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# **Architectural Strategies**

**(Marketing, Icon, Politics, Masses, Developer, the No. 1)**

**Eduard Sancho Pou**

**Foreword by Eduard Bru**



**EDUARD SANCHO POU** is the head of an architecture studio where he combines his work as an architect with his strategic consultancy activities. In the past, he was the director of **Galería BCA** (Barcelona Centre Arquitectura), where he organized architecture exhibitions, colloquia and conferences attended by international architects. He has also been an architectural consultant with the Swiss multinational **Holcim**, for the announcement of the **Holcim Architectural Awards**.

**Sancho Pou** holds a doctorate (*cum laude*) from the **Polytechnic University of Catalonia, Barcelona Tech**. He is currently a member of **Cercle d'Arquitectura Research Group (UPC)** and teaches to **Phd students** at the same university.

**COVER PHOTO@** *D'après moi, le déluge*  
(**Quentin Bertoux/Agence VU**, 2008)



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Ediciones Península

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info@edicionespeninsula.com

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# Foreword

## I

The thesis of the book is quite clear. To practise architecture you need commissions. To obtain commissions you have to be in the market for intangible goods because, unlike fruit and vegetables, the product to be sold does not yet exist at the time of purchase. Therefore, to sell their services architects have had to develop marketing strategies – though they do not always admit it, as Eduard Sancho Pou notes.

Because a constructed work is in itself a strategy, how are the sales strategies related to the formal and creative strategies of design aimed at achieving something tangible and habitable by coordinating form and technique, use and materials? Does one type of strategy take precedence over the other? In the past, was it the creative strategy that generated the sales strategy? Is it now the opposite? And what if they come together in a single strategy? Should they do so?

As Eduard Sancho Pou writes, marketing know-how has not been taught in architecture schools, or at least not until this book came out. What is new is that, whereas traditionally supply depended on demand, supply now takes precedence over demand. Procurement involves more and more conditions and an increasing level of detail, which have a direct effect on the results.

We might generalise by saying that for medium and small budgets the 'right' supply-based demand would be to repeat what has worked in the past. Why change if it works? For high budgets, on the other hand, the standard demand is for architecture to provide what is supposedly new (or *exclusive*, in the most repulsive and fascist sense of the word).

Both attitudes are repugnant to architects involved in serious design: if necessary they will repeat, if necessary they will innovate. And there are always reasons for innovating, improving or changing, because each programme is magnificently different, as is each place and each situation.



Architects innovate to respond as fully as possible to the specific conditions instead of offering a trite mantra.

## II

Let us consider the space that Eduard Sancho Pou devotes to his heroes; or are they anti-heroes?

Koolhaas has spent his life trying to make a system out of everything, from his two firms whose names mirror each other (OMA and AMO) to his commissions to design landmark buildings. In these commissions, too, he manages to define systematic containers crammed full of little boxes that are twisted according to the place to obtain a forceful (and ironic) prominence.

I would really like to see these designs in the way that Koolhaas sees them. They have the merit of offering a defensible solution to the demand for prominence whilst fitting within the principles of architectural culture: structural logic, flexibility, repeatability, good circulation and absence of trivial ornamentation. I would say that Koolhaas sees marketing as just another integrated system. It is not negated but is driven to interact with other variables of the time. I see Qingyun Ma as a lighter extension of this strategy and the marvellous Nash, and Moynihan as their predecessors.

Gensler and Burdett are prescribers of architecture, the former through a large firm. Gensler take the more conventional approach, designing what is most marketable in each case. Their fine-tuned predictability, elevated almost to the level of art, makes the architect immune to any risk of failure (which probably explains their commercial success) and also to any chance of offering novelty. Novelty involves taking risks in dealing with the programme, rewriting the problem in addition to solving it. Koolhaas often does that; Gensler never do. The great change is that corporate clients are increasingly calling for strategies a situation that is well analysed by Eduard Sancho Pou.

### III

But is this a great change or rather the apotheosis of modern design? In its purest original form, modern design tirelessly defended strategy above all things: from Gropius (the functional strategy) to Le Corbusier (see what Koolhaas says of him in *Delirious New York*) and even Mies (the platonic strategy, as will be demonstrated by a forthcoming thesis of the Department of Architectural Design).

The enemies are not the architects that Sancho Pou analyzes, not the strategy vendors. The enemies are the vendors of manners. I therefore believe that this book works on a level that may not be apparent at first glance.

Ultimately, the author is fighting for a cause that may not be grasped from a hasty reading. Like Walter Benjamin's relentless Angelus Novus, who is blind to all except the smoking rubble that he leaves behind, Sancho Pou's Modern Angelus Novus forges through the chaotic reality creating an order that is not necessarily perceptible.

DR. EDUARD BRU

Professor of Architectural Design and Director of  
the Cercle D'Arquitectura Research Group at the  
Polytechnic University of Catalonia, Barcelona Tech

*"I found your book fascinating and very well done. I believe your concepts in the article Gensler and OMA are correct."*

ART GENSLE, founder of Gensler, San Francisco:  
Global firm with more than 3,000 architects and 42 offices worldwide.

*"Eduard Sancho Pou interprets architecture from the point of view of what seems to work in the complex economic, political, commercial and social reality inherent in today's global situation. A fresh take on architecture seen through strategy rather than theory."*

BJARKE INGELS, founder of BIG, Copenhagen and New York based group of architects.  
Visiting Professor at the Yale School of Architecture

*"The conclusions encourage greater strategic thinking, and this is the books' most positive message because it promote action in practice, encouraging the architect to instigate, as much as to react."*

STEPHEN BATES, founder of Sergison Bates architects, offices in London and Zurich. Professor of Urbanism and Housing at TU München.

*"This book offers a fresh interpretation of the figure of the architect, which has always been linked to design and is now starting to be linked to entrepreneurial adventure, intellectual adventure and cross-sectional adventure, in which research is fundamental."*

MANEL GAUSA, dean of the Institut Arquitectura Avançada Catalunya (IAAC) and director of the Doctoral School of the University of Genova UNIGE.

*"Architectural Strategies may seem harsh in that it views architects no longer as professionals, but as consultants. Architects must interpret their clients' needs and preferences. And this may lead to a change in the very concept of architecture, while granting priority to the developer's criteria, over any others."*

ALFREDO PASTOR, professor of Economics at IESE Business School and holder of the Banco Sabadell Chair in Emerging Economies, Barcelona

*"If architecture is about coherent processes, Architectural Strategies must start from disruptive opportunities."*

QINGYUN MA, dean of the University of Southern California's School of Architecture and founder of the firm MADA spam, Shanghai

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