

now more complete, of Ángel Fernández Alba's work. Two other works, until now unknown, would be missing for us to know the whole of his current projects; I refer to the chancelleries of the Spanish embassies in Stockholm and Helsinki, both nearly finished at this time, both very different in the function of the topological conditions of their surroundings and both, finally, allusive to their author's interest in the works of Asplund and Aalto again, coherent in the face of the geographical setting in which they occur. Nevertheless, neither diversity nor quantity are values in themselves, so that the work of an architect deserves enthusiastic admiration. It is not in them that our interest in the work of Ángel

resides, but in other qualities that crop up that are not born of necessity but of the more vital desire to inquire and respond, those that create and choose their active will, the less quantifiable, those that we cannot even measure. That quality of which Cesare Brandi speaks to us in the quotation that opens this text, seems, to me, more applicable to the how than to the what or the how many, in the way that in each work its formal structure is evident —the type— and the structure of its effects —the character and the space— than to other measurable data.

Nietzsche said (I quote from memory): "The interest that a philosopher kindles in me depends on his capacity to give us an example". I have

never doubted, following his own standard, his legitimacy to sustain that aphorism as an example of a man who lived and thought intensely and dangerously to the limit of his capacity. Deducing the correlate applicable to the architect, in himself also the explariness of the biography and of the work are intertwined and work together, the simultaneous path of both is therefore vital and professional at one and the same time. And it is usually a long and difficult path for which the constant, devoted, silent and difficult quality of the long-distance runner has always seemed to me exemplary.



Vista del montaje, sala de exposiciones COAM.
A view of the exhibition, COAM Exhibition Hall.



El arte por los suelos, conversaciones en las nubes. A propósito de la obra de Ángel Fernández-Alba

Art at Ground Level, Conversations in the Clouds. With Regard to the Work of Ángel Fernández-Alba

PEDRO URZAIZ/CARLOS PÉREZ-PLA

Pedro Urzaiz y Carlos Pérez-Plá son arquitectos y socios. Su artículo "El Big Crunch" fue publicado en *Arquitectura*, 290. Pedro Urzaiz es profesor de proyectos de la Escuela de Arquitectura de Madrid. Este texto es un comentario a la exposición *5 proyectos + 6 metáforas urbanas*, sobre la obra del arquitecto Ángel Fernández Alba, que tuvo lugar en la Sala de Exposiciones del COAM durante los meses de enero/febrero, 1992.

Pedro Urzaiz and Carlos Pérez-Plá are architects and partners. Their article, "The Big Crunch", was published in Arquitectura, 290, Pedro Urzaiz is a Professor of Design at the Madrid Architecture School. This text is a commentary on the exhibition, 5 Projects + 6 Urban Metaphors, on the work of architect Ángel Fernández Alba, which was held in the Exhibition Hall of the COAM, during the months of January/February 1992. Translated by Muriel Feiner.

Soy partidario de un arte que toma su forma de las líneas de la vida, un arte que se extiende imposiblemente y que acumula y escupe y chorrea, y que es dulce y estúpido como la vida misma. Soy partidario de un artista que se esfuma y aparece con gorro blanco, pintando letreros o vestíbulos.

Soy partidario del arte encima del cual te puedes sentar..., soy partidario del arte que se enciende y se apaga con interruptor. Soy partidario del arte que se despliega como un mapa, que puedes apretar como el brazo de tu chica, o besar como el perro de casa. Un arte que se dilata y chirría como un acordeón, un arte en el que se puede derramar la cena, como encima de un mantel viejo. Soy partidario de un arte con que hacer martillazos, con que hacer punto, coser, pegar, afilar las cosas. Soy partidario de un arte que te dá la hora del día y que ayuda a las viejecitas a cruzar la calle.

Sí, mejor pródigo que tacaño. Preferiría dar atributos antropomórficos a una piedra que deshumanizar la más ligera posibilidad de consciencia.

No creo que las disciplinas extrañas a la arquitectura puedan ayudar mucho al arquitecto. La habilidad depende del conocimiento de nuestra disciplina.

... es signo de modernidad poder adoptar un camino y renunciar a él.

Es evidente que el origen de la arquitectura no era la choza primitiva, sino más bien el acto primordial de marcar la tierra. Como decía: "Antes de transformar un soporte en una columna, un tejado en un tímpano, antes de colocar piedra sobre piedra, el hombre colocó la piedra sobre la tierra para reconocer un emplazamiento en medio de un universo para tenerlo en cuenta y modificarlo".

... bien pensado. Por el lado de adentro, una sandía es mucho más interesante que un dolar.

El espacio que queda entre los edificios es mucho más importante que los edificios mismos; éste es el espacio urbano y colectivo por excelencia y el que cualifica a la ciudad moderna.

Yo: algunas veces veo algo y entonces lo pinto. Otras veces pinto algo y luego lo veo. Las dos son situaciones impuras, y no tengo preferencia por ninguna de las dos.

PARA ESTABLECER UN CONCEPTO HAY QUE TENER IDEAS, PERO NO CUALQUIER IDEA. HAY QUE ELEGIRLAS. SE TRATA DE UN EFECTO SINÉRGICO ENTRE DIVERSAS IDEAS, CUIDADOSAMENTE ELEGIDAS PARA LA OCASIÓN EN FUNCIÓN DE UN PROGRAMA QUE REPRESENTA DETERMINADAS HIPÓTESIS DE UN PROBLEMA QUE SE DEBE RESOLVER. ES ALGO DEL ORDEN DE LA INTERACCIÓN, DE LA CONEXIÓN, DE LA PROFUNDIDAD, DE LA COMPLEJIDAD, DEL SENTIDO, DE LOS SENTIDOS: DICHO DE OTRO MODO, DEL MATIZ. SE TRATA DE UTILIZAR LO MEJOR POSIBLE LAS CARACTERÍSTICAS ESPECÍFICAS DE LAS CONDICIONES DEL PROYECTO, DEL LUGAR, DEL PROGRAMA, DEL MOMENTO, DE LOS HOMBRES: ES EL MODO DE HALLAR EL LÍMITE DE LO POSIBLE, EL UMBRAL DE LA UTOPIA, ESA FRONTERA DONDE ACONTECE SIEMPRE LA ARQUITECTURA.

Es claro: ... Mis ideas son mis espectativas.

La calidad de la idea es como los recortables de Matisse. Usted puede imaginar a Matisse como un señor mayor con unas tijeras y unas cartulinas haciendo aquello con una gran autoridad.

Lo esencial de la arquitectura es a la vez la idea —con toda su carga conceptual filosófica y humana— y la construcción —con toda su solidez, dignidad, monumentalidad y expresividad.

Nos gusta pensar que la industrialización es despreciable. No sé que me parece. Hay algo terriblemente quebradizo en ella. Supongo que todavía preferiría sentarme bajo un árbol con la cesta de la merienda a sentarme bajo el surtidor de gasolina, pero los letreros y los "comics" son interesantes como temas. Hay algunos aspectos del arte comercial que son aprovechables, enérgicos y vitales. Estamos utilizando esas cosas, pero en realidad no estamos defendiendo la estupidez, el quinceañerismo o el terrorismo internacional.

La primera vez que estuve en Pisa, me dirigí hacia la plaza. Al acercarme viendo en la distancia un escorzo del campanario, me sentí tan satisfecho que me paré de golpe y entré en una tienda a comprar una fea chaqueta inglesa. No atreviéndome a entrar en la plaza, me desvié por otras calles dándole vueltas, pero sin llegar nunca a ella.

No haces la letra "C" para luego rellenar el

blanco en el círculo. Cuando la gente describe las formas en el sentido "calígrafo" lo que realmente quiere decir es "lineal".

... La arquitectura invade el tiempo como la pintura el espacio.

Estoy más cómodo en el suelo. Me siento más cerca, más parte del cuadro, ya que de esta manera puedo pasear a su alrededor, trabajar desde los cuatro costados y estar literalmente dentro de la pintura.

Yo creo que hay que insistir, entrelazar, rodear, otra vez, como el verano pasado, como el año pasado.

El suelo griego no era homogéneo. Venía comprendido como secuencia de demarcaciones, como secuencia de límites. Por eso tanta densidad de habitantes sagrados. Cualquier fuente, roca, bosquecillo tenía su divinidad. Cualquier accidente geográfico que pudiera designarse, que fuera aquel y no otro, quedaba sobrecargado con el título de su habitante. La personalidad que lo poblaban identificaba la extensión y carácter de cada parcela. Los nombres de las deidades eran descripciones paisajísticas, los topónimos eran nombres de caracteres personales, basta traducir para advertirlo: la frondosa, la ventosa, los escarpados, la que llueve de mañana, la sonora, la rocosa, la verdeante, la copiosa...

Recuerdo que en un momento de gran agitación, alguien intentó calmar a todo el mundo, exhortándonos a que la solución de todo aquello era enviar un telegrama a Le Corbusier, propuesta que recuerdo que produjo gran hilaridad en cierto grupo latino más o menos de vuelta...

Lo que ves es lo que ves.

(Voluntarios e involuntarios conversadores en las nubes por orden de aparición han sido: CLAES OLDENBURG, MARK ROTHKO, FRANCESCO VENEZIA, VITORIO GREGOTTI, CHARLES MOORE, DENYS LADUN, JASPER JOHNS, JEAN NOUVEL, ROBERT VENTURI, FRANK O. GEHRY, SVERRE FEHN, ROY LICHTENSTEIN, LOUIS KAHN, FRANZ KLINE, JUAN NAVARRO, JACKSON POLLOCK, CHUBBY CHECKER, JOSÉ QUETGLÁS, FEDERICO CORREA, FRANK STELLA Y PEDRO URZAIZ Y CARLOS PÉREZ-PLÁ.)

I am in favor of an Art which takes its form from the lines of life, an Art which extends itself to impossible limits and which accumulates and spits out and pours forth, and which is sweet and stupid, as life itself. I am in favor of an artist who disappears and appears with a white cap, painting signs or hallways.

I am in favour of Art on which you can sit... I am in favor of Art which is turned on and off with a switch. I am in favor of Art which can be unfolded like a map, which can be squeezed tightly as the arm of your best girl, or kissed as the household dog. An Art which expands and squeals as an accordion, an Art upon which one can spill the dinner, as on top of an old tablecloth. I am in favor of an Art which is made with blows from a hammer, or with knitting, sewing, pasting, sharpening of things. I am in favor of an Art which tells you the time of day and which helps old ladies cross the street.

Yes, better generous than stingy. I would prefer to give anthropomorphic attributes to a stone than de-humanize the slightest possibility of conscience.

I do not believe that the disciplines foreign to Architecture can help the architect very much. Ability depends on the knowledge of our subject matter.

... it is the sign of Modernity to be able to adopt one road and renounce it.

It is evident that the origin of Architecture was not the primitive hut; but rather, the major act of marking the land. As I said: "Before transforming a support into a column, a roof into a tympanum, before placing stone upon stone, Man placed the stone on the ground in order to recognize a location in the middle of a universe, in order to take it into account and modify it".

... well thought out. From the inside, a watermelon is much more interesting than a dollar.

The space which is found between the building is much more important than the buildings themselves; this is the urban and collective space par excellence and what qualifies the modern city.

Now: sometimes, I see something and then I paint it. Other times, I paint something and then I see it. The two are impure situations and I have no preference for one or the other.

IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A CONCEPT, YOU HAVE TO HAVE IDEAS, BUT NOT ANY IDEA. YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE THEM. IT IS A SYNERGIC EFFECT AMONG DIVERSE IDEAS, CAREFULLY SELECTED FOR THE OCCASION IN TERMS OF A PROGRAM WHICH REPRESENTS CERTAIN HYPOTHESES OF A PROBLEM WHICH ONE MUST RESOLVE. IT IS SOMETHING OF THE ORDER OF THE INTERACTION, OF THE CONNECTION, OF THE PROFUNDITY, OF THE COMPLEXITY, OF THE MEANING, OF THE SENSES: EXPRESSED IN ANOTHER WAY, THE NUANCE. IT IS TRYING TO MAKE THE BEST USE POSSIBLE OF THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROJECT'S CONDITIONS, OF THE PLACE, OF THE PROGRAM, OF THE MOMENT, OF THE MEN; IT IS THE WAY OF FINDING THE LIMIT OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE, THE THRESHOLD OF UTOPIA, THAT BORDER WHERE ARCHITECTURE ALWAYS TAKES PLACE.

It is clear: ... My ideas are my expectations.

The quality of the idea is like the cut-outs of Matisse. You can imagine Matisse as an older man with a pair of scissors and some cardboard, doing that with great authority.

What is essential about Architecture is in turn the idea —with all its conceptual philosophical and human burden— and the construction —with all its solidity, dignity, monumentality and expressivity.

We like to think that industrialization is contemptible. I don't know what I think. There is something terribly fragile in it. I assume that I would still prefer to sit down under a tree with a picnic basket, than sit down under the gasoline pump, but the signs and the comics are interesting as subjects. There are some aspects of commercial art which are usable, energetic and vital. We are using those things, but in reality we are not defending stupidity, behavior of fifteen year-olds or international terrorism.

The first time that I was in Pisa, I went to the square. As I approached, seeing in the distance a foreshortened figure of the belltower, I felt so satisfied that I stopped suddenly and went into a store to buy an ugly English jacket. Not daring to enter the square, I made a detour through other streets,

making a lot of turns, but never quite reaching the square.

You don't make the letter "C" in order to fill in the blank part to make a circle. When the people describe the forms in the "caligraphic" sense, what they really mean to say is "linear".

... Architecture invades time as painting, space.

I am more comfortable on the ground. I feel closer, more a part of the painting, for in this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and be literally inside the painting.

Let's twist again, like we did last summer, like we did last year.

The Greek ground was not homogeneous. It was comprised as a sequence of limitations, a sequence of limits. Therefore, there is such a density of sacred inhabitants. Any spring, rock, small forest had its divinity. Any geographical accident which could be designated, which was that and no other, was overloaded with the title of its inhabitant. The personality which populated it, identified the extension and character of that piece of ground. The names of the deities were scenic descriptions, the toponyms were names of personal characters, it was enough to translate in order to realize it: the leafy, the windy, the cliffs, the one which rains in the morning, the loud, the rocky, the green one, the plentiful....

I remember that in a moment of great agitation, someone intended to calm down everyone, by exhorting that the solution to everything was to send a telegram to Le Corbusier, a proposal that I recall, produced great hilarity in a certain more or less experienced Latin group...

What you see is what you see.

(Voluntary and involuntary in the clouds in order of appearance have been:

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