

FOLDS OF LIGHT

On Juan Carlos Sancho y Sol Madrideojos

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Juan Carlos Sancho and Sol Madrideojos are at the forefront of the vanguard of Madrid's young architects. And they have had their own, influential voice in Contemporary Architecture for some time now. The Sancho-Madrideojos aroma is clearly recognizable. Their delicate deconstructions or the folds with which they shape the forms contained by the air of their architecture are not only singular but very personal and of enormous beauty.

It might seem almost a literary recourse to note their intense contact and friendship with Eduardo Chillida, the great Basque sculptor who tempered the air with his works in iron and alabaster. Very close to him, sharing that subtle movement of angles capable of tensing the worked spaces, they too may be said to belong to the Basque country, with all that attribution implies of radicalism and roots. It seems that the strength of the forces of nature there arise in their most primitive form, pervading both the work of master Chillida and that of our architects.

And if their first works already merited the attention of critics (1), they continue to appear in architecture books and journals. *El Croquis*, the most important Spanish journal, has repeatedly set its sights on them. In a recent number (2), some of their latest works were featured and very well presented: from the round teaching pavilion of La Arrixaca, an excavated cave, full of "gold dust", to the Galdácano sports center, where they continue the investigation of issues they'd begun in the sports center at San Sebastián de los Reyes. As well as the chapel in Valleacerón, which alone would have merited a monographic number, it is so first-rate. And also appearing in this publication is the puzzle full of light that they have started to construct for the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Alicante, the result of a first prize in a public competition.

What is the architecture of Sancho-Madrideojos like and how does one feel it? I will never forget the moving experience of visiting their chapel in Valleacerón: a tremor of concrete, like an ironed and folded handkerchief in which scale, light, material, and place, everything was "nailed", just right, right on the dot. Being small, it seemed big; contemplating it expanded the soul. Being heavy concrete, one could say it floated in the air. Being dark, it was of a blinding clarity. Being a settled object, it was at the same time the land itself, which had folded after a mysterious seismic movement. I can honestly say that this chapel was one of the architectural spaces which have most moved me. An exemplary fold. And now, these architects are about to raise a large church using a fold of larger dimensions and of greater consideration as theme.

Both architects are professors of Architectural Design in Madrid, and the group of students who trained under them who are now beginning to emerge with their own voice attests to the quality of their teaching. And there is always something pedagogical in their architecture. Their ideas have been translated into widely read texts: "The Cubist Sense of Le Corbusier", published in 2000 (3), is complemented with another book from 2001 combining texts with images of their works, with the expressive title 'Suite in 3 Movements' (4), in which they write about Emptiness, Tone and the Fold. In it they manage to materialize John Cage's "sonorous silence" which they refer to so often. In all, a written and constructed manifesto.

Architects capable of condensing emptiness with the fullness of their spaces. Of moving us with their silenced tone, of trapping us and moving us, enveloping us in the folds of light of their marvelous architecture.

Alberto Campo Baeza

- (1) YOUNG SPANISH ARCHITECTURE
AAVV. Into. Kenneth Framton
Madrid, 1985.
- (2) EL CROQUIS 106/107
Madrid, 2001.
- (3) "El sentido cubista de Le Corbusier".
Juan Carlos Sancho Osinaga.
Ed. Munilla Lería.
Madrid, 2000.
- (4) "Suite en 3 Movimientos".
Sancho / Madrideojos.
Ed. Rueda.
Madrid, 2001.