

LIGHT IS MORE

On Alberto Campo Baeza

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I have followed the lines of Alberto Campo Baeza's work over the years in a long series of exhibitions that began with the show entitled *Light is More*, a dictum I created in an attempt to sum up his work and that was obviously born of a fusion of Mies' "less is more" and Campo Baeza's self-defining "more with light", vindicating his use of light. The title thus paid tribute to Campo Baeza and to the master whose Crown Hall, IIT housed the exhibition. After Chicago, the Urban Center in New York became a celebration of architecture with Kenneth Frampton, Richard Meier, Beatriz Colomina, Mark Wigley, Steven Holl and Massimo Vignelli there to receive us. Vignelli had long supported Campo Baeza's work and was behind the commission for Olnick Spanu, the magnificent house that we presented there as a new piece.

In 2004, the exhibition grew and was transformed into an installation in which Campo Baeza's light contended with Palladio's in *Campo Baeza alla luce di Palladio*, at the Basilica in Vicenza, where Alberto Campo Baeza was chosen master of the year by ABACO under the recommendation of Francesco Dal Co. In 2005, we went to Istanbul for the concluding ceremony of the UIA conference at the Byzantine Basilica of Saint Irene, where we presented an anthological exhibition of his work. More than 3000 architects gathered for the opening, among them Tadao Ando, who would later select Campo Baeza to exhibit his work at the prestigious Gallery MA of Tokyo, whose Scientific Committee Ando presided. Among the long list of figures who saw this show in Tokyo along with Tadao Ando were Toyo Ito, Kengo Kuma, Yoshio Taniguchi and Kazuyo Sejima, making the exhibition an encounter between Spanish architecture, represented by Campo Baeza and a group of young architects working with him there, and a wide representation of Japanese architecture. In *Campo Baeza. The Creation Tree*, I offered an installation at the MA Gallery constructing a landscape out of Campo Baeza's work. It featured a large tree made out of his drawings, branch by branch, with each one of his seminal design projects over the background of the Casa Guerrero, a white wall as an image of his work, a pond of photographs at its feet, and the already legendary Benetton Day Care Center in the distance. The red moon or the rising sun that presided the landscape framed Campo Baeza, speaking to us about light, surrounded by his maquettes and by a long analysis I provided of all the themes that appear in his work.

Campo Baeza is probably one of the best-known architects of his generation. His clear, precise work, which is both utterly free of excess and lacks nothing, is always recognized, identified and remembered. His handling of light and the passage of time confer a very special quality to his spaces, allowing time to slide through them, marked by the light that caresses them, lingering there and becoming eternal. His work is more intense every time and this is most

likely the result not only of an ever increasing distillation of his architecture, but also of his careful choice of projects and the deliberately small number of commissions he accepts compared with other studios of equal renown. Following the thousands of drawings he has made, one may appreciate the personal quality of his work that relies on a magnificent and small group of collaborators who complement his vision. Some of the most interesting young Spanish architectures have worked in his Studio or under his guidance at the School. His teaching, research, and creative work complement one another, forming a single endeavor. I've had the privilege of enjoying a great number of conversations about architecture with Alberto Campo Baeza, 'off the record'. Phaidon has asked us to provide 'for the record' the conversation transcribed below:

What is Architecture for Alberto Campo Baeza?

In general, I still find it difficult to say what Architecture is. I could tell you that for me, as a person, architecture is an enormously important part of my life. I'd also qualify that: it is not the only thing in my life, but it is still a passion. Those of us who are dedicated to creative work are privileged. Human beings with the capacity for artistic creation are truly privileged, in the most profound sense of what one means by artistic creation.

Stefan Zweig expresses it well in the text you and I have discussed more than once, "The Mystery of Artistic Creation". It's already there in the title. And while he says many very interesting things, the most central almost answers what you've asked me, and that is, the ability we human beings have to create something that afterwards transcends us.

We create something that later goes beyond us. We disappear, but our works remain. This happens with any creative endeavor, but in our creative work as architects, much more so.

Obviously, I'm not telling you "what Architecture is." I'm telling you what it is for me: the possibility of creating something wonderful that can remain.

That something, what is it? Well, it's building, building ideas. For me, it's creating spaces that are going to serve to make men happy, spaces in which I try to apply everything I know, using the instruments that Architecture has been working with throughout history.

When I speak of instruments, I'm referring to scale, proportion, and measure, to control of construction, control of structure, control of light and of all of the elements that constitute the architectural space. And all of this, obviously, at the service of man.

So, we may ask ourselves again, what is Architecture? And we would speak of Vitruvius and of *Utilitas*, *Firmitas* and *Venustas*. One could say that the hardest thing to achieve is *Venustas*, because beauty is what we would all like to attain. Because clearly construction, good construction, is something an architect has to do well. And it's also obvious that the function must be served. So, beauty is the hardest thing.

Plato tells us that Beauty is the splendor of Truth. Plato of course presents the matter as a philosophical proposition, which from the point of view of Architecture could be translated as: Architecture, when true, produces a true beauty that is capable of transcending us, that can go beyond us. It is not the vain beauty of a moment nor is it a passing fashion.

What is Architecture? It is a creation that is going to serve mankind by means of beauty. People say, "architecture has to serve, it has to be useful and well constructed." Yes, of course it does, but I already take that for granted. I can't understand a wonderful idea for a building that turns out to be impossible to build; that's not Architecture. It might be a dream, but if that dream cannot be made reality, cannot be constructed and well constructed and be useful, truly useful, then it is not Architecture.

Clearly architecture tends to be born of necessity. We are not called "to make architecture." No. A need appears and from that need, an architect must be able to combine the ingredients to provide a solution to that need. But that's not all. He has to give the best solution to that need, to give an answer, providing not only the best possible construction, solving the problems of construction, but also, he must reach that something else, something more, which is the *quid* of the question, the central idea.

I've always alluded to the idea of the idea, pardon the redundancy. I mean, the necessity that there be an idea. But this too is not that original; it's just as necessary in creating a poem. One must know what it is one wishes to say, the idea of a poem. In a poem, there is something one wishes to say, which later will be translated into the properly arranged words. That is, there must be a previous idea, which is what I mean when I speak of synthesis or distillation. Which, in the case of architecture, is the distillation of a greater quantity of ingredients than there is in other creative endeavors.

Compared to painting, music, poetry and philosophy, Architecture is the most complex, because so many other factors intervene. Someone might well say, "You lose freedom because you have to construct with heavy materials." So many factors are entailed in architecture and there are fewer factors in a poem. Is the poet freer than the architect? I'd say so.

I have no trouble comparing poetry or music with Architecture because I enjoy poetry and music enormously.

What is this process of creation in Alberto Campo Baeza, this dream of architecture? You know I've seen your drawings, I've seen all the sketchbooks and notebooks in which this process has evolved and developed, but how is it born?

It isn't easy. If I had to find some way to define that point of departure, I'd say it is a dream. And what's this dream like? I would say that it is strict, precise and exact. And very, very difficult.

And I return to poetry, which I've often used as an example and will do so once again because I believe it fits what we're talking about very well. Poetry

is not a matter of setting out to combine words without further thought. A friend of mine wrote a poem called "*Poemar*" (Poetry-making) in which all of this is expressed very clearly:

"Making poems is no more than trapping the words that fly through the air. Strip them and wash them and dry them and brush them. And arrange them with a certain mischievousness. Make them agree and bring them together or marry them forever. And then, when you unite them, a miracle occurs, they make sound, they stop time, they touch your heart and mine, and we burst into tears."

[*"Hacer poemas no es más que atrapar las palabras que vuelan por el aire. Desnudarlas y lavarlas y secarlas y peinarlas. Y ordenarlas con cierta picardía. Acordarlas y juntarlas o casarlas para siempre. Y entonces, al unir las, se produce el asombroso milagro de que suenan, de que detienen el tiempo, de que el tiempo se para, de que tocan tu corazón y el mío y rompemos a llorar."*]

Well, making Architecture is something like that. It requires enormous precision. Remember the quote by María Zambrano, who says, when referring to Poetry: "Poetry is word in agreement with number." Well, Architecture is the same. Of course it's difficult for us and I still find it difficult. For example, the matter of light, which is central for me, but not because it is central for me, but because it is central in Architecture. I would like to have more knowledge. I invented a tale in a well-known text about light, in which I said that Bernini had made some tablets of light, which he loses and which later end up falling into Le Corbusier's hands. What I wanted to say in this story is that I would like to have an exact control over light, knowing that light is a material and that it is the most luxurious material and that it must be treated as stone is, with the same materiality as stone, and that it has to be controlled just as stone has to be.

In the building we're making in Zamora, we've spent months on the stone and dedicated an enormous amount of hours to defining the size, thickness and placement of each stone in this beautiful wall that will appear in front of the cathedral. I want to put very big stones there. They have to be the largest stones possible. And I'm asking for the greatest thickness that can be achieved for the greatest size of the wallboard that current technology allows for stone. Knowing it's a stone that covers a wall that has a previous structure. Obviously, I can reach greater dimensions than those used with traditional stone throughout history. We're in the third millennium, and I want to work with stone, in front of the cathedral of Zamora with the spirit and the technology of our time.

People find all of these things strange, and they're not at all strange. It's like putting words in a poem and suddenly a word acquires a new meaning. I'm currently finishing a text in which I compare Architecture with music and I begin quoting Fray Luis de León and his "*...la música estremada por vuestra sabia mano gobernada...*" ("... Music tempered by your wisely governed hand") from his wonderful Ode to Salinas. I quote the word "*estremada*" that in current spelling is written with an "x", in its original spelling, with an s. Even

these small details are not the details of a neurotic. I worry about the architects who under the motto “God is in the details”, which is what Mies Van der Rohe used to say, spend all day like neurotics over each millimeter that they design, stuck on the banister or the baseboard. Obviously what is important is the general idea, and it’s worth the trouble to take care of these details in as far as they contribute to making this general idea work.

Allow me to return to my question: in his book about Fallingwater, Kauffman Junior recounts how his father called him on the phone saying “... I’m arriving tomorrow morning.” Nothing had been drawn when the members of his studio go to sleep, and Wright draws the house at 5 or 6 in the morning. When the members of his studio get up, they draft it and make the final drawings.

Wright draws this house that night. It’s not that Wright creates the house that night. A building of that complexity was already created, it already existed in Wright’s head and Wright puts it on paper that night.

In the case of Aalto, there is a seed that flowers, from the first sketch he draws to the last floor plan, but one can recognize the final project in the first sketch. We know Kahn’s progression and how he moves from form to design: understanding structure as form, what he wants the work to be, we can follow in the lines sketched how he reaches his final design. Or the processes, almost like automatic writing, in Gehry’s first sketches and in his first maquettes that appear in each one of his projects.

How does the first idea of a work by Alberto Campo Baeza come to be? How is this idea developed over the process of creation? I’ve seen the initial drawings, I’ve seen the 75,000 drawings in your files, but how does that first idea appear and flower? And these ideas, do they appear on paper, do they appear in your head, do they arise as an idea, a concept? What is their gestation?

The answer to that question isn’t easy, but if I must choose one of options you’ve presented, I’d say, in my head. Clearly, in my head.

A drawing might serve as a reference and can help at certain times to suggest or develop, but the idea very clearly comes from my head. And for that same reason, I would say that I need time, a lot of time. I believe the elaboration of architecture or its composition requires a long time.

I don’t mean that it took Virgil 11 years to write the *Aenid*, but rather that even for that first moment, which is what you’re asking about, time is needed. As much time as for the first moment of human life. In human life, means are given in order to have a child, and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t. What is the culminating moment? Nobody knows. I think Architecture is very difficult for me and takes me a lot of time. And furthermore Architecture is not like Mozart’s music. I’ve written it somewhere, there are no Mozarts in architecture.

It doesn't depend on size, precisely because so many factors are involved, even for a small thing. One must also have a clear idea about what one wants for very large buildings.

Yesterday we were reviewing the projects for this book for Phaidon and once again the maquettes for the Copenhagen Auditorium appeared. The building's like a large beached rock, a beached rock that obviously I make parelepidedic, straight, rectangular, divided into four large steps on which afterwards a large transparent glass box is placed that faces the water. Within the large rock are the auditoriums, the more closed-in areas that need to respond to the acoustics. And in the upper glass box, the public spaces looking at the city and at the water. Well, this idea for a large project was born after a long process and clearly will have to be translated later into specific measurements and a concrete program.

About your question and this moment of the birth of an idea: I'm certain it's in my head. You can be on a trip thinking more than drawing, thinking, and it appears. Or certain ideas appear first and are followed by another stronger or clearer idea. It's a complex process.

It's not fortuitous; it is something that has been very worked out in my case. It's not something that suddenly appears like an angelical inspiration, no. It is something for which I need an enormous amount of time.

I don't think I'm so original in this, throughout the history of architecture, you see architects who interest you and whose production is relatively limited.

I distrust contemporary architects who produce more projects than a good creative mind can generate in depth.

Of course, many architects can make a great number of works. The capacity to produce quantity is easy these days, with the means we have, with large firms and immense production companies. I'm not afraid of it. But to produce with depth and quality, knowing that one is building for History, that's another thing. I think true creators, poets and musicians, painters and philosophers, create for History. We are making History, we are building History.

I remember a curious story from one of my visits to Zamora. They told me that a very nice and very effective classmate of mine wanted to join us for lunch. He ate with us and was very pleasant, and he told me, "Alberto, I've built 2000 works." I showed my amazement and he added, "but not only in Zamora, in Madrid too and all over the world." The meal was enjoyable, but when we returned to Madrid and coming home, I asked myself, "Good God, how many have I built?" I pulled together all my books, my publications and my printed vanity and began counting. And I had only 37 constructed works. At first I said "what a disaster!" But then, as it happens, I'm very calm and can only be grateful for all I have and I don't want more. I'm doing what I believe I should and can, and am enjoying myself and try to remain rigorous in my judgment. By chance, on my bedside table that night was a book by Bryson, Shakespeare's latest biographer. And also by chance, on the page where I'd stopped reading, he spoke of how Shakespeare had written only 37 plays. So

that eased my mind and I slept happily that night. The genesis of architecture needs time. Time and maturity. Time to age.

Another aspect I'd like to stress is that what one proposes are theoretical issues. Bockemühl, the art critic, speaking of Rembrandt, my favorite painter along with Goya and Velázquez, said that what Rembrandt did was "translate concepts, make them visually possible by means of his painting."

I think that is what one is trying to do. When I make a building with a platform facing a landscape, I am proposing theoretical issues that can relate this new space to the landscape. And when I propose what a corner means in the building we were talking about before in Zamora, I am certain that, independently of the size of the stone that we use, I care much more about the theoretical issue of the cornerstone.

At what point does a square building have its maximum tension? Where the walls join, in the angle. That first stone is the foundation stone, which is the stone on which my building rests, but I would also say that it is the stone where all Architecture rests, the so-called cornerstone of which the Holy Scriptures speak. So, I'm going to try to make this first stone the largest and the thickest. It will be the biggest stone that the producers with their modern machines are able to bring to light. Then, the following stones will have to be smaller so that this so-called cornerstone looks even bigger. And obviously the basement will require larger stones than the upper stories; that's pure logic.

These very theoretical issues that arise when we speak of the cornerstone or the corner, or of what the corner means in architecture, are what interest me. The corner in Mies Van der Rohe or Palladio or Bernini: these architectural solutions are theoretical issues that can be translated materially.

When we professors speak of how architecture rests on the ground, its contact with the soil, with the earth, how it emerges from the earth, how it rests on the earth and how it connects to the sky, we are speaking of issues that may seem very theoretical but are very real, material. It's that encounter between the theoretical issues and reality that interests me.

Just as Bernini, when sculpting the Rape of Persephone by Neptune, couldn't care less how much beard Neptune has, or whether he wears a crown, or whether Persephone is pretty or not. What he cares about is showing the softness of the hard marble by means of his sculpture: the possibility of making something hard soft, of showing how the very hard and smooth marble gives way under the fingers that press into Persephone's thigh. Bernini is making a purely theoretical proposition there, in addition to the fact that the sculpture is beautiful, or the movement of the cloth and the movement of the body are lovely, which are obviously present in the work as well. There are many factors and I would say, in this sense too, that sculpture is very close to architecture.

We are talking about the constructed idea...

Yes, clearly. And its relationship to painting, sculpture and music is very clear as well.

The other day I read something lovely in Alex Ross's book *The Rest is Noise*. It's a marvelous book and recounts a very interesting fact. How in 1905 Richard Strauss premiered *Salomé*, based on a text by Oscar Wilde and with very provocative music, in Graz. Mahler, Alban Berg, a disciple of Mahler's, Schoenberg and Puccini, who came all the way from Italy, all go to Graz to attend the premiere. All of them were there. At that time Strauss was proposing a new music that those of us who like music love. A music that sounds familiar to us now but at that time was scandalous.

I'm saying all of this to point out what I'd like to do with architecture: to make the most vanguard Architecture, the most representative of our moment that simultaneously is able to last over time.

I am a man of the third millennium, not just a man of the 21st century, and I would like this to be reflected in my work. To make this architecture of the third millennium is it really necessary to twist, break, scream, shout, and do everything that one finds these days in the magazines? I don't think so; this is something different. It's something more profound. In the Zamora project, the site has an irregular shape and we are adhering to the site. So, the stone box that opens to the sky is a box with irregular forms that are controlled but broken because of the layout of city that we are responding to.

Can architecture resemble some outlandish object? I don't think so. But aren't the forms of most of the buildings that fill our magazines outlandish? Yes, but I think Architecture cannot and should not be superficial. It has to belong to the time in which we are living, and at the same time be capable of withstanding time, of lasting. The difficult desire of duration that Paul Eluard spoke of.

We seem to be coming up to something I wanted to ask you. Many years ago Alberto Campo Baeza said, "I am not a minimalist," Alberto Campo Baeza said, "I do more with less."

And I won't say I was surprised by, but I very much liked the fact that the "more with less" that you wrote many years ago to define yourself, recently appeared as the slogan of a congress in Pamplona organized by the Architecture and Society Foundation that attracted many important international architects along with a lot of Spanish architects.

"More with less" as a response to these times of crisis, but there is another "more with less" that is absolutely implicit and explicit as the theoretical statement of Campo Baeza's work.

I would like to develop this thought, what is "more with less"?

"More with less" is very clear, and again I'll give an example from Poetry. In the end, analogies with other creative endeavors are very useful and explain a lot.

A poet is not a minimalist of literature. Imagine people telling poets, "This guy's a minimalist" No, this guy is a poet. He's a poet who is able to make something that can break your heart with the least amount of words. In Poetry a few words put one way say almost nothing and put another say everything, producing the breath of poetry, the soft puff of air.

What you and I have talked about, so often, and it's characteristic of all creative work, is the suspension of time. That aspect that can seem so mysterious, that is the creator's ability to suspend time.

Suspending time sounds almost like pure philosophy, doesn't it? But in fact, it really happens. The other day I walked into the Cathedral of Cádiz and I almost levitated, the light there was so lovely.

On my last visit to New York, as I stared at Velázquez's portrait of Juan de Pareja at the Metropolitan, space and time flew. Or when you read a poem. Right now I'm reading Sophia de Mello, a wonderful Portuguese poet from the last century who centers almost everything in the word. Reading her elevates you and time runs away.

That is what I mean by "more with less". Not minimalism, but rather "more with less." And sometimes words are not enough, but this is it: to squeeze all the juice out of the lemon to its very last drop.

Can we speak of a search for the archetype?

Yes, of course we can speak of the search for the archetype. Lately I've written something about it. I don't think trying to build types is vain or without purpose. It means trying to make a more universal Architecture. When the circumstances, the ingredients, are very similar, the answers should, logically, have a lot in common.

Right now I'm struggling with the project I've got on my desk. In this case, the ingredients are wonderful: a beach house on the edge of the sea, on a site with a slight slope towards the water with dunes in front, so I have to establish the plane on which that marvel can be contemplated. I have to lift myself over the dune a little and in the end you ask: Is this house going to belong to the kind of typology, to the archetype, of the podium house with the temple on top, the cave and the cabin with the cabin on top? As much as I struggle against it and run myself in circles trying escape the "curse", once again, I find myself working on this typology.

It's a matter of establishing the horizontal plane: the exact establishment of the horizontal plane on the exact point so as to be able to face a landscape with its distant - infinite - horizon, which is the sea. It is a matter of being there. The human being facing the universe.

I made a joke at the inauguration of my last piece, *Between Cathedrals in Cádiz*, which is, once again, a horizontal plane on high facing the sea between the city's two cathedrals. And I told those present, with the Mayor and the Bishop in front, "and you will note that from here, we see America."

And you could see America; of course you could see America, there beyond, on the line of the horizon.

What types can one find in Campo Baeza's architecture?

In his text for this book, Jesús Aparicio made a series of synoptic tables with diagrams in which he groups the types very well. There are houses on a horizontal platform when the landscape offers a distant horizon, and there are introverted, closed houses when the landscape nearby is so inadequate as to require the creation of their own landscape.

The last house, Casa Moliner in Zaragoza, is a case in point. I enclose myself within the walls the regulations allow, and I create a box that is closed to its unspeakable surroundings and that is open to the sky, creating an interior landscape. Alternatively, in situations with a distant horizon, when I have a wonderful exterior landscape, I try to appropriate it by means of the horizontal plane, underlining it and stressing it. But when the exterior landscape is unacceptable, you close in on yourself and create your own landscape, which is the sky.

One can take Casa Moliner and open the most transparent part of the house, the ground floor, to that created landscape. And on the upper floor, once again close inward so as not to see the inadequate surrounding landscape and bring in the northern light through a few large clear windows. And in the lowest part, the basement, place the bedrooms that receive light through excavated courtyards.

So, a very clear outline for a house appears, in which I speak of sleeping, living, and dreaming, and may recall Bachelard. To sleep, which is to die a little, in the deepest sense. To live on the transparent floor, in the garden. To dream in the highest, in the translucent space, in the clouds, in the Library.

Curiously, last week I received a Japanese magazine that featured the latest house by Kazuyo Sejima, and it's exactly like it, not in shape, but in layout and idea. The lower walls are curved, while mine are lined up straight and parallel. But it's the same idea; the house is buried, it opens on the *piano terra* to these walls that she shapes while above it is transformed into something different. It's responding to a way of inserting a house in a high-density area with other buildings that have no interest whatsoever. It's as simple as that.

We're talking about a specific language, about a language that has already been gestated and generated, about how this language has been broken and how new ideas and new families suddenly appear.

Yes, and no. If language is expression, obviously it's recognizable, just as I speak Spanish and Kazuyo Sejima speaks Japanese. She will express herself in Japanese and I in Spanish. There will be times that an idea may coincide and its expression be different, and nonetheless, the idea is very similar, not to say the same.

And should the question go in the other direction, of talking about Campo Baeza's language, I don't have a preconceived language. Obviously I have

my tendencies, and I can defend the use of white at certain times because it resolves a series of matters very clearly.

The latest project on my desk right now is in Lanzarote. It's a project on an island where everything is black; the earth is volcanic with bits of picón charcoal. The project is an enormous podium, a horizontal plane that holds and is encrusted into the earth and wants to become earth, merge with the same volcanic soil, and it is in black. Colors and materials depend on the place.

For the museum of Contemporary Art that has not yet been built in Cádiz, in Vejer, in Montenmedio, which is an infinite white band, I made a few tests and for a time was working with colors within that infinitely long box until I finally gave up. Because it was more out of a will to start using colors, than that the project asked for them. What is natural in Barragán may be difficult for me, and one needn't copy him, though I admire Barragán a lot, nor use the color that he used masterfully.

And in regard to the language of form, I can still have rectangular shapes. But if I use them, it is not because I'm stuck on them, or because 'that is the language of Campo Baeza,' but rather because they seem to be the most rational solution. When the plot requires a contralto or a countertenor instead of a soprano, we use a countertenor.

We find a sudden leap of scale in your work. There is a leap in scale in the Caja General de Granada (the headquarters for the Granada Savings and Loan). Is there a before and after that work?

Clearly there is a before and an after. I'd never made such a large building before, though I'd worked on other designs with Julio Cano Lasso, such as the Universidad Laboral of Almería, that were just as large or larger.

But the question is obvious when you've worked on a small scale, the domestic scale, the scale of private homes and of small schools, the scale on which I'd almost always worked before. One could also mention the library at Orihuela, which is another building of a certain size, or the offices for the Andalusian Regional Government in Almería, which also was on a larger scale.

But in a full sense, the Caja de Granada building is the largest I've done. It was a matter of confronting a different scale, a different size, and I believe we faced the challenge gracefully.

Clearly the next big building was the Museum of the Memory of Andalusia, and I think the answer there was also the right one. I tried to establish a dialogue between the new building and the Caja and to continue constructing the new city.

The first building was a point of reference in a more or less disorderly outskirts, with buildings next to it that are as large as the Caja de Granada but that don't look anything like it. In the case of the next building, beside the first, the reading that most interested me was how to relate the new building to the

earlier one and to the city, in this case, marked by the river that lies at its edge.

There's a theme that is still lacking in the new building, which is the forecourt, a level that leads us to the edge of the river, where the river becomes a part of the new city. And I call these two buildings a new part of the city and I hope that if the Kengo Kuma building, the opera, is constructed, it will also be in this line. I believe Kengo Kuma has proposed a different form, but one that he also understands by means of the platform that his building sits on. And you, as the curator in charge of the exhibition in Japan, saw how Kengo Kuma was moved when he looked at our model, because the forecourt from which his building will emerge was already reflected in our maquette.

So, my building has to look towards the river, and not towards the street behind. It does so clearly with that large eye that appears along the top of the screen.

I'm trying to answer your question about the change of scale, the before and after. And I would say that there hasn't been such a great change. Obviously, there's a before and an after, but no one can say that this architect only makes houses. Campo Baeza makes Architecture.

I've figured out the course I'm teaching on housing this year, and I'm presenting, first, a small house, then collective housing and finally, a tower. And I've given it the significant title "An architect is a house". By which I mean, no architect worth anything in the History of Architecture has not made a house. Palladio is the Villa Rotonda, Mies is Farnsworth House, Le Corbusier is Villa Savoye, and Utzon is Can Lis.

When I walked into the Caja General of Granada for the first time, and remember it was during Kenneth Frampton's visit, the first time Kenneth Frampton saw it, he stood looking around the space in amazement, and what surprised me was that it had the same intensity that each and every one of your houses has, transferred to a large space. And that this leap in scale allowed you to make a space evident, make it practically holy. That heart of light that I wrote to you about at one point, in which time stopped.

And here I have no choice but to speak of light, the light in Campo Baeza and the meaning his understanding of light has in his work.

For the exhibition at Crown Hall, I summed up your work, playing with the "more with light" that you wrote and parodying Mies, in the title "Light is more" because in your case light is much more...

I think it's very clear that light is the raw material of Architecture, its first material. And it would be very stupid to say that light is Campo Baeza's discovery. Light is always at the center of architecture, starting from the cave. I imagine that when they were moving that large stone to close off that primitive cave, some cracks of light would be the prelude to everything that came next.

Of course light is a wonderful material, and I think that what works in Caja de Granada is having achieved that suspension of time, that sense of suspended time; the building works as if it were a sun dial, which is what the Pantheon does. If I had to speak about what is behind the Caja de Granada, in terms of proportion and dimension and the central idea, I'd speak of the Pantheon. We could speak again of the essential mechanisms of Architecture: scale, proportion, and the precision of dimensions.

In a house, the matter of light is treated differently. As I did in the Casa Turégano, because there are double spaces that interconnect and there is a large window to the southeast, and the light comes in from high, and at a certain moment it crosses the space. A very lovely light occurs there. But in other houses, such as Casa Gaspar or Casa Guerrero, size and function are not going to talk about light the way they do in the Caja de Granada. Or in the latest house, Olnick Spanu, or in Casa Moliner, there it's working on transparency, on the continuity of the space. That too is a matter of light, obviously, but it's treated in another manner.

When we speak of light, we identify it with sunlight, with solid light that can cut across space, tighten it and produce the emotions that only arise in that kind of space. In my last article, comparing Architecture with Music, I wrote, "... The air is serene and dressed in loveliness and a light never used before..." That's what I'd heard from Juan Navarro Baldeweg some time ago. He spoke with subtlety about how architectural works are like musical instruments. Because, just as music is air that is later tempered, tuned or made to vibrate through the strings or be blown from the primitive flute to the most sophisticated instrument, Architecture is light.

Getting back to your earlier question about scale, when an architect moves to a large scale, light can be treated as a material in a very special way. And I think that's what I've tried to do in these buildings, what I'm still trying to do. In the building in Lanzarote, it's the same thing. I construct three spaces that through a series of circumstances are the same size. But the light makes these three spaces very different. We'll be working with skylights on three different scales.

In an initial study we worked with different shaped skylights, but in the end we're going to go to something much more precise and work with skylights in different scales. I think it will be a very precise exercise in light.

Light, I insist, and will repeat for the hundredth time, is the most luxurious material we architects work with. Like stone, only that light is given freely and stone costs money. Light is without a doubt the most luxurious material, but as it is given to us free, we value it less.

I think many architects forget they have such a wonderful material to work with. And they use very expensive materials when everything is much simpler. Working with light, obviously, and now I'm returning to the beginning of our conversation, has to be in the genesis of the idea. That is, I have to know whether the light interests me or not and how it interests me in a given project for those functions. You cannot always make spaces, the almost

religious or holy spaces as you've called them, like those at the center of the Caja de Granada.

You cannot work with that kind of space in an educational center. If the function is to teach, spaces where the focus is wisdom, which is the teacher, are what's needed. And that's that. They must be well organized and well lit, and afterwards one can create a space in the lobby where all the circulations converge, as we've done in the Benneton Day Care Center. The classrooms work transparently with the light from the garden, with continuity, which is the most logical for a classroom with young children. And nonetheless, the hallways converge in a central vertical space where the light from high is worked with and where such lovely things happen, as I've recounted more than once, that the children themselves have written: "*ho toccato la luce.*" And you can see the children touching the pools of light on the wall. And another child, generously saying, "*questa casa la ha fatto Dio.*"

I think the comparison with music helps us understand the parallel between a well-constructed building that light passes through and the well-constructed musical instrument that air passes through. A violin is not the same as a piano. The well-built piano would have to start from an idea that is very different from that of the violin. You cannot make a violin in the shape of a piano. And once you have a clear idea of what you want, you must know how to construct it well. Construct, tune, and play.

The tension of the space is key in your work.

Yes, in my work and in all worthwhile architecture, space is tightened, tuned. In the case of the skylights in the Benneton Day Care center, we studied models using some cones that gather light with its precise orientation and dimension, just as one would tune a violin. And afterwards, obviously, light comes in and people see that it works because the instrument has been well conceived, well constructed and well tuned.

One could say "but that's so complicated!" I say it's not, because that is the architect's job. The job of the architect is to be useful, but in addition to being useful, or at the same time that the space is useful, it must be beautiful. And we return once again to Vitruvius and to Venustas, and to Truth and Beauty.

There is a more generic term that also pertains to the work of creation, that can sum up everything we've been talking about in regard to scale, measure, proportion and precision, and that is "order". Order, to establish the order of the space, to arrange the world. That is the role of Architecture.

What remains for Alberto Campo Baeza to do?

I could say a lot, but well, in truth, whatever God wants.

What remains for me to do? To continue trying to understand how technology makes it possible for us to conceive new or different spaces. See what I'm defending now? We've moved from light, a very concrete, but sublime, thing, to order, which could seem more philosophical, and now, to technology. It is

easy to understand how skyscrapers came to be, once the elevator's made them possible. The other day I read a thesis that talked about the gondola, the apparatus used to clean a very tall building. For the new doctoral candidate, that was the key, but in fact, the elevator is the core of the matter. There must be a mechanism that can move us quickly, vertically; this is what changed everything so that skyscrapers could be made, just as sheet glass in large sizes made the continuity of horizontal space possible. Without steel and sheet glass in large dimensions, Mies Van der Rohe would not have been able to conceive his continuous spaces. Nor would Le Corbusier have been able to conceive his spaces without concrete.

I think technology allows us to understand what we architects can do. The other creative fields such as painting, poetry or music have a greater degree of freedom.

There is something that has always impressed me a lot and it is the extreme generosity, not only of your work but also of your personal relationships. And it takes me to a different place, to the School, and to a group of people who have surrounded you, standing in your light or in your shadow, and that now appear everywhere.

If you want, we won't mention names, or if you wish, we will. But for me, it was impossible to put together the exhibition "A City Called Spain," in which I wanted to portray all of the generations working over the past ten years, without finding a very significant group of architects tied to you personally. And I hardly find this in any other figure in Spanish architecture, except perhaps in Rafael Moneo, because great figures in Spanish architecture have come out of Moneo's studio and from among his people. What do you attribute this to?

Thank you for those comments; it's generous on your part. I've also often said that I have the immense good fortune of being surrounded by people who are better than I. And it's not just a nice thing to say, it is the truth.

And it is my great good fortune. Garcia Lorca expressed it well in his much-quoted line, "I write for those who love me." Well then, one is lucky to be enormously loved, but I insist on the importance of being surrounded by people worthier than I. I believe that too is the right choice. In every aspect of life, you would be stupid if you surrounded yourself with people who weren't as good so that you could shine. You make a point of surrounding yourself with the best people so as to be in good company.

Here I'd even dare to give names, due to some very recent instances that I think are significant and that sometimes aren't interpreted properly. This past week, Juan Carlos Sancho Osinaga, a splendid architect who makes top quality architecture along with his wife, Sol Madrideojos, got tenure as a Full Professor of Design at the Architecture School of Madrid. And last year, Jesús Aparicio Guisado also made tenure as a Full Professor of Design at the School of Architecture of Madrid. I have only praise for Suso Aparicio, a person who deserves it all. Both men were assistants of mine years ago, until

naturally and logically they became independent at the School, as professors. So, the years go by, and the teachers who had been my assistants are now full tenured professors. That hasn't happened with any of the other Design and Project professors.

And I've "hardly done anything" for this to happen; that is, I haven't done anything strange or anything that I shouldn't do or that wouldn't encourage them and give them freedom. It's the same with one's children, you can give them all the maternal protection you want, but it's counter productive: you have to give them freedom.

Freedom is at the center of my life. In Architecture and in Teaching, and in my personal life.

This hymn to freedom may bring us towards a conclusion here. We're talking about a body of work with great freedom.

Speaking of freedom brings to mind the 37 buildings, speaking of freedom brings to mind the intensity, the consistent intensity, that means no work is diluted or watered down and instead has its force, each and every project. It brings to mind specific examples. The tower for Telefónica that was not built and the neighborhood offered in place of the tower, also rejected; it brings to mind your choice of which projects to take on.

What has this freedom meant in Campo Baeza's work and what price has this freedom had in Campo Baeza's work?

The question is a clear one and I'd tell you that my answer is also very simple: that is, it's worth it. Freedom is worth the trouble. The price is very high but it is worth it, and thank God, I am in a situation in which I can only be grateful. But yes, it has had its cost.

You've said so gracefully in mentioning the Telefónica Tower. When instead of the tower, they suggest I make a neighborhood, and so a neighborhood is made. What was done is just fine, but I think the tower would have been better, for Telefónica as well, not only as a major piece, but also as an understanding of the city of Madrid, the place and topography.

Independently of whether or not the tower was appropriate in its conception as a tower with the four nuclei in the corners and the emerging elements, it was truly beautiful. But above all, there was the matter of understanding the city and the territory clearly. To make the highest tower in the city, at the highest point in Madrid, which would have been seen from great distances, would have served as a future reference for what was going to be built. That Telefónica Tower would have been the right choice.

It's useless to speak of the price of this attitude, of not agreeing to the other solution, which, economically, would have been terrific for me. Consistency offers satisfactions that money never does.

Which leads me to the last anecdote from my latest project, the one now under construction in Zamora that I've already mentioned several times. At a

certain moment, there were complications due to that damn stone, with some quarries trying to force us or force the owner, the Regional Government of Castilla y León, and pressuring us, so that I said: 'If this, inappropriate colored stone, is used in an inappropriate size, I'm leaving the job. I'm not interested in finishing the work in that manner. If they try to force that stone on me I'm leaving.' And I would have left.

We work intensely, as you say, with great freedom, a freedom that comes from honesty, which I think is the other word that could match freedom.

It also gives all the works their intensity. Of course they're intense! Because I have never let down my guard. Obviously some have turned out better than others, but even in those, it's there, the intensity with which it was made, beating like a heart.

All of this is very clear and is worth the trouble. We spoke before of Shakespeare and his 37 plays and my 37 constructed projects, and I think it's absolutely worth the trouble.

Economically? Money is the great temptation for an architect, because architecture is capable of producing a quantity of money that breaks anything. But I also believe one needn't be a hero to escape that temptation.

One thing we haven't spoken about is the size of your studio, the number of collaborators.

Right now, I am very curious to see how the large firms are going to survive these so-called times of crisis. During the Savings & Loan crisis in the United States, I still remember the day when Skidmore, Owings & Merrill laid off a thousand architects. If SOM could fire one thousand architects, how many architects were working at the firm at that time? How many are in your studio? 5 or 6 people?

Three, there are three of us, not six. But I'll repeat, I think life establishes naturally certain rhythms that are good to follow. There are buildings, projects, commissions that enter the studio and then are watered down. Two terrific commissions in Madrid that by the time we put the contract on the table escaped, they'd been watered down. There are people who confuse the enthusiasm one has for architecture and try to take advantage of the situation. The three people in my studio are enormously worthy, so we can control what we have with absolute precision.

At my studio, I don't know whether this will be printed or not, but, we don't work on Saturdays and Sundays. The office is closed. We start at nine in the morning, we close from two to five, and then work from five until nine.

With this schedule and with truly efficient people, we can make a Caja Granada, we've made the MA, we've brought forward all of the things that would seem to have come from a larger studio. As in everything in life, I think that if you organize and plan well, it's possible to do very well.

Is this a formula for the new times ahead?

It's a formula for the new times and for the old ones. I think the big mistake some architects, whom I love and admire, make is that of falling into the trap of getting more people, so that they need more work.

Sometimes having more people does not provide better solutions. Sometimes the load is heavy on my collaborators and handling the construction is intense, but then, it's also done within a well-controlled order.

Does that mean that each work is decided entirely by Alberto Campo Baeza?

I would say so, and I don't mind saying so. It doesn't take one bit of merit away from my collaborators.

Obviously, they're not going to consult me if the seventh brick in the fourth row on the third corridor has a chipped corner. I would do that when I was young, when I was a newly graduated architect and worked with Julio Cano Lasso. I knew those things at that time, I was proud to know what was going on in each millimeter of the construction. I'm speaking about the work's overall plan, having broad strokes, which are clearly those I most value. I think that a work is its strong design, though I also value every stroke. In Velázquez, one sees the work as a whole and the work up close and the work in close detail, and it stands up to these three readings. I think my buildings do as well.

What do you most value in your work?

Among the things one tries to do in architecture, and before I'd discovered many of my intentions, I would say the ability to withstand time. That may sound extreme, but I think, if the works are truly worthwhile, they withstand time.

The ability to be recognizable. A recognizable architecture and that can remain in one's memory.

To speak of time, of the ability to withstand time and to remain in people's memory, would require a much longer discourse.

I like it that people can remember Casa Gaspar. It really excites me when people still say when they see me, "that's the architect who made the Gaspar house." Casa Gaspar was built twenty some years ago and it is very small, but it's radical, clear, seminal. Or the Casa de Blas or the Caja de Granada.

They are works that withstand time and remain in people's memory, and that is important.

I've spoken to you before about making people happy. I think people live happily in my buildings, both in the houses and in the others (Cajas, etc.)

I've told the story thousands of times about the first day the employees walked into the Caja de Granada to work, and how one of the people going there to work was moved as he entered the large space. Because obviously

that space, which you call holy, is very powerful. Every time I go back to the Caja I say hello to that person.

I think the works' ability to serve in this respect and to make the people there comfortable and happy is a good objective.

In the end, that's my intention: to build ideas capable of being materialized so that people live happily in them.