

**THE DANCE HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN**

**On the architecture of Marcos Parga and Idoia Otegui (PO2)**

PUBLISHED IN

Monoespacios Fundación COAM. Madrid, 2005

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Just as the dragon in the legend needed a new maiden every day, who ended up devoured in its jaws, so the tempestuous world of Architecture of our days needs new people of whom nothing remains. Only those who escape survive, those who do not allow themselves to be trapped.

There are architects who would give their lives for a few printed pages, anywhere. There are architects who suffer because they think they do not appear enough in the media. There are architects who do nothing but appear in all the media. And we could go on describing infinite variations on the previous types. But there are also other architects who go their own way, who go to the other shore, who escape, who do not allow themselves to be trapped. Although they sometimes appear in the media because it is impossible to hide architecture. And among these, the free ones, the liberated ones, Marcos Parga and Idoia Otegui.

Under two letters and a number PO2 appear here today these very young architects entering with unstoppable force in this Caucasian chalk circle of emerging architects. With a splendid architecture that we are going to analyze, and that has among others the virtue of being able to be remembered, to remain in the memory.

After studying his work, we will never forget the Numancia Sports Center in Santander, an everlasting piece of wood, nor the Vicálvaro Occupational Center, a tight industrial contraption, nor the Burela sports center even before it was built.

Nor their houses: the T45 in Santiago with its two closed overlapping pieces, or the impeccable P12 in Foz with its metallic skin, or the slanted roof of the M3 in Santa María Alta. All radical houses, with roots.

And it seems that the impressive white vertical space, full of vibrant light, which is the central hall of its recently begun to build Auditorio Ciudad de Lugo, will not be able to leave our retina either. We will toast there one day with the best of the ribeiros, drunk with light.

Chillida said that "all things become important at the edges, at the limits, when things cease to be". And even more so, much more so when we speak of architecture where, whether we want to or not, the outer edges cannot fail to be defined and clear, and where the interiors, because of the light, are as well. And so, precise and with their well-defined edges, appear all the architectures of Parga and Otegui that we are going to try to analyze briefly here.

## PIECES FOR A DANCE

And we are going to analyze here the works in which I consider that some of the most characteristic features of these architects are most clearly manifested: freedom in composition, fairness in the articulation of spaces or the deep understanding of the place.

The Numancia sports center in Santander, his first work of a certain size, produces a strong impact on us already from that resounding image of the wooden box surrounded by children dressed in red. A piece of proportions and dimensions capable of being the nexus of union of the three schools it serves, and at the same time create some very well articulated exterior spaces. The skin of the building, made of light wood studded with pieces of dark wood, as if it were a giraffe, contributes to the ability of this piece to be well remembered. In its very luminous interior, a constructive section that refers to Sota, with some of its Galician finesse. For its clarity and simplicity. Even in the use of the roof as a court for the little ones.

The P12 house, in the estuary of Foz in Lugo, is a strict, radical and strong exercise. And its metallic façade accentuates even more its tension in the landscape. The house opens generously on the first floor with a large horizontal gap from which emerges as a tongue, or rather a carpet that forcefully establishes the dominant horizontal plane. The arrangement of the parts (the mastery of the art of *cisoria*, as Oíza would say), impeccable. The details, precise. A house that would seem to be very mechanically planned but then has the quality of taking on the landscape that welcomes it as its counterpoint.

And as a *pièce de resistance*, as a main course, the Teatro Auditorio Ciudad de Lugo, whose works are about to begin. It is exciting to see in the studio the enormous amount of working models, the result of the doubts, questions and answers inherent to an architecture made with thought and materialized with the hands. As Saramago expresses so well in *The Cave*, a text that all architects should read, with those "like little brains in their fingers" that all creators have. And even more so architects.

Some of us still defend precision, something that has been the stuff of architecture of all times, even those to come. As for poetry and cooking recipes. Qualities and quantities and temperature agreed with numbers, with accuracy. And this project has, in my opinion, the first virtue of its precision. The models that line up in Parga and Otegui's studio are not only the result of an enormous work full of illusion, but also the irrefutable proof of their tenacious search for beauty through maximum precision.

The result is a building with adjusted floors, like the pieces of a clock, which then rises with sections presided over by a central lobby space of great verticality accentuated by light. The light coming from above vibrates sliding down white pleated walls that cause a luminous flood in a space of great drama. A space of great beauty.

## CONCLUSION

The splendid work of Parga y Otegui, short in age, but intense because of its precocious maturity, announces an architecture that interests us in a special way: an architecture that without losing the mechanisms with which history has been endowing it, launches itself to open new paths that build contemporaneity in the deepest sense. A bit blasé in the face of the multiple formalisms that invade us, they are, as I said so long ago about Sota, like going on the other side of the river. Perfectly aware of everything that is happening, but without being swept away by the current. If we were to extract the verbs they use in the mysterious text they use in the exercise they presented at the last Venice Biennale (discern, point out, underline, codify, elaborate, configure, etc.), we could deduce something of their way of thinking. They end their text with "the game is not over" which I would paraphrase with "the dance is not over". For them who have entered this dangerous game of courtly dance that is that of the young emerging architects, "the dance has only just begun". And they have entered on the right foot.

Alberto Campo Baeza

April one, two thousand and five with rain