

VENI, VIDI, VICI

Carvajal returns to New York

PUBLISHED IN

Catálogo de Exposición. Remains of Regional Identities. Twin Houses by Javier Carvajal in Somosaguas. Instituto Cervantes, Nueva York, octubre 2014

VENI, VIDI, VICI

Carvajal returns to New York

Vincent Scully went so far as to write in *Life* that the Spanish pavilion was "the jewel of the New York World's Fair" and Ada Louise Huxtable in the *New York Times* called it "the best work of Architecture at the Fair."

Javier Carvajal arrived in New York in 1964 and *veni, vidi, vici*. Like Julius Caesar after the battle of Zela, Javier Carvajal with the Spanish Pavilion at the World's Fair in New York arrived, saw and won, won all possible awards and distinctions. He arrived, he saw and he convinced. Not in vain was the pavilion a very precious work, hardly conceivable for a country like Spain in 1964.

Now, like the Cid Campeador, after death, Javier Carvajal returns again, after 50 years, to win the battle of New York with an exquisite exhibition in the heart of the city of skyscrapers that he loved so much.

The pavilion was an introverted architecture of courtyards that, being of an indisputable modernity, since there was materialized the spatial fluidity preached by Mies Van der Rohe, the sweeping force of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, and the order of Louis Kahn, also included many of the themes of the Alhambra so dear to Carvajal. It is said that Mies came to see and praise Carvajal's pavilion and even congratulated him personally. Salvador Dalí and Ada Louise Huxtable's praise in the *New York Times* and Vincent Scully's in *Life*, in May 1964, were public and published.

The pavilion was inaugurated by the then very young princes of Spain, Juan Carlos and Sofia, who were here watching their first weapons. They were accompanied by Cabot Lodge, the American friend, the American ambassador in Madrid who would later stay to live in Spain, and by Fernando Castiella, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs.

We celebrate with this exhibition the 50th anniversary of this event. 50 years in which too many things have happened in the history of Spain and in the history of Carvajal. Javier Carvajal left us shortly after receiving the Gold Medal of Spanish Architecture in 2013. His long biography, full of exceptional works and awards, culminated in the Spanish Pavilion in New York.

Then came the Somosaguas house that the architect built for his family and which received the Fritz Schumacher of the T. University of Hannover, the most prestigious prize awarded by the Germans every year, which attests to the exceptional quality of that work. And just as happened with Wright's Casa de la Cascada, the Somosaguas house became the protagonist of the film by Saura, one of the best Spanish film directors. And through this beautiful space by Javier Carvajal, Geraldine Chaplin, the granddaughter of Charles Chaplin himself, moved, directed by Saura as if she were at home. The film was called *La Madriguera* (The Burrow) and was a great success.

And although his extensive teaching work, both in Madrid and in Pamplona, has been magnificent, it cannot eclipse the first-rate architecture of a master such as Javier

Carvajal. This exhibition in New York is a testimony to the architectural work of a true master whose figure grows larger with time.

No place could be more suitable for this exhibition in New York than the Instituto Cervantes headquarters on 49th Street, in a former Post Office house with a beautiful courtyard in the heart of Manhattan. Javier Carvajal would like it.

Carvajal was assisted by New York architects Kelly & Gruzen. And Carvajal took with him the best contemporary Spanish painters and sculptors of the time. From Ferreras to Torner. And there was a particularly beautiful piece which was the figure of Isabella the Catholic. I think that the idea of the queen holding an open pomegranate in her hands must have been Carvajal's idea, who suggested it to José Luis Sánchez. The magnificent piece now presides over the OAS building on 17th Street in Washington.

This exhibition comes, at the right time and in the right space, to put in place the figure of Javier Carvajal. As a master of architecture in the cross of his time and space, in the cross of his teaching and his wonderful work. Javier Carvajal, the Master.