

**CODERCH IN FRONT OF THE SEA**

**Ugalde House in Caldetas, by José Antonio Coderch**

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I want to remember where I saw that image for the first time and I can't remember. I do know that for a long time I associated the name of José Antonio Coderch with that fascinating image of his Ugalde House in Caldetas. An abstract plan facing the sea, which seemed immense to me, with Antonio Bonet's BKF armchair as an effective counterpoint.

The photograph, of course! was by Catalá Roca. And it appears on page 247 of AEC, *Arquitectura Española Contemporánea* by Carlos Flores. The book, published by Aguilar in 1961, is now seen as an essential document for the history of Spanish Architecture of those years. I am lucky enough to have an original copy of the original 1961 edition. And I have been surprised to find that this image does not appear in some of the monographs on Coderch that have been published since then.

The Ugalde House, from 1952, is one of Coderch's most beautiful works. Not only is it a masterful piece, but its validity is absolute. It could be made today by the most avant-garde of young architects. On the great platform the plants dance, they move with an unthinkable freedom. All conceivable curves are there perfectly agreed upon. I am reminded of the curved plan of Mies Van der Rohe's Friedrichstrasse project.

But, above all, the flat horizontal plane. Coderch's proposal is logical and classic: a wide platform facing the sea, which here proves to be of proven effectiveness. The establishment of a horizontal plane facing the sea, or facing any landscape with a distant horizon, is such an effective mechanism that it was wisely used by the Greeks, Palladio and even Mies Van der Rohe.

The horizontal plane, which is the first thing that man builds, reaches its culmination when man, as an architect, discovers that, on that horizontal plane in height, at the precise height, all the surrounding space is dominated.

In the Greek temples on that high plane, on that podium, the temenos, the architects framed the landscape through the imposing columns.

Palladio, of course, having learned his lesson, practiced framing the Venetian landscape through the porticoes of his villas.

Mies, in his Farnsworth House, masterfully establishes the order of space through his columns, after raising the horizontal plane to eye level.

But it will be a small David of architecture, Adalberto Libera, who in his Villa Malaparte, will free the horizontal plane from any hindrance. A house that, although small, seems big.

And Coderch, in his Ugalde house, deploys a larger plane than the one in front of his house in such a way that it has the capacity to sublimely emphasize the sea that can be seen in the distance.

Well, it is in this attempt, that of emphasizing the landscape with a large horizontal plane, stripped of any element, that I find myself now. In my latest projects, a platform in Cadiz, between the two Cathedrals, a Landscape Interpretation Center in Lanzarote, and the House of Infinity in Tarifa. All three facing the Atlantic Ocean, all three on high ground. In all these works, radical, a flat horizontal plane, high, to contemplate and to be in front of that landscape of more than distant infinite horizon.