

ALFREDO PAYÁ

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In his retreat in Alicante, where he gives his calm and deliberate classes at the city's new Architecture School, Alfredo Payá is a serene and calm architect who transmits these qualities to the clear architecture he constructs.

He was one of the most brilliant students that I taught at the School of Architecture of Madrid, so much so, that the jury committee on his Final Project awarded him the highest grade.

His best-known work, the Museum of Alicante, built in 1994, though it looks just opened, is an extraordinary piece. It seems simple, but it hides a complexity worthy of analysis. I recommend that you examine the original structure in which the so-clean box is articulated. There is a diffused constructive section that explains the established system well. One could say that it is an exercise in an athletic dance that achieves a suspension of time carrying us to silence. I remember the unanimity of the jury in conceding that project the first prize. The design was not only simple; it was also suited to its function. No one doubted the "Pandora's box" that has provided such good results afterwards.

As the first means to establish this play of silences, the project excavates a large box in the earth in which the service spaces are placed. The space is so valid, so capable of admitting various uses, so flexible, that it now functions to perfection as the headquarters for the Alicante School of Architecture. And if buildings are capable of transmitting the spirit that generated them, the School should be magnificent.

Alfredo Payá was invited to the Biennale de Venetia in the year 2000 where this accomplished building called attention to itself powerfully.

He was finalist in the Borromini Award in 2000 with his Museum in Alicante, which also provides a measure of the international dimension of his work.

And if we analyze his recently completed Public School in Dolores, Alicante, we reach the conclusion that it is a very clear building. As the first measure, it turns the lot into a garden, after closing it with hung walls, on which by means of parallel screens, transparent spaces in the north-south direction are created, where the service elements are placed. On these screens, transversally, he places two large metallic pieces in zinc, that house classrooms and the gymnasium, windowed with an aptly continuous one-one, open-closed rhythm. The view of these strong elongated boxes floating in the air is impressive. The "light closets" with which he lights the interior circulation spaces are interesting. From a far, the image is enormously attractive.

The Youth Center in Quart-Jove is a suggestive aggregation of different spaces like a *kaaba*. All bathed in a placid light. Spaces of always-variable dimensions that seek order within multiplicity. And equally attractive is his use of different materials. It dances with full and empty spaces, with lights and shadows that create a spatial system, the *kaaba*, ancient and new at the same time. A contemporary space.

One may expect Alfredo Payá's architecture to continue to work in the essential and to achieve spaces capable of reflecting his time, of showing him to be an architect of the future who is already present.

Alberto Campo Baeza