

EVEN MORE CURSED

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Hold on, cursed ones! was the bellowing cry I used to introduce a group of young architects from the School of Madrid. Well, with those same age records (under 40), teaching practice (full and associate professors) and determined critical will (doctoral theses presented or about to finish and other writings), there is another group of architects who develop their work and teaching throughout the length and breadth of our country. These "even more cursed" ones, like those who are still standing up for architecture, are building works of the first order, rigorous, logical, and of intelligent beauty. This is the generation that, if they resist, will build the history of architecture of the day after tomorrow.

When I now write this "even more cursed" I know that it can be interpreted in a double sense: that of considering that the degree of their condition as cursed is greater than that of the former, or that of understanding that there are still more madmen, those presented here today, who come to join the group from Madrid. For both meanings are valid and are in all cases understood as an essential quality, constant in the history of all the good creators who have been in the world.

As if it seemed that the panorama was not very lively, shortly after the publication of "Hold on, cursed ones!" in this magazine (Arquitectura nº304, 4th quarter 1995), a very interesting and complete issue of AV appeared (Arquitectura Viva nº46, January-February 1996) with the also provocative title of "Fresh Blood", in which Luis Fernández-Galiano framed and encouraged a "large group of professionals who are paving the way for the future of Spanish architecture". It was said of them that they are "precociously wise", "more competent than risk-takers" and another series of interesting considerations that conveniently supported "those who begin their professional life in an environment increasingly hostile to innovation, and progressively impervious to unexpected proposals." This issue of AV, very well worked, will undoubtedly serve in the future as a necessary reference in this part of the history of contemporary Spanish architecture.

And, as was to be expected, with the lime, there was also the sand. This young generation was claimed, and rightly so, an Orteguian "duty of their age" that should lead them to a greater oppositional thrust. And they were described as novel "in the field of forms but not in that of ideas," to end up understanding that "they exercise their talent almost exclusively in the plastic and visual field."

And at this point - in which, touching me complete that "Hold on, cursed ones!" with reflection on the "even more cursed" young architects in the rest of the country - I would like to focus. Because I believe that the adventure of these young architects is more serious and deeper than a mere formal adventure. That triad of criteria proposed by Moneo in 78 to assess that young then Spanish architecture had the virtue of understanding the essential balance between facts and ideas, between the projected and built reality and the ideas that support it. Understanding, once again, Architecture as a built idea. And that is why I returned and I use again the same criteria to evaluate the group that today is completed here. Many of them, almost all of them, are in that issue

of AV, focused here not only for their young age and their quality, but also for their critical will and their teaching practice that guarantee a creation based on the deepest reason.

The dream of reason produces monsters, and more so in architecture, where dreams remain built forever. In this dislocated and irrational society where reason sleeps, perhaps the greatest rebellion should be shown through a wide awake reason, an architecture with reasons, which is what I understand that, over and above the forms, this young group of damned rebel architects is trying to do.

And with these three registers appear a series of names, which I will now list: Pere Joan Ravetllat with Carme Ribas, and Rafael Aranda with Carme Pigem and Ramón Vilalta in Barcelona. Pepe Morales with Juan González Mariscal and Ignacio and Luis Rubiño with Pura Márquez in Seville. Alfredo Payá in Valencia. Jesús Irisarri with Guadalupe Piñera in La Coruña. In Granada, Juan Domingo Santos. In Valladolid, Gabriel Gallegos with Juan Carlos Sanz. In Pamplona, Miguel A. Alonso del Val and Patxi Mangado. In Las Palmas, Luis Correa; and in San Sebastián, Santos Barea.

Pere Joan Ravetllat and Carme Ribas have a long and good family tradition behind them. Their interest and critical sense would be reflected in that fleeting but very interesting adventure of the A30 (still remain in my memory that of Llinás). His current teaching at the School of Barcelona enjoys great prestige; and some of his works, such as the Institute of S. Pere de Ribes, are of great maturity. The central space, well tensioned by the light, is impressive.

The sharpness and compactness appear as outstanding features of the work of Rafael Aranda, Carme Pigem and Ramón Vilalta. Their teaching is developed in the other School of Barcelona and we can highlight among their works the Faculty of Law of Girona or their most recent and precise guest pavilion of Can Cardenal in Olot. Or that beautiful access pavilion to the Fageda de Jorda.

Ignacio Rubiño with Pura Márquez and Luis Rubiño, from Seville, set up architectures of a special luminosity, such as the Centro Cultural de la Victoria in Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Widely spread, he expresses very well his capacity of synthesis of the contemporary language, with a certain aroma of Siza, with the deepest Andalusian traditions with impeccable results. This is also evident in his homes in Los Palacios.

José Morales and Juan González Mariscal move in the same coordinates and with a greater theoretical load and formal freedom. His best-known work, the Ayuntamiento de Coripe, is a brilliant exercise in the mastery of light as if it were a tight bullfighting. It is to be hoped that the construction of the Zamora Auditorium, built with José María Romero, will serve to consolidate their position. They develop their teaching at the School of Seville in a group of enormous interest, which arouses a special expectation.

To build in India, like Le Corbusier or Kahn does not seem an easy thing to do. For there, in Laore, Alfredo Payá built his first and very beautiful house, and the last one, recently completed in Tarifa, is not far behind. In both his great capacity for precision is evident in an architecture that stands out for its clarity and logic. The Museum for the University

of Alicante, won by competition, is a rotund box floating in a deep excavation in the ground. Still under construction, it will give the measure of its author. As a teacher, it has its own place in the School of Valencia.

I still remember the impressive presence of the "great glass" with which Juan Domingo Santos culminated his exhibition at the Reales Alcazares in Seville. Prestigious teacher at the School of Granada, collaborates with Alvaro Siza (good eye and good beard) in the building to be built there. He has his doctoral thesis ready, where he studies and convinces us of the capacity of modern architecture to adequately continue the discourse of the historic city; he does so in line with Siza's work. He has finished a luminous house in San Matías and is finishing off the project for an impressive Chipie house.

I must confess that it was not at all easy for me to be incorporated into the 111 Biennial of Architecture, even if only as finalists, the great houses in Vigo of some young and for me then unknown architects, Jesus Irisarri and Guadalupe Piñera. The project, the circular courtyard housing, is clear and clean. As was that also impeccable office building for the INEM in Vigo or his first and resounding assembly with cardboard for the Biennial of Photography in 1994.

Of the group of still young architects from Pamplona, working and teaching there, we should point out at least two, who are not only the ones who have built the most works, but are also the most recognized. Although Miguel A. Alonso del Val and Patxi Mangado are at that still young age, and with that critical will and that teaching work, their architecture is already mature. With ripe and abundant fruits.

Alonso del Val, who started out brilliantly at Columbia University, has built buildings of such quality as the Sports Center for the University of Navarra. His successful treatment of light and the good agreement of his materials make the piece of the first order. As a teacher, he has served as Professor with me at the School of Madrid.

Patxi Mangado, who made his first and already great works with Maite Apezteguía, has developed a brilliant career, marked by architectures of great interest, where he has emphasized in a special way the constructive fact, experimenting with new materials used today by everyone. His house in Irache or the Golf Club are clear expressions of his magnificent work.

From Valladolid and from its School of Architecture, the voice of Gabriel Gallegos and Juan Carlos Sanz, who had already shown their high quality in their intervention at the headquarters of the Official College of Architects, is raised. And if the House of Culture of Villamuriel de Cerrato in Palencia, with its well-articulated floor plan and powerful volumes, was a splendid architecture, the smaller public school in Pozal de Gallinas in Valladolid is no less so. The set of walls that enclose the simple yellow-walled structure in a white box, and the way they tighten it, is perfect.

And from the school of Las Palmas, Luis Correa, with works as stupendous as the reworking of the Cuyás cinema. And from the school of San Sebastian, the Loosian Santos Barea shines with his own light.

A splendid writer, a very good friend of mine, used to say that "the novel is not stopping, continuing to see what happens, moving forward mounted on the word. And that poetry is to stop, to stay face to face with the word, to delight in unraveling it, and to fall surrendered at its feet". For all these damned creators, all these more damned architects, have in common that they are all on the side of poetry; and of the time necessary to do things well. Compared to architects who rush hastily into the jaws of fame, popularity or money, without knowing what or why or what for, these most cursed, like those, are sure that not slow at the pace they deem necessary to do things well: an architecture at the pace of poetry, with poetic breath, with rigor and depth, with which they give us. And these even more cursed ones know well that, without poetry, nothing.

The sea, says Sabines the poet, is measured by the waves. And the architect, by his works. This sea of the youngest architects, the most cursed of the cursed, is now a rough sea of great waves, of great ups and downs, with the vehemence that is proper to their state and "duty of their age". It is to be hoped that these brave architects will eventually come to soak the sands of the society of the new millennium with the calm waves of their more mature architecture.