

Presentation and Representation – An Outline for a Critical Interpretation of the “New Generation” of Spanish Architecture

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Abstract

The continuous development of the Spanish economy, the large investments, the transformation of the society and the increase in international connections, had drawn public attention to contemporary Spanish architecture by the millennium. Through the medium of the press, the transformation of Spanish architecture is observable, with Spanish periodicals and monographs gaining ground among the international professional issues, headed by the Spanish-English magazine *El Croquis*. Moreover, we are eyewitnesses to the emergence of the new Spanish architect generation, whose young associates have attracted considerable international interest; their works being built all over the world, enriching their reputation. This paper searches for the answer to the question: how did Spanish architecture reach public awareness from the complete isolation, and what kind of social, cultural and economic factors played a part in this process.

Keywords

contemporary Spanish architecture · Iberian Peninsula · representation

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Introduction

In reference to the Spanish architects appearing during the building expansion of the late 1990s to early 2000, some authors speak directly about the formation of a new architect generation. William J. R. Curtis in a volume of the *El Croquis*, divides the architects born in the 1960s (more exactly between 1957 and 1970) as a NEW SPANISH GENERATION¹. In his opinion, they are old enough to remember the time of the Franco regime, but they started practicing in a country open to the outside with a strengthened urban middle class. From a social point of view we can undeniably speak about a generation with a unified identity, however, these young Spanish architects who appeared from the 1990s to 2000, are not necessarily a strongly connected generation. The psychologist, László Garai, stated that the terms for the formation of a unified generation, are that a social stratum has to be deeply influenced by a historic challenge at a certain age². Though this unified historic imprint was noticeable during the dictatorship, the elapsed time moderated the situation.

This research paper presents those economic, social and cultural aspects – illustrated by examples – that affected the architects of the examined era and those processes that resulted in the diversity of this generation.

The analysis is based on publications that have represented Spanish architecture over recent decades (the synthetic writings of David Cohn, William J R Curtis, Terence Riley, Gabriel Ruiz Cabrero and Alejandro Zaera Polo among others), and the work of authors who, as outsiders, attempted to define the mainstream. This was completed by the analysis of the designer perspective,

1 Curtis W J R, *Territories of Investigation*, *El Croquis* Nr 118, 2003, En proceso, pp. 4-23. (named architects: Alonso (1951), García-Solera (1958), Payá (1961), Ábalos (1956), Herreros (1958), Nieto (1957), Sobejano (1957), Tuñón (1958), Mansilla (1959), S&Aa - Palacios Díaz (1960), Soriano (1961), RCR - Vilalta (1960), Aranda (1961), Pigem (1962), Juan Domingo Santos (1961), FOA - Zaera-Polo (1963), Moussavi (1965), NoMad - Arroyo (1964), Ocaña (1966), Cero 9 – García Grinda(1966), Díaz Moreno (1971), Alonso (1966), Acebo (1969)

2 Hunyady Gy, *Generáció és identitás*, *Alkalmazott Pszichológia*, 1999. I/1. pp. 67–73

the inner point of view that evolved through narration and the building and writings of practicing architects. The aim of the research was to relate the oeuvres of designers to the economic-social-cultural background and transformations of the country, to discover the system of connections and to examine why there are still disintegrating, parallel tendencies inside the generation that was traditionally regarded as unified.

The identity of contemporary Spanish architects can be readily approached through the ideas of PRESENTATION ('demonstration, introduction') and REPRESENTATION ('depicting, deputising, expression, designation'), according to the way in which they see and how they express themselves in both national and international forums. This includes the publishing of architectural work and theories, (the domination of Spanish periodicals and monographs among the internationally quoted professional publications, with the journal *El Croquis* heading the list), the main streams of architectural research, and their participation in competitions, exhibitions and education inside and outside Spain. However, these factors are inseparable from the economic, social and cultural background of the 1990s, which was the basis and trigger for the changes. This paper analyses the related factors, not stylistically, but in a way, by reflecting on national and international impacts, searching the unique characteristics beyond the unified tendencies.

The demand for renewal is strongly connected to the regionalist tendency of the 1960s that attempted to find local ways of expression, based on its own cultural values, in order to escape the moral crisis of Modernism (controlled by the government) fitting the actual/realistic economic and social possibilities. On the one hand, the slow economic mechanism generated by the isolation, triggered the architects to innovatively apply simple, existing techniques; however, on the other hand, the search for national architecture – and at the same time turning away from the international movements – dictated by the cultural politics is in coherence with self-reflective initiations of other nations of the time³.

The regionalist houses of the architects of the 1960s, who were educated during modernism, are results of this claim of representation (the modern as a point of reference, and side by side, the local traditions of construction based on own cultural memory⁴). We also attempt to evolve this through the interpretation of master-student relationships and by the research from the "architectural schools" that came into existence. However, traditional modernity has also been the point of reference for the last 20 years of contemporary Spanish architecture. The

dynamic transformation of the cultural and social medium after the dictatorship – that is obviously traceable and can be recognised due to the wide spectrum of economic opportunities – also started with the reinterpretation of attachment to early Modernism. A related representative event was the reconstruction of the Barcelona Pavilion with the evaluating exploration of the connected intellectuality, to find rapid and adequate answers in the new construction environment, and to find new ways of expression with the help of self-invented techniques. The critical regionalist architects and the architectural works known from the international press due to the theoretical writings of Kenneth Frampton, are transitional compared to our research periods. Additionally, due to its significant presence in the specialised literature, this theme is not part of this paper, which aims to define the basis of research. Furthermore, the intellectual connection with modern architecture is supposed to be found in the synthesizing approach of contemporary architecture.

The conception of presentation is interpreted as self-refer-

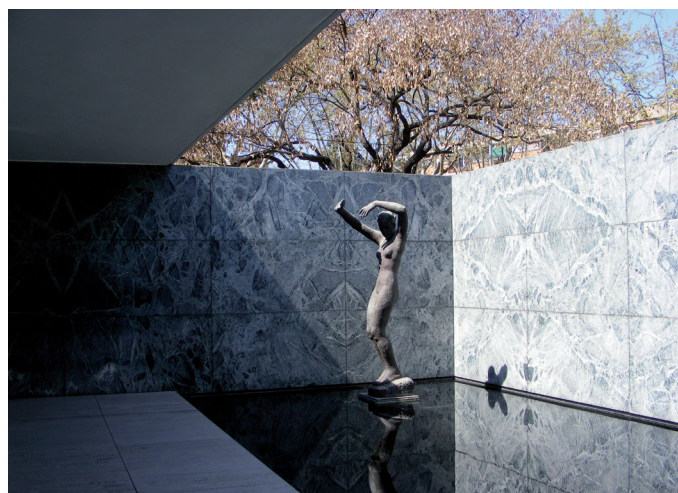


Fig. 1. Barcelona Pavilion, Barcelona, 1929/86. Architect: Mies van der Rohe. Picture: author

ence: we analyse the context and relationships of the masters determinant in the education of this "new generation" with the international Modernism and with their own architectural traditions. This new generation characteristically worked in the 60 and 70s, so their role is also the most important concerning the examples of Spanish architecture and cultural continuity. These references of self-representation can be extended and re-interpreted in two ways; the relationship of the new generation towards their masters, and their connection to Spanish Modernism. The instrument for this extension is the background

³ Like the architectural problems connected to the cultural politics of the other Iberian nation during the dictatorship: research by Centro de Estudos Arnaldo Araújo and Escola Superior Artística do Porto (Popular Architecture in Portugal. A critical look - FCT: PTDC/AUR-AQI/099063/2008) at a conference in Hungary (BME, Budapest, 08.10.2010) **Cardoso A, Maia, M H, Tradition and Modernity. The Historiography of the Survey of Popular Ar-**

chitecture in Portugal (summary: **Vukoszávlyev Z, Approaches to Modernity. Metszet 6/ 2010. pp.12-13.**)

⁴ The paper does not aim to define the concept of cultural identity. For comparison: **Assmann J, Czaplicka J, Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. New German Critique. (No.65) 1995/Spring-Summer, Cultural History/ Cultural Studies, pp. 125-133.**

research from an economic, social and cultural aspect, and the analysis of design methods (the introduction of new techniques from the turn of the millennium) communicated by the architectural media.

Economic background

After the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and World War II, during the nationalist dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975), Spain became isolated both politically and economically, and the member states of the United Nation withdrew their ambassadors. THE ECONOMIC GROWTH starting in the 1960s (that became known as the Spanish miracle⁵), principally meant the appearance of mass tourism and the related infrastructural developments, the development of car manufacturing and Basque heavy industry⁶. The economy, protected from international competition, was under strong government control, triggering a process of centralisation all over the country. The sporadically appearing progressive architecture was not supported by the culture politics moderated by the state, so for architects, it became the symbol of resistance against the existing regime. In that period, several Spanish modernists emigrated, although the majority of architects who stayed behind became determinant personalities due to their characteristic attitude. Significant figures from this 1st generation are Alejandro de la Sota, Sáenz de Oíza, José Coderch and Oriol Bohigas, who – partially through education – became the masters and examples for the following generations. Such determinant works like the modernist villa by Coderch and the Casa Ugalde characterise the era. Due to the impact of the regional cultural environment, the architects soon started to mingle the formal language of international modern architecture with some local colours; an example of this, is the Barceloneta housing by Coderch, which represents this transformation. The interest in traditional architecture induced similar effects, which resulted in regionalist designs like the housing by de la Sota in Esquievel or Fuencarral⁷.

The growth exponentially increased after the death of Franco in 1975, as a result of the new Constitution and of the establishment of the NEW DEMOCRACY. The strong and well-functioning economic structure inherited from the dictatorship served as a good basis for the political and cultural transformation⁸, and the joining of Spain to NATO in 1982 and to the European Union in 1986, only strengthened this accession. Globalisation and the cultural impact of the United States⁹ brought drastic

changes compared to the previous isolation, with the dominance of agricultural and industrial production slowly taken over by the service sector. The social compound also changed, as the emigration process caused by the lack of work during the 1960-1970s was replaced by still increasing immigration.

The strong centralising effect of the Franco era (principally the developments in Madrid and Barcelona) and the process of depopulation reversed during the development of the new democracy, together with increasing PROGRESS OF THE PERIPHERIES. The impact of the liberal principles also appeared in public administration in the 1980s, and the evolving market economy deeply influenced the bureaucratic authorities. From the 1990s, cooperation also started among the different levels and territories of administration, as in the other countries of Europe¹⁰. All these processes resulted in a change of the regional distribution of architectural designs, with the previous concentration replaced by diversity on different levels according to local demands. The growth of construction works in the country re-



Fig. 2. MUSAC, León, 2004. Architect: Mansilla&Tuñón.

Picture: author

flects the autonomic regions coming to the fore, partially thanks to the need for local authority public buildings. The same process resulted in more and more renowned architectural offices deciding to relocate their workshops to the country after graduating in a central city. The well-known office RCR (Aranda, Pigem, Vilalta) is not only working in the city of Olot, in the Catalan region Girona, but their breakthrough and their later works are also connected to this town. The quoted buildings of

⁵ sp. *el milagro español* (1959-1974), the name for the growth of the Spanish economy at this time, thanks to which, the income per person reached 75% of the West-European average

⁶ **García Ruiz J L**, *Barreiros Diesel y el desarrollo de la automoción en España*, Fundación Empresa Publica, Burgos, 2003.

⁷ **Ruiz Cabrero G**, *The Modern in Spain: Architecture After 1948*, MIT Press, Cambridge-London, 2001.

⁸ **Zaera Polo A**, *A Scientific Autobiography, 1982-2004*, In: The New

Architectural Pragmatism, Saunders W S (ed.) A Harvard Design Magazine Reader 5, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

⁹ The United States initiated military and commercial cooperation with the anti-communist Spain due to its already strategic situation during the Cold War. Pact of Madrid, 1953

¹⁰ **Blanco I, Bonet J, Walliser A**, *Urban Governance and Regeneration Policies in Historic City Centres*. Urban Research & Practice, 2011, Vol 4, Nr 3, pp. 326-343.

the Granada-born Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas, were all built in his hometown – the Museum of Fine Arts in the Alhambra, the Centre of José Guerrero and the completion of the Nasrid Wall. However, the progress of the cities on the periphery is not always connected to local architects – the cultural rehabilitation of the north-west town of León is characterized by the names of Mansilla&Tuñón from Madrid (Auditorium, MUSAC) and of Jordi Badia from Barcelona (Municipal Funeral Services). The territories outside the Iberian Peninsula are also worth mentioning, where the local connection of contemporary buildings and offices is also observable. This connection can be illustrated by the office AMP where the associates (Felipe Artengo, Fernando Menis and José María Rodríguez Pastrana) were all born in Tenerife, and their designs are also related to the Canary Islands.

The economic growth connected to the political transformation of the country multiplied the architectural opportunities; the tenders streaming in from the European Union in the 1990s, enabled several infrastructural and other SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC



Fig. 3. Spanish Pavilion, Zaragoza, 2008. Architect: Francisco Mangado. Picture: author

and by the Expo in Zaragoza in 2008; Francisco Mangado designed the Spanish Pavilion, an architect who already belongs to the generation under analysis. The participation of several foreigners, partially American architects in different prestige investments aimed at the strengthening of international relationships (Richard Meier – Contemporary Art Museum, Barcelona, 1997. Frank O. Gehry – Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, 1997. Jean Nouvel – Reina Sofia National Museum, Madrid, 2005. Jürgen H. Mayer – Metropol Parasol, Sevilla, 2011¹³. Oscar Niemeyer – International Cultural Centre, Avilés, 2011. Peter Eisenmann – City of Culture, Santiago de Compostella, in process); the infrastructural developments with the increased tourist interest and public attention also stimulated the Spanish architects.

CULTURAL TOURISM, as an alternative to low-budget seaside vacations appeared as a new sector of tourism and has been increasingly emphasised over the recent decades, demanding the creation, progress and extension of museums, exhibition spaces



Fig. 4. Can Framis Museum, Barcelona 2008. Architect: BAAS Arquitectos. Picture: author

ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS, usually with a cultural role¹¹. The first peak of this construction was the result of the Expo organized in Sevilla and the Olympics in Barcelona (“the 92 effect”)¹² – here the 2nd generation of the modern Spanish architects played the main role (Rafael Moneo, Esteve Bonell, Juan Navarro and Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra). After an isolated decline, this tendency was followed by the city centre rehabilitation of Bilbao, thanks to the Guggenheim Museum that opened in 1997,

¹¹ Cohn D, *The Death of the Icon*, The Architectural Review, 2011. October 11. <http://www.architectural-review.com/view/the-death-of-the-icon/8621628.article>

¹² The economic effect of the investments of 1992, Fernández G, *New Architecture in Spain: Beyond the Hype*, the Art Wolf online art magazine

¹³ Vukosavljev Z, *Parametrikusnapernyő-felhő: A Metropol Parasol köztér-organizáló építménye Sevilában*. Octogon 2011/5. pp.44-48.

¹⁴ Vukosavljev Z, Kóródy A, Szendrei Zs, *Contemporary Spanish Exhibition Spaces*. Periodica Polytechnica – Architecture 41(2) pp. 63-72. (2010)

and other cultural facilities¹⁴. The work of the Abalos&Herreros office, the José Hierro Public Library (Madrid, 2003) or the MUSAC Contemporary Art Museum (León, 2004) by the architect partners Mansilla&Tuñón, were also built as cultural projects supported by the government. The seashore of Barcelona and the previous industrial quarter, the so called @22 was renewed with the aim of city rehabilitation, with cultural investments also playing an important role, like the South – East Coastal Park and Auditorium (FOA, 2004) or the Can Framis Museum (BAAS Arquitectos, 2008¹⁵). The renowned museum axis of Madrid was also uniformly developed¹⁶.

¹⁵ Kóródy A, *Városioázis: Can Framis Alapítvány, Kortárs Katalán Művészeti Gyűjtemény*, Barcelona. Octogon 85-86(2-3) pp. 38-40. (2011)

¹⁶ Kóródy A, Szendrei Zs, *Múzeumi negyed spanyol módra*. Utóirat-Post Scriptum 2011(2) pp. 36-40. (2011)

Social background

The economic progress and the numerous projects built as a result of the finance being invested in the construction industry, was a significant factor in the increase of contemporary Spanish architecture; the effects of social changes and of the transformation of the architect's role are also undeniable. The early and increased participation of this generation of architects, is also a result of the special COMPETITION SYSTEM. The main benefit of this system is that it allows young architects to prevail without reference to reputation or political connections. Fuensanta Nieto and Enrique Sobejano gained public attention in 1992 (being 34 and 35 years old) due to their housing in Sevilla; Eduardo Arroyo became well-known after his nursery school in the Basque town Sondika was built in 1998 (when he was only 34); Luis Moreno Mansilla and Emilio Tuñon who are now renown all over the world were similarly young (33 and 34 years old) when they won their first tender in 1992 for the Provincial Museum.

The new networks of electronic communication also helped the emergence of young architects by facilitating the process of information exchange around the world. The Internet supported the strengthening of international relations, since the cross-border cooperation as well as publishing abroad became easier. The contracts offered by the continually extending European Union provided experience in famous offices outside Spain, for example Alberto Nicolau spent his traineeship next to Alison & Peter Smithson, and later next to Norman Foster. The spread of international competition enabled such opportunities for architects that were not available so widely before the 1990s. In this way, some buildings of young Spanish architect offices were built abroad, like the work of the overseas architect offices in Japan. In 1995, Alejandro Zaera Polo won the internationally popular competition with his designs for the Yokohama port at the age of only 32; – the victory was even compared to the Pompidou competition won by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano¹⁷. The European competition organized every second year provides a similar forum for the introduction of young architects: the participants are free to design any site provided by the member states. After some successful plans for Spanish sites (Paredes&Pedrosa, Madrid, 1991; Aranda de Duero, 1996; Soriano & Palacios, Barakaldo, 1998), Cristina Díaz Moreno and Efrén García Grinda won first prize for their competition design in Finland, an area of experimental housing in Jyväskylä.

The REPRESENTATIVE BUILDINGS which symbolise Spain abroad, serves the appearance of Spanish architecture on an international level. For example, the World Fair pavilions, which usually attract huge public attention thank to the press

(FOA: EXPO 2005, Nagoya. EMBT: EXPO 2010, Shanghai), and the varied buildings of embassies and ministries that become part of the everyday life. The significance of this theme was marked by an important and comprehensive exhibition organized in Madrid in 1995, where 42 thematically chosen buildings were represented¹⁸.

The main field of communication and the transmitting of knowledge among architects, is EDUCATION; this in turn facilitates the exchange of thoughts among different age-groups. A large number of architects speak and lecture at different universities all around Spain, additionally the number of students studying abroad has increased significantly since the country joined the European Union in 1986, as did the number of professors teaching abroad. For instance, Antonio Jimenez Torrecillas at the Faculty of Architecture in Granada has been lecturing to foreign students since 1997. He also teaches outside Spain in Latin America, China and at several French, Italian and German universities. Spanish architects also play an important role in international online education – Manuel Ocaña opened a design workshop in IE School of Architecture besides teaching at the Faculty of Architecture in Madrid. The inspiring effect of the intensive international information exchange is undeniable; it is also traceable in the interaction of architectural trends.

The impact of education and different ARCHITECTURAL SCHOOLS is significant, the determinant role of the School of Madrid and the School of Barcelona has been recognised since the 1960s¹⁹, although the appearance of regional architectural schools (A Coruña, Las Palmas, Pamplona, Sevilla, Valencia) has challenged this bipolar situation. In the 1990s, only such professors worked at these universities who had graduated in one of the central cities, so their mentality and methodology was similar, more unified. Since architectural education has become differentiated, the generational bonds have become weaker, with the connection of master and student becoming more emphasised, strengthening the relationship of ideas, with a unified approach that is connected to a particular school but at the same time joins the different generations. The important role of architectural schools is even more obvious for the Spanish than for outsiders, with José Ignacio Linazasoro characterising these cross-generation ideological relations as “intellectual families”²⁰.

Cultural background

The self-concept, the identity of a social group can be described through its field of interest. In architecture, instead of

¹⁷ Designing Modern Britain - FOA kiállitás, Design Museum and British Council, 2006, <http://designmuseum.org/>

¹⁸ López Sardá J M (ed.), *Arquitectura de Representación, España de Oriente a Occidente*, Pronaos-Arquitectura, Madrid, 1995

¹⁹ Fullaondo J D, *La escuela de Madrid, en Cuadernos summa – nueva*

visión: enciclopedia de la arquitectura de hoy, No 22, 1969, pp. 7-25.

²⁰ José Ignacio Linazasoro gave a lecture at the BME (Budapest, 6.12. 2011.) where an interview was given, see: Kóródy A, *Építész a romok között – José Ignacio Linazasoro építésszel Kóródy Anna beszélgetett*. in: *Octogon* 2012/2, pp. 29-32.

hardly provable stylistic parallelism and imitation of trends, the main subjects of publications and research are easier to keep track of. One characteristic common part of the analysed generation is the increased attention to the work of (international and Spanish) MODERNIST ARCHITECTS. An identifying point of early Spanish modernism was the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe, built in 1929; its effect was observable for long time. Although the temporary pavilion was demolished at the closure of the World's Fair, Spanish architects reconstructed it, thanks to its fame, in 1986. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1936, blocked the development of the Modern Movement, as a result, during the dictatorship, modern architecture became the symbol of resistance and therefore gained an additional cultural meaning, different from the other regions of Europe²¹. The discussed architects' interest for Modernism is also observable in their choice of subjects for publications. Numerous writings concern and analyse the theories and works of Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, or Alejandro de la Sota, Josep Antonio Coderch and Miguel Fisac. The same interest is outlined in the themes of the "Architect's Library" series, special issues of the magazine *El Croquis*. Here, the writings of Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto and Luis Barragán, the autobiography of Frank Lloyd Wright, the journey notes of Erik Gunnar Asplund, and an interview with Louis Kahn follow each other²². Some monographs were published by the magazine *Arquitectura Viva*, as well as about the modernist architects Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Alejandro de la Sota, Miguel Fisac, Oscar Niemeyer or Buckminster Fuller²³. Altogether 22 monographs concern the work of Alejandro de la Sota in just the last two decades, clearly illustrating the intensity and depth of the existing interest in the topic²⁴.

The subjects of DOCTORAL THESES also imply the preferred research fields of a university, for example at the Faculty of Architecture in Navarra, the titles and abstracts of the PhD dissertations in the 2000s, outline the accentuated attention for Spanish modernist architecture²⁵. The topics contain the analysis of modern architecture of Spanish regions or cities, the presentation of related oeuvres and general theoretical syntheses.

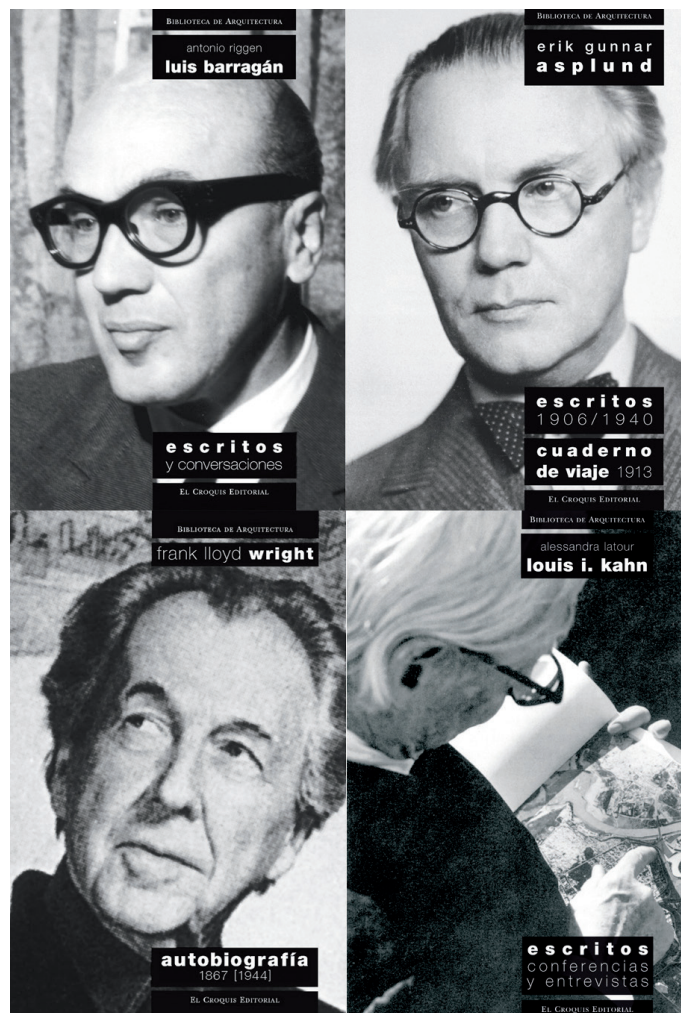


Fig. 5. "Architect's Library" series, special issues of the magazine *El Croquis*.

The processing of the work of outstanding figures from international modernism, like Le Corbusier or Mies van der Rohe, is similarly frequent in other architectural schools²⁶.

ARCHITECTURAL WRITING is almost an interpretation of mentality, a form of self-representation that allows introspection into the theoretical ideas and design methodology of a generation. Thanks to the economic expansion, the practice of construction and realised buildings was emphasised in the 1980s, with ar-

²¹ Finta J, *The Dilemma of Conformism, that is, of Chaos*. *Periodica Polytechnica – Architecture*, Vol. 36, 1-4, pp. 133-139 (1992)

²² *El Croquis – Biblioteca de Arquitectura: La Palabra sin Artificio, De Palabra y por Escrito, Escritos y conversaciones, Autobiografía, Escritos 1906/1940 Cuaderno de Viaje 1913, Escritos, Conferencias y Entrevistas*

²³ AV Monografías Nr 6 and 92, 9 and 10, 54, 68, 125, 143

²⁴ <http://www.alejandrodelaSota.org/presentacion.cfm?idSeccion=2&idSubSeccion=4>, last view: 13.12.2011.

²⁵ for example Torres A S, *Urbanismo y vivienda en Bilbao. 1939-1959*. Julián I C, *La axonometría moderna, forma simbólica de la arquitectura*. Sepulcre Bernad J F, *César Ortiz-Echague y Rafael Echaide (1955-1966): tecnificación y humanización del funcionalismo*. Medina J Á, *Crónicas de la vanguardia. 1927-1936*. de Guereñu L M, *Construir la abstracción: actitud y estrategia del proyecto moderno*. González J M, *Historiografía de la arqui-*

tectura española moderna (1945-1978). Ortega C D, *Primera arquitectura moderna en Navarra (1900-1950)*.

(<http://www.unav.es/arquitectura/investigacion/tesis/> – last view: 13.12.2011.)

²⁶ for example Gonzalez Cubero M J, *Le Corbusier: El Proyecto de la Ciudad Moderna*. Sarmiento Ocampo J A, *La Capilla de Ronchamp de le Corbusier. De la Percepcion, de la Materia al vuelo del Espiritu*. Gutiérrez Labory E M, *Le Corbusier, El Control Geométrico Matemático de la Forma*. Santatecla F J, *De la Esencia de la Arquitectura a lo Esencial del Espacio. Forma y Concepto en la Arquitectura de Mies van de Rohe*. Martínez A C, *La Densidad Del Limite. Le Corbusier Y Mies Van Der Rohe Del Equipamiento Al Sistema De Objetos*. Ortega Frutos A V, *Le Corbusier, Paris '53 : El Sonido de Treinta Años de Silencio*. (http://www.cibernetia.com/tesis_es/ – last view: 13.12.2011)

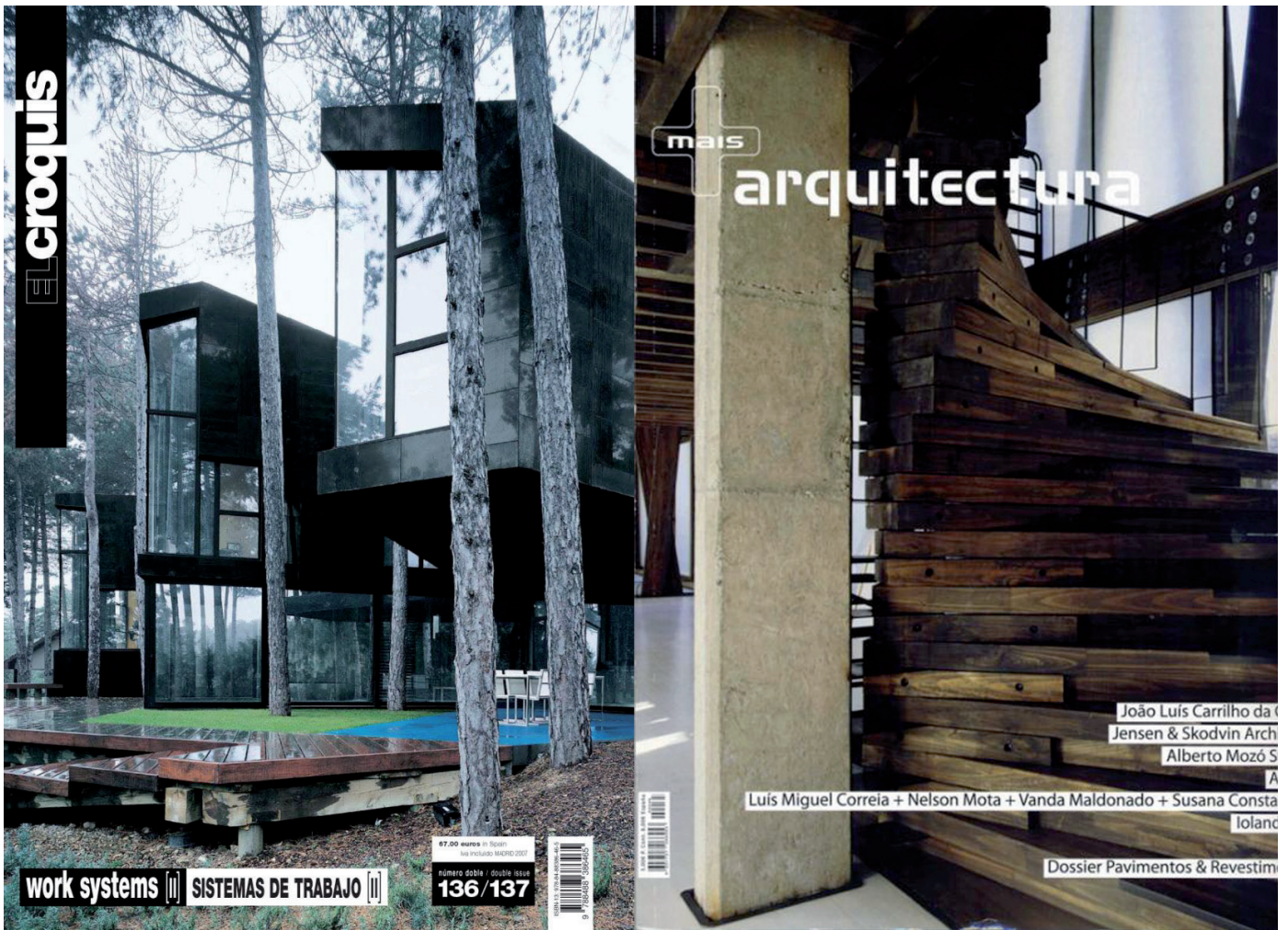


Fig. 6. Cover of the magazines El Croquis and Arquitectura.

architectural theory receiving a more and more important role in the 1990s. As a result, the described generation is definable not only through their designs, but also through their writings. The theoretical base of Spanish architecture is related to Catalan Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1942-2001), who's main research field was – like for Bruno Zevi, Kenneth Frampton or William J. R. Curtis – the comprehensive analysis of the history of architecture of the 20th century. The theoretical writings of architects, who also practice design themselves, are especially interesting for the analysis of a generation since they enrich the related bibliography with an authentic point of view, which in turn can be a good base for researching their coevals.

A special kind of architectural publication is the INTERVIEW – sometimes the questioner is also a practicing designer, as a result, even the questions and focused topics mentioned by the participating architects carry useful information. Alejandro Zera Polo, who belongs to this generation, wrote for the *El Croquis* with a less critical attitude, already fitting into the maga-

zine's image in the 1980s. This way – on his own admission – he had the opportunity to present his ideas and theories besides the works. His interviews with Enric Miralles and Santiago Calatrava among others, adds important data for the research of contemporary Spanish architecture. Likewise, Efrén García Grinda was also an author at *El Croquis*, presenting for example the works of the office of Mansilla&Tuñón and of the Foreign Office Architects. Fuensanta Nieto and Enrique Sobejano both worked as editors for the periodical *Arquitectura* between 1986 and 1991, along with Federico Soriano who later became an author of the magazine *Fisuras de la Cultura Contemporánea*.

Besides the participation at reviews, the number of books published by practicing architects also increased. Different articles and works were published by Luis Mansilla²⁷, Cristina Díaz Moreno and Efrén García Grinda²⁸, similarly to Juan Carlos Sancho Osinaga and Sol Madrudejos, who published two books together; one about their own work and one about the oeuvre of Le Corbusier²⁹. Iñaki Abalos and Juan Herreros³⁰

27 García-Mansilla L M, *Apuntes de viaje al interior del tiempo*, Arquia Foundation, Barcelona, 2002

28 Díaz Moreno C, García Grinda E, *Breathable*, Universidad Europea de Madrid, Madrid, 2009



Fig. 7. Cover of the magazines *Arquitectura Viva* and *On Diseño*

wrote several volumes about the topics of modernism in the history of architecture, and of contemporary architectural theory. Their work titled “Areas of Impunity”³¹ effectively illustrates the interest of the new generation of Spanish architecture that seeks the relationship of theory and practice, and the supportive interaction of architecture and critics.

However, it is the high sales magazines that reach most readers – at home and abroad alike – widely representing the architecture of the nation. The number of internationally quoted ARCHITECTURAL REVIEWS is particularly high in Spain; the most well-known of them are the *El Croquis*, *Arquitectura Viva*, *On Diseño* and *2G*. These periodicals characterise the public life of an era in many respects: the compound of the editorial– the proportion of practicing architects and theorists among the employees, the spectrum of topics – programmes, types of houses, accentuated styles, regions and people. This, together with the

descriptive or analytic aspect of the studies all influence the self-concept, the identity of the era shown to the outside.

The magazine *El Croquis* was founded in 1982, and in the beginning, it presented thesis works of the Faculty of Architecture in Madrid, before moving in a professional direction, preserving the intense attention for detail, to which, the title originally referred³².

Around 1985, from the 19th volume on, the first monographs appeared in parallel with the issues concerning general Spanish architecture. Since 1990, the issues were printed bilingually, in Spanish and English, suggesting an opening up to abroad. Following this, there were also foreign architects among the presented designers, at first Tadao Ando. The emphasis slowly changed, and in the 2000s already two-thirds of the volumes were connected to architectural offices outside Spain. The internationally exciting choice of subjects, the bilingualism and the exigent de-

²⁹ Sancho Osinaga J C, Madrudejos S, *Arquitectura de Autor, El Sentido Cubista de Le Corbusier*

³⁰ Abalos I, Herreros J, *Tower and Office: From Modernist Theory to Contemporary Practice, Constructing Better Futures, Recycling Madrid, Técnica Y Arquitectura En La Ciudad Contemporanea, Le Corbusier. Rascacielos,*

Técnica y Arquitectura en la Ciudad Contemporánea y Natural-Artificial

³¹ Abalos I, Herreros J, *Áreas de impunidad*, Actar, Barcelona, 1997.

³² Zaera-Polo A, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 1982-2004, In: *The New Architectural Pragmatism*, ed: Saunders W S, A Harvard Design Magazine Reader 5., University of Minnesota Press, 2007

sign of the paper all contributed to the magazine becoming one of the leading architectural reviews of today³³. Alejandro Zaera Polo sees the success of *El Croquis* in the moderate critical aspect. In his opinion, the fame and popularity of the periodical is due to its distant attitude that is in default of strong criticism, but is committed to present a detailed portrait. The studies focus on particular architectural works, “independent from any period, trend or situation”³⁴, so the editorial managed to preserve its total professional independence from different organizations, architectural streams or politics – according to Zaera Polo. The conversation of the architect and the author supports each issue, providing a unique, personal intonation for the introduction.

The volumes of the magazine, *Arquitectura Viva* that was founded in 1988, are printed in Spanish with an English summary assigned only to the main articles. This limits the international spread of the periodical, however, the yearbooks published bilingually since 1995 are widely popular³⁵. The review connected to the name of Luis Fernández Galiano (b. in 1950) aims to present an objective image about the actual architecture of Spain, against the assumed subjective attitude of the *El Croquis*. The yearbooks submit selected buildings organised into categories, and compare them with the determinant events and changes of that year. A founder of the review *On Diseño*, Juli Capella Samper (born in 1960), is also a fellow of the described generation. The first issues of the magazine were printed in 1979 as the first one among the papers specialised in architecture. Its main aim among is to concentrate on the work of Spanish architects by also incorporating the associated fields of architecture³⁶. Contrary to this, the Spanish-English bilingual magazine *2G* presents mostly international architect offices. It was first printed in 1997, and now it is the leading architectural periodical of Barcelona. Like the *El Croquis*, it also aims to present unpublished buildings in the monographs focusing on a particular architect, with its introductions written by internationally acknowledged critics. The last chapter of the magazine, the so-called *nexus*, contains the architect’s own description about his theories and design methodology, which enriches the presentation with a personal aspect, bringing it closer to the reader³⁷.

Consequently, the four most significant Spanish architectural reviews follow different principles with their choice of subject and the style of presentation, ensuring that displayed works are widely publicised, and create a comprehensive, detailed image about contemporary architecture.

The “new generation” of Spanish architecture

By analysing the transformation of the economic, social and cultural background in the new mechanisms, we meet the question that could Spanish architecture, which is widely represented in the international architectural media, be defined as a group or phenomenon of designers with a unified identity. Several theoreticians mention the importance of common influences (starting from education) in the processes of the transitional period that serves as a common base. However, we can assert that the expected uniformity of designers becoming known during the economic boom, based on synchronism and on the same age is no longer maintainable. We can rather speak about a common ground connected to modernist masters and an extended system of relationships, sometimes significantly varying in techniques. Their cultural base may be unified, but their manifestos, besides the methodology of representation, show different aspects in a critical way.

By following the transformation of the economic, social and cultural background, the effects that assisted the international rise of contemporary Spanish architecture are outlined, and this allowed the architects born in the 1960s to appear in professional public life at a young age. The written tools of architectural communication, the reviews (*El Croquis* among others) emphasize an emerging unified generation; however, the strong opinion of William J. Curtis can be refined. He originated the success of this generation as a result of the changes of political conditions, emphasizing the increasing role of foreign languages and history in education. Yet it can be shown, by analysing other aspects, that with the growing autonomy of regions in the decentralised county, the ideological cross-generation relationships were strengthened. On the one hand, the described generation can be enriched by further names that have appeared since then in architectural public life³⁸, and on the other hand, they are sortable based on stylistic, ideological relations according to architectural schools.

The four-fifths of the architects selected by William J. Curtis graduated from Madrid, even those who came from the periphery, which could have been the basis for the similarities he accentuated. However, the previously mentioned architectural works support our hypothesis that while we can speak about a generation in a physiological sense based on unified cultural and political-social background, in the 1990s, we can rather concentrate on the unique behaviours of people resulting from the numerous opportunities that makes the question of the

33 www.elcroquis.es

34 Zaera-Polo A, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 1982-2004, in: The New Architectural Pragmatism, ed: Saunders W S, A Harvard Design Magazine Reader 5., University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

35 www.arquitecturaviva.com

36 www.ondiseno.com

37 ggili.com

38 Architects born in the analysed period: Mangado (1957), Osinaga (1957), Madrilejos (1958), Paredes (1958), Pedrosa (1958), Aranguren (1958), Gallegos (1958), ACM – Cánovas (1958), Amann (1961), Maruri (1961), Irisarri (1958), Piñera (1960), Tabuenca (1960), Leache (?), MGM – Morales (1960), Mariscal (1961), Giles (1972), BAAS – Badia (1961), Torrecillas (1962), Coll Lez (1964), Leclerc (1967), Carrasco (1965), Creus (1966), Nicolau (1967), Coll-Barreu (1968), Cloud 9 - Ruiz-Geli (1968), Garcia-Abril (1969)

generations irrelevant. Analysing this period, the main streams and tendencies become visible, where the schools derived from the master-student relationship define the ideological basis and the examples for fields of interest, also finally restricting some architectural-stylistic references. In the our completed list of published offices that have appeared in renowned magazines since the statement of William J. Curtis, it is notable that almost the half of them graduated somewhere in the peripheral regions. This also supports our hypothesis, because the tendency of decentralization and the increasing importance of regions anticipates the groups evolving on a territorial, educational basis.

Our approach emphasises the design-based analysis that is the most suitable to research the cultural environment characterised by evolving opportunities (by means of economic growth, as well as developing communication and presentational skills covered earlier) since the 1990s, and where unique ways and experiments play an increasingly important part. The adaptation to international streams and the introduction of new methods, and their spread abroad, all propose the search for tendencies. According to these aspects, it can be stated that by the millennium, instead of the former unified groups, there are generations not only in a horizontal sense but also vertically, constituting parallel streams that form a diverse unit.

It can be said, with a high probability, that the tendency towards diversity will be still traceable in the next decade, defining the main characteristics of the next generation. Besides the architects now in their 50s, the youngest offices have started to appear, forming a 4th generation of Spanish modernism, where a different architectural culture of new communication methods is strengthened, effectively adapting to the social processes of the era through new techniques. We assume that the hypothesis formulated in the introduction is now verified: the main role in the unified identity of the new architect generation is played by architectural publications and by the theory of architecture again coming to the fore. These factors characterise the revealed works in Spanish and international forums, defining the presentation and representation of this generation.

This paper aims to ensure the basis for the interpretation of the internationally respected contemporary Spanish architecture, to find guidelines through the concept of presentation for the additional comparative research of further generations, and particularly, to create the basis for analysis of self-definition of the usually uniformly interpreted new generation of Spanish architecture.

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- 36 *GG*