

**I'M STILL LEARNING**

**On the architecture of Renè Pérez Gómez**

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A wonderful exhibition of Goya's drawings is currently on display at the Prado Museum in Madrid to celebrate the 200th anniversary of its inauguration. One of the drawings, G54, is that of an old man with white hair and white beard, leaning on two staffs and staring out at us. It is generally believed to be a self-portrait of Goya himself. And above the drawing is the expressive caption: *Aun Aprendo* (I'm still learning). These words from the great painter have given me much food for thought.

Watching the images of the stunning architecture of a wonderful young Mexican architect René Pérez Gómez unfold before my eyes, I could not help but exclaim: I AM STILL LEARNING.

I have to admit that, despite my advanced years, I was still surprised by the outstanding quality of the architecture of such a young Mexican architect. This is architecture that is simple, not minimalist. An architecture that is sober, not simply clean. Logical, not rationalist. Architecture that is laconic, which is exactly how I described the architecture of my Spanish *maestro*, Alejandro de la Sota.

Alongside publications of bizarre, flamboyant architectures I'm weary of seeing others reportedly in the same vein as those of Campo Baeza: minimalist, rationalist, clean. Yet what they really are is dull, insipid, bland. It's not that they have little to say, but that they say nothing at all. Nonetheless, they are artfully presented with images capable of seducing us.

The works of René Pérez Gómez, on the other hand, are magnificent in their simple simplicity, in their utter sobriety. Presenting well-articulated orthogonal lines, they employ effective mechanisms of compression and dilation, of shadows and light and spatial continuity. Nor does this architect fall into the trap of copying Barragán in his colors, which were brilliant in the work of the *maestro*, but somewhat ridiculous in his imitators. René Pérez Gómez builds a very Mexican and at the same time very luminous architecture.

The Casa Pradera in Zapopan, Jalisco, is impressive. And at my age I'm not easily impressed when it comes to architecture, whether fanciful or straight-lined. Nonetheless, we teachers have a kind of sixth sense that allows us to discover architecture like this, which is truly worthwhile.

Impeccable, logical floor plans, well ordered by a central double-height space that opens onto the garden in vertical lines. Continuous space as proposed by the Modern Movement, which is so perfectly understood and developed here.

Casa TC in Tlajomulco, Jalisco, is also very simple and beautiful. That serenity already evident on the outside extends to an interior of prodigious luminosity. Some of the mechanisms already seen in the Casa Pradera, such as the double-height glazed space, have been used to connect everything. A house in which one would like to live.

And the Yurecuaro House in Michoacán, which is still in the process of construction, incorporates enclosing walls in the local stone masonry, which perfectly integrate the architecture with the site. The same type of stone is used to build several enclosures between the house and the walls, which further contributes to the unity of the whole.

The LR Clinic in Zapopan, Jalisco, is a brilliant white, luminous space contained within two reinforced concrete walls. A real gem.

I could describe this and all the architecture of this young Mexican architect with the same words I have used to define Sota's architecture: the architecture of René Pérez Gómez possesses that extreme elegance of the right gesture, of the exact phrase that caresses the silence. The silence of the work and the architect that has the uncanny ability to fascinate us. So close to poetry, to poetic breath, to silent music.