

INTIMATE AND NOSTALGIC EXPERTISE

About Luis Peña Ganchegui

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I was lucky to meet Luis Peña Ganchegui in 1982, when we invited him to give a lecture on his work at the School of Architecture in Madrid and he helped us with great generosity to meet Chillida and also to invite him to the School to act as a "client" in a course exercise. A folly.

I was Javier Carvajal's assistant and I had organized with Ignacio Vicens the visits of some of the most prestigious architects of the time. We took Richard Meier and Peter Eisenman, and Alvaro Siza and Mario Botta and Tadao Ando to the School, halfway around the world.

A small group of great students, the best, helped us very effectively. So much so that I decided to invite them to come with me to San Sebastian to see Peña and Chillida. They were Paco Merino, Antonio Sancho and Antonia Segura. People who are still wonderful.

We knew Peña's work through *Arquitectura*, *Hogar y Arquitectura* and *Arquitectura BIS*, but above all through *Nueva Forma*. We will never thank Fullaondo enough for his enormous work.

Peña came to Madrid and gave the conference which, as Antonio Sancho reminds me, was a spectacle.

He came dressed as a typical Basque, with a striped T-shirt and a sailor's sweater, I think he even wore a txapela, and presented a project for a tomb-monument to the "Basque-heroes" surrounded by ikurriñas in a small cemetery in Guipúzcoa. Chillida came to the School with Pili, his wife, twice: to explain the program of the project and to see the result, actively participating in the debate of the corrections. It was incredible.

We spent an unforgettable day in San Sebastian, as can be seen in the photos we have kept. With Peña Ganchegui we first saw his Laboratories of Unión Farmacéutica Guipuzcoana, with an intimate light and nostalgic mastery over Luis Peña Ganchegui 118 precious through the paved walls. I knew the work through an issue of *Arquitecturas BIS*, of whose editorial committee Peña was a member. I don't know if we got to see his Torre de Vista Alegre in Zarauz, which for me remains a key and clear work. Then he invited us to lunch at his own home. Chelo, his wife, was the owner of BD in San Sebastian. And he took us for coffee at Chillida's house, from where we all went, in Peña and Chillida's cars, to the Peine del Viento. There are no words to describe the gift that is the Wind Comb commented by its authors. As Antonio Sancho rightly says, "that's great!"

As the years go by, Peña Ganchegui's great stature as an architect becomes clear. Iñaki Galarraga frames him accurately, comparing him with Sverre Fehn and Utzon, and even with Alvar Aalto. And Miguel Garai is right when he describes Peña's architecture as made with "everyday words in which the style is hidden". Or as Juan Daniel Fullaondo rightly said, "he is an architect of an intimate and nostalgic mastery".

