

**HOLD ON, CURSED ONES!**

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## HOLD ON, CURSED ONES!

That creation is more than Power and Art more than Politics.  
How immortal are the WORKS  
and not the wars and dances of the princes.

Milan Kundera, Immortality

### THOSE 28 YEARS AGO

"For reasons of an almost we would say that forced continuity, the issue that the reader has in his hands should be the update of a presumed school or Madrid way". This is almost how Moneo began his article "28 non-numerary architects" published in *Arquitectura Bis* no more and no less than seventeen years ago. This school or Madrid way, tried repeatedly, has already been seen as impossible: so heterodox, so unclassifiable, so colorful, so unsubmissive were, are and will be, fortunately, these architects of Madrid. And freedom is an essential basis for all worthwhile creation.

And what in the following pages of that article was posed as a Madrid-Barcelona confrontation, which has always been unreal in this field of architecture, nevertheless served as an effective support to encourage that group of architects who at that time were beginning that now classic battle of the eternal confrontation between the artist and society. The artist, the architect, trying to build his best works for it. Society, so often determined not to let it. For in these coordinates of encouragement and impetus to the younger architects of Madrid is in which this writing is framed.

But what happened to those 28 non-members who joined because of "their age, their dedication to teaching and their critical will"?

As for age, time, inexorable, has passed equally for all of them, although its imprint has been very different. In their works, as in their understanding of life, time has been an implacable judge.

As for their dedication to teaching, very different things have also happened in that group. Five of them are now professors of Projects at the Madrid School of Architecture: Juan Navarro Baldeweg, 1984; Alberto Campo Baeza, 1986; Manuel de las Casas, 1987; Antón Capitel, 1992; and Gabriel Ruiz Cabrero, 1995. Víctor López Cotelo, in Munich, 1995. And Juan Antonio Cortés, of Composition in Valladolid, 1989. And they continue teaching, as professors of Projects at the School of Madrid, another ten. Two as tenured professors: María Teresa Muñoz, 1988, who was director of the Projects Department from 1988 to 1991, and Javier Frechilla, 1993; and another eight as associate professors: Ignacio de las Casas, Javier Bellosillo, José Manuel López Peláez, Francisco Rodríguez de Parterroyo, Eduardo Sánchez, Daniel Zarza, Jerónimo Junquera and Estanislao Pérez Pita.

And as for the critical will, it has also suffered its share. The natural tendency to accommodation has been overcome only by a few, those who from that group continue to produce a rigorous architecture or to write more profound texts. Those, his figure and his works, in which time passes in favor, those who resist in this incredible exercise of resistance that is always Architecture.

#### WITH A GIVEN DETERMINATION

In order to encourage this resistance, over the years I have written several texts on young Spanish architecture. Back in 1977, in the article "7+7+7" published in the Tokyo magazine A+U, I proposed a list whose names, almost all of them, would be on the list of the 28 non-numbered architects that Moneo published the following year in *Arquitectura Bis* with the same purpose of encouraging and promoting that young architecture of Madrid.

Later, in 1985, in *Process Architecture*, also from Tokyo, I wrote "The Architecture of Madrid: An unrestrainable avalanche". There, half of the article, and of the issue, was dedicated to the then young architects of Madrid. And in the same year I insisted on the same operation with the mythical Young Spanish Architecture, which was considered the red book of young Spanish architecture, since in this case it included architects from all over the country.

And then, in 1992, he returned to the charge in *Arquitectos*, the widely distributed magazine of the Superior Council of Architects of Spain, with the article "Architects of the coming century" where, with the help of Italo Calvino and dribbling at the end so as not to reveal the names, the same operation was carried out.

And all of this is accompanied by explicit references, lists and comments in, for example, various yearbooks of the newspaper *El País* or in various articles in magazines and newspapers about specific architects.

The intention has always been the same: to defend and encourage younger architects, in this case in Madrid, in the face of a society that is becoming increasingly uneducated and ignorant about architecture.

The title of an article I published with these intentions in *El País* in 1985, "Saturn will no longer devour its children" was very expressive of this attitude.

And who and how are these people who in the heading of this article are called "damned" and who are urged to resist? They are a group of architects from Madrid who are in those coordinates in which those 28 were inscribed. They are a group of young architects, all of them dedicated to teaching, professors of Projects at the School of Architecture of Madrid, and with a critical will evident in their works. Like those 28, but with even more intensity if possible.

## FAMILY TRAITS

Although this group, certainly rebellious in its indiscipline, does not feel explicitly linked to the masters of the previous generations, and display before them an unspeakable modesty, as soon as one scratches a little they show their admiration and respect. Not in vain are recognizable in all of them, to a greater or lesser degree, the familiar traits: the finesse of Sota and the bravura of Oíza. The naturalness of Cano Lasso and the precision of Carvajal, the erudition of Fernández Alba and the culture of Moneo. The rebelliousness of Fisac and the simplicity of Cabrero, and the sense of construction of Corrales and the ingenuity, already in the memory of nostalgia, of Molezún. All these notes reappear in very different ways in these new architectures.

The impressive quality of the architecture of the group of Spanish masters, whose importance increases with the passage of time, cannot leave unmoved those who now, as if it were a relay race, have taken the baton.

And although these familiar features are generic, we should not fail to point out certain greater similarities, at least formal -only formal? more concrete ones. Thus, we can see Sota in many of the works of Sancho and Madrudejos. And Oíza is always latent in Aparicio's projects. Cabrero and Cano Lasso appear subtly in Aranguren and Gallegos. And Corrales and Molezún in Ábalos and Herreros. And there is something of Carvajal in Matos-Martínez Castillo. And of Moneo in Tuñón. And there is something of Fisac's mood in Cánovas-Amann-Maruri. And so we could, in this extensive family, continue searching and finding, logically, common traits.

## KNOWING, KNOWING HOW TO TEACH. WANTING TO TEACH

All of them have the common denominator of being in teaching. For this group of young architects from Madrid, teaching projects at the School of Architecture is not something added. The preparation of their classes, the elaboration and publication of their programs, the real dedication of time are some examples of how basic this dimension is in their understanding of Architecture.

They fulfill the triple condition that Julián Marías demanded of teachers: "to know, to know how to teach, to want to teach". They know, they continue studying and thinking. They know how to teach, because all of them, although to varying degrees, are pedagogically very valid. They want to teach because they give generously of their time to teaching.

The most consolidated group is precisely the one made up of the youngest Full Professors of Projects: Ábalos-Herreros, Aranguren-González Gallegos, Aparicio and Sancho-Madrudejos. And a good harvest of theses is immediately expected for this academic year among the rest of the large group. Naturally, this intense dedication and the quality and rigor of their teaching is reflected in the enormous number of students who always want to be in their classes.

I can attest that their corrections, their critiques of projects, far removed from the "like it or dislike it", have theory as their cornerstone. They all display a great capacity for analysis which, logically, is reflected in their works. They try, and this is more difficult, that there are no formal approximations of their students to their architecture.

They know, they know how to teach, they want to teach.

## THESE ARE MORE EDUCATED

The generation of those '28, which is precisely the generation of May '68, managed to load its cultural saddlebags long after its passage through the School. That School of ours had abandoned the statue and the washing as a symbol of many other things and gave itself without much reflection and with a certain superficiality to Mies, Le Corbusier and Aalto, or rather, to their forms. Without understanding them too well. Perhaps with the same understanding, more formal than conceptual, as his own teachers.

The few of that generation who claimed to be more cultured, were only slightly better read. With the small erudition of pedantry that comes with young age. And it is that the time of the assumption of culture is, fortunately, something slower. It is the tempo of taste and enjoyment, which require a certain slowness.

Some others of that generation, with more weight, were maturing and increasing their culture, enjoying it and resisting to the thread of those criteria described by Moneo when framing them in his article of *Arquitecturas Bis*: age, dedication to teaching and critical sense.

For almost all of them the realization of the doctoral thesis, almost always with a historical theme, was an opportunity to put in tune the instruments of analysis with which thought must face the creative fact that is the architectural projection. And for almost all of them it served to deepen and increase the rigor of both their teaching and their works.

All this, and more, is what this young generation of architects presented here today has done, with a certainly greater cruising speed, and perhaps also with greater intensity.

The theme of their doctoral theses usually coincides with the theory they deploy in their teaching and work. And their culture, since the school itself, has also been more solid. This has necessarily led them to be more rigorous, to make an architecture that, almost always, wants to be of ideas, of constructed ideas.

Following the long Spanish tradition, they are quite heterodox in terms of following fashions: either they do not follow them or they do not admit to being told that they follow them. There is no "minimalist" or "deconstructivist" or "hightech", etcetera, although they may be contaminated, I insist that, in a heterodox way, of many of these "isms".

And their culture and the rigor that derives from it has also led them to express their ideas in writing. They write. And in this, they also seem to distance themselves from their elders. They try to explain the keys to those ideas and theories on which they base their

architecture. And they publish frequently. All Spanish magazines have included their writings, and when they run out of space they create their own media. This situation was well reflected in CIRCO, a prestigious "fanzine" created by Tuñón, Rojo and Mansilla, where Sancho-Madrirdejos wrote a certerotext: "The paradox of emptiness", and were answered with "A conversation", lighter and funnier as it corresponds to them, by Ábalos-Herreros. All of them, being very different from each other, belong to this heterogeneous group of the young and rabidly interesting architecture of Madrid.

## FEET OFF THE PLATE

Without advertising chairs, like Gehry, or 'yogurt', like Bofill, these architects know that it is no longer true that "the good cloth in the ark is sold". An architect locked up in the ark can become moth-eaten or go mad or die. And not only is it natural to communicate with others, which is one of the reasons for any creative process. It is as simple as if there is no work. And if there is no built work, there is no Architecture. Have you ever seen anything more ridiculous than bullfighting? Just like that, without a bull, anyone.

And these architects know it well. And they try to spread their works to the four winds. To communicate to others that Architecture is still possible. And if they have to take their feet off the plate, they take them off. Like the masters.

Le Corbusier was very concerned that the photos of Villa Savoie reflected the portentous architecture contained in that Pandora's box. And if he had to put a hat and glasses on the table, he did. And Palladio, as photography had not yet been invented, was dispatched with his four books. With the clear idea of disseminating that architecture of which he was so convinced. And Utzon, since photography had already been invented, draws with his hands in movement a well-known image that summarizes his Sidney operation beautifully,

Well, the same goes for these. They know they can't be confined. And not only have they taken their feet off the plate, they've ended up kicking it.

## CONCURSITOS INTERRUPTUS

I am someone traumatized by the contests. I am full of scars, some wounds are still open. And I am not the only one. I have seen many friends, participants or collaborators, in a pitiful state many months later. In the world of Architecture, the day will come when we will also end up being killed ... You have to know what it is to work as a team for several weeks, sometimes months. With what passion and with what faith it is carried out. The amount of work that is cancelled for each consultation. The humiliation, whether justified or not, in the face of a result that is not objective. A lost project that makes you cry in secret, you forget it in silence and drink ... as if you had lost a loved one. Some of these projects never leave you, they come back again as a concrete obsession and tell you that, in spite of everything, they still exist.

This is how Jean Nouvel expressed himself in 1984. Although coinciding with this bitter testimony, he started the Arab Center in Paris, after which he has not stopped building.

And the fact is that contests, hard when you lose and joyful when you win, continue to be the eternal resource of young people.

And so, some older architects, but young in spirit, continue to tirelessly apply for competitions at the same pace with which the Society devours many young architects in age, who with skeptical smiles before the competitions, sign tireless denigrating constructions.

Well, this group of young architects, professors of Architecture at the School of Madrid, not only insistently apply for competitions, but also win them: Aranguren-Gallegos (European, Bentaberría), Ábalos-Herreros (M- 30 Madrid, RENFE Madrid, Palencia, Usera), Sancho-Madrirdejos (Ópera París, San Sebastián de los Reyes, San Fernando de Henares), Aparicio (Congreso de Madrid, Bienal Venecia) and Cánovas-Maruri-Amann (Zaragoza, Cadalso de los Vidrios). Tuñón-Mansilla (El Águila, León) and Matos-Martínez Castillo (Palladio). And many others whose enumeration would be endless. Of course, this hides behind something that is easily forgotten: that there are also many other contests, more, lost in which time, money and what is more important, illusion and creation have been wasted.

I still remember how clearly Clorindo Testa, the great Argentine architect, explained to me how, one after the other, all the participants in that competition, in which he had participated and lost, could fill the long Ribadavia Street of his beloved Buenos Aires. And he complained about the uselessness of that cruel waste. Well, I fear very much that these young architects of whom I speak still have enough illusion to throw themselves into the volcano of the latest competition announced: the extension of the Prado Museum in Madrid. And they are incombustible.

Moreover, there is no organization that guarantees, even if it should, that these competitions are built. I once wrote at length on the subject. And I entitled it "Concursitos interruptus", thus expressing how many positive results remain failed, without consequences, when the Society refuses to build a winning project. One could, with Clorindo Testa's method, fill another long Argentine street with projects never executed.

## NAMES, NAMES

But who are these architects we are talking about? They are a group, already beginning to be well known, of allegedly involved in this triple network of age, dedication to teaching and critical will.

M<sup>a</sup> José Aranguren and José González Gallegos, Iñaki Ábalos and Juan Herreros, Jesús Aparicio and Juan Carlos Sancho are full professors of Projects at the Madrid School of Architecture. All of them are under forty years old. They are the *pièce de resistance* of this group.

Aranguren and González Gallegos, who started from more formal postulates elaborated with great skill, have become more rigorous and have refined their forms in works of great spatial content.

Ábalos and Herreros, with positions linked to the aspect of Architecture in which Technology shows its most brilliant facet, evoke their connections with Herzog and de Meuron, or with the best Goldsmith of the SOM.

Aparicio continues in his radical endeavor in primitive architectures of great density and strength that, at last, are beginning to rise.

Sancho and Madrdejós have succeeded in setting up with astonishing coherence their theories about the void as the germ of architectural space in works full of light and well tempered.

Fortunately for the School of Architecture of Madrid, these are its youngest members, all without exception, splendid architects and teachers of well-established prestige, who base their strong coherence between theory and practice as much on their constant dedication to teaching.

Some are already doctors, such as Gazapo; and others are about to read their doctoral thesis, such as Matos-Martínez Castillo, Cánovas-Maruri-Amann, Tuñón-Mansilla, Sobejano-Nieto and Ruiz Barbarín. This requirement, essential to achieve tenure in the Spanish university, is serving as a driving force to keep alive the thinking that fuels their teaching and their works.

And in the same situation is another group of professors with the subject approved or about to be approved, who are trying to find time from under the rocks to develop this research work: Soto, Colomé, De la Mata, García Gil, Gómez García, De Bias, Pardo, Soriano. And Corrales, Herrera, Lapuerta, Moure, Santamaría, Mera-San Vicente, Maroto, Lleó, Revillo, Torrelo, Burgos, Vaquero, Feduchi, Cano Pintos, García Pedrosa, Peltain. And the most recent Garrido, Torres, Ulargui, Pesquera and De Miguel.

## DRILLING INTO HISTORY

This story, whose last chapter we are trying to write for now, is a continuation of that of the 28 and I would also like to connect with that of Carlos Flores in his *Arquitectura Española Contemporánea*; a splendid, extensive and profound document of an era very well reflected there. The era of the masters. Like History itself, rather than closed circles, these proposals are like rings in a spiral that is continuous and non-exclusive, and where the constituent elements return, as in any spiral, to meet many times. And, like any spiral, it has the capacity to, by piercing History, advance like a berbiquí.

And if those already distant 28 were noted some characteristics that were somewhat diffuse, I would point in this group of young architects of Madrid that are those of the new millennium some more defined. They have a solid base of deep culture. They still believe in architecture as a fact of creation. They show coherence between their works already erected and the theories on which they are based. They are idealists, with ideas capable of being built. They are free, with the difficult freedom that suits the creative architect.



And if these damned artists, so cultured, so coherent, so idealistic, so free, were to be encouraged not to give up, I would concentrate all the encouragement to be contained in this text in just two words: HOLD ON, CURSED ONES!