

**OSCAR NIEMEYER BULLFIGHTER**

**About Oscar Niemeyer**

**PUBLISHED IN**

Oscar Niemeyer. Ed. Cosac & Naif. Sao Paulo, 2008

Pensar con las manos. Ed. Nobuko. Buenos Aires, 2009

## OSCAR NIEMEYER BULLFIGHTER

About Oscar Niemeyer

"He dances when he draws, dances when he thinks and tempers when he builds."

"Bravo, Oscar, bravo!" these well-known words of Le Corbusier are the words used in Spain to praise good bullfighters when they fight well. And something of very good bullfighter, of consecrated master has our architect. Something sublime that I would express, already in bullfighting similes, with "he dances when he draws, dances when he thinks and tempers when he builds". Like the best of bullfighters, like the best of architects. For to those drawings of his, so expressive and generous of curved lines that seem to dance, corresponds a thought that far from being linear and classic in its reasons, jumps over them in a rapturous dance. And then, when he builds, he does so with absolute security and certainty, as if tempering, with the tremendous strength of the best architecture.

I have been honored to be asked to write about the master Oscar Niemeyer to celebrate his 100th birthday. Which, as life would have it, is the age that my father is fortunately going to reach next year. And talking a few days ago with my father, who still has a very clear head and a very generous heart, he confessed to me that when he was studying medicine (he was a magnificent surgeon) he had received 19 Honors, which is the highest grade awarded at the Spanish University. When I asked him why he had not told me this before, his answer was "these things are not told". In his case it is another example of his deep humility. And I say this because sometimes we do not value geniuses enough when they are too close to us. Something of this happens with Oscar Niemeyer, the master. The quality of his work is such that we have become accustomed to it. But this unrepeatable celebration is a unique occasion to proclaim loudly the highest quality of the master's architecture.

I suppose that Niemeyer, as Le Corbusier did with him when he was starting out, will also have encouraged the younger ones. And more than once he will also have shouted to that stupendous architect Mendes da Rocha. "Bravo, Paulo, bravo!". And so Oscar Niemeyer with Paulo Mendes da Rocha and with Le Corbusier, have achieved for Brazil, their country, an ability to be recognized throughout the world for its strong, radical, powerful architecture. Niemeyer's architecture is to Brazil as the Baroque is to Italy or the Gothic is to France. Something more than just a brilliant personal adventure. And those old accusations of radicalism are now like jewels adorning his crown of glory.

Niemeyer's works are basically structures. How could the master's works not be structures? Structures capable of making his architectural artifacts fly like birds. That is what Oscar Niemeyer has done all his life, architectures that overcome gravity and fly to make people dream. As have all the great architects of history. Structures are the works of Le Corbusier and those of Mies Van der Rohe.

And although it is clear that the curves prevail in the architectural forms of Oscar Niemeyer, his architecture is not so much as has been said "the fight against the right angle" as a search for the most logical structure, more radically logical. When it touches right angles, then right angles. But when it comes to diagonal or curve, then curve and diagonal. The overwhelming logic of the hand of Beauty, of Venustas. For if Oscar Niemeyer manages so many times to catch Beauty, he does it by punctually complying with the Utilitas and with the most perfect Firmitas. It seems incredible how those Vitruvian precepts that seem so distant can be so close in the best architecture. In all of Niemeyer's work the Utilitas and the Firmitas and the Venustas always converge with surprising precision. With the curves, and with the straight when necessary.

And if Oscar Niemeyer is a master in the great works, all of them well known, he is also a master in the smaller ones. His Estrada dos Canoas house of 1953 should be studied in the Schools of Architecture together with Mies' Farnsworth House or Le Corbusier's Villa Savoie. Clearly showing us that other paths are possible. The waste of freedom always present in Oscar Niemeyer is combined in this great little house with a deep wisdom to produce a brilliant work, as if it were an archetype.

Or the beautiful 1985 Pantheon of Liberty, which is a prodigy of synthesis of all its architecture flooded with light tinged with shadow. And the Brasília Cathedral of 1970, could not have been done better by a believer. Oscar Niemeyer, a believer in his own way ("leftist, Catholic and sentimental" as Valle Inclán would say) produces a surprising space. I will remember here how his chapels of the 50s, beautiful, like hands catching the sky, had a certain echo in the Spanish religious architecture of those years. And so many other things we could say about the master.

Oscar Niemeyer is a giant of contemporary architecture capable of overcoming time with his work. And today, here, we can happily celebrate the fact that he is still with us. He and his architecture have already gone down in history with a powerful voice.

Congratulations, Master! Bravo, Oscar Niemeyer! Bravo, Oscar, bravo!