteriores, chimeneas, volúmenes salientes, así como su 'agresiva asimetría'¹⁴ y geometrías no ortogonales, el campus satélite de la Universidad de Toronto¹⁵ se alzaba en su bucólico entorno como una fortaleza futurista o, quizás, una (mega)estructura extraterrestre. del tipo que las películas de finales de la década de 1970 mostrarían desplazándose por las inmensidades del espacio exterior¹⁶. Pero, además, albergaba también un innovador diseño pedagógico basado en el uso de circuito cerrado de televisión. "Scarborough debe ser calificado como un logro técnico a nivel educativo. Está repleto de equipos electrónicos"—señalaba un tanto ingenuamente Frampton¹⁷. Aulas, auditorios y laboratorios estaban equipados con pantallas de retroproyección para la presentación simultánea de películas y diapositivas, así como de monitores de televisión adicionales en los pasillos laterales de las aulas más grandes, entre otras novedades. El edificio disponía incluso de su propio estudio de televisión central, con otros varios situados en otras partes del mismo, lo que garantizaba que 11 programas educativos pudieran transmitirse simultáneamente a 50 aulas diferentes, en un momento en el que "se anticipó que al menos la mitad de toda la enseñanza sería impartida a través de televisión"¹⁸. En los años posteriores a la finalización de la Fase 1, Scarborough pasaría por muchos futuros posibles¹⁹: planos y edificios aparecieron y desaparecieron, y si el 'Andrews Building', como se conoce en la actualidad el rosario de volúmenes interconectados formado por el Ala de Humanidades, el 'Meeting Place' y el Ala de Ciencias, continúa en pie, conservando intacto su esplendor futurista, el propio campus, con sus diferentes añadidos, se mantiene inusualmente fiel a las intenciones originales de Andrews²⁰ (figs. 01, 02).

No todo era igualmente utópico, en cualquier caso. Aunque *The Canadian Architect* subrayó que los edificios efectivamente construidos "forman un espacio académico central, un centro formal y digno de actividad universitaria"²¹, el proyecto original de Andrews nunca llegó a completarse (fig. 02). Ampliaciones subsiguientes, que habrían completado la estructura original con alojamiento para estudiantes, convirtiéndola así en un campus residencial (fig. 01) —un requisito fundamental para un campus satélite situado a 30 kilómetros del centro de Toronto— quedaron sin construir²². La gaceta estudiantil, apropiadamente bautizada *Marooned* ('abandonados/náufragos'), trató a menudo el tema de la falta de identidad que ocasionaba el estar situados tan lejos del núcleo de la universidad²³. También el experimento de tele-instrucción fracasó; los estudiantes se rebelaron, alegando que "los nuevos objetivos y demandas educativas iban en contra del

concepto de instrucción mecanizada y estandarizada²⁴, y al menos un crítico definió su sentimiento inicial al visitar el campus “no tanto como el atisbo de un lugar del aprendizaje como un siniestro bloque orwelliano en el que se convence a la gente de que dos y dos son cinco”²⁵. Esta resultaría, como se vería más adelante, una visión asaz profética, considerando algunos de los futuros cinematográficos que esperaban al edificio.

**UNO: DISTOPIAS
COTIDIANAS: ALIENACIÓN
O EL CAMPUS DE UN SOLO
EDIFICIO. (DIFERENTES
SOMBAS DE GRIS)**

Scarborough tendría un estrenó dentro del cine distópico, como telón de fondo de *Stereo* (1969), ópera prima fuertemente inspirada en Bergman de David Cronenberg. Filmada en un opresivo blanco y negro, y casi pudiendo ser calificada de

película muda, *Stereo* inauguraría el subgrupo de ‘Siniestras Compañías Tecnológicas’ dentro de la historia fílmica de Scarborough. De naturaleza ciertamente experimental, la película relataba un experimento con sujetos humanos a los que se privaba quirúrgicamente de la facultad del habla en aras a potenciar el desarrollo de habilidades telepáticas. *Stereo* introducía muchos de los temas que caracterizarían la cinematografía posterior de Cronenberg, como es la simbiosis entre mente, cuerpo, sexualidad y tecnología, en un mundo también cada vez más tecnologizado. Estos temas dominan la segunda mitad de la película, donde, surtidos de drogas afrodisíacas por un invisible -pero audible- grupo de científicos, los poderes telepáticos de los pacientes emergen por medio de la participación en prácticas sexuales polimorfas, que desembocan en última instancia en el antagonismo mutuo, la aplicación de violencia y, en dos casos, el suicidio.

Transformado en la rimbombante ‘Academia Canadiense de Investigación Erótica’, Scarborough representa el “mundo cada vez más tecnologizado”, con su sistema de circuito cerrado de televisión y su rico interior microurbano, transformados de tecnología/entorno pedagógico en una opresiva arquitectura del control. Esta casi perfecta simbiosis no era accidental: como relataría más tarde Cronenberg,

“Estructuré la película en torno a la arquitectura... [s]u vaciedad me permitió ver esta estructura de una manera completamente abstracta, porque [sic] aún no estaban habitados (...). Eso contribuyó al tono — la soledad, la pequeñez del ser humano... Siempre me ha interesado la relación de la tecnología con el ser humano, y hay que pensar en la arquitectura como expresión de la tecnología.”²⁶

El aún immaculado Andrews Building ofreció a Cronenberg —él mismo un graduado de la Universidad de Toronto— un entorno ideal, global, que actuó como ancla de la exigua trama, que se completaba con una voz en *off* plagada de jerga pseudocientífica que hilaba una narrativa fragmentaria y abstracta, al tiempo que ayudaba a situar la acción en un escenario temporal indeterminado pero adecuadamente futurista. Filmado con una ruidosa cámara Arriflex 2C de 35 mm y un presupuesto estimado de 3.500 dólares canadienses, el rodaje de Cronenberg, realizado con un estilo cercano al documental, presentaba al edificio como una estructura grande, tosca e inhumana, con sus calles interiores zigzagueantes retratándolo convincentemente como un mundo interior continuo, laberíntico y desorientador. La defamiliarización provenía aquí del estado desierto en el que se filmó: un edificio-ciudad, pensado para una población habitual de miles se presentaba desprovisto de persona alguna (fig. 03), con la falta de la textura que el elemento humano habría proporcionado reforzando la frialdad de sus superficies, daba como resultado un paisaje apropiadamente inhumano y deshumanizador, que transmitía una sensación de alienación similar a la de la posterior *THX 1138* (1971)²⁷ de George Lucas. El de Cronenberg, sin embargo, se trataba de un retrato desapasionado del edificio, que evitaba deleitarse en la representación monumentalista a la que este tan fácilmente

se presta. Tres años antes, la CBC (*Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*) había emitido un documental de 30 minutos sobre la construcción e inauguración del Scarborough College cuyos planos, también en blanco y negro, y mostrando el edificio ‘as is’, perfectamente podrían haber pertenecido a *Stereo*²⁸ (fig. 04). Al igual que *THX*, *Stereo* encuentra su distópica sensación de asfixia en su combinación de lo extraordinario -la alienación de encontrarse en herméticos mundos arquitectónicamente- y lo mundano, con una sensación adicional de extrañamiento proporcionada, en el caso de Cronenberg, por su clínico, desapasionado estilo de filmación.

Medio siglo después, Anon (2018), de Andrew Niccol, contrarrestaría esto de alguna manera al presentar un doppelganger de Scarborough que compensaba la poco monumentalista representación de Cronenberg. Ambientada en una distópica sociedad del control, donde las autoridades pueden registrar y acceder a las percepciones visuales y auditivas de cualquier ciudadano, el edificio es aquí trasplantado a Nueva York, improbablemente recontextualizado como el interior del imponente rascacielos *AT&T Long Lines Building* de John Carl Warnecke (1969-1974), envoltorio habitual de diferentes corporaciones secretas en la historia del cine que era a su vez ‘trans-programado’ en una igualmente improbable -por lo grandioso y vacía- comisaría de policía²⁹ (fig. 05). Niccol consigue la sensación de alienación subrayando la escala del edificio, aprovechando para ello tanto las interminables balconadas del Ala de Humanidades, con sus paredes inclinadas, como la inmensidad del Meeting Place, que desempeña el papel de una sala de interrogatorios de escala inhumana. Paradójicamente, sin embargo, en un mundo donde toda la publicidad es digital, y las calles, desprovistas de toda señalización se sienten artificial e inquietantemente mudas, Scarborough no resulta particularmente alienante. Por el contrario, la elección del director de fotografía Amir Mokri de filmar la película con una paleta de color “gris-piedra desaturado”, “donde la comisaría semeja más un templo desnudo”³⁰ tiene un interesante e intenso efecto ‘glamurizador’ en el edificio (ayudado por la inserción de un mobiliario minimalista y límpido), especialmente si se compara con la granulosa textura de video casero del filme de Cronenberg. En lugar de una enorme y tosca masa de hormigón, las superficies de Scarborough se muestran perfectas, exactas, con la ingravidez matemática y abstracta y la nitidez de una maqueta digital que las reviste de una contraintuitiva, reconfortante e inusual suavidad. Cincuenta años después de su construcción, el Scarborough del futuro cercano de Anon se ve tan límpido —y futurista— como nunca.

**DOS: ANY COLOUR
YOU LIKE
(DYSTOPIAN BLUES)**

“...visitar Scarborough College es participar en una experiencia multidimensional y multi-sensual (...)”³¹

Un sosiego similar puede encontrarse en *Enemy* (Denis Villeneuve, 2013), donde Scarborough aparece como una versión ligeramente ficcionada de sí mismo, el Edificio de Ciencias Sociales de la UGT (*University of Greater Toronto*) (fig. 06). Enteramente rodada en una altamente estilizada versión Toronto, el filme se centra en un frustrado profesor universitario de Historia, Adam Bell (Jake Gyllenhaal), que se obsesiona con un actor que es su doble exacto. En esta versión fílmica de un Toronto por otra parte muy real, la ciudad está filmada con un omnipresente tinte ámbar, que la hace exudar una tenue, pero, quizás por ello, asfixiante³² atmósfera distópica: una ficticia ciudad de sofocante smog, construida en su totalidad a partir de retazos de su contrapartida real, que se convierte en un lugar de Ballardiana, alienante y ‘corporativamente moderna’ uniformidad. Scarborough destaca, en un sorprendente cambio de registro, como uno de sus lugares más humanos: con la rugosidad de sus superficies grises suavizadas por la pátina amarillenta general, su escala hábilmente atenuada a

través del posicionamiento de la cámara y los encuadres, y rodeada de vegetación, Scarborough se transforma en un amable oasis entre los muchos otros edificios y lugares mostrados a lo largo del filme, retratados siempre en su forma más despersonalizada.

En cuestión de rol, imagen y, especialmente *color*, *Enemy* es, en cualquier caso, una rareza tonal entre las representaciones fílmicas de Scarborough. A lo largo de sus muchas apariciones en la pantalla, el edificio ha sido objeto de las habituales estrategias de cross/trans-programming, tal y como los define Bernard Tschumi³³, en su interpretación del papel de diferentes y ominosas instituciones. Las estrategias visuales utilizadas para subrayar sus rasgos más inquietantes son múltiples: la frialdad de sus superficies de hormigón es a menudo potenciada con colores desaturaciones de color, con especial predilección por la tendencia actual hacia los tonos acerados o azul cobalto³⁴. Su masa interior a veces se filma envuelta en sombras que subrayan su naturaleza opresiva y laberíntica, mientras sus enormes volúmenes exteriores se muestran en abrumadores contrapicados. Diferentes variaciones de todas ellas pueden encontrarse, por ejemplo, estos en la teleserie televisión sobrenatural *Shadowhunters* (2016-2019), donde el Meeting Place y los alrededores del acceso norte, filmados de noche y bañados por una densa lluvia al estilo de Blade-Runner juegan el papel de una, de nuevo, improbablemente colosal Comisaría 89 de la Policía de Nueva York. Mientras, otra serie de ciencia ficción canadiense, *Impulse* (2018-2019), obsequia al espectador en su episodio *Vita/Mors* con un inusual paseo por sus cubiertas, que, con la superposición de unas antenas parabólicas fabricadas digitalmente, se transformaba en un razonablemente futurista 'Observatorio de Ondas Gravitacionales'³⁵.

Un buen compendio de esta estética, predominante en la representación actual de futuros distópicos, puede encontrarse en la refacción del *Fahrenheit 451* de Bradbury realizada por Ramin Bahrani en 2018, un film que también ejemplifica a la perfección el cambio de sensibilidad desde los 60 hasta hoy. Filmada en una fecha más cercana al momento en que se escribió el libro, la versión de Godard, había utilizado un ejemplo canónico del movimiento moderno como son los bloques de viviendas en Alton West, Roehampton, donde únicamente algunos accesorios añadidos bastaban para introducir visualmente el elemento futurista. Fotografiado con un estilo naturalista por el futuro director Nicholas Roeg, la atmósfera brumosa propia del clima británico junto con la casual de los interiores banalidad, el vestuario o los peinados bastaban para inducir sutilmente en espectador la -muy inglesa- sensación de 'calmada desesperación' de un futuro distópico que ya estaba aquí. La revisión de Bahrani toma una dirección completamente diferente, sustituyendo la leve alienación de lo cotidiano por el espectáculo *hi-tech*. Menos propenso a filmar espacios domésticos y más inclinada a intimidar al espectador con la imponente sede del brazo represor del estado, Bahrani hace un recorrido que para en los hitos habituales de Scarborough: la enorme entrada norte, la sala de conferencias principal, así como los diversos niveles de pasillos del Ala de Ciencias, que albergan aquí vestuarios y armerías ocultas tras rejillas metálicas. Filmada íntegramente de noche, con sus superficies de hormigón bañadas por una pátina azulada y tenuemente iluminadas con luces de neón rojas y amarillas, Scarborough se muestra adecuadamente oscuro y siniestro, -si bien algo reducido en su escala- como la imagen de un estado fascista³⁶ que "censura y 'bastardiza' aquel arte que encuentra problemático", mientras "la mayoría de la población ha sido voluntariamente anestesiada por unos medios de comunicación diseñados para darles exactamente lo que quieren"³⁷. Visualmente hermosa, aunque estereotipada -como el propio guión-, la película tiene algunos -pocos- elementos que la redimen, como las escenas que muestran raras vistas cenitales de las escaleras interiores, o un plano general que abre el film, y que captura el *Meeting Place*, aquí transformado en un ring de boxeo, en toda su altura y gloria. Pueden

apreciarse ecos del subtexto de Kubrick, cuando una instalación destinada al aprendizaje en la vida real se resignifica como lugar de entrenamiento para un ejército de funcionarios dedicados a borrar el conocimiento.

Por último, pero ciertamente no por menos importante, destacaría en este grupo, *La Forma del Agua* (Guillermo del Toro, 2017), donde, trasplantado nuevamente a una ubicación estadounidense —Baltimore—, y nuevamente haciéndose pasar por una instalación gubernamental secreta y más turbia aún, el ficticio Centro de Investigación Aeroespacial OCCAM (fig. 07), Scarborough se reviste de la pátina azul de la distopía. Esta vez, sin embargo, el equipo dirigido por el arquitecto y diseñador de producción Paul Austerberry haría mucho más que agregar elementos cosméticos al edificio existente. Originalmente pensado para ser filmado en blanco y negro (lo que habría introducido una interesante resonancia con *Stereo*³⁸), el uso último de "azul acero y verdes claros" -también un elemento distintivo de la filmografía de Del Toro— se aplicó no sólo a las tomas rodadas en ubicaciones reales del edificio, que proporcionaría "la fachada y la entrada" a su "laboratorio en el inframundo"³⁹, sino también a toda una serie de nuevos espacios interiores, construidos en estudio, que se apropiaban algunos de los manierismos de Scarborough para ampliar su léxico arquitectónico en nuevas direcciones. Impregnándose de su filosofía de diseño para expandir sus espacios interiores en direcciones plausibles⁴⁰, el proceso de 'producción del espacio' del filme logra la rara gesta de mostrar al espectador un Scarborough divergente que, sin embargo, este no percibe como extraño, resultando difícil, incluso para un ojo conocedor, distinguir lo real de su —especulativa— simulación⁴¹.

**TRES: BRUTALISMOS
'APROPIADOS' Y POST-VIDA
DIGITAL (LA REALIDAD
COMO PUNTO DE
PARTIDA): AMPLIACIONES,
DESTRUCCIONES,
EXPANSIONES,
CONDENSACIONES**

Una estrategia similar puede encontrarse en la que es una de las representaciones más amables dentro de este grupo, la ofrecida por la teleserie *Hannibal* (2013-2015), donde el Ala de Humanidades se desdobra para representar el doble papel del exterior de la Academia del FBI y de la BAU (Unidad de Análisis del Comportamiento), ambas en Quantico (Virginia). La serie presenta el exterior de Scarborough fundamentalmente a través de imágenes fijas desaturadas de diferentes ángulos del edificio recortándose contra cielos acerados⁴². El primer episodio, sin embargo, abre con una vista inusualmente cálida del edificio: una toma en la que la cámara seguía a los personajes en su paso por el exterior del Ala de Humanidades. Rodeado de un entorno vegetal, el edificio mostrado en su escala más humana, y los auditorios en forma búnker pintorescamente cubiertos por vegetación, Scarborough aparece, como en *Enemy*, como una fortaleza emergiendo en el centro de un verde Edén. También como en *Enemy*, esta escena en cierto modo doméstica se prolonga en otra que muestra la modesta escala del corredor del Ala de Ciencias. A partir de este momento, sin embargo, la acción se desplaza imperceptiblemente y sin solución de continuidad a escenarios construidos en estudio.

Partiendo de un tropo habitual del cine, el diseñador de producción Matthew Davies extrapolaría a partir de estas dos vistas de Scarborough, en un proceso inductivo que daría lugar a un conjunto de otros espacios que convertían el interior del edificio de Andrews en una laberíntica pero ordenada matriz de laboratorios, salas de reuniones y conferencias, pasillos y oficinas. Tomando prestadas tan sólo algunas texturales del repertorio de vidrio, hormigón, acero y madera del edificio, Davies crea *un otro*, cognitivamente disonante Scarborough⁴³ (fig. 08). Con sus espacios modulares de pilares de hormigón, paneles de madera y techos tronco-piramidales, Hannibal amplía el catálogo de ambientes interiores de un modo tal que podrían haber encajado

perfectamente en los edificios situados en el norte del campus, si se hubieran construido tal y como los planificó Andrews. De este modo, *Hannibal* ofrece al espectador la experiencia, parafraseando a Giuliana Bruno, del Scarborough de un espacio-tiempo *que podría haber sido*, y también brinda un posiblemente fortuito, pero no obstante interesante subtexto arquitectónico: con sus nuevos espacios modulares de hormigón y techos troncopiramidales, los diseñadores de *Hannibal* establecen un vínculo entre Scarborough y la obra de Louis Kahn, una influencia temprana en Andrews ausente de esta obra en particular⁴⁴.

El advenimiento de la era de la imagen digital ha hecho que esta apropiación y reinvención de las estructuras existentes sea mucho más fácil y frecuente, y Scarborough, como hemos visto, no es una excepción. Entre la variedad de apropiaciones digitales, podríamos listar su breve aparición como la prisión de Westhole en la serie *Killjoys* de SyFy (2015-19⁴⁵). Los dos únicos planos estáticos en que aparece destacan, sin embargo, por brindarnos una atractiva instancia de esa 'imaginación del desastre'⁴⁶ enunciada por Susan Sontag, que, siguiendo la tradición de Joseph Gandy/John Soane⁴⁷, muestra el edificio en estado de ruina en una sencilla *matte painting* digital. Una de sus localizaciones predilectas, el Meeting Place, también ha sido objeto de diferentes excursiones al futuro. Así, aparecería, en lo que podría considerarse un 'cameo glorificado', en la nueva versión de *Total Recall* (Len Wiseman, 2012), interpretando el papel de la terminal asiática del sistema de transporte global conocido como *The Fall*. Repleta de cachivaches y extras, tanto reales como digitales, la plaza interior es casi irreconocible, especialmente cuando el carácter introvertido de esta plaza interior se desnaturaliza por medio de una expansión digital que abre en su opaco perímetro de hormigón ventanas de varios pisos de altura mostrando el futurista paisaje urbano exterior. Una estrategia en cierto modo antagónica puede encontrarse en *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2010), donde interpreta con inusitada discreción -al punto de pasar desapercibida incluso para el espectador informado- el papel central de la cafetería situada en la base del patio interior de una prisión. Con un mínimo atrezzo, el aspecto del espacio no difiere demasiado de su doble real hasta el momento en que la cámara se eleva para revelar que ha sido dramáticamente extruido verticalmente, con la adición de innumerables pisos con balconadas cerradas con barrotes.

Los exteriores de Scarborough también han estado sujetos a procesos de aumento o condensación digital, que expanden o concentran el diseño de Andrews, ya sea siguiendo su lógica interna de crecimiento u oponiéndose a ella. En el primer grupo se situaría la sencilla -pero especialmente relevante a los efectos de este artículo- reinterpretación diseñada para la teleserie *The Expanse*. Ambientada a mediados del siglo 24, la serie se ambienta en un futuro en el que el Sistema Solar ha sido parcialmente colonizado, y se encuentra en un escenario de guerra fría, con la Tierra y Marte representando las dos principales superpotencias en competencia. En este contexto, donde las posiciones de las Naciones Unidas y la República del Congreso de Marte pueden asimilarse a las de los EE.UU. y la URSS del siglo xx, respectivamente, Scarborough representa el rol de la Embajada de Marte, con su masa de hormigón severa y abrumadora encarnando, se deduce, cierto ideal futurista de la fría arquitectura de la era soviética, y la serie hace un extenso uso de algunos de los puntos más opresivamente imponentes del edificio⁴⁸.

La defamiliarización entra en acción cuando, primero a través de una ventana y luego al abandonar el edificio, descubrimos que Scarborough ha sido trasplantada no sólo desde el centro de Toronto a una futura Nueva York, sino también de su original entorno bucólico a un frío contexto urbano: cercado por una alta muralla, totalmente pavimentado en hormigón, prácticamente desprovisto de vegetación, y rodeado de estructuras igualmente

estériles. Más interesante es la forma en que se construye esta escena, que revela, en el plano medio, un paisaje urbano conformado por fragmentos y estilemas del edificio de Andrews que se han ensamblado para efectiva -y finalmente- ampliar el edificio más allá de su estado incompleto actual. Al igual que en *Civilia*, la ciudad-collage ensamblada en 1971 por Ivor De Wolfe y Kenneth Browne, los diseñadores aprovechan la que es seguramente la más básica habilidad de la fotografía, potenciada en la era digital: expandiendo por mera repetición, regalan al espectador impactantes vistas de una *Science Wing* en su imagen especular que muestra destellos de lo que una expansión megaestructural de Scarborough podría haber ofrecido⁴⁹ (fig. 09).

"Detenerse frente al Colegio... es una experiencia reveladora. Las controvertidas chimeneas (...) y el uso masivo de hormigón vertido in situ dotan al edificio de una sensación de aprensión"⁵⁰.

Una aproximación opuesta a la estrategia de apropiación-por-collage puede encontrarse en el episodio "The Crossing" (2021⁵¹) de *The Handmaid's Tale*, donde Scarborough una vez más hace las veces de una prisión de máxima seguridad. Presumiblemente ubicado en Toronto, el edificio proporciona varios de sus interiores más habituales, con el interesante añadido de las aulas subterráneas del Ala de Ciencias, en el doble papel de celdas para prisioneros y cámaras de tortura. Sería difícil argumentar en contra de la idoneidad del edificio para recrear atmósferas orwellianas, como demuestra una escena de *water-boarding* que evoca la destrucción mental de Winston Smith a manos de O'Brien en 1984 combinada con ecos venidos de Guantánamo. Igualmente eficaz es su utilización del *Meeting Place*: mostrado en un estado pristino, su inquietante vaciedad se enfatiza con la inserción de un cubo de vidrio en su parte inferior mostrando a Hannah, la hija del protagonista, como parte del proceso de tortura. También incluye un bienvenido añadido a la historia cinematográfica de Scarborough: una escena filmada en el comedor del tercer piso, semejando aquí una especie de salón de baile, a un tiempo hermoso y sofocantemente vacío como escenario de una cena para dos.

La mayor contribución del episodio no está, sin embargo, en su, por otra parte, persuasiva disección quirúrgica del reverso distópico de los interiores del Scarborough real, sino en su reinvención global del edificio como tal: antes de entrar en él, el episodio descoloca al espectador con una *folly* arquitectónica digital (fig. 10) que, en lugar de extender el edificio, lo comprime en una especie de retrato cubista. En su reseña, Frampton había subrayado el carácter pintoresco del diseño de Andrews, una forma zigzagueante que se adaptaba a su entorno donde "uno solo tiene que añadir el campanario vestigial del pozo de chimeneas, y la 'ciudad en la colina' está completa"⁵². Aquí, los diseñadores adoptan una postura opuesta, y dejan de lado la naturaleza horizontal del edificio, haciendo crecer su zona central hacia arriba en la forma de dos torres enfrentadas, y añadiendo diferentes elementos extraídos del menú de estilemas que ofrece el campus. La cascada de la fachada sur del Ala de Ciencias y sus conducciones por el exterior, los volúmenes paralelepípedicos de la más modesta en sus formas *Bladen Wing*, las cubiertas inclinadas de la antigua *Bladen Library*, o la densa maquinaria que puebla la cubierta del ala administrativa convergen sobre una planta ortogonal que aparece como una visión condensada del campus en su conjunto. Un ejercicio manierista, nuevamente al estilo de *Civilia*⁵³, el resultado tiene el aspecto de una obra decimonónica de Alexander 'Greek' Thompson en la que su característico eclecticism se restringiera a un único referente; o, tal vez, de una imagen generada por inteligencia artificial a partir de palabras clave como "Scarborough", "brutalismo" y "prisión", creando en última instancia un simulacro Baudrillardiano que es a un tiempo igual y diferente de sí mismo.

¿FIN? LAS FRONTERAS DEL SIMULACRO

En su análisis de la influencia internacional del anime japonés, Toshiya Ueno afirmaba que si "Japón está... ubicado geográficamente, como dijo una vez Jean Baudrillard, como un satélite en órbita", también está "... cronológicamente... ubicado en el futuro de la tecnología"⁶⁴. Un secreto laboratorio gubernamental de

tecnología punta en las décadas de 1950 y 1960, una universidad contemporánea, una prisión en ruinas de un presente de carácter futurista, una estación de policía situada en futuro cercano o una embajada del siglo 24 —Scarborough personifica la persistencia del brutalismo en el futuro distópico de nuestro imaginario (fílmico) colectivo. Celebrado en el momento de su construcción y bien recibido por sus usuarios durante décadas, Scarborough College nunca llegaría a finalizarse en la forma en la que Andrews lo había imaginado. Había sido, de acuerdo con lo afirmado por Oscar Newman en 1966, "un comienzo más que una culminación"⁶⁵. Y el cine, al parecer, compartió y comparte esta opinión, convirtiéndolo en un ejemplo de permanencia, pero también de las múltiples vidas alternativas que los edificios pueden experimentar a través de sus diversas apropiaciones, una vez los arquitectos abandonan la escena. Qué otras nuevas evoluciones, metamorfosis o reinvisiones puede generar la megaestructura de Andrews, en qué nuevas personalidades arquitectónicas se puede transformar y qué otras vidas alternativas le quedan por vivir, es algo que sólo el futuro puede decir.

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Notas

01. KUBO, Michael; GRIMLEY, Chris; PASNIK, Mark, "Brutal" en CLOG: Brutalism, edited by Kyle May, and Julia Van Den Hout. New York, Clog, 2013, p. 166.

02. Es necesario aclarar que el término "brutalismo" se utiliza a lo largo de este artículo atendiendo al uso "convencional" antes mencionado para describir edificios de la tardomodernidad, típicamente contruidos desde principios de la década de 1960 hasta finales de la década de 1970, y principalmente con estructuras y acabados de hormigón. El propósito del texto es discutir la apropiación de estas estructuras por parte del cine y, en este sentido, Scarborough College suele encuadrarse dentro de la etiqueta de "brutalista". Para una discusión sobre el origen término y las cualidades arquitectónicas que pretendía encarnar, nos remitimos a "The New Brutalism" de Reyner Banham (The Architectural Review, vol. 118 n.º. 708, diciembre de 1955, pp. 355-61), y su posterior El nuevo brutalismo: ¿Ética o estética? (Londres, The Architectural Press, 1966). Lo mismo se aplica a la palabra 'megaestructura', como se explica más adelante en este texto.

03. Véase: BANHAM, P. Reyner, Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past, London, Thames and Hudson, 1976, pp. 190-92.

04. Entre los pocos que hemos logrado localizar se encuentran el Chicago Circle Campus de Walter Netsch (actualmente Universidad de Illinois en Chicago), que, aún en una época en la que sus calles elevadas lo hacían razonablemente megaestructural, apareció como trasfondo de la película de terror Candyman (1992), y, más recientemente, en las series televisivas de ciencia ficción Sense8 (2015-18), Electric Dreams de Philip K. Dick (2017-18) y la película distópica Captive State (Rupert Wyatt, 2019). El Andrew Melville Hall (1967) de James Stirling en la Universidad de St. Andrews también fue recientemente rescatado en Never Let Me Go (Mark Romanek, 2010), como Centro de Recuperación de Dover, una instalación médica

destinada a la extracción de órganos de clones humanos en un sombrío presente alternativo.

05. Al igual que con 'brutalista', el uso del término 'megaestructura' debe tomarse con una cierta reserva. El propio Banham proporcionó una definición bastante clara de las características que debe poseer una megaestructura para ser considerada como tal (ver *Megastructure*, págs. 70-71). La definición, tomada del bibliotecario Ralph Wilcoxon, era también notablemente restrictiva; tanto es así que hacía imposible que cualquier ejemplo construido cupiera en ella. Esto no impidió que Banham usara el término con bastante laxitud para aplicarlo a ciertos edificios o complejos de edificios de la vida real, como *Scarborough College*. El Capítulo 6, "Megaciudad Montreal", comenzaba, de hecho, afirmando que "1967 también nos trajo *Scarborough College* (...), la más llamativa de todas las megaestructuras académicas" (p. 105).

06. La construcción de Scarborough tuvo lugar, como explican Paolo Scrivano y Mary Louise Lobsinger, "durante un período de entusiasmo y activismo sin precedentes de expansión universitaria a lo largo de todo Canadá". (SCRIVANO, Paolo; LOBSINGER, Mary Lou, "Experimental Architecture. Progressive Pedagogy: Scarborough College", en *Architecture and Ideas*, vol. 8 n.º. 1, 2008, pp. 4-19), lo que resultó, como relataría Banham más tarde, en diferentes experimentos con la megaforma. Además de Scarborough y la SFU en Burnaby (Columbia Británica), Erickson y Massey también diseñaron el plan urbano de la Universidad de Lethbridge (1967), y John Andrews y su equipo propusieron un diseño igualmente megaestructural para el otro satélite de la Universidad de Toronto en Erindale, que finalmente fue descartada y absorbida por los Moriama Arquitectos —cuya propia propuesta propia tendía hacia lo megaestructural, en cualquier caso.

07. Andrews parecía identificar esta etiqueta con conceptos como 'bruto' o 'brutal': "Me opongo con bastante

vehemencia a la palabra 'brutalista'. No es brutal. Scarborough College es un edificio muy humano". Cuando se le preguntó con qué término preferiría ser etiquetado, respondió: "Si existiera tal palabra, 'apropiatismo'. Lo que siempre estoy tratando de hacer es encontrar la respuesta lógica a las cosas, y en el momento en que estaba, si quieres, siendo brutal, esta era la respuesta lógica." WOODWORD, Berton, "Brutalist"? Architect behind U of T Scarborough's Science and Humanities Wing didn't think so." *University of Toronto Scarborough News*. Tuesday, March 29, 2022. [https://utsc.utoronto.ca/news-events/our-community/remembers-architect-behind-u-t-scarboroughs-iconic-brutalist-building]

08. En el capítulo 7 de *Megastructure*, "La Megaestructura in la Academia" (p. 163), Reyner Banham señalaba que, por un lado, "la institucionalización de la megaestructura como una 'idea cuyo momento había llegado' fue, de forma abrumadora, obra de las escuelas de arquitectura y universidades", y, por otro, cómo "en la práctica... la mayoría de las oportunidades para trabajar a esta escala... estaban en el diseño de nuevos campus o en la reelaboración de los antiguos". En la página 133, pie de foto 134, insistía en que "Scarborough fue reconocida como una megaestructura casi tan pronto como la palabra estuvo disponible para describirla", incluso si "en comparación [con otros ejemplos canadienses pseudo-megaestructurales, como la extensión del *Centennial Hall* en la Universidad de Winnipeg], Scarborough era un tanto primitivo" (p. 139).

09. La expresión fue acuñada por Peter Hall, no para referirse específicamente a Scarborough, sino para criticar el movimiento megaestructural que él había experimentado de primera mano en la Exposición Universal de Montreal de 1967 en Canadá. (HALL, Peter, "Monumental Folly", en *New Society*, 24 de octubre de 1968, pp. 602-603)

10. Entre los medios arquitectónicos que recogieron

el Proyecto en el momento de su diseño y construcción, se encuentran la arquitectural el *Royal Institute of Canadian Architects Journal* (Julio de 1964), *The Canadian Architect* (Septiembre de 1964, Mayo de 1965), *Landscape Architecture Magazine* (Abril de 1966), *Architectural Forum* (Mayo de 1966), *The Architectural Review* (Octubre de 1966), *Architectural Record* (Septiembre de 1966, Noviembre de 1966), *World Architecture V3*, de John Donat (1966), *the Canadian Architect Yearbook* (1966), *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (Diciembre de 1966/ Enero de 1967), *Architectural Design* (Abril de 1967), *RIBA Journal* (Abril de 1967), *Architecture Canada* (Septiembre de 1967), y *Progressive Architecture* (Julio de 1968). Las apariciones en medios no arquitectónicos incluyen *College & University Business* (1968) y, obviamente, las muchas menciones en *The Varsity*, periódico de la Alumni Association of the University of Toronto. ("New U of T college opens today." *The Varsity*, vol. 85, n.º. 1, 20 de septiembre de 1965, p. 1; Bond, Tony, "TV College makes history," vol. 85, n.º. 2, 22 de septiembre de 1965, p. 1; Beckel, William E.: "Teaching '67," *the Varsity Graduate* vol. 13, junio de 1967, p. 62].

11. N/A, "Scarborough College, Ontario", *The Canadian Architect*, vol. 11 n.º. 5, May 1, 1966, p. 43.

12. FRAMPTON, Kenneth, "Scarborough College, Toronto, Ontario", en *Architectural Design*, April 1967, pp. 178-187.

13. Oscar Newman escribió una crítica entusiasta, concluyendo que Scarborough trascendía "el simple problema del campus para indicar directamente la forma de nuestros futuros núcleos urbanos multifuncionales y de alta densidad". NEWMAN, Oscar, "The New Campus" en *Architectural Forum*, vol. 124 n.º. 4, New York, Mayo de 1966, pp. 53/30.

14. N/A, "Colleges: 'a satellite built for tv'", en *Time magazine*, vol. 89, n.º. 2, 13 de enero de 1967, pp. 32-35.

15. Tanto Erindale como Scarborough se concibieron como campus satélite de la Universidad de Toronto,

construidos para acomodar un incremento estimado en la matriculación a tiempo completo de 20.000 a 35.000 estudiantes para 1970. Scarborough fue diseñado para 500 estudiantes en el momento de su apertura, que se convertirían en 1.500 en 1967, y de 5.000 a 6.000 en 1972.

16. Un comentario en este sentido puede encontrarse en DREW, Philip, "John Andrews: The Early Years - Canadian Breakthrough". Simposio John Andrews, Edificio David Caro, Universidad de Melbourne, sábado 20 de octubre de 2012. El autor también introduce otras conexiones futuristas con pedigrí arquitectónico con la *Città Nuova* de Antonio Sant'Elia.

17. FRAMPTON, K., *op. cit.*, p. 186.

18. SCRIVANO, P.; LOBSINGER, M.L., *op. cit.*, p. 8.

19. Como señalan Scrivano y Lobsinger, hubo muchas ideas diferentes para la expansión del campus: "Parece difícil identificar con precisión las diferentes fases en la concepción del plan general para la universidad, o las diversas opciones que se tomaron en consideración. Lo que existe hoy en forma construida corresponde sólo a al 'estadio uno', es decir: la disposición para 1500 estudiantes". ESCRIVANO, P.; LOBSINGER, M.L., *ibid.*, p. 11.

20. El diseño de Andrews preveía, además de las alas de Humanidades y Ciencias, así como al área de administración, una biblioteca y un centro deportivo con una piscina y varios gimnasios, junto con una pista de patinaje y hockey sobre hielo. Estas y otras instalaciones se construyeron en el área norte del campus, aunque sin seguir estrictamente la posición, volumen o la estética original de Andrews. Para un recuento de la historia de la universidad: véase: BALL, John L., *The First Twenty-Five Years, 1964-1989*. Scarborough College, University of Toronto, Scarborough, University of Toronto, 1989.

21. *The Canadian Architect*, hablando del proyecto aún en construcción, subrayaba que "el programa de ampliación es tal que debe ser implementado

en un largo período (...). En este caso, de 500 estudiantes a 5.000 en 1972. La fase inicial establece el carácter del *college* y la identidad de cada equipamiento (...). Los edificios de la etapa inicial conforman un espacio académico central, un núcleo formal y digno de actividad universitaria". N/A, "Scarborough College, Ontario", en *The Canadian Architect*, mayo de 1964, p. 49.

22. Scarborough no construyó su primera residencia hasta 1973, nueve años después de la llegada de los primeros estudiantes, convirtiendo al gigantesco volumen en un espacio desierto durante largas horas por la noche.

23. Una cita del *Toronto Daily Star* afirmaba que los estudiantes de Scarborough College, representantes de un grupo demográfico de clase trabajadora y sin educación, estaban condenados a la mediocridad académica: "El peligro de enviar estudiantes en su mayoría pobres a estas universidades es que tienen menos probabilidades de tener éxito." (Citado en *Marooned*, diciembre de 1967).

24. Arthur J. W. Plumtree, director de Scarborough, citado por Friedland (*op. cit.*, p. 452). Paradójicamente, "... los conductos embebidos en el hormigón que albergaban los cables de televisión fueron perfectos para los cables de los ordenadores que ahora se usan habitualmente en las aulas y otras salas de Scarborough". *Ibid.*, 453.

25. 'Scarborough College, Ontario', *op. cit.*, 1966, p. 40.

26. TONH, Allan, "These Movies Work Better If You're Really Stoned": David Cronenberg on Architecture and His Early Work", in *Filmmaker Magazine*, Jan 24, 2014 [en línea: <https://filmmakermagazine.com/84009-cronenberg-on-architecture-and-horror-in-toronto/#.Y5NyBXaZPIU>]

27. *Stereo* no fue, en cualquier caso, un precedente de *THX 1138*. La película de Lucas era en realidad una nueva versión de su cortometraje estudiantil *THX 1138 4EB*, de 1967 (retitulado *Electronic Labyrinth THX 1138 4EB* para su lanzamiento).

28. ACLAND, James, "Scarborough College (Universidad de Toronto)". *A Sense of Place*, episodio 3 (*Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Television*, emitido el jueves 18 de octubre de 1966). El documental de 30 minutos fue parte de *A Sense of Place*, una miniserie de 4 episodios presentada y dirigida por Acland, profesor de Arquitectura en la Universidad de Toronto. Otros edificios incluidos fueron la *Universidad Simon Fraser* y el *Hábitat de Moshe Safdie*. El primer minuto del documental, que consiste principalmente en vistas exteriores, a veces aéreas, del edificio, funcionaría como una introducción perfecta a *Stereo*, que comienza con el personaje principal llegando en helicóptero al campus.

29. Niccol se mostró firme en utilizar Scarborough, como señala Scott Alexander, el jefe de localizaciones de la película: "El director seleccionó el campus desde el principio. Fue uno de los puntos focales de esta película (...). El *Meeting Place* fue el mayor atractivo. Este gran espacio, con la balconada sobre él lo hacía perfecto para lo que estaban buscando". QUIJANO, Bianca, "Filmmakers find UTSC 'perfect for production'", in *University of Toronto Scarborough*, Sep 9, 2016 [Online: <https://ose.utsctutoronto.ca/ose/story.php?id=8745>]

30. ALLEN, Nick, "Anon", en *Rogerebert.com*, 5 de Mayo de 2018 [en línea: <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/anon-2018>].

31. Affleck, citado por *The Canadian Architect*, vol. 11 n.º 5, p. 49.

32. Significativamente, en su reseña de la película para *Slate*, Forrest Wickman argumentaba que la película puede verse "como una parábola sobre cómo es vivir bajo un estado totalitario sin saberlo", un tema que forma parte de la trama del filme como parte del contenido de las clases de Adam, que tratan sobre las dictaduras, y cómo tienen "una obsesión principal... controlar las ideas, el conocimiento... limitan la cultura, la información sensorial... censuran cualquier medio de expresión individual".

WICKMAN, Forrest, "What Should We Make of Enemy's Shocking Ending?", en *Slate.com*, 14 de marzo de 2014 [en línea: <https://slate.com/culture/2014/03/enemy-movie-ending-explained-the-meaning-of-the-jake-gyllenhaal-and-denis-villeneuve-movie-spiders-and-all-a-theory.html>].

33. Véase: 'Six Concepts' en: TSCHUMI, Bernard, *Architecture and Disjunction*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1994, p. 254.

34. "Durante un viaje preliminar de exploración en Toronto, encontramos la Universidad de Toronto Scarborough y David [Slade, productor ejecutivo y director de los primeros episodios del programa] nos dio fotografías tratadas de los edificios con un aspecto frío y acerado". PODESTA, Patti, "The Attraction of Opposites", en *Hannibal's Blog*, 7 de junio de 2013 [en línea: <https://hannibalblog.tumblr.com/post/52331780904/the-attraction-of-opposites>]

35. TONDERAI, Mark (dir.), "Vita/Mors". *Impulse*, Temporada 1, Episodio 4. Hypnotic / Universal Cable Productions. Emitido el 6 de junio de 2018.

36. En relación con la asociación de brutalismo y socialdemocracia, Jack Self señala cómo "los espacios modulares del brutalismo manifestaban un deseo social de... cohesión cultural, valores compartidos y una calidad de vida justa para todos. El ciudadano Brutalista debe entenderse, por tanto, como un ideal igualitario abstracto, no como un individuo perdido en una cueva microscópica de hormigón en el interior de un gigantesco edificio" (SELF, Jack, "The Morality of Concrete", en *Clog: Brutalism*, editado por Michael Abrahamson, NY: Clog, 2013, p. 29). Por el contrario, como explica Timothy M. Rohan, cuando Paul Rudolph estaba construyendo su Centro de Servicios del Gobierno de Boston (1962-1971), tuvo que negar "con vehemencia" "las acusaciones de la generación más joven de que la monumentalidad del BGSC era fascista". (ROHAN, Timothy M., "The Rise and Fall of Brutalism,

Rudolph and the Liberal Consensus", *ibid*: 60-61).

37. HENDERSON, Odie, "Fahrenheit 451", en *RogerEbert.com*, 18 de mayo de 2018 [en línea: <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/fahrenheit-451-2018>].

38. Las razones para filmar la película en color fueron puramente presupuestarias: "Searchlight dijo: 'Bueno, si la quieres en blanco y negro, el presupuesto es de \$16,5 millones'", recuerda. "Entonces les pregunté: '¿Cuánto si es en color?' Y me dijeron: '\$19.5 millones. Y yo dije, 'Pues en color'". Guillermo del Toro en: KIT, Borys, "How Guillermo del Toro's 'Black Lagoon' Fantasy Inspired 'Shape of Water'", en *The Hollywood Reporter*, 3 de noviembre de 2017 [en línea: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/how-guillermo-del-toros-black-lagoon-fantasy-inspired-shape-water-1053206/>].

39. POWER, Tom, "Paul Austerberry on shaping the look of *The Shape of Water*", en *Q with Tom Power*, 4 de marzo de 2018 [en línea: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQwGETXBTFw>].

40. "...utilizamos esto como el exterior que informaba nuestros decorados interiores, y construimos muchos decorados dentro que seguían ese lenguaje, y nuevamente los artistas escénicos tenían que hacer coincidir ese tipo de aspecto concreto en nuestros decorados en estudio", *ibidem*.

41. PUNDIR, Pallavi, "Oscars 2018 Best Picture winner: On the sets of 'The Shape of Water'", en *Architectural Digest*, 15 de febrero de 2018 [en línea: <https://www.architecturaldigest.in/content/oscar-2018-best-picture-winner-set-design-the-shape-of-water/>].

42. "Cada género tiene su propio vocabulario estético, y el mundo de *Hannibal* está especialmente enriquecido. La paleta de colores está estrictamente controlada... todos nuestros decorados están diseñados desde cero para satisfacer las necesidades de los personajes, la cámara y la narrativa". Equipo de HOLLYWOOD.COM, "Hannibal' Production Designer Matthew

Davies Talks Creating the Terrifying World of a Killer", en *Hollywood.com*, 28 de febrero de 2014 [en línea: <https://www.hollywood.com/tv/hannibal-production-designer-matthew-davies-interview-57359713>].

43. Matthew Davies, diseñador de producción del programa y ex alumno de la *Bartlett School of Architecture* de Londres, afirma que "(...) Si realmente miras y estudias el programa de cerca, notarás cuándo pasamos de un lugar a un facsímil de ese lugar en estudio; hay cambios sutiles... en la escala o el lenguaje arquitectónico del espacio". GROUCHNIKOV, Kirill, "Production design of 'Hannibal' – interview with Matthew Davies", en *Pushing Pixels*, 13 de mayo de 2016 [en línea: <https://www.pushing-pixels.org/2016/05/13/production-design-of-hannibal-interview-with-matthew-davies.html>].

44. "La influencia de Kahn en el primer Andrews es quizás la más escurridiza de las que tuvieron lugar en él... Y, sin embargo, afirma que Kahn era importante para él". WALKER, Paul; MOULIS, Antony, "Before Scarborough. John Andrews in the Office of Parkin Associates 1959-1961". *SAHANZ 2017 Annual Conference Proceedings*, pp. 777-786. Para una revisión más profunda de la influencia de Kahn en Andrews, véase: TAYLOR & ANDREWS, *op. cit.*, p.17, y TAYLOR, Jennifer, "John Andrews, architecture", en *Architecture Australia*, vol. 70 n.º. 2, mayo de 1981, pp. 30-37. Las conexiones de las instalaciones de *BAU* con el trabajo de Louis Kahn resultan especialmente evidentes en la comparativa con la estricta cuadrícula estructural de hormigón visto del Centro de Arte Británico de Yale (1969-74) y del formalmente emparentado, pero no construido el Centro de la Comunidad Judía en Trenton (1954-9), cuya última iteración presentó una cuadrícula de espacios cuadrados entrelazados, coronados por techos troncopiramidales.

45. Véase: NANKIN, Michael (dir.), "One Blood" (*Killjoys*, Temporada 1, Episodio 6, emitido el 24 de Julio de 2015), y WOOD, Martin (dir.), "Wild, Wild Westerley" (*Killjoys*, Temporada

2, Episodio 2, emitido el 8 de julio de 2016), respectivamente.

46. SONTAG, Susan, "The Imagination of Disaster", en *Commentary Magazine*, octubre de 1965, pp. 42-8.

47. Véase: GANDY, Joseph Michael, *A Bird's-eye view of the Bank of England* (1930).

48. Véase: *The Expanse*, Temporada 2: SALOMON, Mikael (dir.), "The Weeping Somnambulist". Episodio 9, emitido el 22 de marzo de 2017; SALOMON, Mikael (dir.), "Cascade". Episodio 10, emitido el 29 de marzo de 2017 y LIEBERMAN, Robert, "Here There Be Dragons". Episodio 11, emitido el 5 de mayo de 2017. Los espacios utilizados son la omnipresente entrada norte y la fachada del ala de Humanidades y, en el interior, las balconadas superiores del ala de Humanidades, llegando hasta el *Meeting Place* y el acceso principal.

49. DE WOFLE [sic], Ivor, *Civilia: The End of Suburban Man; A Challenge to Semidetsia*, London, The Architectural Press, 1971. Para un estudio del contexto y contenido de *Civilia*, véase: LUS ARANA, L. M., PARNELL, S., "Learning From Civilia. Critical Heterodoxies, Historiography and Urban Design" en *Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura*, 2020, n.º. 22, pp. 36-53.

50. N/A, "Scarborough College, Ontario". *The Canadian Architect*, 1 de Mayo de 1966; vol. 11, n.º. 5 (1), p. 40.

51. MOSS, Elisabeth (dir.), "The Crossing." *The Handmaid's Tale*. Temporada 4, Episodio 3. Emitido el 27 de Abril de 2021.

52. FRAMPTON, K., *op. cit.*, p. 187.

53. Es difícil no establecer paralelismos con los collages #83, que transformaba el *Graduate Center* de Cambridge en una monumental torre, con retales de otros edificios en su parte inferior (*Civilia*, p. 84), o con el collage #82 (*Civilia*, p. 83), donde se habían entretreído dos imágenes del *Southbank Centre* de Londres para conformar una estructura vertical similar. Véase: LUS ARANA, Luis Miguel; PARNELL, Stephen, "Civilia: Utopía en la Era de la Reproducción Fotomecánica.

La (Foto)copia arquitectónica como (re)invención", en *RA. Revista de Arquitectura*, n.º. 24, 2022, pp. 154-17.

54. TOSHIYA, Ueno, "Japanimation and Techno-Orientalism: Japan as the Sub-Empire of Signs", en *Documentary Box* n.º. 9, 1996, pp. 1-5.

55. NEWMAN, O., *op. cit.*, p. 54.

Imágenes

01. Proyecto original para Scarborough College, Fase 1 (1963). En la parte inferior derecha, configuración para 5.000 estudiantes, con dos alas suplementarias y residencias de estudiantes añadidas en los extremos del edificio original.

02. Vista de satélite del campus en 2023.

03. El *tour* arquitectónico de Cronenberg en *Stereo* (1969).

04. Scarborough en los primeros minutos del documental dirigido por James Acland en 1966, que podría funcionar perfectamente como una escena introductoria en la película de Cronenberg.

05. La exuberante representación de los espacios interiores del edificio en *Anon* (2018), con el añadido de muebles de hormigón y estructuras murales en el Meeting Place.

06. Scarborough presentado como un moderno jardín del Edén en *Enemy* (2013). Abajo, a la derecha, comparativa con el rudo y monumental retrato del mismo realizado por el fotógrafo David Moore en 1970.

07. Un Scarborough razonablemente cercano al real reconvertido en las instalaciones de *OCCAM* (fila superior) frente a los decorados realizados en estudio, diseñados para pasar por espacios interiores del edificio de Andrews en *La forma del agua* (2017).

08. Diseños de producción (arriba a la izquierda) frente a las múltiples variaciones de los Kahn-ianos interiores ficticios de Scarborough en *Hannibal* (2013-2015).

09. *The expanse* (2017), combinando imágenes reales del *Andrews Building* con su expansión megaestructural por medios digitales.

10. El apócope cubista del edificio original en *El Cuento de la Criada* (2021), mostrado con más detalle en una vista aérea más adelante en el mismo episodio (arriba, izquierda), frente a la exuberante, aunque agorafóbica representación de los interiores reales.

11

An Afternoon Tea at the Eames House

Nieves Fernández Villalobos
Alberto López del Río

In 2012, a tea ceremony was held at the Charles and Ray Eames House, attended by a shy number of guests. The event was intended to recall another that had taken place in the same space sixty years ago, when the Eameses had received distinguished guests such as Charlie Chaplin and Isamu Noguchi. On both occasions, the Eameses' 'select and arrange' aesthetics, together with the artistic interventions of their guests, created a bare scenography, rather Westernised, that served as the basis for the celebration. These events, as well as the elements and guests who gathered there, represent but a small sample of Eames' link with Japanese design and architecture, and particularly the embodiment of some common ideals manifested in their own iconic Californian home, becoming essential chapters in the unique story of this building.



"It is difficult to understand this spirituality as it is not the same for everyone, (...) on the contrary, it is individual. *Chashitsu* (the tearoom) exists as one's spiritual space. And then others arrive, bringing with themselves their own and personal spiritual space. And that's where we gather and talk, sharing the spirituality of the moment."

Terunobu Fujimori¹

On the 10th of March 2012, the Eames House in California once again displayed tatami mats in the living room. The mats, eight, in particular, were laid out on the floor in an almost rectangular shape near the corner most open to the garden.

Nine LTR (Low Table Rod) tables, designed by the couple in 1950, with their black and white surfaces, are arranged in an L-shape, away from the wall, forcing the connection to the outside. Several of the iconic LCW (Lounge Chair Wood) chairs, designed in 1946 in three-dimensional moulded plywood, shown here in natural colour and lacquered in black, red or white, stand behind the nine tables waiting to welcome the guests. Between the chairs and the rear wall, there is an interior garden made of stones and some flowerpots.

On that date, two of Charles and Ray Eames' grandchildren, Lucia Atwood and Eames Demetrios, who are part of the Eames Foundation's management team, organised a symbolic tea ceremony at the house to raise funds for the Foundation, which is responsible for the restoration and conservation of the house. Only twelve privileged people were able to attend the event², which recalled a first ceremony that took place in 1951, and which would be significantly officiated by Sosei Shizuye Matsumoto: sixty years earlier, she had been in the same place with her husband Eddie Matsumoto and the 15th generation Grandmaster of the Urasenke Tea School, Genshitsu Sen³. Sosei had met the Eameses through

Mitsuhiko Sen, friend and architect of the Huntington Library Teahouse and Genshitsu's younger brother.

A folded L-shaped folding screen is arranged in the glazed corner to form a symbolic *tokonoma*. Above it hangs the *kakemono*, a vertically unfolded scroll with calligraphy that reads: "the sound of the kettle is like the wind through the pines"⁴. To begin the cha-ji in the traditional ritual, i.e. tea ceremony, participants must gaze at the laid out scroll, which has been selected according to the season.

In this case, the chosen phrase had been written by the great master of the 14th generation of the Urasenke school, Tantansai, in the 1940s, and it only seemed fitting to recall that first ceremony. A small *ikebana* arrangement was placed directly in front of it, putting the finishing touches to the setting.

Five students accompanied Mrs. Matsumoto on this unique evening, and her niece, Etsuko Ota, performed the tea ceremony using exactly the same utensils that were used the night of 1951: a black lacquered *natsume*⁵ by Kōetsu with the symbol of Kyoto's Kōdaiji Temple (chrysanthemum and paulownia), the main *chawan*⁶ (served to Eames Demetrios as the first guest) which was a black copy in the style of Nonomura Ninsei with bamboo motif made by Kyūho, and the tea spoon, *chashaku*, carved by Tantansai, which was poetically named 'Sai Rai', meaning 'to meet again' (fig. 01).

The Japanese expression *ichi-go ichi-e*, which literally means 'one life, one meeting', describes a cultural concept often attributed to the famous tea master Sen no Rikyū. Frequently associated with transience, it takes on a special significance in the tea ceremony, reminding participants that each meeting is unique and should be treasured in memory as it can never be repeated. Despite the meeting-again connotation, each of these celebrations was undoubtedly an *ichi-go ichi-e*.

TEA CEREMONY WITH CHARLES AND RAY

In the usual images of the Eames House (fig. 02), the interior is filled with furniture, plants, art objects and assorted collections; items that the Smithsons - friends and ardent admirers of the Eameses - would define as "signs of occupancy"⁷. They

constituted a way of *appropriating* a place and contributed to transforming the living space, to individualising the image of a serialised architecture from which the design of the dwelling had started⁸. Thus, in the original proposal, published in *Arts & Architecture* in December 1945, the living room was described as "pure enjoyment of space in which elements could be put in and taken out"; they spoke of creating "a continually evolving spatial collage"⁹ in their home. Art works were constantly collected, displayed and rearranged throughout the space, on the floor, walls and even the ceiling, from which paintings, plants or other ephemeral decorations were suspended.

It was an attitude that the Smithsons called "the Eames aesthetics", based on the technique of 'select and arrange'¹⁰, which allows us to understand the Eames architecture from the point of view of scenographic design¹¹, as we can appreciate in the indoor photographs of the living room, or the slides of their film *House: After Five Years of Living* (1955); an attitude that portrays the celebration of the quotidian and considers it as something magical, that treasures disparate objects and 'select and arrange' them according to the moment.

Against this cluttered interior, a few black and white photographs taken in 1951 show an unusually bare house. The Eameses' 'select and arrange' has been minimised, for a very special occasion, to just "a few tatamis and akari" strategically placed in the vast living room next to the glazed corner¹² (fig. 03). The Eameses were friendly hosts who welcomed plenty of friends and acquaintances into their home. On this occasion, in keeping with

their admiration for Japanese aesthetics, they held a truly unique traditional tea ceremony on 24 July 1951. Charlie Chaplin and Isamu Noguchi were present as guests of honour, among other attendees such as Christian and Henrietta Lederbom, Iris Tree and the actors Betty Harford and Ford Rainey¹³. Sosei Shizuye Matsumoto would lead the ceremony and his pupil, actress Yoshiko Yamaguchi, would prepare a *sukiyaki* meal for the attendees, at Chaplin's request (fig. 04). Later, he himself, who admired Japan and appreciated the tea ceremony¹⁴, and had even studied *Kabuki*, *Kyōgen* and *Nō* theatre to shape and perfect his own art, delighted the audience with a *Nō* dance¹⁵. Chaplin struck up a lasting friendship with Yoshiko Yamaguchi, who would marry Isamu Noguchi shortly after the tea ceremony on 15 December 1951¹⁶.

The young actress appears in two other unique photographs of the house, dressed in a different kimono from the one she wore at the famous celebration, so we can assume that it was from another date close to the ceremony, or in the moments prior to its preparation. In one of them, Yoshiko is by herself in the middle of the room, sitting on a cushion and meditating at the end of a rectangular composition of eight tatamis. A horizontally suspended panel clearly marks the space in height, and on the wood-panelled wall there is an intriguing composition, "quite Eames", derived from their 'The Toy', a construction game they had created that same year with a language resembling the one from their "Chinese kites"¹⁷. In front of this geometric background, two Akari lamps, designed by Noguchi, dominate the scene. In the opposite corner to Yamaguchi and in the foreground, on a lacquered wooden board, rests the *chagama*, the pot for boiling water at the ceremony, and a floral arrangement (fig. 05).

In the other photograph, the artist is wearing the same kimono (fig. 06), and stands next to Noguchi, who is dressed in more casual clothes than he would have worn at the ceremony. Both are standing in front of the door leading to the event, next to the side courtyard. As it can be observed in this photograph (also in fig. 03), a transverse panel has been placed in the doorway, intentionally lowering the lintel, to form a *nijiriguchi*, the small entrance to the tearoom, making visitors bend down in a symbol of the definitive abandonment of the everyday world.

Once inside, the interior layout corresponds to the first part of the event, i.e. the tea ceremony itself, with the eight tatamis placed together and two clearly differentiated areas on these: the one with the coloured cushions for the guests, further away from the glass enclosures and facing them, and the one in the opposite corner, which will be occupied by the tea master, Sosei Matsumoto, assisted by Yamaguchi (fig. 08). This is a formal and restrained arrangement which emphasises the solemnity of the ceremony as well as its theatricality, with the tea master performing a series of prescribed movements and the guests in front of her observing her contained gestures and losing themselves in contemplation of the scene. In the words of Kakuzo Okakura, "the tearoom was an oasis where weary travellers could gather to drink from the common source of the love for art. The ceremony was an improvised drama revolving around tea, flowers and paintings"¹⁸.

Following Okakura's words again, we see how this ceremony strikes a curious contrast with the traditional idea of the house and the tea ceremony, since, according to him, the house "implies a structure created to satisfy an individual artistic demand" and, therefore, "the tearoom is made for the master, not the master for the room"¹⁹. In this space, however, this artistic individuality has been lost, producing a set of individualities, with related or like-minded sensibilities, in many cases close to or interested in Japanese aesthetics, but with their own characteristic culture and creativity.

Thus, on the wooden wall that acts as a conceptual *tokonoma*, in addition to the Eames decoration, and the Akari, a light Eames centipede is placed in the corner, resembling both his animal

kites, ephemeral and natural elements which hung from the ceiling of the great hall, and the centipede-shaped sculpture, made by Noguchi himself in ceramic during his productive stay in Japan the following year²⁰. The decoration of the scene is completed by yet another singular object which, from then on, 'wanders' around the space of the great room: a miniature garden, a mobile rectangular metal planter, roughly the size of a tatami, covered in small white stones and on which are placed vases and pots with plants, ferns and, above all, *monstera*s or 'Adam's ribs', which will always have a place in the Eames living room, and which will reach considerable size and acquire prominence in their saturated world full of objects.

No other images have survived of the more formal part of the ceremony, apart from the one showing Yoshiko's self-absorbed presence and others displaying the elements arranged in an uninhabited space. On the contrary, there are numerous photographs of the *kaiseki*, the more informal part of the celebration in which food is shared, which allow us to appreciate the arrangement of the elements in space, as well as that of the participants, although some of them will change position throughout the images (fig. 07).

At this point, the tatami that had previously been grouped together are moved, leaving three close to the glass, on which there are three LTR tables occupied by Ray and probably Betty Hartford and Charles, one on each side; although the latter will never be seen sitting on the tatami mats, as he and Noguchi will be the main photographers. On the opposite side of the room, two more tatami mats, almost next to the wooden wall and separated from the previous ones by the distance of another tatami mat, are occupied by whom we can consider the most prominent guests: Charlie Chaplin in the middle, Iris Tree on his left and a space alternately occupied by Yoshiko and Isamu Noguchi on his right. Between these two groups, and following the first three, a tatami occupied by Henrietta and Christian Lederbom, on which the only *Akari* that will remain in this part of the ceremony rests, as the main source of illumination for the space, and then the mobile planter closing the corner. Opposite this tatami, but not quite in line with the others, will be the last of seven tatamis, which will be occupied by Ford Rainey and, at some point, from what can be deduced in the pictures, by Isamu Noguchi. Almost in the centre of the space, under the panel which limits the scale of the room, either in a more comfortable position or in the more formal posture of *seiza*, resting on their knees, is the tea master's space, to be occupied by Sosei Matsumoto and Yoshiko Yamaguchi (fig. 08). Here, the original floor of the house has been left bare and, on it, we see a large circular tray and the mistress, with a small brazier and a pot in which she will prepare the food. The arrangement of the diners and of each element that makes up the scene, the small pieces of furniture and the multitude of containers for the food, do not seem excessively rigid, but undoubtedly correspond to an unmistakable Japanese taste, in which the elements are arranged "for a painter's view"²¹, but with a high degree of naturalness and asymmetry, as Roland Barthes points out, and perfectly illustrates the position of the tea master in the central space. At the same time, it is in keeping with the Eames aesthetic and the configuration of space, with the 'select and arrange' that constitutes the sign of the occupancy of space.

The contrasting reduction and scenographic restraint has been attributed to Isamu Noguchi.²² Yoke-Sum Wong explains that Charles Eames had confessed that after the tea ceremony, the house remained empty, and they had enjoyed the open space, but then over time everything returned, 'little by little', until the images of the house that we were used to were brought back again, full of various found objects, *selected and arranged*. Thus, the scenography of the tea ceremony probably resembles more the initial drawings of the naked container that were printed in *Arts & Architecture* in September 1949²³.

THE EAMES HOUSE, A WESTERN TEA PAVILION?

Charles and Ray had not visited Japan before building their home, but there certainly are myriad of aspects of the house which are reminiscent of Japanese design. Among the many visitors to their home, and before and after the tea ceremony

previously described, were several Japanese celebrities who had more than likely nurtured their admiration for oriental art and customs. Through Isamu Noguchi, for example, the Eames met the designer Isamu Kenmochi in 1950 and the painter Genichiro Inokuma, who paid a visit in 1955. In 1951, the year of the ceremony, the 15th generation tea grandmaster of the Urasenke Tea School, Genshitsu Sen, visited the house. In 1952, Torao "Tiger" Saito, editor of Japan Today magazine, visited the house and introduced the Eames' work to Japan through his articles²⁴ at a time when, after the Second World War, Japan was paying particular attention to American design²⁵. In 1953, the renowned ceramicists Shōji Hamada and Bernard Leach also visited the house, as did the thinker Sōetsu Yanagi, a key figure in the founding of the Mingei movement, whose exaltation of everyday beauty and functional objects would probably have been much appreciated by Charles and Ray. The Eameses would later travel to Japan, both for work and leisure²⁶, and the house began to reflect more clearly the architects' admiration for Japanese architecture and culture, to the extent that, as Alison Smithson, who would soon recognise the Japanese influence on the house²⁷, would say, much of Japan's influence came to the West through the Eameses²⁸.

This influence had been evident in Los Angeles architecture since the beginning of the 20th century, especially in the way interior and exterior spaces were linked²⁹. Pat Kirkham underlines the reminiscence of traditional Japanese architecture in the Eames House by its emphasis on lightness, elegance, simplicity and geometry³⁰. The structural grid is key in this respect. Plyon's wood-framed screens³¹, which slide along the façade, were placed at the top of the house and at the bottom of the studio with the initial aim of providing sun protection and privacy. Their appearance and function are therefore similar to the characteristic translucent *shōji* panels of the Japanese house, and in the same way they allow one to particularly enjoy the shadows of the eucalyptus trees dancing around them as the light changes.

The constant connection between the inside and the outside, framed by this almost invisible structure of steel and glass, is also a common feature between the Eames House and the Japanese house. The two courtyards of the Santa Monica house, one between the house and the studio and the other to the south of the house, are defined by fine wooden lines and configured with a modular grid, inside which grass, red brick, marble or wood can be seen. Planting in the courtyards is restrained, emphasising the textures of the elements surrounding the plants, as in a traditional Japanese garden. Interestingly, in the south courtyard a single, small bonsai stands out among the red bricks³².

Even more striking is the way in which the house is placed in its surroundings, resembling some of the traditional teahouses described by Kakuzo Okakura or the drawings of Bruno Taut (fig. 09). According to Okakura, "the *sukiya* consists of the tearoom itself (...), an antechamber (*mizuya*) where the tea utensils are washed and prepared before being brought into the room, a veranda (*machiai*) where guests wait until they are ushered in, and a path (the *rōji*) connecting the *machiai* with the tearoom". Similarly, the entrance to the living room, which will be used for the tea ceremony, is not near the entrance to the site, but on the opposite side, which means a route flanking the side of the two constructions, the house and the studio, along a path delimited by tall eucalyptus trees. In the 1951 ceremony, the access path would therefore serve as the *rōji*. The double-height entrance portico would act as the *machiai*, and a raised tatami was positioned in front of the door, which, like

the stones placed at the entrance to the teahouses, would mark the end of the *rōji* and the necessary mental separation from the outside world before entering the teahouse. At this point we find the *nijiriguchi* transposed to the Eames House, the access of reduced dimensions developed by Sen no Rikyū, which equalises the status of the participants, as they must bend down and practically crawl to enter the room.

The constant scenographic change that the interior of the house undergoes to accommodate different moments, situations and domestic celebrations can also be linked to what happens in the tea pavilion, an "Abode of the Void", as Kakuzo Okakura would say, which takes delight in the ephemeral: "The term 'Abode of the Void', besides conveying the Taoist theory of the inclusiveness of the whole, conveys the idea of a continuous need to change decorative motifs. The tearoom is absolutely empty, except for the changing elements, arranged to satisfy a temporary, almost momentary aesthetic taste". However, as he later points out, "... the way we decorate our tea rooms is in contrast to the Western system, in which the interior of an ideal house often resembles a museum"³³. Thus, we can speak of a "Westernised Japaneseness" in the Eameses, a similar attitude but one that employs juxtaposition rather than "centrality" as a compositional method, where "all other elements are selected and presented to enhance the main one"³⁴. It is no coincidence that the Smithsons similarly alluded to the fundamental difference between Japanese and Western homes: "storage goes unnoticed in the spaces and at the same time defines them, unlike the Western house, which has always tended to show everything"³⁵ (fig. 10).

In any case, the flexibility sought in the interior of the home, the search for a lower point of view to enhance the enjoyment of the space, with its usual scenographic changes, are also features shared with Japanese design. The Eameses emphasised this with the double height in both the studio and the living room, the use of carpets (if not tatamis) and low furniture: Indian seats in carved and painted wood, or directly on cushions in a variety of colours and patterns, and the versatile LTR side table which, with its 25 centimetres of height, would become the undeniable protagonist of the tea ceremony.

Beyond the formal evidence and parallels we can discern, it is probably Charles' own words that shed more light on the connection between the Eames House and traditional Japanese architecture, particularly that of the teahouse. In an article published in *Architectural Forum* in 1953, Charles points out how traditional Japanese constructions, whether objects or buildings, seem to make use of the humblest materials to provide solutions that imply a heightened understanding of human needs, as well as the relationship between these creations and the scale of the body itself³⁶.

Even more enlightening is the letter he wrote to Genshitsu Sen³⁷ on the occasion of the tea ceremony in 1951. "Any feeling I may have about the relationship of this beautiful and ancient ceremony with the architecture it harbors can only be based on an intuitive feeling, since I have no extensive knowledge of either"³⁸, Charles writes with some humility, but allows himself to draw what he sees as the greatest parallel between the two: "The most important thing (the house) has in common with the Japanese teahouse is the fact that it uses extremely humble materials in a natural and uncontrived way. The bare, unadorned I-beams and the open, latticed steel beams largely serve as the bare wooden structural elements of the teahouse", nuancing how, in this simple, bare space, "the intrusion (...) of tables and chairs in a westernised version seems to me quite shocking"³⁹, reflecting on the need for the space to retain its essence, and probably also on the furniture and objects he and Ray designed for the famous ceremony; a reflection that could be extended to the even more westernised 2012 ceremony.

In these statements we can see that there is a common essence, something that goes beyond mere appearance

and approaches a form of understanding, a shared attitude.

This is summed up by Charles in the following sentence, which is enlightening: "Conceptually, the environment must be modest, sensitive and discreet"⁴⁰.

According to Okakura, "(the tearoom) is an Abode of Fancy inasmuch as it is an ephemeral structure built to harbor a poetic impulse. It is an Abode of Vacancy inasmuch as it is devoid of ornamentation except for what may be placed in it to satisfy some aesthetic need of the moment"⁴¹. These beautiful descriptions could well have been written for the Eames House. The 'magic factory'⁴², which hosted both ceremonies is configured as a container in which the aesthetic impulses of its owners are collected and displayed through the objects arranged there and their ever-changing character.

It was also a shared space in which these poetic impulses could be given free rein, with some found objects and others created by the authors or by those who visited the house and temporarily made it their own, and which, arranged in heterogeneous groups in this empty space, revealed all their aesthetic potential. Above all, however, the house is a simple container, built as a shelter with humble materials and on a human scale, a sensitive space that is a faithful reflection of a way of life and a showcase for the elements that make up its unique way of inhabitation. These moments of life, when the house becomes a real tea pavilion, reinforce the successful enjoyment of its spatiality.

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Notes

- 01.** FUJIMORI, Terunobu, "Chashitsu: Camere da tè. La camera da tè, lo spazio minimo", in *Casabella*, February 2008, n° 763, pp. 40-60. Translation and text in brackets by the authors of this text.
- 02.** Each of the attendees paid \$5,000 for their entrance to the event. See RAWSTHORN, Alice, "Preserving Fragile Memories of Genius", en *The New York Times*, 22/01/2012. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/23/arts/design/preserving-fragile-memories-of-genius.html?_r=0 (retrieved on: 20/01/2023)
- 03.** As was customary in traditional Japanese culture, males, especially those from families of a certain social status, would acquire different names throughout their lives. In this case, all the heads of the Urasenke tea school in Kyoto, one of the three main schools and direct descendants of Sen no Rikyū, share the name of Sōshitsu Sen (Sōshitsu being the first name and Sen the "family name", or surname according to Western nomenclature) at the time they hold that position. Genshitsu, would be the name that the 15th generation master adopted when he retired from his position, and Hōunsai is his appellation or title as a Zen practitioner. In addition to the above, he has also been known as Masaoki, as his birth name, and as Soko Sen, the name by which Charles Eames will refer to him. Throughout the article, he will be referred to as Genshitsu, to differentiate him from the current Grandmaster, the 16th generation, who goes by the name of Sōshitsu Sen.
- 04.** GARCÍA, Dan, "Invitation to Tea", en *The Rafu Shimpō*, 4/11/2012. <https://rafu.com/2012/04/invitation-to-tea/> (retrieved on: 20/01/2023). This expression also appears in Kakuzo Okakura's well-known reference work "The Book of Tea". OKAKURA, Kakuzo, *El libro del té*, Olañeta, Palma, 2011, p. 60.
- 05.** *Natsume* is the vessel containing *matcha*, which is traditionally used in the Japanese tea ceremony.
- 06.** The tea bowl, or *chawan*, is always the 'ultimate work of art' in the tea ceremony and is often priceless.

- 07.** SMITHSON, Alison; SMITHSON, Peter, *Signs of occupancy/ Signos de ocupación*, (CD) Ala+2, Barcelona, 2003.
- 08.** For the construction of the Eames House, the architects selected the metal parts from a steel manufacturer's catalogue. The original plan for the house, usually referred to as the "bridge house" in explicit reference to Mies van der Rohe, was modified because of the difficulty of obtaining the steel in time, so they designed a new layout using exactly the same parts that had been ordered for the previous project. The new proposal, which took only a day and a half to assemble structurally, was published in *Arts & Architecture*, May 1949. FERNÁNDEZ VILLALOBOS, Nieves. "House of Cards: el 'continente' Eames en una baraja de cartas", en *Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura*, May 2019, n° 20, p. 91.
- 09.** KOENIG, Gloria, *Eames*, Taschen, Colonia, 2005, p. 47.
- 10.** SMITHSON, Peter, "Concealment & Display: Meditations on Braun", en *Architectural Design*, julio 1966. Quoted in SMITHSON, Alison & Peter, *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, p. 79. See also *Without Rethoric*, Latimer, 1973 (In Spanish: *Sin Retórica*, Puente Editores, Barcelona 2023, p. 53).
- 11.** COLOMINA, Beatriz, "Reflexiones sobre la casa Eames", en *RA. Revista de Arquitectura*, 2007, n° 9, p. 6.
- 12.** In Noguchi's own words, "All you need to start a home is a room, a tatami mat and an Akari". <https://shop.noguchi.org/collections/akari-light-sculptures>
- 13.** According to Yoke-Sum Wong, Iris Tree's son, the screenwriter Ivan Moffat, was also in attendance, although it is impossible to say for certain as he does not appear in any of the photograph. WONG, Yoke-Sum, "The Future is Hybrid: Isamu Noguchi and the Mid-Century Modern", in *Feelings of Structures*, MQUP Press, Montreal, 2018.
- 14.** CHAPLIN, Charlie; GÓMEZ DE LA SERNA, July (traducción), *Autobiografía*, Lumen, Barcelona, 2014, pp. 527-529.

- 15.** WONG, Y, *op. cit.*
- 16.** DOVAL, Gonzalo (coord.), *Metamorfosis en barro: Noguchi en Kamakura* [exhibition, fundación ICO, Madrid, from 10th October 2006 to 7th January 2007], Fundación ICO, Madrid, 2006, p. 15 y 102.
- 17.** EAMES, Charles, ©Life in a Chinese Kite: Standard Industrial Products Assembled in a Spacious Wonderland", in *Architectural Forum*, September 1950, pp. 90-96.
- 18.** OKAKURA, K, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
- 19.** *Ibid.* p. 62.
- 20.** DOVAL, G., *op. cit.*, p. 113.
- 21.** "Totally visual (conceived, arranged, managed for the eye, even for the eye of a painter, a graphic artist), food here claims not to be profound: the edible substance lacks a precious heart, a buried strength, a vital secret: no Japanese dish has a centre [...], it is all an ornament of another ornament: first of all because on the table, on the plate, food is always a collection of fragments, none of which seems privileged". BARTHES, Roland; GARCÍA ORTEGA, Adolfo (foreword), *El imperio de los signos*, Seix Barral, Barcelona, 2007, p. 30.
- 22.** WONG, Y., *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- 23.** EAMES, Charles, "Case Study House for 1949: the plan", in *Arts & Architecture* 66, September 1949, n° 9, p. 38-39.
- 24.** NEUHART, John; NEUHART, Marilyn; EAMES, Ray, *Eames Design. The work of the Office of Charles & Ray Eames*, Harry N. Abrams Publishers, Nueva York, 1989, p. 167.
- 25.** KIRKHAM, Pat. *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 2001, p. 365.
- 26.** In December 1957 Charles and Ray travelled to Japan for the first time; in 1961 Ray travelled to Japan alone; in 1978 Ray travelled to Japan three more times.
- 27.** Alison Smithson stated in a brochure printed for the opening of the Eames IDZ exhibition, Berlin, 5 September 1979, that they had "recognised the Japanese influence" in the Eames House as early as 1958, when they first visited and photographed it. SMITHSON, Alison, Opening of the Eames exhibition, IDZ, Berlin, 5 September 1979, extract from a brochure printed for the occasion. In "Eames' Dreams", *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, p. 83.
- 28.** "Suddenly Japan realised its West Coast influence, the luxury of simplicity and orderliness of the interior, the beautiful wrappings, the Kleenex. And the West Coast influence came to us through the Eameses". SMITHSON, Alison, "Eames and now Dharmas are dying out in Japan", *Architectural Design*, September 1966. In: *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, p. 77.
- 29.** STEELE, James. "The Japanese influence". In *Eames House. Charles and Ray Eames*, Phaidon, Londres, 2004, pp. 20-24.
- 30.** KIRKHAM, P., *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- 31.** Plyon is a material produced by Swedlow Plastics Company during the Second World War, originally used as a plastic support for self-sealing fuel cells in aircraft. By the end of the war, the material was in surplus, and its lightness, flexibility and translucent appearance were exploited for use in industrial partitions.
- 32.** WILLIAMS, Kelsey Rose, "A Feeling of Japan", en *Eamesfoundation.org*, <https://eamesfoundation.org/news/three-elements-that-make-the-eames-house-feel-japanese> (retrieved on: 20/01/2023).
- 33.** OKAKURA, K., *op. cit.*, p. 65.
- 34.** *Idem.*
- 35.** A comment they made as an explanation of their Appliances Houses. SMITHSON, Alison, "The Future of furniture", in *Interior Design Supplement, Architectural Design*, April 1958, Vol XXVIII, Wiley, Londres, 1930, pp. 175-178. Quoted by FERNÁNDEZ VILLALOBOS, Nieves: "Japón y occidente. Encuentros y desencuentros tras la II Posguerra", in *Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura*, November 2015, n° 13, p. 61.
- 36.** This issue contains the opinions of sixteen Western architects who were asked about Japanese architecture. EAMES, Charles, "Japan Architecture and the West",

in *Architectural Forum* 98, January 1953, n° 1, pp. 143-148. Quoted in EAMES, Charles & Ray, *An Eames anthology*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 111.

37. The letter is addressed to Soko Sen, dated 26 October 1951. EAMES, C. & R., *An Eames Anthology*, p. 92. In addition to the above text, in the letter, Charles thanks her for the fan and yukata that the tea master gave them through Sosei Matsumoto (whom he refers to as "Susi"), and in this outfit he can be seen in some photographs.

38. *Idem*

39. *Idem*.

40. *Idem*.

41. OKAKURA, K., *op. cit.*, p. 52.

42. Alison Smithson would refer to the Eames House as "a secret home of the magic factory". SMITHSON, Alison, Opening of the Eames exhibition, IDZ, Berlin, 5 September 1979, extract from a brochure printed for the occasion. In "Eames' Dreams", *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2001, p. 83.

Images

01. On the left. Utensils for the tea ceremony on the tatami, with the folding screen, the calligraphy and the flower arrangement in the background.

On the right. Image of the tea ceremony held at the Eames House in March 2012, with the guests seated on the LCW chairs and the LTR tables in front of them.

Photograph: Eames Foundation. © 2012 Eames Office, LLC.

Published in: <https://eamesfoundation.org/events/japanese-tea-ceremony/>

02. Charles and Ray Eames in the living room of their California home, filled with furniture, rugs, lamps, plants and other unique objects selected by them.

Photograph: Hap Johnson para la Eames Office. © 2012 Eames Office LLC. Published in: DEMETRIOS, Eames, *Beautiful Designs*, Ammo Books, California, 2012, p. 341

03. The Eames House living room prepared for the tea ceremony, that took place on 24 July 1951. We can see on the right two Akari lamps by Isamu Noguchi. and on the left, the tatami and cushions for the guests, and near the corner of the room, the *chagama* and flower arrangement.

Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York / ARS <https://archive.noguchi.org/Detail/archival/37419>

04. Tea ceremony held at the Eames House on 24 July 1951. Attendees, from left to right: Isamu Noguchi, Ray Eames, Yoshiko Yamaguchi, Sosei Matsumoto, Charlie Chaplin, Henrietta Lederbom, Iris Tree, Betty Hartford, Christian Lederbom and Ford Rainey. Photograph by Charles Eames. Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York / ARS <https://archive.noguchi.org/Detail/archival/37431>

05. Actress Yoshiko Yamaguchi, fiancée of the sculptor Isamu Noguchi, alone in the living room of the Eames House in the run-up to the tea ceremony on 24 July 1951. Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: EAMES, Charles & Ray, *An Eames Anthology*, Yale

University Press, New Haven and London, 2015.

06. Isamu Noguchi and Yoshiko Yamaguchi in front of the entrance to the Eames House, California (1951).

Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York / ARS <https://archive.noguchi.org/Detail/archival/37434>

07. *Kaiseki* from the tea ceremony held on 24 July 1951 at the Eames House, where we can see some of the attendees seated on the tatami and surrounding the central space occupied by the tea master, in this case, Yoshiko Yamaguchi. Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York / ARS <https://archive.noguchi.org/Detail/archival/37429>

08. Above. Arrangement of the interior space of the living room during the ceremony: white rectangle_tatami / grey square_cushion / black circle_akari / dark grey rectangle_chagama / green line_interior garden.

Arrangement of the attendants:

1. Position of the tea master / 2. Below. Arrangement of the interior space during *kaiseki*: white rectangle_tatami / light grey square_cushion / black circle_akari / dark grey rectangle_LTR table / in green line_interior garden.

Arrangement of assistants: 0. Position of the tea master (Sosei Matsumoto and Yoshiko Yamaguchi) / 1-3. Charles Eames or Betty Hartford / 2. Ray Eames / 4. Christian Lederbom / 5. Henrietta Lederbom / 6. Alternatively, Isamu Noguchi, Yoshiko Yamaguchi or Sosei Matsumoto / 7. Charlie Chaplin / 8. Iris Tree / 9. Ford Rainey / 10. Isamu Noguchi. Drawing made by the authors of the article.

09. Above. Eames House roof plan casting the shadows of the eucalyptus trees. Below. Bruno Taut. Diagram of a tea house and garden, with a side path lined with trees.

Above. Published in: EAMES, Charles & Ray, *An Eames Anthology*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2015. Below. Published in: TAUT, Bruno; GAROÍA ROIG, José Manuel (ed). *La casa y la vida*

japonesas. Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, Barcelona, 2007.

10. Alison & Peter Smithson: Two diagrams showing the Western organisation space (left) and the Japanese house (right). In the latter, the storage space is separated from the living space, which flows freely through the volume of the house, hiding what is not of interest.

Published in: SMITHSON, Alison: "The Future of furniture", in *Interior Design Supplement, Architectural Design*, April 1958, Vol XXVIII, pp. 175-178. Frances Loeb Library. Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

12

Climbers at the Munch

Juan Herreros



During the construction of the Munch Museum, a question of significant architectural substance arose. The facades, which were finished with perforated corrugated aluminium panels to screen out sunlight, required more meticulous cleaning than the usual method employing baskets suspended from the cornice. The work required was closer to maintenance, in the broad sense of the term, than to mere cleaning. After weighing up several high-tech solutions, none were deemed to cover all the specialisations required so a team of professional climbers was eventually hired. The theory was that the very act of climbing demanded a series of skills that were similar to those involved in repairing, fastening and checking devices, as well as applying new joints and seals. Such a solution can only be reached when different specialists who share a need to address unforeseen issues through design come together around the table.

Transforming the building into a rock face and placing it in the hands of a group of young mountain enthusiasts was a way of reflecting the Norwegian love of nature in the middle of the city and of demonstrating that architecture does not necessarily require us to constantly reinvent but to find new uses for what we already know.

Image

Estudio Herreros. Munch Museum. ©Tove Lauluten

13

Catalano, Caminos and the Dissolution of Two Disciplinary Dichotomies. The Case of the Ciudad Universitaria Campus in Buenos Aires

Marcelo Faiden

The building housing the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism (FADU) is one of a select group of architecture schools to be designed by prominent architects. Others include Gropius's Bauhaus, Mies's IIT and Artigas's FAUSP, as well as Siza's work in Porto, OMA's work at Cornell and Lacaton & Vassal's work in Nantes... The University of Buenos Aires joined this list, albeit unwittingly, thanks to the work of Eduardo Catalano and Horacio Caminos. Yet, there is one key difference between the buildings at the Ciudad Universitaria campus and the others mentioned above, which is central to this essay.



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Yet, there is one key difference between the buildings at the Ciudad Universitaria campus and the others mentioned above, which is central to this essay. Whereas all the other architecture schools have made the spatial attributes of their premises part of their academic culture, FADU has remained indifferent to its physical form. There have been no publications or exhibitions on the subject of the Pabellón III building, nor do the faculty's archives contain any documents concerning its architecture or the architects who produced it.

It is striking to see that the building has been overlooked in local discourse, despite its highly didactic nature. During my time at university, the building by Catalano and Caminos was only mentioned in the classroom when our lecturers wanted to give us an empirical example of what not to do. Whenever they deemed our proposals to be "too systematic", "indifferent" or simply "cold",

they evoked the Pabellón III building to represent the evils so vehemently opposed by the "Buenos Aires School". Some of us would nod despite being unconvinced by their arguments because, in our eyes, we were witnessing an architecture that could withstand almost anything. It was capable of withstanding our professors, the predominant narratives of each era and, most importantly, a lack of visibility and predictability. Embracing these capabilities as architectural attributes will be the main focus of my latest attempt to anchor the Pabellón III building to the present day.

Catalano and Caminos displayed an impressive adaptability when it came to their own careers. From the outset, their education and work were both national and international in scope and they combined their professional practice with extensive academic activity. They both worked as lecturers at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies in Tucumán before joining the Architectural Association (AA) in London as guest lecturers. Later on, they worked at the School of Design at the University of North Carolina, where Catalano was subsequently appointed dean. Finally, both architects obtained tenure at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where they ended their academic careers as emeritus professors.

Their working style was never stable. During the most productive period of their professional careers, they were able to combine their individual work with the work that they carried out in partnership. Their lives and work were influenced by the political upheaval in Argentina, although this did not dampen the intensity of their activity. Indeed, quite the opposite is true: their sheer consistency obliges us to reconsider their work from a new perspective, accepting events not as diversions from an apparently ideal destination but as a specific variable capable of sparking specific knowledge.

Let us begin by looking at the two versions of the plot plan published in specialist media outlets. The difference in graphic terms between them and the other documents disseminated is immediately apparent. Their lack of definition suggests that they have been produced to tick the boxes prior to a potential publication. It would not be outlandish to assume that the architects took little interest in designing a project from such a position of distance. This might be explained by their first-hand experience of the Tucumán university project collapsing² or by the perspective granted by their geographical distance from Argentina at the time when the project began. They may well have been sceptical of long-term projects, especially those whose scale meant that they would span several government mandates before they would be completed.

The Ciudad Universitaria campus was quite literally designed over the River Plate. The expansion of the city along this new edge was decided on the same drawing board used to design the faculty buildings, at the same time. There was no careful attention to context nor empty slate. Architecture and landscape were part of a single design, or better put, a single attitude to design. An attitude based on a determination not to reproduce traditional approaches to design in situations in which they were clearly no longer workable.

If we observe the layout of the blocks, we see an arrangement that appears to be in motion, in the midst of a decision-making process. It is as if the design were in tension, perhaps because it is not entirely symmetrical. The central area seems unstructured due to the imbalance produced by the off-centre position of the dyke. The three buildings located to the north of the plot blur any possible axiality in the layout, leaving some room for manoeuvre for future adjustments. The subtle changes made to the scale model confirm the use of this strategy.

By contrast, the second diagram not only features a significant reduction in terms of building and plot size but also takes the possibility of incorporating the "accurately unpredictable" into

the final arrangement of the buildings to the extreme. Catalano and Caminos no doubt predicted that further cutbacks would be made as the project progressed, prompting them to opt to organise the buildings in as basic a manner as possible: in rows. It was as if they were trying to force themselves to unlearn the value of the finished product or of the "final state" of things through this act. As if, from this point onwards, from this apparent renunciation, they had found a new area in which their project could be deployed: an area in which "change" is accepted as the only material capable of expressing a far more appropriate, relevant idea of context.

To date, two buildings have been constructed. Their duality makes them oddly stable. The radical use we make of them should rid us of any trace of nostalgia when we look back at the unfulfilled promises of the Ciudad Universitaria campus project.

Now for a change in scale. Let us move a little closer and pause on the standard floor plan, with its axial structure and open-plan spaces. The cohesion between each of the elements is evident: the central void in specific relation to the stands and the two cores in line with the position of the columns, which, in turn, are linked to the modulation of the waffle slab, which is connected to the envelope... Here, the significance of each element could be said to lie in its ability to establish relationships with other elements rather than in its own uniqueness. This characteristic is reminiscent of Mies van der Rohe's American projects, which were built at the same time as the faculty buildings.

On more than one occasion, specialist critics have insisted on interpreting this period in Mies's work as a regression from mature modernity to classicism³. This observation might be comprehensible to us. The plans to which these critics referred seemed to abandon an approach to layout based on equivalence and revive an approach based on symmetry, returning to a far more elementary notion of balance than is apparent in the architecture presented by the architect 25 years ago.

However, these arguments might be misplaced when it comes to Catalano and Caminos's design. In their faculty buildings, there is something that they appear to have overlooked... Where exactly are the classrooms and workshops? How is this floor used? What is it for? And what programme was it designed for exactly? These questions are usually resolved in the specifications before the design process begins. Although that was not the case here, the architecture of the buildings conveys an unusual authority, as if such basic considerations were almost irrelevant to the project. Catalano and Caminos perfectly understood the scope of the project and its new geography, identifying this contingency as an opportunity to test out new design techniques. They built an architecture that embodied "programmatic instability" and "spatial specificity" in a positive manner⁴. The robustness of the layout only makes sense from this new perspective. Its generic character and symmetrical stability are not presented as a value in themselves, but rather as an organisational strategy capable of encouraging the emergence of unexpected, surprise elements. In this case, the architecture itself seems to fade from the limelight. It appears to lose weight and substance. It is now presented as infrastructure for the events that happen within it.

Let us look closer still and spend a moment considering the load-bearing structure of the faculty buildings. Like the National Gallery in Berlin, the buildings rise up from a foundation with just two structural elements: waffle slabs and cruciform columns. The consistent attention that Catalano and Caminos paid to the rest of the world allowed them to draw on the same disciplinary breakthroughs as their more acclaimed peers. It is even possible that their peripheral status emboldened them to adjust each of the techniques that they adopted to their own needs. If we compare the structural elements used in these two projects, we can see that in both cases the approach to formalisation is based on an endeavour to make these elements more lightweight, reflecting the challenges

posed by the large spans between supports. In theory, this would justify the similarity... But let us look even closer and consider how these elements were built in each of the projects. Besides the obvious material differences, a new objective appears to have been added to the agenda in the Ciudad Universitaria campus project. Whereas Mies's efforts were centred on the visual purity of each structural element, Catalano and Caminos dedicated their energies to identifying the possibilities offered by an emptied structure. If we focus on the corner detail, we will see that the structure has taken on a new level of responsibility that goes much further than simply providing gravitational support for the building. Here, the structure not only supports, it also contains. Its form allows it to be transformed entirely into conduits for installations. In this manner, each column can be a vertical plenum and each waffle slab a horizontal plenum. Catalano and Caminos transposed the need to incorporate the immediate demands of the present and the permanent need for change to every possible scale of the project. Not only were they unaware of the future programme for the faculty buildings, the architects suspected that their use and organisation would change over the course of their lives. In other words: they were convinced that the useful life of the buildings would depend on their ability to adapt.

Halfway through my undergraduate degree, when we returned to the classroom after the summer break, I discovered that all the precast parts cladding the four facades of the faculty buildings had been removed. In his book *¿Arquitectura?*⁵, Catalano explains that the precast parts were removed because they were too porous as they had been poured from the concrete left over at the end of each working day.

Once the concrete parts had been removed, the appearance of the faculty buildings changed dramatically. The large windows exhibited an extensive catalogue of interventions, revealing the building's diverse interior uses and their direct impact on an envelope that had remained comfortably in the background for decades.

Like all the events associated with the faculty buildings, the removal of the precast concrete parts made no particular impact. This may be because they never had any great responsibility. They were designed neither as sun shields nor as security mechanisms. Their role was simply to influence people's perceptions of the buildings. To soften the impact of a constantly changing interior life from the outside.

The current appearance of the faculty buildings undoubtedly helps to convey their performative potential more effectively. A nocturnal visit to the Ciudad Universitaria campus is sufficient to grasp the energy emanating from the buildings. With all the artificial lighting systems that coexist at FADU superimposed on a single facade plane, the intensity of use that Catalano and Caminos sought to encourage is more than apparent.

At every scale, the buildings appear to insist on the same thing: on reversing the inertia of events and diluting their gravity. Here, the architecture seems to modify the melody often used to verbalise any negative description of reality. It is as if anything that might traditionally have been seen as unfortunate were transformed here into a joyful new starting point.

The buildings on the Ciudad Universitaria campus in Buenos Aires torpedo the dichotomy between "form" and "function". In doing so, they successfully revive a vocation to serve within the architectural discipline, reinforcing its contract with a society that is far more dynamic than our disciplinary tools. It is no surprise that the architects who triggered the dissolution of this dichotomy underwent a similar process in their own careers. "Professional practice" and "academic research" is another dichotomy that has sadly taken hold around the world. Catalano and Caminos embody an approach to architecture that is capable of resisting this global trend. Analysed with the privilege of hindsight, their practices may be viewed as a

latent example of the fertile creativity required to dedicate an entire professional career to alternating positively between intellectual speculation and material reorganisation.

Marcelo Faiden

Marcelo Faiden is a founding partner of the architecture studio Adamo-Faiden and dean of the Universidad Torcuato Di Tella School of Architecture. He completed his undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (FADU-UBA) and his postgraduate studies at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona at the Universidad Politécnica de Catalunya (ETSAB-UPC). In 2016, he was awarded a PhD in Architecture for his thesis 'Los bajos de los edificios altos' (The low part of the high-rise). He has been invited to deliver courses and presentations at numerous institutions, including the Berlage Institute, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Princeton School of Architecture, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Escola da Cidade de Sao Paulo and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, among others. Adamo-Faiden's work has been published extensively in monographic books in Chile, Spain, Italy and New York.

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Notes

01. As democracy was restored, professionals with a greater involvement in architectural practice returned to the University of Buenos Aires. This is when this group of professors began to refer to themselves as the "Buenos Aires School" for the first time.

02. In 1948, President Perón expropriated 14,000 hectares of the Cerro San Javier in the province of Tucumán (Argentina) to build a university campus that would serve the whole of South America. In the mid-1950s, the project was suspended before any of the buildings could be inaugurated. Catalano and Caminos participated in the project alongside Jorge Vivanco, Eduardo Sacriste, José Le Pera, Hilaria Zalba and Rafael Onetto.

03. See the chapter on Mies Van Der Rohe in FRAMPTON, Kenneth, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Thames and Hudson, 1980.

04. Terms used by Rem Koolhaas in "The Generic City", in *S, M, L, XL*, O10 Publishers, 1995.

05. CATALANO, Eduardo, *Arquitectura?*, Cambridge Architectural Press, 2007.

Images

01. Aerial Photograph. Photo by Javier Agustín Rojas.

02. Main Hall. Photo by Javier Agustín Rojas.

03. Plan of the complex.

04. Model of the complex.

05. Main plan, second version.

06. Typical Plan.

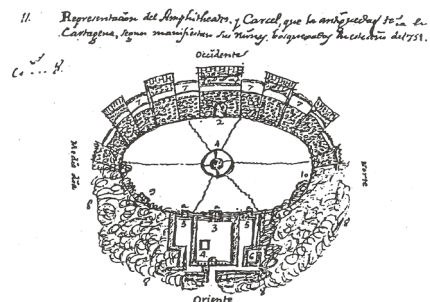
07. Detail.

08. Photograph of the works.

14

A Building in Six Times. The Feast of Death in Cartagena Nicolás Maruri González de Mendoza

Cities can be perceived as an accumulation of built-up layers that are related through their superimposition over time. Each of these layers offers data of historical memory recognisable in their constructions. The building which was an amphitheatre in Carthago Nova, a quarry in Carthago Spartaria, a cemetery and bullring in Cartagena, which was almost an art space and which can become a city museum or archive, is one of these cases where the coexistence of forms and uses can be reconstructed in a panoramic view of more than two thousand years.



ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE - 1ST CENTURY AD

The first traces of the amphitheatre were made in the Republican period, to be extended and reach its monumental phase in the last quarter of the 1st century AD¹. The amphitheatre was built on the hill of La Concepción, on the outskirts of the city, on

schist, taking advantage of the slope of the hillside to support the north-west *ima* and *media cavea* and only having to raise, on vaults and buttresses, the south-east *cavea* (fig. 01). Its plan is elliptical, as befits its function as a circus space according to the type used by the Roman builders. It measures 110 m long by 77 m wide on the outer sides, similar to the amphitheatre of Tarragona, with a perimeter of 942 Roman feet, and it is thought that it could hold around 11,000 spectators, five times less than the amphitheatre in Rome and two-thirds of the one in Mérida. The arena measures 60m x 37m².

The amphitheatre is a key part of Roman urbanity because of its enormous size, together with the theatre, with a capacity of up to seven thousand spectators in Cartagena³, the forum and other smaller buildings such as the baths, the palestra, the curia and various temples for different gods⁴ (fig. 02).

In the year 298, a large part of the eastern sector of the city was transformed, due to the strong political and economic changes, using materials from the buildings constructed during the Roman monumental period, as happened with the colonnaded⁵ market built over the Roman theatre, taking advantage of its rich materials to build foundations and walls. At this time the amphitheatre had probably already lost its function and a process of slow degradation and reuse of its materials had begun, which was

reinforced at key moments in its history: in 425, the city was sacked by the Vandals⁶, in 622 the Visigoths destroyed it, in 1245 it was conquered by Fernando III the Saint after a hard siege...

QUARRY

A la falda del castillo sobre la parte de Levante ay grandísimos fragmentos de edificios donde estava la Chancillería o convento lurídico de Cartagena en un famoso Coliseo no de menor grandeza que el Romano. De aquí los vezinos sin orden han sacado lindas piedras, figuras antiguallas y columnas y sobre quatro destas está fundada la Yglesia Matriz desta ciudad que admira su grandor y altura siendo piedras vivas de una pieça cada

qual. Hasta en nuestro tiempo se llevó de aquí Vespesiano Gonçalves bellísimas ymágenes de piedra para honrar con el desecho desta ciudad su principado. Y aquellos pedaços por allí derramados llaman aora Antiguones.

Discurso de la Ciudad de Cartagena, Francisco Cascales (1598)⁷

A building with several thousand square metres of façade requires an enormous economic, material and human effort for its construction, which must be planned, balanced, firm and beautiful. Its dismantling, progressive and anarchic, only requires abandonment over time. About a thousand years after its construction, the Arab geographer Al Idrisi⁸, who travelled around the Iberian Peninsula describing its cities in the 12th century, is reported to have spoken of Cartagena, describing the "house of lions", a volume that was to be silhouetted against the horizon and would continue to show an imposing presence to travellers.

For a long period of time, the building is simply a place without use, an abandoned object that gradually falls apart. Where its most superficial elements, decorations and finishes, are dispersed and reused in other constructions in visible noble areas, other times, they are only mass and filler in walls and foundations. All that remains is the geometric outline of its supporting walls and foundations, with the memory of what happened there now erased.

CEMETERY

Carlos III's project for the "enlightened development" of the city drew up a new defensive wall inside which the amphitheatre remained, and two new buildings were erected around it: the Royal Hospital and the Antiguones Barracks⁹. In

addition, an "Amphitheatre of Autopsies" was built, separate from the Hospital and adjacent to the remains of the amphitheatre, which was used as an unregulated cemetery.

In the stratigraphic sections, from the level of the sand of the amphitheatre, the human remains appear about 1m below the level of the sand of the bullring, occupying a layer of dark earth. It gives the impression that the bodies had been carelessly dumped, deaths resulting from epidemics, the bodies of soldiers and sailors with no family to care for their corpses, which were cut open and chopped up in the amphitheatre and then abandoned in a disorderly fashion on the abandoned ground of the adjoining building.

BULLRING

In 1854 it was decided to take advantage of the site of Antiguones to build a bullring. The level of the arena of the bullring was 4 m above the level of the amphitheatre and the remains that remained above this 4 m were razed to the ground. These remains

were used as fill to fill in the vaulted spaces of the "carcieri" and other rooms below the level of the arena. The inner perimeter of the arena lies within the minor axis of the ancient amphitheatre, with an inner diameter of 44m and an outer diameter of 70m (fig. 03).

Building, razing and clogging, eliminates all vestiges and, in this way, erases the memory that remains buried. A few years later, in 1868, the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann came to the Dardanelles to search for the remains of the city of Troy¹⁰. This new spirit signalled a cultural change in the reading of history

and its traces that had not yet reached Cartagena¹¹, where progress eliminated the old amphitheatre and founded a new one, with a similar use, the feast of death, but with a different geometry.

The new bullring, instead of being an autonomous object on the outside of the city, completes an urban ensemble formed by the cylinder of the bullring and the two large parallelepipeds that form the barracks and the hospital¹², defining a public urban space with the potential to become one of the monumental spaces of the city.

The bullring was renovated and enlarged in 1911, adding a façade with Arabic decoration in keeping with the taste of the time. In contrast to the clarity and simplicity of the previous circular volume, the aim was to make it more representative and attractive to the public. In addition, the capacity of the stands was increased by raising a light cast-iron structure on two levels above the stone stands, and a series of service parts were built to improve its operation.

The Ortega Cano bullring was closed in 1986, probably due to the progressive decrease in its economic profitability, but also because of the annoying coexistence with Roman remains that began to be protected by means of preventive actions in 1960, carried out by Pedro Sanmartín, 100 years after they had been buried and forgotten. The severe industrial crisis of the 1980s forced the city to change its sensitivity towards archaeological remains, remains that surface every time a new building is erected. The transformation of one of the most polluted industrial cities in Spain into an environment where the enhancement of the cultural heritage took centre stage in a process of urban regeneration that offers a new way of living.

CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE OF THE REGION OF MURCIA / UNCOVERED AUDITORIUM

The abandonment of the bullring and its decay allowed the city council to buy the building from its owners, in order to proceed with the excavation and recovery of the amphitheatre (fig. 04).

Various localised interventions were carried out with the aim of confirming the supposed geometries, consolidating the discovered factories and allowing visits to the archaeological remains. At the same time, a debate began on the appropriateness of preserving the square, coexisting with the remains of the amphitheatre, or demolishing the square and bringing to the surface, without interference, the traces and walls that would allow the amphitheatre to be appreciated.

Reflection on how to excavate in a living city, on how to make archaeological remains compatible with functioning urban uses, is a permanent and critical discussion in Cartagena. After intense debates and meetings of experts¹³, it was decided to conserve the external volume of the square as a configurator of the urban space, contributing new uses to the building, and to bring to the surface the structures of the amphitheatre inside and outside the double stone ring that shapes the square.

The first task was to dismantle in an orderly fashion the stands of the bullring, taking advantage of the fact that the minor ellipse of the amphitheatre is almost completely circumscribed by the inner circle of the arena. Next, the upper arcades, affected by aluminosis, were dismantled, as well as the elements added at the beginning of the 20th century, which disfigure the original state and make excavation difficult, as they are located on areas of the major axis of the ellipse.

Thus, the two large cylindrical sandstone walls have been preserved, the outer one, 17 m high and 50 cm wide at the base, decreasing in vertical section, and the inner one, 14 m high and 1.10 m in constant vertical width. Interior wall that supported the base fill of the stands. The vision of the site that is achieved is that of two constructions, both historical, superimposed, amphitheatre, at ground level, and square, which retains its main geometry and

its autonomous position that maintains the urban image of a large cylindrical volume that defines limits in a complex space (fig. 08).

In 2006, at a time of economic prosperity and optimism, the cultural institutions of the Region of Murcia proposed the reuse of the structures of the square for the construction of an Art Museum, a proposal commissioned to Amann-Canovas-Maruri (fig. 05). The proposal, dreamy and daring, takes advantage of the space between the rings to insert small exhibition rooms, adds an adjoining service building and, resting on the cylindrical walls, crosses several hollow bars with semicircular rooms overhanging the arena (fig. 06). The aim was to offer a singular and renewed image that would coexist with the old elements and activate the interior space, with a reading of the form that added a contemporary layer to the place (fig. 07). Above the arena, reusing the empty space inside, it was proposed to build an open-air auditorium with a capacity for 1,200 people, allowing the stage to be assembled and dismantled without affecting the historical remains and thus recovering the space as a meeting place.

**CONTEMPORARY ART
SPACE OF THE REGION
OF MURCIA / UNCOVERED
AUDITORIUM**

The arrival of the economic crisis brought the museum project to a standstill. The interior of the square had been emptied and the scaffolding to support the rings, designed to last about six months, had been in place for years.

The project was taken up again in 2018. A master plan¹⁴ was drawn up and a procedure in small phases was established, as the available budget was reduced, and the intervention was transformed into a light and integrated action with the existing structures. The project becomes a flexible process, where the structures are first consolidated while the archaeological remains are excavated, without deciding precisely on their future use (fig. 09).

The aim is to allow the site to be visited and its traces appreciated at the same time as the excavation, so that it can become a visitable archaeological site accompanied by a small museum to help with its interpretation.

CODA

The circle is a type of ellipse with two coincident centres. Both geometric shapes are unique and are disconnected from the continuity with the urban layout. Their specificity is a consequence of the conditioning factors of their interior

function, which in this case are to provide the best visibility towards the arena and to offer a space without corners. Whether it is an amphitheatre or a bullring, in both cases they are spaces for death and collective celebration, a place for gatherings, noise and noise, with a marked presence in the city, both as a social activity and as a singular building.

Its cylindrical volume is a unique condition, different, recognisable, but in need of activity. The future of the building depends on its structural consolidation, which will safely allow the excavation of its buried structures and the emergence of new uses and occupations. New layers of material and history will continue to be superimposed on this hillside in Cartagena.

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Notes

Management team of the intervention project in the Roman Amphitheatre of Cartagena.

Archaeological scientific

direction: José Miguel Noguera, M. Carmen Berrocal Caparrós and Francisco Fernández Matallana.

Restoration scientific

direction: Izaskun Martínez.

Architects: Atxu Amann, Andrés Cánovas, Nicolás Maruri.

Technical architect:

Antonio Pérez.

Structures: Mecanismo Ingeniería.

01. PÉREZ BALLESTER, José. BERROCAL CAPARRÓS, M. Carmen. FERNÁNDEZ MATALLANA, Francisco. "El anfiteatro de Cartagena. Fases, construcción y estructuras a la luz de las últimas excavaciones", *ACTAS, XVIII Congreso Internacional de Arqueología Clásica*. Vol. I, pp. 865.

02. *Ibid.* p. 868 "This new amphitheatre or second phase of the previous one has external measurements of 100 x 77m, which increase to 110 x 77 if we take into account the possible existence of an advanced body in the major axis, now lost. The measurements of the arena are the same as those of the first amphitheatre: 60 x 37.5 m".

03. "After Abdera comes Cartago Nova, the foundation of Asdrubal, the successor of Barka, the father of Hannibal, which is by far the strongest of the cities of this region. For it has a strong position and a well-built wall and is provided with harbours and a lagoon and the silver mines we have described. And there is also much salting there and in the neighbouring region. And it is the largest emporium for the goods that come from the sea destined for the inhabitants of the interior and for the products of the interior destined for all the foreigners". The quotation is from Strabo, 3,4,6: and is taken up: ABASCAL, Juan Manuel. "La fecha de la promoción colonial de Cartago Noua y sus repercusiones edilicias". Mastia, 1, 2002, p. 21.

04. All these buildings have been excavated and can be visited in Cartagena, within the archaeological park of the Cerro del Molinete. One of the largest

archaeological parks in Europe with 26.000 m².

05. See the various reports that exist on the excavations in the theatre: RAMALLO ASENSIO, Sebastián F.; BERROCAL CAPARRÓS, María del Carmen; LAIZ REVERTE, María Dolores (1996). "Report on the archaeological excavations carried out in the plots around the Casa-Palacio de la Condesa de Peralta (Roman Theatre of Cartagena). 1990 Campaign". *Memorias de Arqueología (Murcia)* (5): pp. 171-182.

06. According to the Chronicle 86 of Hydatius. "Vandali Balearicas insulas depraedantur. Quique Carthagine Spartaria euersa et Hispaniis depraedatis Mauretanium inuadunt". RAMALLO ASENSIO, S.F., RUIZ VALDERAS, E., MURCIA MUÑOZ, A.J., GUILLERMO MARTÍNEZ, M. "Aproximación a las fases de ocupación de Cartagena desde el registro arqueológico obtenido en las excavaciones del teatro romano: breve síntesis de su evolución urbana". *AnMurcia*, 29. Murcia, 2013, p. 35.

07. CASCALES PAGAN, Francisco. "Discurso de la Ciudad de Cartagena", Molino de la Rovella, Valencia, 16th century (1598).

08. PIQUERAS HABA, Juan. "Cartografía islámica de Sharq Al-Andalus. Al-Idrisi and the precursors". *Cuadernos de Geografía*, 86. Valencia, 2009, pp. 137-164.

09. ROS MCDONNELLA, Diego. MESTRE MARTÍ, María, DE ANDRÉS RODRÍGUEZ, Enrique. *Las fortificaciones militares del S. XVIII en Cartagena* Defensive Architecture of the Mediterranean. XV to XVIII centuries / Vol. II / Rodríguez-Navarro (Ed.) 2015 Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València p. 298.

10. "...in 1871 he began a series of campaigns... with more determination than archaeological knowledge... in search of the lost city." GARCÍA, Oscar. "Prologue to the Iliad" Alianza ed. Madrid. 2021. p. 32.

11. In Cartagena there are records of excavations as early as 1876 carried out by Francisco de Paula Oliver in the cathedral of Santa María

la Mayor where a tessellated opus signinum pavement dated to the Republican period was documented (Oliver, 1883); GÓMEZ MARTÍN, Javier (2023). La arquitectura doméstica en Carthago Nova (2nd century BC - 3rd century AD): síntesis de un problema arqueológico. Lucentium, Online First. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.14198/LVCENTVM.22123> p. 2.

12. Both buildings are currently part of the Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena being rehabilitated by the architect Martín Lejárraga.

13. Meeting of Experts held in December 2015, in Cartagena, with the participation of professors, archaeologists, architects and technicians from the public administration, together with the scientific team directing the excavations: José Pérez Ballester, M. Carmen Berrocal Caparrós, Francisco Fernández Matallana. The participants agreed that, while respecting the integrity of the Amphitheatre, the current structure of the ring walls and the façade of the Bullring can be preserved. ...The directors of the project expressed that they have always supported a public utility and a social reversion, for example, as an auditorium, since the complex is located in the centre of a university campus.

14. Master Plan for the Roman Amphitheatre of Cartagena. 2018, prepared by TEMPERATURAS EXTREMAS ARQUITECTOS. AMANN, Atxu. CÁNOVAS, Andrés. MARURI, Nicolás. MATALLANA, Francisco. ORTIZ, Diego.

Images

01. (corresponds to the image that opens the article). Plan of the amphitheatre in the mid-18th century. Drawing by P. Juan Talamanco.

02. Plan of Carthago Nova during the High Imperial period —Noguera Celdrán—.

03. Bullring and Antigones barracks in the background. Prior to the opening of Gisbert street. Decade of 1860.

04. Bullring, 2005.

05. Model of the proposal for MUCAM, 2008.

06. Interior view of the MUCAM from the steps, 2008.

07. Diagram of the layout of the Roman amphitheatre, the bullring and the MUCAM superimposed on each other.

08. Aerial view of the bullring and its urban surroundings.

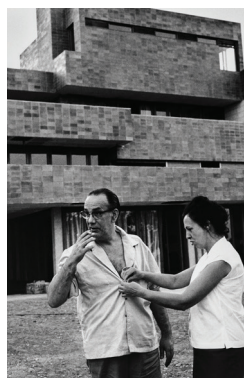
09. New structures within the consolidation and protection process.

15

Letters for a Home. The House of Camilo José Cela in Palma de Mallorca

Alberto Ruiz Colmenar
David García-Asenjo Llana

When studying a work of architecture it is important to take into account all aspects relating to its commission, design and construction. Furthermore, when both the architects and the client are major figures in the cultural scene of that period, as is the case here, analysis becomes increasingly important. Based on the original documentation of the project and the wealth of correspondence preserved in archives, this article aims to study not only the development of the project, but also the relationship between the architects and the client, as seen in the house which José Antonio Corrales and Ramón Vázquez Molezún designed for the writer Camilo José Cela in Palma de Mallorca.



"It was certainly not going to be just any old house. No pseudolocal styles, fictitious comforts or stupid luxuries. And definitely no Doric columns and marble in the entrance hallway; the house had to be a work tool".

In February 1954 Camilo José Cela decided to move to Mallorca, where he hoped to work without the distractions of social life seen in the literary circles in Madrid². From there, in 1958 he began to run the journal *Papeles de Son Armadans* —which aimed to emulate Ortega y Gasset's *Revista de Occidente*— as well as the publishing house Alfaguara, which had been set up recently with funding from the Huarte construction company. Cela had been living in a series of houses in Mallorca, which he gradually outgrew given the large quantity of objects and books he was amassing³. In addition, he was also missing a space suited to his work as writer and editor. He finally decided to build a house that would serve as this work tool, a quiet place where he could live, and above all, write.

(fig. 01) Through his friendship with Jesús Huarte he established contact with the architects who were to design the home, José Antonio Corrales and Ramón Vázquez Molezún. Huarte was to be in charge of the construction work and funding the operation. Ramón Vázquez Molezún and Jesús Huarte had met in Rome on a grant-funded stay at the Academia Española del Arquitecto, and their friendship had grown during shared holidays in Formentor. In

summer, Cela, who lived on the island year-round, visited the Huarte family, and when the writer brought up the idea of building a house in Mallorca, Molezún and Corrales were suggested for the project.

The painstaking care with which Camilo José Cela archived his correspondence has made it possible to outline the process of creation of the house. The letters exchanged with the architects, consulted in Iria Flavia through the Fundación Cela, reflect the writer's observations on the project, as well as the circumstances surrounding its construction. The programme proposed was complex. A single building had to accommodate the dwelling for Cela and his family—as well as servants' quarters and space for the chauffeur—, offices and storage space for the journal *Papeles de Son Armadans*. It also had to accommodate the writer's workspace, which was to house his formidable library. From these early communications it can be gathered that Cela was heavily involved in the decisions of the project (fig. 02).

The land, in the neighbourhood of La Bonanova, had the advantage of being located near the city, but was quiet enough to work in. The dwelling was to be located in a trapezoid-shaped plot and was accessed from the uppermost section. From this point, the land slopes steeply towards the sea in a southeast direction. The architects immediately came to their first decision: the house was to be organised in a series of staggered volumes with views of the coast. The 6-metre difference in altitude from the access to the lowest part of the plot resulted in these pieces becoming increasingly private as they descended, while preserving the views to the sea.

The architectural influences assimilated by Corrales and Molezún and their evolution over the years in which their career was consolidated after the success of their Pavilion for the Universal Expo in Brussels can be identified during the design process (fig. 03). Even in this early stage, early working documents conserved show a very specific approach to the problem. A grid with equilateral triangles with 1.80 m sides was superimposed on the topographical plan of the plot, taking advantage of the angle formed by the street side and the west boundary. This grid, which established the order for the initial explorations for the layout of the dwelling, is clearly inspired by the order strategy used in the project for the Spanish Pavilion in Brussels. A talk given by the architects in the College of Architects of Madrid explained this project:

"(the building had to) 'adapt to the perimeter of the land and to that of the wooded areas. This meant that the outer perimeter would be a jagged or curved line. The Pavilion therefore had to display elasticity in its floorplan. It was possible to work with the severe differences in level in the terrain by building the Pavilion horizontal on the ground, building upwards or moving large amounts of earth, or by adapting to its staggered levels. We chose the latter. The Pavilion's section had to display elasticity"⁴.

Obviously, the requirements for the project for Casa Cela were not the same. However, the need to adapt to a somewhat irregular plot with a steep slope explains the effort to implement the hexagonal grid which had provided such good results a few years earlier.

Early trials for the distribution of the dwelling showed that directly transposing this system was not a good choice. The rigid triangular grid in the small-scale project created oblique meeting points and long rooms which made it difficult to use and furnish the space. The initial distribution solutions for the house show the organisational difficulties caused by the grid, which made it necessary to establish the entrance to the house via a triangular courtyard and to add a vertical communication through stairs which affected the equilibrium of the connections between private and public areas. The rest of the dwelling followed the isometric layout in a somewhat artificial manner, which in turn meant that the rooms were aligned facing away from the sea views. This complex modular distribution worked better on the lower level, with spacious living and

dining areas open to the garden and the view of the sea which was not possible on the access level.

Its geometry thus became a constricted and corseted form which straddled the floorplan distribution for the project, sacrificing functional requirements and failing to achieve the sought-after flexibility which had been seen in Brussels. Although the solutions for an almost completely diaphanous Pavilion were clearly unlikely to be suited to resolving problems on a small domestic scale, this approach highlights how the desired elasticity was not so much dependent on the geometrical grid, but rather on its potential to adapt to specific needs. Successive proposals appearing in the documents for the project show that the architects considered this line of work a major challenge, one which was ultimately abandoned.

The following trial operations show how the rigid geometric scheme was progressively overcome. One of the proposals which, seemingly, made it no further than the architects' desk, is clearly reminiscent of the floorplan drawn up for the Dubarry house in Sotogrande, designed by José Antonio Corrales alone in 1965⁵. On this occasion, the plot was rectangular, and a diagonal was introduced to provide a south orientation, closing itself off from the access street and neighbouring buildings. In a project process which ran parallel to that followed in Casa Cela the final version of the dwelling took on this diagonal direction, while the floorplan became orthogonal.

This strategy, combining oblique direction and orthogonal organisation, eventually provided a solution for the project, as well as the elasticity sought. The diagonal direction in relation to the access street, aligned with the west boundary, was maintained, as was the organisation into platforms staggered in parallel to the natural irregular levels of the plot while most of the house is concentrated on the top floor.

The correspondence between Cela and José Antonio Corrales, who was in charge of the dialogue between the architects and writer, starts with a letter informing him that the documentation applying for the building permit had been submitted⁶. Molezún's archive still conserves the notes added by Cela to the plans and later transcribed in the letters he sent with commentaries (fig. 04). While we were pointing out the importance of being able to consult the correspondence between the writer and architects, being able to access the work documents through the *Legado Molezún*, archived in the College of Architects of Madrid, has provided essential data on the evolution of the project and the different options suggested before the definitive solution was finally adopted.

The definitive version of the project, established in 1961, still underwent several modifications throughout the construction work. These changes were brought about by a series of factors, as can be seen in the communications between the architects and owners. Cela constantly introduced modifications, initially prompted by the functional needs of the dwelling and the offices of the journal. In the letters sent in the early stages it was seen that Cela had ordered the construction of the house due to the pressing lack of space caused by his book collection, which grew incessantly. He requested a cupboard in each room in order to guarantee storage. He understood the need for fluid communication between the different uses found in the house and wanted the stairs and connecting vestibules to be in the most suitable position in order to ensure their correct operation. Furthermore, he took an interest in the materials that were to be used in the construction of the dwelling, expressing concern for the humid climate in Mallorca and any risks entailed for the contents of his library. Once the correct layout of the dwelling had been decided, the letters went on to address issues which could appear more secondary, such as the design of the shelves or the heating system. On these topics there were several changes of opinion due to the operation costs of the different options proposed by the architects. Cela's famous sarcastic tone appeared when criticising, with little fine irony, the cooling budget,

saying: “as long as there are tropical fans that one can use to cool down, I am not spending 900,000 pesetas or 200 litres of water on cooling. I have neither the money nor the water”⁷. On other occasions his suggestions were more unexpected, like the construction of a chicken coop, a kennel or a stable. His tendency to collect objects led him to consider how they would fit in his new home. Thus, a studded door was adapted to become a table top for the cellar, and it became necessary to find a space on the house exterior that would be suitable for a mural based on a drawing made for him by Pablo Picasso on a lighter.

The execution plans (**fig. 06**) already show the recurring elements of the strategy for the “open” project which José Antonio Corrales presented to Carmen Castro in *Arquitectura* journal.

“Casa Huarte was a “concentrated” house, while this one is open, with sea views: these are two completely different cases. The solution here has been to build three staggered terraces, so that everything looks onto the sea”⁸.

It is a compact volume, where the floorplan is defined by an orthogonal distribution aligned with the boundary, while the outdoor envelope is defined by the superimposition of horizontal layers. Thus, the house is divided into three blocks, one for each use, separated by communicating elements.

The spaces to be used for the journal were located in the most public area, beside the garage, and on this occasion directly connected to the access entrance. The main office and centre of the complex communicated with both the area allocated to the journal and with the private rooms of the dwelling. The living spaces in turn opened out to the plot and its views over two floors, the lower one of which was beside the garden designated for more private spaces.

The articulation of the different uses, dictated by the client’s needs, was brilliantly resolved and linked to the horizontal stratification of the dwelling. One of the main characteristics in the architecture of Corrales and Molezún is the relation established between the main floorplan of the building and the land. This plan can be manipulated to adapt to the topography, but also to establish the best conditions for the relationship between the building and its surroundings.

One of the main elements articulating the dwelling is the staircase providing access to the living area. This element is placed transversal to the dwelling, but following the incline of the plot, which means that, as the path descends, the garden space and views of the Mediterranean are revealed through a window open at the springing. This lower floor, beside the service quarters, houses the public area of the house, with a large room open to the garden on two sides. One of the sides incorporates a covered porch, offering protection from the sun and rain.

We previously mentioned the concept of elasticity highlighted by the architects in their conference about the Spanish Pavilion in Brussels at the College of Architects. We once again see this concept in the analysis of the solution provided for the section. The need to adapt a typically rationalist architectural work of compact volumes to a rugged topography harks back to a specific example and prototype, Villa Tugendhat by Mies van der Rohe (**fig. 07**). On the one hand, by treating the pieces as independent functional elements—a technical characteristic derived from the use of the waffle slab system—the resulting section adapts to the terrain, while on the other hand, the pieces are able to shift slightly in relation to others within the section. The envelope is thus organised into horizontal bands alternating solid surfaces and openings, like a large continuous window. This envelope is not flat and there are various depths of bands depending on the requirements of the programme. They can project, offering protection to openings, or be used as terraces, prolonging the inside of a room and providing shade.

This way of working by section is reflected on the outer

appearance of the building, establishing a correlation between several of the projects which the architects were working on at the time. The building for Laboratorios Profiden, the building for Selecciones de Reader’s Digest and Casa Cela all share a common starting strategy: the open distribution leads to elasticity in their section and a façade solution incorporating large independent pieces articulated through slight horizontal movements. This form of composition for sections also allows the elevations of the dwelling to be hierarchised following privacy criteria. It is possible to once again reference the example of Villa Tugendhat, as Casa Cela features two façades which were designed in opposition (**fig. 08**). The main façade, seen only from inside the plot, has openings onto the best views. These south-facing openings are protected with projecting roofs. The terraces have high walls so that there is an increase in the visual prominence of the solid sections, which seem to float over the terrain.

The façade onto the street has a different presence, almost in opposition. It is concealed from the outside, barely showing openings other than the different entrances to the dwelling and horizontal window strips on the upper sections of rooms. Like the side façades, it is clad in Marés stone, typical of the region. Gres cladding is limited to the cornice, both in the dwelling and garage annex, conferring it a degree of horizontality which is further emphasised by elongated openings. The cubic volume on the roof is also clad in gres, counterbalancing the horizontal nature of the complex while linking it to the terrain.

Inverting the importance of the elevations—the main elevation is at the back while the secondary one is accessed from the street—forced the architects to find the way to make the entrance to the dwelling disappear. This is done in two ways. On the one hand, the layout of the triangular access courtyard, flanked by the garage and the guard’s house, transforms it into an intermediate transition space and visually detracts from the entrance door. Furthermore, the access is not in a prominent space, and it is necessary to cross a shaded gallery leading visitors along the outside of the façade to a simple door. This idea is heightened by the decision not to draw this door on the elevations of the preliminary project, even adding a very rough drawing on the plans. In time, this way of accessing the dwelling became a device habitually used by Corrales and Molezún, who used it again in Casa Huarte.

Cela viewed the house as a work tool which would also be filled with books, works of art and objects that he collected. The same tiles which covered the façades were used as flooring. The concrete structure was left bare, with the coffers of the waffle slab system becoming a recognisable element in the appearance of the house. According to Pablo Olalquiaga, site supervision was the responsibility of Ramón Molezún, who was praised for his ability to use the materials best suited to each situation⁹. Cela complimented the appearance that this bare structure gave the dwelling by this bare structure in an article for *Arquitectura* journal, despite having suggested that these coffers be covered in his private correspondence¹⁰.

The truth is that in reality Casa Cela differed greatly from the idealised image which the writer himself had shown in public. His letters featured constant complaints about the scant attention he was receiving from the architects and their insufficient visits to the site (**fig. 09**).

The tone of the communications changed once the construction work process began. In contrast with the optimism of the letters exchanged during the design phase, the difficulties in the construction stage showed Cela’s desperation. The work suffered lengthy delays and Cela expressed concern on the issues which were hampering progress with the construction work. In his correspondence with Jesús Huarte he told the developer of the inconveniences caused by the Company in charge of carrying out the work, as well as its lack of foresight in guaranteeing the supply

of materials and machinery. The main delay was due to lateness in procuring the system of ceiling structures selected by the architects, which allowed the articulation of volumes in the dwelling. As this system was patented by the company Hipercesa there was a wait before they were manufactured. Cela was under the impression that the architects were rather careless in the attention paid to the progress of the work, as recorded in his letters. The lack of control in the work meant that certain construction details were not finished with the necessary care. The problems observed in the waterproofing were particularly serious, as several very valuable books from the library were ruined. This cannot be considered a secondary issue, as the brief project report specifically identified this as a priority. Several letters showed that this had caused strain in the relationship between the architects and Cela, who felt —from the outset— that poor execution had caused inconvenience (fig. 10). The constantly increasing number of books in the author's library outgrew the space planned in the project and as a result, what had originally been planned as a painting studio on the top floor was also transformed into a library. In addition, the installation of new shelves resulted in the calculated load for the structure being exceeded. This meant that the pillars required reinforcement, which also called for the addition of new supports¹¹.

This provides us with a dual perspective of the act of architecture. The disciplinary perspective places the project within a project-based practice and an architectural culture while another focus, based on experience, stems from how the client, who has commissioned and funded the work, experiences the built result.

Casa Cela had an almost immediate positive welcome, with mentions in the *Arquitectura* journal and in *Quaderns*¹². The architects were viewed as efficient professionals who carried out major jobs for the bourgeoisie and the wealthy, as well as working on the construction of social housing. Although the jobs they carried out were increasing in prominence, they did not give up on the constant evolution of their architectural language. However, critics began to observe the toll taken on their project methodology. The projects were seen as becoming further removed from the more experimental and radical proposals of the discipline. The nature of their work, which did not focus on the written element, seemed to move away from a line of work typical of a time when the intellectual facet of the discipline was becoming increasingly important.

Once this house was completed, Huarte Corrales and Molezún made sure they avoided this type of commission, which had caused them endless grief. In the correspondence between Cela and Jesús Huarte the latter pointed out that the company's management board had forbidden the construction and funding of single-family dwellings, which were usually taken on as personal favours¹³.

It is not unusual for the direct experience of the client to contradict the principles on which the architectural narrative is based. This is the case of this project, where a rich epistolary archive between architects and owner was generated. Thanks to the public importance of the owner, who painstakingly archived his correspondence, these communications have been available for study. These documents, which are a direct reflection of the gaze of these protagonists, allow us to analyse the process without interference from indirect references. They show us how history told through architectural publications establishes a biased account of the built product, tending towards the acritical mythification of the work of these master architects. While it is common to study the process of the project and the images of the finished work, shown through the filter of photographs carefully curated by the architects, we often fail to study how the intentions of the project and the functional reality of the building are interconnected.

Casa Cela, as this building is known, is a magnificent project. However, the owner perceived his home very differently. The fragments of epistolary communication presented here show an uncomfortable, yet necessary, facet. It is easy to imagine this

mundane version of the process for the project and construction of many of these works which live on —untouchable— in the imagery of architecture enthusiasts. This reality does not destroy our view of the projects, but it should help to put them into perspective. We also believe that the minor misfortunes which cannot be extricated from the work of the great architects of our history can help dispel myths about the study of their works, yet still enrich it. It is left to the criteria of the researchers analysing these architectural pieces to incorporate the inevitable personal context into their studies, although often this is not easy to find. In the complex process of architectural projects focusing on purely theoretical analysis can often be a tempting option. We should not need a "brutal, straightforward and headstrong" writer to remind us that houses must be "logical and habitable"¹⁴.

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Notes

01. CELA CONDE, C. J., *Cela, mi padre*. 2nd ed. Temas de Hoy, Madrid, 1989, p. 164.

02. SOTELO VÁZQUEZ, A., "Los papeles mallorquines de Camilo José Cela", in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 2006, 668, pp. 71-88.

03. FERRET, G. y GONZÁLEZ, F., "Las casas de Camilo en Mallorca", in *Cela en Mallorca*, Consell Insular de Mallorca, Palma de Mallorca, 1989.

04. "El Pabellón de España en la Exposición de Bruselas", in *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*, 1958, 198, p. 2.

05. MARTÍN DOMÍNGUEZ, N., "José Antonio Corrales en Sotogrande, Monte-hombre", in *Revista De Arquitectura*, 2020, vol. 25, n° 38, pp. 24-35.

06. Letter from Cela to José Antonio Corrales, dated 9th September 1961. Fundación Cela Archive.

07. Letter from Cela to José Antonio Corrales, dated 18th February 1963. Fundación Cela Archive.

08. CASTRO, C., "Los arquitectos critican su obra: entrevista a José Antonio Corrales y Ramón Vázquez Molezún". *Arquitectura*, 1971, 145, p. 27.

09. OLALQUIAGA P., *Casa Huarte: José Antonio Corrales y Ramón Vázquez Molezún. El concepto de lo experimental en el ámbito doméstico*, 2014. Doctoral Thesis: E.T.S. Arquitectura (UPM).

10. CELA, C.J., "Breve noticia de mi casa de Palma de Mallorca". In *Arquitectura*, 1966, 96, pp. 52-54.

11. "Neither Molezún nor Corrales had paid sufficient attention to my father's warnings, as someone who completely took over empty spaces. Before having even spent a year in the house the designated space for books had been filled, with shelves continuing to metastasise (...) One one of his visits, the architect Molezún —now a friend— wanted to go up to CJC's office to see the final results. Once he got up there, the blood drained from his face. The following day a crew of

builders lined the columns on the first floor in steel while new candles were fervorously lit in the church of La Bonanova." CELA CONDE, C. J. *Cela, mi padre*. Madrid: Temas de hoy, 2002. pp. 171-172.

12. "Casa Cela en Palma de Mallorca", in *Arquitectura*, 1966, 94, pp. 21-24 and "Casa para el escritor C. José Cela, Palma de Mallorca: arquitectos R. Vázquez Molezún, J. A. Corrales Gutiérrez", in *Quaderns d'arquitectura i urbanisme*, 1964, 58, pp. 14-18.

13. Letter from Jesús Huarte to Camilo José Cela, dated 26th August 1968. Fundación Cela Archive.

14. CELA, C.J., op.cit., p. 52.

Images

01. (corresponds to the image that opens the article)

Camilo José Cela and Rosario Conde in the house in La Bonanova neighbourhood in Mallorca (1966) Joana Biarnés (Photographic Social Vision).

02. Letter from Camilo

José Cela to José Antonio Corrales. 22nd September 1961. Fundación Pública Galega Camilo José Cela.

03. Sketch of preliminary

project. Fondo Ramón Vázquez Molezún. Fundación Arquitectura COAM.

04. First version of the execution project, with notes from Cela.

Fondo Ramón Vázquez Molezún. Fundación Arquitectura COAM.

05. Notes from Cela on a letter

to the architects dated 16th September 1961. Once typed up, they were sent by the writer on 21st September. Fundación Pública Galega Camilo José Cela.

06. Floorplans from the

execution project. Fondo Ramón Vázquez Molezún. Fundación Arquitectura COAM.

07. Villa Tugendhat section.

Casa Cela section. Fondo Ramón Vázquez Molezún. Fundación Arquitectura COAM.

08. Elevations of the execution

project. Fondo Ramón Vázquez Molezún. Fundación Arquitectura COAM.

09. Letter from Cela to José

Antonio Corrales (13th October 1962 and visit by Cela to the work on the dwelling (no known date). Fundación Pública Galega Camilo José Cela.

10. Letter from Camilo José Cela

to the architects. 18th February 1967. Fundación Pública Galega Camilo José Cela.

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Aguas inciertas: más allá de un sublime metropolitano

Michael Stanton

La desaparición de las Torres Gemelas infló grotescamente lo sublime. La inclusión de Edmund Burke del miedo y el temor como elementos estéticos ha llegado a dominar los cánones de la representación, pero el efecto extremo del 11-S hizo del concepto algo intolerable, mientras que la arquitectura posterior parece haber reaccionado con la proliferación de contorsiones extremas, y a menudo inquietantes, voladizos vertiginosos y perfiles desequilibrados. Representando las maquinaciones del milenio anterior, tras su extirpación estos monolitos mínimos se convirtieron en los auspicios más potentes para el siguiente. Antes de caer, eran extraordinariamente puras formalmente al mismo tiempo que provocaban la ira sectaria hacia las instituciones que representaban: Nueva York, Estados Unidos y el comercio multinacional. La improbable historia de la desaparición violenta de sus edificios contagió también a su diseñador. El colapso los convirtió en verdaderos monumentos, en el sentido fúnebre de la palabra, profundamente significativos mientras el mundo deriva hacia la distopía, favoreciendo a la plutocracia y destilando sentimientos malignos en muchas culturas.



La fascinación que siempre ha despertado en la gente la destrucción de una ciudad puede ser en parte una expresión de satisfacción por la destrucción del emblema de un conflicto irresoluble.

Burton Pike, "The City as Image," *The Image of the City in Modern Literature*¹

Quizá la mayor contribución de la ciudad industrial fue la reacción que produjo contra sus mayores delitos; ...

Lewis Mumford, "The Counter-Attack", *The City in History Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects*²

Caminaba hacia el norte por la ciudad de los escaparates brillantes, la ciudad de los alfabetos enrevesados, la ciudad de los letreros dorados. John Dos Passos, "Skyscraper", *Manhattan Transfer*³

INATURA MORTEI

La vida sólo promete una certeza. Al igual que los soldados y los artistas cuyo breve paso adquiere importancia a título póstumo, los edificios pueden vivir significativamente como ausencia palpable después de que su uso o, a veces, su materialidad haya desaparecido.

En 1925, Dos Passos veía una ciudad de alfabetos oscuros; de significados confusos y expresiones entrecortadas; afasia, coprolalia, síndrome de Tourette, disfemia. "Letreros dorados"

refractan una culpa impenitentemente negada. Medio siglo después, las Torres Gemelas, más enfáticas en la cacofonía, formaban un entrecomillado fraternal, un 11 que se elevaba hacia lo imposible. Al carecer de una semántica evidente, abiertas por tanto a una interpretación maleable, permanecían en un silencio rotundo. Esta pareja comercial confundía inevitablemente la totalidad, desplazando la simple certeza fálica del rascacielos convencional, resistiéndose al cierre. Formalmente mínimas, conformaban un texto enrevesado, como la obra de Donald Judd, maestro de la reticencia y la repetición. La orientación oblicua de los ejes de este diapason sesgado daba una nota discordante de fuerza, resonando con atronadora autoridad, el código perfecto para el poderío anónimo del comercio transnacional, al estilo estadounidense. Formaban una valla publicitaria de las promesas neoliberales de "libre mercado", artificio destinado a aumentar la desigualdad económica. Como mecanismos metropolitanos, las torres delineaban el capitalismo tardío. Vívido e imperioso objetivo para antagonistas diversos, reificaban la omnipotencia sin rostro de multinacionales cada vez más impermeables e invertidas en una expansión maniaca, al tiempo que se declaraban inocentes respecto a las redes internas e independientes, los holdings autónomos y la suscripción militar de las políticas.

Enormes incluso en la ciudad más alta del mundo, antes del 11-S el perfil de las torres proyectaba la imagen de la metrópoli encarnada. Extraordinariamente puras formalmente, antes de su destrucción las torres provocaban la ira sectaria hacia las instituciones que representaban: Nueva York, Estados Unidos y el comercio multinacional. Siempre políticas, se inflaron ideológicamente de forma grotesca en el momento en que desaparecieron. Su presencia bulliciosamente taciturna fue sustituida cuando las gemelas se fundieron finalmente como insignificante polvo y escombros. De repente eran exponencialmente más representativas, sobrecargadas por su negación. El cráter embrujado por los espectros que las habían ocupado, apropiadamente llamado Cero, las superó. Representando las maquinaciones del milenio anterior, en su caída, estos monolitos neutrales se convirtieron en potentes auspicios para el siguiente.

Manhattan desde el piso 110 del World Trade Center. Bajo la bruma agitada por los vientos, la isla urbana, un mar en medio del mar... En este escenario de hormigón, acero y cristal, recortado entre dos océanos (el Atlántico y el Americano) por una masa de agua gélida, las letras más altas del mundo componen una gigantesca retórica del exceso tanto en el gasto como en la producción.

Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the city", *The Practice of Everyday Life*⁴

De Certeau leía la metrópolis dorada desde lo alto de las torres. Siguiendo a Dos Passos, sus dos "letras más altas" inscriben un "alfabeto" económico y político resentido por la mayor parte del planeta. Agitada por los restos movedizos de poblaciones nómadas, América es una extensión precaria de aguas turbulentas e inciertas, asolada por tornados y huracanes, e igualmente por la ideología y la ambición. Como un faro, a los pies de las torres se agitaban las corrientes de la empresa estadounidense, consumiendo innumerables iniciativas fallidas, los sueños rotos decretados por el efecto paralizante/embrutecedor de la plutocracia.

Su arrogancia fue percibida por una comunidad global que, como era de prever, se sentía perjudicada por el intenso comercio mundial. Si una torre hubiera caído al ser atacada en 1993, la otra habría permanecido como un holding extranjero dispuesto a continuar el comercio, incluso a emigrar de una nación de importancia decreciente, o de control creciente, a otra. La hidra multicéfala multinacional es, en efecto, resistente. Su emblema biocefalo no lo era, jo como tampoco lo eran las miles de vidas que se llevó por delante! Por último, no fue su forma sino su marca lo que atrajo a los atacantes en más de una ocasión. En el 93, el trágico minué de la arrogancia, la impotencia y el terror se representó en

el campo semántico que es la ciudad estadounidense. El intento de derribar una de las dos torres y hacerla caer sobre Wall Street apuntó al corazón comercial de la nación, pasando así de la analogía al acto y ajustando el orden mundial hacia la distopía, favoreciendo la riqueza y destilando sentimientos malignos en muchas culturas. Aparentemente realizado por fundamentalistas, este asalto, semántico y físico, fue un vívido golpe contra lo que consideraban excesos impíos del imperialismo mercantil armado y el globalismo sin rostro, en última instancia tan inútil como golpear el propio "océano" estadounidense. La extirpación en 2001 los convirtió en verdaderos monumentos en el sentido mortal original.

La negación en la abundancia puede leerse como el efecto de anulación que es posible cuando uno se enfrenta a más de lo que es comprensible, a lo que adormece la mente, a más de lo que uno puede soportar. Renée Green, "Survival: Ruminations on Archival Lacunae", *Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*⁵

Diana Agrest ve la brecha enmarcada por las dos torres como una puerta, a escala urbana, a Manhattan⁶. El significado clásico de las columnas pareadas que anuncian la entrada a escala tanto doméstica como urbana es arquetípico; como en Venecia, donde las columnas romanas monolíticas de la *Piazzetta* marcan la entrada a la *Piazza*, o a otra escala, los *campanili* de San Giorgio y San Marco dirigen los barcos que llegaban al almacén de la Dogana, donde se realizaban los trámites aduaneros necesarios. En San Luis, las torres se elevan parabólicamente para unirse como el Arco de la Puerta, un componente del Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, que conduce al infinito territorio comprado a Napoleón en 1803 duplicando el tamaño de una nación codiciosa.

Nueva York es una ciudad de monumentos como no creía que pudiera existir.

Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*⁷

...objetos enormes que imitan una danza abstracta y sublimada de contradicciones".

Manfredo Tafuri, "The Crisis of Utopia: Le Corbusier at Algiers", *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*⁸

ELOGIOS AL EJE Z Y A SUS PIONEROS

El término monumento es conmemorativo, abiertamente fúnebre. Si bien su raíz latina remite a la memoria, su subtexto recuerda la ausencia, la tumba o el sepulcro. Acumulado durante milenios en el Viejo Mundo. Tal hermenéutica fue inicialmente ignorada por el WTC. En el Nuevo Mundo, escenario de la inmortalidad imaginada, al igual que otros rascacielos, estos particulares monolitos se deleitaban con la permanencia. Inicialmente emblemáticos de la megalópolis, eran postes de meta mudos que invitaban a la ambición al tiempo que manifestaban emociones extremas y diversas entre comunidades nacionales y extranjeras para las que bastaban las explicaciones dogmáticas entre las que se filtraba el resentimiento. Como claves, enmascaraban el oportunismo a la vez que participaban en el final de la arquitectura modernista. El intento de formalidad abstracta de los diseñadores cayó con estos edificios, desafiando todas las lecturas disponibles, neutralizando cualquier sentido, como los sonidos, las explosiones por ejemplo, que se amplifican tanto que la audición falla. Como los mártires, pero a diferencia de la mayoría de los edificios, son más "reales" en la muerte dada su falsa ambivalencia cuando están vivos. Declarando objetividad, de repente se volvieron enfáticamente figurativos. El 11-S materializó todas las contradicciones que habían representado regias desde el 73, autorizando el aventurerismo económico como una cruzada farisaica contra *el otro*, fomentando los conflictos tribales y sectarios para consolidar nuevos mercados. En ausencia siguen siendo dolorosamente tangibles. La herida que dejaron se unió a las ruinas horriblemente dolorosas de Guernica, Hamburgo, Tokio y Nagasaki,

vastos campos de escombros, de madera carbonizada, piedra rota y vidas imperiosamente arrebatadas, provocando la aflicción incalculable de los supervivientes.

George W. Bush y Osama bin Laden, dos hijos del privilegio petrolero de mediados de siglo, se enzarzaron en una muda y mortal lucha simétrica en la que se erigieron en actores principales... Esta competición se escenificó como un trágico acertijo de conflictos y fallas fatales. Los personajes parecían llevar a cabo represalias involuntariamente programadas y consolidaciones autoprotectoras. Sin embargo, de dentro de este círculo perfecto de autorreflexividad surgían los más convincentes gritos de inocencia.

Keller Easterling, "Subtraction", *Enduring innocence: global architecture and its political masquerades*⁹

Tras el 11-S, la simpatía inicial de los europeos se agrió rápidamente debido a la reacción belicosa e islamófoba de Estados Unidos y a la retórica fanfarrona de un presidente al que, a los pocos días, los franceses empezaron a llamar *Roi Georges*. "Vivos o muertos" y "sáquenlos de sus agujeros", posturas de vaquero machista de este pijo de Connecticut/Texas recordaban el genocidio romántico de las poblaciones indígenas estadounidenses. Oriente se inundó de reacciones intensas. La euforia y cierta simpatía se vieron inmediatamente desbordadas por el miedo a las represalias asimétricas, que era la respuesta previsible de Estados Unidos, y la macabra fascinación por la indignación sin autocritica, la santurronería vengativa y la xenofobia, haciendo inevitable que el excepcionalismo occidental tuviera un efecto devastador en una región asustada, con cicatrices terminales, cuya población, que había soportado repetidamente horribles masacres de inocentes que conmocionaron al Norte Global, sabía que volvería a verse sometida a la repetición exponencial de la carnicería estadounidense¹⁰.

... si el dolor no se lleva a la violencia, y el terror no se refiere a la destrucción presente de la persona, en tanto que estas emociones limpian las partes, ya sean finas o gruesas, de un estorbo peligroso y molesto, son capaces de producir deleite; no placer, sino una especie de horror delicioso, una especie de tranquilidad teñida de terror; que, como pertenece a la autoconservación, es una de las más fuertes de todas las pasiones. Su objeto es lo sublime. Su grado más alto lo llamo asombro; los grados subordinados son temor, reverencia y respeto, los cuales, por la misma etimología de estas palabras, muestran de qué fuente se derivan y cómo se distinguen del placer positivo.
Edmund Burke, "Of the Sublime" & "Exercise Necessary for the Finer Organs," 1757, en *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the SUBLIME and BEAUTIFUL*¹¹

LA ARQUITECTURA RESPONDE

La afirmación retroactiva de lo sublime durante la Ilustración, la integración del asombro en los vocabularios artísticos, institucionalizó el papel activo que desempeña el miedo en los cánones de representación. En las artes, ha superado por completo "el placer positivo" de la belleza y lo pintoresco. Tal y como lo conocieron Burke y los artistas anteriores y posteriores, lo sublime se encarnaba en una "naturaleza" sobrecogedora (tormentas montañosas, erupciones, barcos consumidos por el hielo o las olas, ríos impasiblemente violentos, estragos silvestres en general) que infundía un pavor excitante. En la actualidad, lo sublime es el medio dominante del arte consagrado en el Romanticismo, el Expresionismo y la Modernidad, reificado en diversos matices de la instalación, la performance y el cine.

Del mismo modo que Frederick Law Olmsted tomó como modelo para el diseño de parques el arte de paisajistas como Claude Lorrain a la hora de evocar un interior de las Américas aún virgen, los arquitectos medio siglo posteriores a él, Raymond Hood, Cass Gilbert y Harvey Wiley Corbett entre otros muchos, vencieron a la "naturaleza" en su propio juego estructurando en Manhattan un impresionante paisaje montañoso que emulaba las Montañas de Adirondack al norte del estado. En la escalada de

construcción de torres en Manhattan, la emulación de esos perfiles escarpados y su consumada sublimidad se trasladó al agitado contexto de la ciudad industrial. A medida que el río se alejaba del mar, esta sublimidad metropolitana agrupaba picos aún más espectaculares que los que había registrado la Escuela del Río Hudson de mediados del siglo XIX, cuya obra encarnaba tanto la armonía pastoral fisiocrática prometida por Jefferson como la fuerza dinámica implícita en la economía hamiltoniana. Las escenas industriales —barcos de vapor, ferrocarriles y fábricas— se yuxtaponían a menudo a los paisajes bucólicos de la nación benévolamente autoproclamada "virgen". El frenético mecanismo cautivó la imaginación estadounidense. Capturando la excitación ansiosa y oscura del renacimiento industrial de principios del siglo XX, la Escuela Ashcan representó una visión humeante de la ciudad musculosa a medida que alcanzaba su plenitud y empezaba a denotar un imperio americano en expansión. El atractivo de tales imágenes se vio agravado por la colisión de la densa necesidad tecnológica con el sublimado delirio casi sagrado de la Revolución Industrial victoriana. El deseo de grandeza pictórica eclipsó la necesidad de luz y aire que fue la razón ostensible de las leyes de retanqueo de 1916, ya que codificaban el deseo de que los edificios altos fueran pináculos. A menudo, lo que pueden parecer estatutos pragmáticos, también expresan anhelos figurativos¹². Por ejemplo, el cambio legislativo de posguerra de los retanqueos a torres prismáticas lisas asentadas sobre plazas retanqueadas, como el WTC, formalizó el cambio de apetito arquitectónico entre el naturalismo decó y la pureza miesiana.

El caos sustituye al tejido conectivo.

Los edificios en llamas son los símbolos de esta comunidad: sus arcos de triunfo invertidos, sus siniestros Taj Mahal (sic). Los edificios en llamas desempeñan ahora un papel simbólico equivalente. La gente puede construir con estilos diferentes, pero las explosiones son universales.

Aunque cada una de ellas tenga una causa diferente, nuestra percepción las vincula a un terrible gran diseño.

Herbert Muschamp, "Things Generally Wrong in the Universe", en Peter Lang ed. *Mortal City*¹³

La reacción de Muschamp al atentado del 93 resultó clarividente el 11-S, cuando lo sublime se infló hasta alcanzar proporciones letales. Los acontecimientos de aquel día recordaron a la multitud el peso fatal de los edificios y su impresionante potencial para perturbar y matar. El potencial de catástrofe afectó al diseño arquitectónico, fomentando contorsiones extremas y a menudo inquietantes, voladizos vertiginosos y perfiles desequilibrados en la década posterior. La amenaza se convirtió en un tópico. Abundaron las estructuras colgantes, inclinadas, desportilladas, agrietadas y partidas, los *tours de force* de la ingeniería. El inmenso y flotante CaixaForum de Madrid, con su ingravidez imposible; el ICA de Boston, que apila clichés concurrentes, voladizos vertiginosos y plantas contorsionadas; la Torre Mare Nostrum del Edificio Gas Natural de Barcelona; la torre CCTV de Pekín, otra puerta ciclópica: estas extravagancias arquitectónicas supersublimas proliferaron.

La arquitectura moderna murió en St. Louis, Missouri, el 15 de julio de 1972 a las 3:32 p.m. (o por ahí) cuando el infame esquema Pruitt-Igoe, o más bien varios de sus bloques de losas, recibieron el golpe de gracia final con dinamita. Anteriormente había sido vandalizado, mutilado y desfigurado por sus habitantes negros, y aunque se inyectaron millones de dólares para intentar mantenerlo con vida, finalmente se puso fin a su miseria. Boom, boom, boom... Otro factor: fue diseñado en un lenguaje purista en desacuerdo con los códigos arquitectónicos de los habitantes". Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post Modern Architecture*¹⁴

El caos provocado por la agitación política, la movilidad, la explosión demográfica y por el tremendo impacto de la máquina exige... un entorno sereno.

Minoru Yamasaki, *Architects on Architecture*¹⁵

UNA CARRERA PLAGADA DE CATÁSTROFES

Yamasaki fue el diseñador de dos de los complejos de edificios más notorios de la época moderna, ambos conocidos más por sus violentos finales registrados que por sus cortas vidas. Irónicamente, el primero fue detonado el mismo año en que se construyó el otro. La sustitución volumétrica estaba impregnada de una macabra inevitabilidad. Tras su formación, se unió a los diseñadores del Empire State Building⁶⁵. Poco después fue alcanzado por un bombardero B-25. Un año después, otro avión militar impactó contra la torre 40 Wall, diseñada por el mismo despacho. Trasladado a Detroit en 1949, Yamasaki fundó la empresa que procedió a salpicar el paisaje urbano internacional con enormes objetos lisos, muchos de ellos torres. Su primer encargo importante, muy alabado en sus inicios, fue el infame complejo de viviendas públicas Pruitt-Igoe de San Luis, terminado en 1955. Menos de 20 años después, el proyecto fue dinamitado, proclamado símbolo del fracaso del propio Modernismo. Su descarnado funcionalismo fue acusado junto al carácter y, extraordinariamente, el gusto de sus residentes afroamericanos. En 1956, su empresa terminó el U.S. Military Personnel Records Center, cerca de St. Louis. Este coloso de hormigón y aluminio era uno de los veinte edificios más grandes del mundo. Durante los turbulentos años 60 se convirtió en símbolo del servicio militar obligatorio y de la guerra de Vietnam. A principios de los años 70 se prendieron más de una docena de pequeños fuegos en el edificio en un intento de negar la dolorosa historia y el papel actual que representaba. El fin de semana en que terminó oficialmente el servicio militar obligatorio, en 1973, un incendio arrasó el edificio y ardió durante dos días. Casi el 80% de los archivos de 1912 a 1960 quedaron destruidos. Ese año Yamasaki and Associates terminaron lo que se convirtió, en 2001, en la estructura más rotunda de los últimos tiempos. La historia del 11-S se cuenta con elocuencia y con frecuencia a pesar de que hubo gente perdió su trabajo por contemplar siquiera sus causas. "Nos odian porque somos libres", era la única explicación aceptable. En 1999, el grupo separatista vasco ETA vio frustrado su intento de volar la Torre Picasso de Madrid, también diseñada por Yamasaki. La torre, el edificio más alto de España, se terminó de construir en 1988, dos años después de la muerte de su diseñador. Compartía la elegante neutralidad de las Torres Gemelas. ETA acumuló 2.000 kilos de explosivo de gran potencia, una bomba mayor que la que destruyó el edificio Murrah de Oklahoma City unos años antes, pero la Guardia Civil interceptó las dos furgonetas que transportaban la bomba.

Todos monumentos. ¿Extraña coincidencia? ¿Supernaturalmente desafortunados? Su escala y su lenguaje minimalista parecen imbuir una semántica que llevó a los extremistas —reaccionarios posmodernos, radicales anti-Vietnam, fundamentalistas o separatistas— a identificar los edificios como objetivos sinécdoques. Como cenotafios siguen siendo singularmente infames, no por su presencia, sino por la extrema animadversión manifestada en su destrucción real o prevista, racista en el caso de Pruitt-Igoe, identificado displicentemente como un fracaso por el desacreditado panegírico de Charles Jencks sobre el Modernismo. La antipatía nacional y extranjera hacia la arrogancia destructiva y el imperialismo económico de Estados Unidos condenaron al gigantesco almacén militar y a las igualmente grandilocuentes torres gemelas.

Estos edificios eran el producto de la euforia sobre la sociedad, sobre la capacidad infinita de las técnicas de construcción, sobre el ciclo económico, sobre la capacidad del arte del diseño arquitectónico, sobre el hombre y su dominio sobre el mundo que habita... nos vimos arrastrados a una carrera por la altura y la declaración dramática de la que las Torres Gemelas de Nueva York son un ejemplo estelar... ricas, exóticas en su forma y empáticamente, incluso violentamente declarativas del gobierno centralizado.

Phoebe Stanton, "Architectural Dinosaurs: The end of a new age of 'dinosaurs', *The Baltimore Sun*"⁷

La palabra 'fuerte' en este contexto parece connotar 'poderoso', es decir, cada edificio debería ser un monumento a la virilidad de nuestra sociedad... Hay otro aspecto mucho menos deseable de este esfuerzo hacia la monumentalidad... El resultado de este pensamiento termina inevitablemente en la crudeza, hasta el punto de la brutalidad... Estos nunca pueden ser apropiados para una sociedad democrática; son mucho más adecuados como imagen de los principios totalitarios que aborrecemos... El World Trade Center debería, debido a su importancia, convertirse en una representación viva de la creencia del hombre en la humanidad... y a través de esta cooperación su capacidad para encontrar la grandeza.

Minoru Yamasaki, *Architects on Architecture*¹⁸

...en esta lucha por el poder del saber, por el poder a través del saber, por el monopolio de la violencia simbólica legítima...

Pierre Bourdieu, "Symbolic Power and the Political Field", en *Language and Symbolic Power*¹⁹

Manfredo Tafuri se refiere a lo sublime como "la idea del poder, de dominación"²⁰. Inequívocamente políticos, los monumentos y conjuntos urbanos manifiestan una voluntad potente, anónima y despreocupada. Puede que la hegemonía sea su materia más firme. Revisando en particular el WTC tras su finalización a mediados de los años 70, Stanton identificó elementos simbólicos y materiales que, en efecto, podían proyectar una envergadura capaz, en consecuencia, de provocar. La elegante simplicidad y la escala masiva vinculan los proyectos de Yamasaki, desde las notorias destrucciones en EE.UU. hasta el intento de atentado en España. Estos elegantes símbolos que Yamasaki imaginaba representaban el igualitarismo y las normas democráticas humanas, desplegaban significantes inconcebibles para este *Nisei* que estuvo a punto de ser alistado durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, pero que avanzó profesionalmente en los años posteriores en una alabada versión del Sueño Americano. Como una imagen especular, la autoevaluación del arquitecto es antitética a su obra. La disparidad entre el ideal y la realización de sus proyectos no hace sino trazar la trayectoria polarizada de la propia nación, lejos de la "cooperación" y hacia la exacerbación de la violencia, tanto "simbólica" como horriblemente real. Los edificios eran "fuertes", hasta el punto de la coacción. En la mente de sus atacantes y de gran parte del mundo, los "principios" económicos que representaban parecen estar lejos de ser "democráticos", para ser simplemente el último nivel del control "totalitario". Al morir, las gemelas se convirtieron irónicamente en "una representación viviente", aunque el resentimiento recalcitrante hacia el dominio explotador, hacia lo exactamente opuesto a la "grandeza", acusó insistentemente tanto a los asaltantes como a las instituciones que creían estar atacando metonímicamente. Su destrucción produjo terror más allá de lo sublime... pero poca introspección. Las represalias sembraron más caos y dolor en una "humanidad" trágicamente vulnerable con la seguridad como excusa para maquinaciones draconianas. Las represalias imprecisas y voluntariamente inmerecidas a escala mundial también apalancaron el aventurerismo financiero, en particular el control de los recursos: petróleo, minerales y mercados. Sin embargo, estos signos arquitectónicos y su liquidación políticamente cargada señalan el camino hacia un futuro aterrador. La excusa de viejas atrocidades para justificar otras nuevas parece más que habitual y no exclusiva de la región de la que proceden los perpetradores. El fotograma final de *Munich*²¹, de Steven Spielberg, estrenada cinco años después de 2001, se centra en las torres, vistas desde Long Island City. El ciclo de violencia que comenzó en Oriente hace un siglo y que sirvió de excusa para la masacre olímpica en Alemania y el posterior asesinato de palestinos no implicados culminado en 2001 queda así retratado a un nivel que parece perpetuo.

En la medida en que hay rastros de violencia y muerte, negatividad y agresividad en la práctica social, la obra monumental los borra y los sustituye por un poder y una certeza tranquilos que pueden abarcar la violencia y el terror.

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*²²

Es norma en la vida estadounidense que el comercio empequeñezca a la conmemoración... Mammon y la memoria entraron en guerra en la Zona Cero y, pequeña sorpresa, Mammon ganó: ... Adam Gopnik, "Stones and Bones: Visiting the 9/11 memorial and museum", *The New Yorker*, Julio 7 & 14, 2014²³

VANITAS

Instaladas en marzo de 2002, las luces se elevaban desde la Zona Cero en un conmovedor monumento temporal a las torres caídas. Esta extraordinaria evocación tanto de la ausencia como de la ascensión ha sido lamentablemente

sustituida ahora por sus huellas, perpetuamente enrojecidas, la nueva e insignificante torre que sólo alcanza sus declarados 1.776 metros añadiendo una antena como los primeros televisores, el trillado centro de tránsito de 4.000 millones de dólares, estéril a pesar de su intento de pirotecnia y su extravagante precio, y el igualmente predecible museo. Todos ellos pretenden evocar el recuerdo mientras que, como un ático de moda en un folleto inmobiliario de lujo, en realidad reflejan la descarada economía y las actitudes lujosas del cercano Wall Street y de un Manhattan cada vez más plutocrático.

Explotar para cualquier fin la erradicación de las torres y sus ocupantes es censurable, pero el sector inmobiliario, las finanzas, los mismos fenómenos para cuyo servicio fueron bautizadas las Torres Gemelas, han explotado la Zona Cero en un ciclo previsible de tópicos y especulación. Más allá de la destrucción y las muertes que se produjeron el 11-S, la tragedia hizo metástasis otorgando ventajas posteriores a las políticas neoconservadoras de las que se benefició sin escrúpulos el nuevo régimen en nombre de los acontecimientos de aquel día, intimidando a la población estadounidense, silenciando cualquier debate crítico sobre sus complejas causas, mediante protocolos represivos que aprovecharon el clima político/económico a escala local y mundial. El consiguiente golpe de estado de unos pocos sobre la mayoría parece ahora cada vez más arraigado. Las imágenes verdaderamente horribles de destrucción y muerte persiguen el presente y no pueden borrarse. Una generación ha quedado marcada, empobrecida emocional y a menudo fiscalmente por aquel día y por lo que vino después.

Casi todas las películas ambientadas en Nueva York utilizaron las torres como localizador. La búsqueda de un sustituto lúcido ha sido relativamente infructuosa, ya que los marcadores contextuales se basan en vistas genéricas de Manhattan que casi podrían ser São Paulo, Shanghai, Chicago. Duplicados y, por tanto, siempre equívocos, el anonimato de los monolitos entraba en contradicción directa con la cornucopia de torres de antes de la guerra que anticipa Dos Passos. Estos edificios arcaicos, Woolworth, Equitable, Rockefeller, Chrysler, Empire State, flamantes escenarios de la danza macabra de los magnates y la hegemonía, ya no son suficientes. Considerados inadecuados como talismán instantáneo de la aglomeración moderna y sus tenebrosas maquinaciones internas, se marcan a sí mismos, suscitando un reconocimiento único, que no es el de la fuerza universal de la metrópolis del siglo XXI. Autoengrandecidos y estentóreos, dicen "Nueva York" sólo después de "yo", como tonos de llamada específicos extraídos de canciones pop en lugar de un timbre de teléfono genérico. Las imágenes de la ciudad afirman ahora el anonimato de la plutocracia contemporánea manifestada en una ascendente horda dorada de nuevos ricos internacionales.

Esta unión entre el yo y el objeto (no estamos lejos de la "sensación oceánica" del bebé, pero en adelante remodelada y redescubierta...) Julia Kristeva, "The Adolescent Is a Believer," citando Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*²⁴

El mar es la materia de los relatos épicos, la madre y la femme fatal, el escenario de los heroicos historiadores de los sistemas mundiales o el disolvente capaz de disolver las lógicas terrestres... Al igual que las costas, estas zonas de intolerancia entre mundos sostienen y son sostenidas por

la piratería del error, o las contiendas de la democracia. Como interfaz entre mundos, forman un páramo perpetuo de superficie ilimitada, siempre recién acuñada y a menudo subexplorada. Por muy agitados que sean, estos mares también son espaciosos, en los que se mezclan diferentes aguas y diferentes constituciones políticas.

Keller Easterling, "Contemplation: Seas", *Enduring innocence: global architecture and its political masquerades*²⁵

Vistos desde su base a finales de verano, su tamaño, la forma en que los resplandecientes pilones se inclinaban retorciéndose unos hacia otros en diagonal en perspectiva, los numerosos y esbeltos pilares de aluminio que se ensanchaban incongruentemente en la parte inferior en arcos góticos donde la estructura abogaba por lo contrario, la pura claridad colosal -minimalista, geométrica, suave, intratable-, la serenidad prometida por Yamasaki mezclada con una sublime inquietud rayana en el vértigo. Pasando de Judd a Eva Hesse, dos semanas después eran un desastre postminimalista, habiendo esparcido papel como confeti diabólico, enturbiando el cielo puro de septiembre y volviendo tóxico el bajo Manhattan con polvo sepulcral gris. El mortífero polvo orgánico/mineral obligó a la consiguiente retribución brutal y a la piratería del mercado. El mar oscuro se cierra sobre toda empresa, venal y humana, mientras sus aguas permanecen turbias y continuamente más turbulentas.

El rascacielos que finalmente, mediante un acto de extrema violencia, consigue purificar, al tiempo que restaura su propio poder de expresión, el lugar del asesinato colectivo: la metrópolis...

Manfredo Tafuri, "The New Babylon: The 'Yellow Giants' and the Myth of Americanism (Expressionism, Jazz Style, Skyscrapers, 1913 - 1930)", *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*²⁶

Cuando se examina con atención esta realidad fugaz y permanente, se tiene la impresión de explorar el lado nocturno de las sociedades, una noche más larga que su día, un mar oscuro del que emergen sucesivas instituciones, una inmensidad marítima en la que las estructuras socioeconómicas y políticas aparecen como islas efímeras.

Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*²⁷

Los viajes, esos cofres mágicos llenos de promesas oníricas, ya no volverán a entregar sus tesoros impolutos. Una civilización proliferante y sobreexcitada ha roto definitivamente el silencio de los mares.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Quest for Power", en Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trad. John and Doreen Weighman²⁸

Michael Stanton

La obra de Michael Stanton ha sido galardonada en cuatro ocasiones por la ACSA, y reconocida por el Young Architect's Award de la Architectural League de Nueva York, el Premio Steedman Bienal y seleccionada para los premios Progressive Architecture, además de premiada varios concursos de arquitectura. Ganó una beca en Arquitectura en la Academia Americana de Roma y fue el primer Aga Kahn Travelling Fellow. Ha publicado dos capítulos de libros y 70 artículos y artículos arbitrados sobre arte y arquitectura y está completando dos volúmenes sobre el poder de la paradoja que da forma a la ciudad en las Américas. Ha impartido conferencias y expuesto su obra en América, Oriente Medio y Europa. Recientemente ha sido profesor en el Maryland Institute College of Art, en Tulane, en la Universidad de Miami, en las Universidades de Texas Austin y Arlington, en la Universidad de Minnesota en Venecia, en la Universidad de Maryland, en la ETSAM de Madrid, en la Real Academia de Copenhague y fue Profesor Asociado y Decano del Departamento de Arquitectura y Diseño de la Universidad Americana de Beirut. Ha dirigido programas de estudios en Italia y cofundado y dirigido 11 talleres internacionales en Venecia y Barcelona. Como crítico invitado, ha participado en 60 escuelas de arquitectura y arte de cuatro continentes. Afiliación actual: Maryland Institute College of Art E-Mail: michaelstanton22@gmail.com

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17

Skanderbeg, Tirana. A Section Full of Nothing (Static Shot)

Urtzi Grau Magaña
Guillermo Fernández-Abascal
Christina Deluchi

Belgian photographer Maxime Delvaux's images of Skanderbeg Square, Tirana, completed in 2017 by Belgian architectural office 51N4E and Albanian artist Anri Sala, have at least three different readings. Their content allows us access to the complex history of the project by revealing the connections between design decisions, urban transformation policies, the city's leaders, and, in some cases, the political imagination of Albania vis-à-vis the European Union. Their format, a combination of traditional photographs and still frame videos, helps us to understand not only how 51N4E explains their projects, but also the reorganisation of their office and their design processes. Lastly, examining the images as architectural photographs reveals the effects that the eruption of digital imaging processes has had on the documentation of architectural projects.



In 2008, the Belgian architectural office 51N4E and Albanian artist Anri Sala won the project for the plan of Skanderbeg Square in Tirana. The hyperbolic title of the competition, 'call for help', implied both the urgent need for an intervention and the ambitions of its organiser, Mayor Edi Rama, currently the country's prime minister. Rama, leader and champion of Albania's reconciliation with the European Union, has been immersed in an urban transformation campaign recognised globally for repainting the city's facades with brightly coloured murals. The shift from this project's vertical surfaces, to the horizontality of the square, was not free of trouble. The enormous 40,000 sqm surface of the square in the centre of the capital had to be negotiated. While it seemed like an empty space, the square contained the remnants of Tirana's multiple pasts that the Balkan country, and by extension Europe, had traversed throughout the 20th century.

Skanderbeg Square was opened in 1917, five years after Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire during the Austro-Hungarian occupation of World War I. It was born of the impetus to become a space for institutional representation for the future capital, but it would not become such until 1920. Resulting from successive renovations, the historic bazaar and the Mahmud Muhsin Bey Stërmasi mosque that surrounded the square would disappear by 1959 when Nikita Khrushchev – the first secretary

of the Soviet Union's Communist Party – laid the first stone of Tirana's Palace of Culture (Pallati i Kulturës). A second mosque, the Hajji Et'hem Bey (1821), survived the city's successive reforms and political changes and reopened in 1991 after the end of the Communist regime. Opposite the surviving mosque, the Orthodox Cathedral of the Resurrection (Katedralja Orthodhokse 'Ngjallja e Krishtit') rose in 2012, completing the representation of religious buildings that surround the square, and the balance of worship after the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Secular buildings such as the 1822 clock tower, the National Library (present since Tirana was instituted as the capital of Albania), the Opera House and the National Museum of History (Muzeu Historik Kombëta) represent the Communist regime's socialist cultural policies. These buildings contrast with the headquarters of the National Bank of Albania (Banka e Shqipërisë) responsible for the country's monetary policy; the Tirana International Hotel (Pesëmbëdhjetëkatëshi) built in 1975 as a symbol of Soviet modernity and meeting place for the Politburo, and remodelled in 2001 to adapt to corporate needs; and the new Hotel Plaza, a symbol for the country's European opening, also completed by 51N4E a year prior to the square. Lastly, the City Hall of Tirana (Bashkia Tiranë) and the headquarters of the Ministries of Infrastructure, Economy, and Energy, complete the square's elevations, covering in a seemingly educational way the nation's history and its modes of governance. All culminates in the equestrian statue of the figure after whom the square is named, the 15th-century Albanian hero, George Kastrioti Skanderbeg.

The square's construction process began in 2010, replicating the social, political, and urban contrasts and fragmented histories present on the site and its surrounds. After the first year of construction, changes to the municipal government following elections (2011) led to the suspension of the project. The new Mayor, Lulzim Basha of the Democratic Party of Albania and oriented toward the European right wing and centre right, cancelled the project. Instead, Basha built a large temporary roundabout and returned road traffic to the public square, reproducing the persistent ideological European position that cars should be present in urban centres. Four years later, after 2016's municipal elections, the Socialist Party regained the Mayor's office and Erion Veliaj restarted 51N4E's project with the addition of an underground carpark and increased garden area. The project would take two more years to complete. Finally, nine years after the competition process began, the square opened to the public in 2017². The following year, true to the original convener's European fervour, the square went on to win the 2018 European Prize for Public Space, and would become one of the five finalists for the 2019 European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture (Mies van der Rohe Award).

Possibly the most widely recognised image of Skanderbeg Square is the one appearing on the cover of 51N4E's book, *Skanderbeg Square, Tirana* (Ruby Press, 2017). Taken by the Belgian photographer Filip Dujardin, a zoom from a distance surely taken from the top of the Pesëmbëdhjetëkatëshi, the photograph's vanishing points are distant and parallel causing it to look like an axonometric projection. The image shows the square's paving, a grid of red-toned pastel stones rotated at 30 degrees, with the public passing over it. Some parabolic stains on the surface mark the places where water flows toward the out-of-image perimeter of the square, changing the colour of the pavers along the way. The level of abstraction due to the lack of vanishing points is amplified by the disappearance of the pavement's limits, which seem to extend into infinity, effectively introducing a 'strangeness' to the image. The square is separated from its urban context, and from the many stories that construct it. In contrast with Dujardin's surreal landscape, Albanian photographer Blerta Kambo captures the intimacy of the square via zooms of everyday life. One of her iconic photos portrays three women sitting on green chairs in an unconventional position while they chat, possibly the alter ego of Dujardin's image. Focused on the users of the square,

Kambo accurately captures their daily lives, overlooking the urban design decisions that make them possible.

Perhaps trying to synthesise both Dujardin and Kambo, 51N4E commissioned the Belgian photographer Maxime Delvaux to document the project for their website³. Delvaux, born in the 1980s, easily combines the approach of two antagonistic figures of the previous generation of architectural photographers: Dutch photographer Iwan Baan, who at the beginning of the 21st century reintroduced figures, context, and aerial perspectives back into architectural photography, and Dutch photographer Bas Princen, who constructs his images with an excessive formal tension that emphasises the autonomy of the objects portrayed. Delvaux's commission resulted in a series of 16 images, which are not so different from those that preceded them, some practically identical. His displacement of the camera's lens toward the context and the occupation of public space – which is Kambo's interest – results in images framed similarly to those of Dujardin. But Delvaux's new images allow us to see another square, one that combines heroism and intimacy. This square is in continuous tension with the narratives of national identity inscribed in the site, the pragmatism that a public work of such scale requires, and its own capacity to foster new collective conditions.

But what project has Delvaux portrayed? What kind of public space can aspire to transform the global image of the city? What kind of photographs can explain the Albanian realpolitik in Europe? How are they constructed? The excessive ambition of these questions is not accidental: they are of the same importance as those raised alongside the competition's winning proposal.

Nevertheless, 51N4E proposed to build, among Tirana's institutional buildings, a pyramid of similar dimensions to its Egyptian relatives. The pyramid's symbolic inversion – to fill a public void surrounded by architectures of power in their most authoritative and primal form – is as disruptive as it is contextual. It also replicates another pyramid that already exists in Tirana, the Pyramid of Tirana (Piramida), which has similar dimensions and is located two blocks south of the plaza. If the accelerated history of Piramida is trashing its marble cladding and turning its sloping walls into improvised public spaces, then Skanderbeg's pyramid recovers this stone materiality and brutally reduces its height. The Piramida reaches 21 m in height. The top of the plaza's pyramid only rises to 2.3 m above its edges, or, more exactly, to the same height as the plinth of the Pallati i Kulturës. The centre of the square is therefore an exceptionally accessible viewpoint that inverts the direction of the gaze. Its peak is the furthest point from the buildings that surround it; the pyramid exists in opposition to them as public activity unfolds across slopes of 4% in a much less vertiginous way than the ruins of its communist counterpart⁴.

Completing the proposal, a series of water features is hidden underneath the 24,000 m² of inclined tiles, transforming the plaza into a large, accessible public fountain with a belt of vegetation that separates the pyramid from the centre's existing buildings. The extended paved surface made it unnecessary to limit wet areas. Invisible except for when active, the only traces of the fountain's existence are the patinas of slowly sliding water. In the competition entry's collages by 51N4E and Anri Sala, the water forms shapeless mirrors. The collages are reminiscent of Jean Arp's paintings surrounded by Henri Rousseau vegetation, and then situated within a work by René Magritte⁵. The references are not accidental, but point toward the artistic interests of the authors and, more importantly, the jury's 'European' ambitions⁶. In the end, the prize was awarded to a public space combining exoticised French realism, German Dadaism, and Belgian surrealism: perhaps several of the most pertinent artistic renditions of the European Union's origins.

Despite the delay in the project's execution, the plaza maintains its main competition elements: a green ring surrounding the water-stained stone pyramid. In fact, the only notable change to

the project is not visible: the underground carpark. One of Delvaux's images best allows us to understand the project. It is taken from the porch of the Pallati i Kulturës, camera pointed toward the west of the square, from the only perspective where the green belt's trees disappear to allow access to the Opera House. The image is a diptych, divided into two almost perfect squares by one of the pillars of the Opera House's colonnade. The right one frames the foreshortening of the Muzeu Historik Kombëtar, which flanks the northern edge of the square. On the left, the Banka e Shqipërisë's facade is shown behind the pyramid. It is a theatrical and didactic image. It reveals an organised sequence of plans that present the layers of the project framed by the existing architecture. In the background, the green belt that separates the plaza from the rest of Tirana fails to hide the city's new skyscrapers. Following its incorporation into the development phase of the project, the Belgian landscaping office Plant en Houtgoed designed and specified the 12 perimeter gardens that comprise the green belt. Its width is variable. Constructed of grass, shade, benches, trees, insects, and birds, it reappears at the margins of the image's foreground as a reminder that it completely surrounds the plaza.

Unlike the informal activities that populate the competition's images, in the built project, the elements that allow the public to occupy the vegetal perimeter are carefully designed. Delvaux's images explain how. In the foreground, sheltered from the sun on a likely hot summer's day in Tirana, four people watch passers-by crossing the square. They sit on chairs that 51N4E designed especially for the project. Mobile, like the 1923 *Sénat* chairs in the Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris (also known as the Luxembourg chairs), and obviously inspired by the geometry and green colour of the *Palissade* outdoor furniture collection by the Rowan brothers and Erwan Bouroullec for HAY (2015), the distortion of their proportions radically transforms their use. Their 80 cm width makes them too big for one person, and too small for two. So, as the picture shows, they can be used in two ways, forcing users to take a position on how rest is shared around the square. The chairs do not seek comfort; instead they encourage their users to decide how to manage interpersonal distances themselves. They are a piece of the project that most clearly illustrates how 51N4E's interest in participation and negotiation plays out in their architecture, and not by chance, and they reinforce the idea that the new square has ancestry in the classic public spaces of the European Union.

On the right-hand side of the image appears the other item of furniture 51N4E designed for the project. It is a robust terrazzo bench, solid and immobile, reversing the lightness of the green chairs. But, as different as their ambitions might seem, both seating types are similar in terms of their origin and use. The bench's geometry is clumsy; it is too robust for its discreet size. The bench is divided in two by a triangular prism, cancelling its horizontality that would make it closer to the continuous benches that populate the empty squares of high modernity. Instead, they converse with the robust Soviet modernity of the Pallati i Kulturës and the Muzeu Historik Kombëtar. Each side of the bench is wide enough to seat two people comfortably, but the triangular piece can also be used as a backrest, transforming it into a double chaise lounge that forces the user to place their legs on the bench to the exclusion of others. The ambivalence of use is reproduced in its materiality that alludes to Milan or Brussels and, at the same time, is tautologically contextual. The terrazzo was made using debris from the pre-existing constructions on site. Therefore, the benches reference the history of the square and, likewise, the facade of the Plaza Hotel that was built with the same materials a year before the square's completion: another icon of the European renaissance built by 51N4E and sponsored by Rama.

The volume of design decisions made in the green perimeter contrasts the apparently empty but symbolically swollen surface of the pyramid it frames. Since the production of the

competition's images, the colour of the square's stone surface has shifted from grey to a tonal yellow tiled blanket: a barely visible mosaic similar to one of Gerhard Richter's *Farben* rugs. In actuality, there are 129,600 stone tiles of 30 different types taken from the country's different regions to form the square's multicoloured collage. The symbolic function of this gesture sees the biographies of the authors and clients intertwined, as is the history of the relations between art and power in Tirana. This is a story that might begin with the square's other mosaic titled *The Albanians* that presides over the square from the facade of the Muzeu Historik Kombëtar, it also appears on the right of Delvaux's image. Completed in 1981, the 400 m² mosaic presents, in the pure style of socialist realism, 13 of Albania's historical figures advancing toward the culmination of history. Rama, an artist and academic before becoming a politician, and son of Kristaq Rama (one of the most prominent representatives of Albanian socialist realism), is intimately familiar with how large murals function. Upon arrival at the Mayor's office, Rama began to have Tirana's building facades covered with colourful murals. Rama has explained exhaustively the social function of these seemingly superficial urban transformation operations. International recognition of the projects came with the video *Dammi i Colori* made by Anri Sala, one of Rama's art school alumni¹⁷. Five years later it would be Sala, in collaboration with 51N4E, in charge of proposing the country's largest mural – Skanderbeg Square's tiled surface – closing the collection of historical representations of national identity in Tirana's centre. Just as the restoration of *The Albanians* removed the red star from the Albanian flag and the volume of the *Communist Manifesto* from the hands of one of its protagonists, the design of the square constructs a new national representation via abstraction and land art strategies like those used in public memorials since Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982). The mosaic of the pavement eliminates the figuration that personifies national values. Rather, it links to Albanian identity in an infinite multiplication of individualities transfigured in the 40 x 45 cm tiles, which are literally made of the materials that make up the country: its rocks. This crude metaphor, a pyramid in the centre of the capital built with the nation's rocks, is negotiated by the domestic banality of the tiles' size. The stone carpet that draws a geological map of the country seems immeasurable due to its dimension, but, in reality, it is illegible due to the fact it is permanently covered in dust.

The dirt, typical of public pavements, the pollution of the city, and the dryness of summer, is not coincidental. It hides the surface of the pyramid and the fountains reveal it. Delvaux's image shows how the jets from the competition images have disappeared, instead replaced by runoff emerging from the pavement. The water runs its course, reducing the temperature of the stones and, by evaporation, the general temperature of the atmosphere. In the image, the distant pools of water function as mirrors where the urban landscape and fragments of the sky are reflected. The closest ones, due to the different viewing angles and their ability to remove surface dirt, allow us to see the fragments of Albanian geology that lie below the water's surface. Water, therefore, operates as the pyramid does: it is a balance between the legibility of populist narratives on national identity, a large-scale public operation's economy of means, and the poetic autonomy that characterises aesthetic decisions. The water stains also reference the lakes of Albania, which allow us to discover their geology, and they refresh the square with pictures of the sky drawn across the pyramid's surface¹⁸.

Delvaux's representational strategy made of layers that explain sections of the project is not by chance. It appears continuously in his images as seen in the image taken from the porch of the Pallati i Kulturës, but this time the image is south facing. This image is not built as a theatrical elevation, rather as a section that reveals the backstage of the previous one. On the left we see the dome and minaret of the Hajji Et'hem Bey Mosque, and on the right is the headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture with the

Albanian national flag flying out front. The base of the pyramid to the right of the image sits several metres below the observer and has ceased to be a pixelated pink mosaic, instead becoming a grey plane crossed by a sheet of water. The centre of the image is occupied by vegetation, defining the negotiations occurring at the project's change of levels. The trees are supported by windbreaks, but still precarious, and completed by a layer of tall and short shrubs, and perennial plants closer to the ground. Species include *Salvia argentea*, *Euphorbia dendroides*, *Phlomis fruticosa*, *Asphodeline lutea*, and other native varieties that are in some cases locally extinct but have been recovered in other parts of Europe. The vegetal collage connects with the network of green spaces in Tirana, giving continuity to the disconnected architectures of the past that represent apparent antagonistic governmental systems. At the same time, like a medieval moat, the vegetation separates them from the tiled pavement, defending the pyramid's autonomy. From the square, the vegetation blurs the presence of the surrounding institutional buildings, hiding them behind a green curtain. The image shows how the Pallati i Kulturës preserves a part of its ceremonial stairs, but they no longer reach the square; instead they abruptly end in the garden area. Thanks to the garden, it is impossible to observe the square from the colonnade of the Pallati i Kulturës; the tree tops prevent it. To enjoy the view, it is necessary to descend the stairs. Moving toward the trees, the terrazzo benches beneath them allow for observation of the square from a privileged position. On the other side of the vegetation, on the square's tiles, are some pieces of urban furniture shaped like barges, revealing how the life of the square has continued, disregarding the original project design.

The narrative and compositional mechanisms are so explicit that they can blind us. Reading the project through Delvaux's images, we must not forget what we are looking at: a series of images that can be accessed, in most cases, only via digital devices. As a series of documents, they lack the physical substrate of analogue photographs; they are a set of light emissions that our retina reads as a unitary whole: a collection of representations that move when our fingers touch the screen of our cell phones. Without taking this material into consideration, the images' operation cannot be understood. If the role of photography as a medium and mediator has caused modern architecture to massively spread – visually and discursively – the advent of digital photography has dramatically increased its reach, causing representations of architecture to transform into a commodity consumed at an unprecedented scale. The velocity of circulation affects Delvaux's images. Of the 16 images in the series, six literally move: some of their elements are never still. They are not photographs, but six videos treated as static shots like Andy Warhol's *Empire*, but with a fleeting duration. The frames of the videos do not vary, as the action is limited to the minor elements in the image. The wind moving the grass, a subtle affectionate gesture shared between a couple sitting on a bench, or a moving car behind the vegetation record the events of daily life that take place across the square. Like the monotonous shots of his compatriot Chantal Akerman, but perhaps with a more optimistic twist, Delvaux's static images force the viewer to be patient with the slow pace of everyday life and to appreciate the relationship between the passing of time and the space it occupies.

It is not the first time Delvaux has used this image technique. Since 2014, similar videos have been a part of his collaboration with the Belgian architectural firm BAUKUNST and the French digital imaging company Artefactorylab⁹. The encounter between the three disciplines is necessary to the creation of these digital images, not only to add movement, but to also dismantle the traditional forms of authorship¹⁰. But the static shots of Skanderbeg do not call into question their authorship. Instead, they point to a collaboration that, embedded within a professional commission, is possible thanks to the short static shots and their forms of distribution. The images, not limited to the square project, are

commissioned for the 51N4E website designed by the London graphic design studio OK-RM. The website presents similar videos of other projects and the participatory processes that have generated them, alongside the creative and organisational changes of the practice itself¹¹. Delvaux's static shot videos have become the virtual image of 51N4E. Each of the sections of their website opens with one of his videos in full screen. Their ability to capture the relationships between architecture and its occupants make it possible to argue for the former's social capabilities. Their short duration is adjusted for the attention deficit regime that defines the consumption of digital images. And their stylised realism causes them to transcend the professional commission by validating the projects they document as separate visual exercises. In this sense, the static shot videos seem to carry, in their logic, the tension between marketing, pragmatism, and high culture that is so well captured by Skanderbeg Square.

In any case, the adaptation of the images for 51N4E's commissions does not do justice to Delvaux's static shots. Their power lies elsewhere. Delvaux's ability to represent the square fits the historical readings that evaluate images for their capacity to present reality. But they go even further. There is something in the images that annuls the reality–representation duality. The subtle movement introduced to what looks like a photograph dismantles our relationship with it; it tears it apart, as Andrea Soto Calderón has argued when discussing the work of Argentine filmmaker Lucrecia Martel¹². For Martel, duration and changes in rhythm alter the perception of time: this is Delvaux's method of working. Slowing down, constructing images that produce a lapse in time, seems to be the ultimate project of his static shots. It must be remembered that in his photographic work, Delvaux refuses to use digital cameras as he considers the slowness of large-format analogue development a blockage to the speed of the production and consumption of today's images. It is not surprising that these short videos perhaps learn from Belgian artist David Claerbout: they are static shots filled with almost nothing.

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Notes

01. The competition and the work was financed by Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of Kuwait. The development and construction phase, the team of 51N4E and Anri Sala was expanded to include landscape architects Plant en Houtgoed, and the Albanian architectural practice iRI. The proposal by the Dutch firm MVRDV and German landscape architects TOPOTEK received second place, and in third place was Spanish firm MAP Arquitectos. The heterogenous guestlist for the competition included the French firm Architecture-Studio, the US-based architect Daniel Libeskind, and the Italian firm Atena Studio & Partners.

02. Prior to 2016, when the project had stopped, 51N4E worked on other projects in Albania. No longer tourists, they became regulars in the city. They gained experience in small-scale urban interventions ranging from a scenic gas station (Europetrol, 2006), to a railing for a bridge (Lana Bridge, 2008), and the remodelled interior for the Center for Opening and Dialogue (COD, 2015). Lastly, the tower of the Hotel Plaza —a competition won by 51N4E in 2004 and completed in 2016— rises a few metres above the square. 51N4E’s new housing and office tower (Book Building), also on the edge of the square, is currently under construction.

03. Not all the images have reached www.51n4e.com; the webpage is a perpetual work in progress. The complete series of 16 images can be found on Delvaux’s website, and includes the portraits of the occupants of the square that was part of exhibition *The Things Around Us: 51N4E and Rural Urban Framework* at the Canadian Center for Architecture (CCA). <https://maximedelvaux.com/51n4e-skanderbeg-square-tirana>

04. Since its opening in 1988, Piramida has been a museum dedicated to the leader of communist Albania, Enver Hoxha; a palace of congress after the end of the communist regime; the NATO headquarters during the Balkan war; the headquarters for Top Channel and Top Albania Radio; and,

after a failed attempt to convert it into an opera house, an abandoned ruin partly used as a bus station. Dorina Pllumbi has been one of the most critical voices on the Dutch office MDRDV’s project for the Piramida that is currently under construction. The project will transform it into a technological hub, adding stairs to the facade due to its inability to previously recognise the value of its public spaces. Oliver Wainwright, architecture critic for the *Guardian*, has also criticised MVRDV’s activity in the Albanian capital, which has expanded to works beyond the pyramid —the result of the friendship between Winny Mas and Edi Rama. PLLUMBI, Dorina, “Outrage: the unwinding of the Pyramid of Tirana”, *The Architecture Review*, 19 May 2021. <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/outrage/outrage-the-unwinding-of-the-pyramid-of-tyrant>. WAINWRIGHT, Oliver, “What the Marble Arch Mound architects did next: a skyscraper shaped like Albania’s national hero”, *Guardian*, 15 Aug 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/aug/15/mvrdv-albania-tirana-skanderbeg-skyscraper-marble-arch-mound>

05. A wider selection of images for the competition proposal can be found in 51N4E’s monograph, *Skanderbeg Square* (Ruby Press, Berlin, 2017), and in an article on e-architect.com titled “Skanderbeg Square Tirana Renewal Design”. On the occasion of the 2011 elections, 51N4E and Anri Sala produced a revised version of the image series for Edi Rama’s electoral video campaign, irremediably linking the future of the project to the political future of the mayor. Images from the competition also appear in the book *Double or nothing* (AA Publications, London, 2011), and in the book *How things meet* (Art Paper Editions, Ghent, 2016) that summarises some of the project failures, trying to find a narrative for their endless Albanian projects. “51N4E and Anri Sala: Winning proposal for the redesign of Skanderbeg Square, Tirana, Albania”, 2008. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpg3jll5CmQ>.

06. The jury was made up of Andreas Ruby, Arben Kumburo, Edi Rama, Elia Zenghelis, Ismail Khudhr Al-Shatti, Maks Velo, Marco Casamonti, Marin Biçoku, Valerio Olgiati, Vedran Mimica, and Xaveer de Geyter.

<https://www.skyscrapercity.com/threads/sheshi-sk%C3%ABnderbej-arkivuar-skanderbeg-square-archived.600696/page-3>

07. The awareness that the success of urban transformation operations falls as much on local narratives as on global perception has led Edi Rama to explain the *Tirana Facades* project in multiple forums, both professional and popular. His TED talk in Thessaloniki in 2012 is perhaps one of the best documented examples. The video *Dammi i Colori* (2003) by Anri Sala has been part of the TATE collection since 2003. RAMA, Ed., Take back your city with paint, TEDxThessaloniki. https://www.ted.com/talks/edi_rama_take_back_your_city_with_paint <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sala-dammi-i-colori-t11813>

08. The importance of water is obvious in the project's credits, which always acknowledge the technical solutions in a similar way to the collaboration with the landscaping office. The Belgian fountain office Aquafontal, and the British Gatic, are listed as fountain authors.

09. BAUKUNST, Delvaux and ArtefactoryLab have produced images and videos since 2014 for competitions such as Hôtel de Biolley in Verbiers (2014), Watersportbaan in Ghent (2015) and The Bastion in Geneva (2016). This work was prior to the images produced for two major competitions won in collaboration with Bruther. BAUKUNST further discussed the role of images in their practice at a recent lecture at the University of Technology Sydney's School of Architecture. VERSCHUER, Adrien, Architecture as a Language, 23 September 2020.

10. In 2017, BAUKUNST, Delvaux, ArtefactoryLab, and French architecture firm Bruther shared the credit for the competition images for Life Sciences in Lausanne and the Maison des Media in Brussels. Guillermo

Fernández-Abascal and Urtzi Grau have analysed this case and others in their discussion of the logic of authorship in architectural imagery in their book *"A long list" better together: (33) documents of contemporary Australian architecture & their associated short stories*. FERNÁNDEZ-ABASCAL, G., and GRAU, U., *"A long list" better together: (33) documents of contemporary Australian architecture & their associated short stories*, URO, Melbourne, 2022.

11. Delvaux was commissioned for the video series on the transformation of Zurich for the Chair at the ETH of Freek Persyn —one of 51N4E's partners— and similarly filmed 51N4E's work in the Office Complex in Northern Brussels where the firm was temporarily installed as part of the urban transformation process of the district. This moment also served as a laboratory for the reorganisation of the office. The collaboration has also continued in the systematic portrayal of 51N4E's buildings users —not unlike the portraits Delvaux took of Skanderbeg Square's citizens.

12. SOTO CALDERON, Andrea, *La performatividad de las imágenes*, Ediciones Metales Pesados, Santiago de Chile, 2020, p. 50.

Images

01. (corresponds to the image that opens the article) Untitled digital video still by Maxime Delvaux of the centre of Skanderbeg Square, Tirana (2019).

02. Untitled digital video still by Maxime Delvaux of west Skanderbeg Square, Tirana, seen from the porch of the Pallati i Kulturës (2019).

03. Untitled digital video still by Maxime Delvaux of south Skanderbeg Square, Tirana, seen from the porch of the Pallati i Kulturës (2019).

04. Untitled digital video still by Maxime Delvaux of the green belt of Skanderbeg Square, Tirana, taken from the website of the project's authors, Belgian architectural firm 51N4E (2019).

18

Fuegos artificiales

Bernard Tschumi



Desde siempre te han fascinado los fuegos artificiales. Un buen día te piden que diseñes una colección para un festival de verano en el parque de La Villette. Te preguntas: "¿Realmente pueden llevarse al aire los conceptos y planteamientos del parque? ¿Puede transformarse la arquitectura en algo así como una obra etérea y tridimensional de arte performativo?". Conforme empiezas a darle vueltas contactas con las empresas pirotécnicas: "Por favor, ¿podría decirme cómo diseñan los fuegos artificiales? ¿Tienen algún diagrama?".

Pero te responden: "No, no tenemos. Bueno, nosotros... lo hacemos, sin más". Claro, como arquitecto esperas que haya algún tipo de plano. Tienes que encontrar un sistema de notación, tal como ocurría en tus primeros trabajos, donde la notación era tan importante.

Quieres encontrar un modo de representar los fuegos artificiales mediante perspectivas, plantas y alzados, donde puedas indicar también aspectos como el color, la intensidad y la duración.

Así que despliegas tu propio sistema de notación. Indica las folies, los vectores de movimiento y cómo interactúan unos con otros. Cada uno de los fotogramas corresponde a un intervalo de siete segundos. Esa es la base temporal.

Y piensas que tanto el esquema como el sistema de notación que has concebido son, de hecho, bastante bonitos, de modo que te diriges al fabricante pirotécnico para enseñarle tus planos.

El fabricante te mira como si estuvieras mal de la cabeza: "No, no lo hacemos así. Tú solo dínos lo que quieres; no entendemos nada de todo esto que traes. Recoge los dibujos y cuéntanoslo con palabras. ¿Quieres una explosión grande, con mucho ruido? ¿Con todo azul, y luego todo rojo?".

Image

Fuegos artificiales,
Parc de la Villette, 1992.
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