

## **RELENTELSSLY SEEKING BEAUTY**

### **PUBLISHED IN**

Poetica Architectonica. Madrid, 2014

Address of the Academician to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Spain, RABASF. Madrid, 2015

La suspensión del tiempo. Diario de un Arquitecto. Madrid, 2017

Textos críticos. Madrid 2017

Divisare Books n.104. Rome, 2017

Sharpening the scalpel. Madrid, 2019

Quid est ergo pulchrum? Et quid est pulchritudo?

“Do we perchance love anything but the beautiful? What then is the beautiful? And what is beauty? What is it that allures and unites us to the things we love; for unless there were a grace and beauty in them, they could not possibly attract us to them?”

Saint Augustine, Confessions. IV.13. 44

After many years working as an architect, teaching as a university professor and putting my ideas on paper, the reasons why I do my work, I must confess that what I truly seek with all my heart, with all my soul, relentlessly, is beauty.

Can an architect confess this so overtly? Can any creator state outright that what he is seeking is beauty? That is what poets and musicians and painters and sculptors do, what all artists do. Many of the academicians here today know that full well.

To state that beauty is the goal of Architecture could seem rather risky. But I am convinced that by achieving beauty in architecture we can achieve, with this “art with necessary reason” as the classics used to say, a happier place for mankind.

To achieve Venustas, having previously fulfilled the requirements of Utilitas and Firmitas, is the best way of making people happier, which is not only the aim of Architecture but that of all creative work. Sáenz de Oíza explained it better than me in *The Dream of Paradise* when he said:

“I declare that the works of Architecture are instruments for transforming reality into a splendid and regained Paradise from which through our own fault we were expelled and which we have again been readmitted to thanks to the powers of transformation of Architecture”.

Venustas, beauty, to regain Paradise lost, happiness.

Or when Carvajal spoke of “orderly beauty” and his “desire to create efficiency and beauty at the same time such as only true architects seek to do”. “The beauty that we contemplate, being ours, we can use to engender beauty, operatively, in our works. Thus beauty becomes motor and not just consequence.”

Over the past number of years I have written about many of the masters of Spanish Contemporary Architecture and, in attempting to summarize all that seemed to me most substantial in them, I developed those texts under the heading of beauty. Bald beauty for Sota, volcanic beauty for Oíza, chiseled beauty for Carvajal, rebellious beauty for Fisac and beauty itself for Barragán. It was my understanding then that beauty was the cause and the aim of the creative work of the masters. And now, with the passage of time, I see it with ever greater clarity. Beauty!

REASON. CERVANTES, GOYA, GOETHE

And beauty in architecture is guided by Reason. I have defended and still defend reason as the architect’s primary and principal tool in order to achieve beauty.

Because although this may be true for all the arts, it is most imperatively so for Architecture, because of its inherent ineluctable seriousness.

Cervantes. Those who have read Don Quixote do not usually pause at those exceptional pages with which Cervantes prefaces his universal work. And Cervantes confesses himself that he wrote the prologue later. And he also confesses that it is the piece of writing to which he devoted most time. Cervantes wrote: "Idle reader: thou mayest believe me without any oath that I would this book, as it is the child of my brain, were the fairest, gayest, and cleverest that could be imagined". So, having made it clear that reason was his principal work tool, he declares his determined desire to capture beauty with it.

When I wrote that architecture is a built idea, I was merely making the claim that architecture, and any creative work, must be the product of thought, of reason, and of understanding, as we read in Cervantes.

And when that reason is missing, then curious architectures appear which, being so often against nature, produce the amazement and the adoration of a society such as ours that bows before these works as if they were the temples of a new religion.

Goya. The sleep of reason produces monsters Goya tells us in the marvelous aquatint that presides over the office of the president of this Academy. It is number 43 of the 80 etchings that make up the series of Los Caprichos published by Goya in 1799. The original plate is still conserved and on display in this Academy. Goya also wrote a text, in the form of a list of comments, the original of which is conserved, curiously enough, not in the Academy but in the Archive of the Prado Museum. In this text, when he reaches etching 43 Goya writes: "Fantasy abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters" but goes on to say that "united with her, she is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels". In other words, reason needs imagination to open the doors to beauty. How could we not agree with Goya!

God forbid that I should wish to compare myself with Cervantes or with Goya, but it is with this spirit with which I have wished and still wish to build all my works: trying to conquer beauty with all my soul, with the arms of reason and of imagination. With the dour desire to endure as the primary impulse of creation, as Paul Eluard tells us. With the intention of remaining in the memory of humankind. Or as Federico García Lorca said with such simple and lovely words: "I write to be loved".

Goethe. And it would seem that Goethe had an agreement with Cervantes and Goya concerning the defense of reason as the best pathway to beauty when he affirmed, referring to the painters of the time, that "the artist's brush should be dipped in reason", adding thereafter: "and architects in Winckelmann". It would appear that the Academy has been listening to Goethe with its publication recently of the History of Ancient Art by Johann Joachim Winckelmann in a beautiful edition through the manuscript by Diego Antonio Rejón de Silva, who was Honorary Member of this Royal Academy of San Fernando. Goethe, tired of the unreasonable digressions being produced around him, strongly advocated the recovery of reason with his resounding words.

PLATO, SAINT AUGUSTINE, SAINT THOMAS

Reason as man's primary tool in achieving beauty. But what is beauty? In The Banquet, Plato proposed beauty as the splendor of truth.

Over the centuries further nuances were added to this proposal by other thinkers who, starting out from Plato, fine-tuned his words with the most interesting of accents. Jacques Maritain sums it up very well: “splendor veri said Plato, splendor ordinis said Saint Augustine, and splendor formae said Saint Thomas”. Although coursing through the veins of all these formulas is an irrepressible ambition to discover deeper explanations, if truth must be at the basis of all architectural creation that aspires to beauty, how could we consider order and form to be less important? Truth, and order and form. “Form, as we well know, is not something superimposed; it is generated by the very material that reveals itself in it” as José Angel Valente wrote so rightly when honoring Chillida. How could we as architects not subscribe to form as the “material that reveals itself in it” in achieving beauty?

And I cannot resist laying before us here the considerations surrounding beauty that Saint Augustine made in identifying beauty with the Supreme maker:

“Late have I loved you, beauty so ancient and so new: late have I loved you  
Lo, you were within me and I was in the external world  
and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into the beauty of your  
creatures.  
You were with me, but I was not with you.  
They held me back far from you, which if they did not have their existence in you, had  
no existence at all.  
You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness.  
You were radiant and resplendent, you banished my blindness.  
You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you.  
I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you.  
You touched me, and I am on fire to attain the peace which is yours.”

INVESTIGATION, PRECISION AND TRANSCENDENCE. ZUBIRI, ZAMBRANO, ZWEIG

Let us not however go off on intricate philosophical or theological tangents but return to the route that leads to beauty via Architecture.

And indeed, the motto on the shield of the AA Architectural Association London says: “Design with Beauty, Build in Truth”, which is an accurate summary of what we are discussing right now.

On the occasion of his Doctorate Honoris Causa conferral by the University of Oporto, I was asked for a text on Alvaro Siza in which I developed what I consider to be his three principal qualities as an architect, to a large degree as a factor of beauty, these being the three characteristics that I consider inherent in all Architecture participating in that much-desired beauty: an investigative nature, poetic precision and the capacity to transcend.

Investigative nature. One reaches beauty in architecture in the wake of rigorous, profound work that can and must be considered as a true work of research. Beauty is something profound, precise and concrete that rocks the very foundations of human

civilization, that makes time stand still and ensures that the created work remains durable in time and in the memory of man. Beauty is not something superficial, vague or diffuse.

Not one of my projects has ever been just another one. In each and every one of them I have given my all. Each new project has been and is for me an opportunity to seek and find beauty. Each and every one of them has been conceived and designed and built with maximum intensity. With the intense conviction that architecture is the loveliest work in the world.

I have said no many times to many projects in which I wasn't given enough freedom or which I considered were not interesting enough to devote my time to them. Some may call this pedantic. But I believe that this is the only way that one can create, that one can live creating, living with the intensity that makes this life worthwhile. All creators understand this very well: worthwhile poets and writers, musicians and painters and sculptors. I am absolutely certain that many of the academicians here today understand it very well.

When Xavier Zubiri was awarded the National Research Prize in 1982, he thanked Spanish society in his acceptance speech for being capable of understanding that philosophy is a true labor of research. Many times have I recommended to my students that they replace the word philosophy with architecture in that defining speech and the result is surprisingly apt. Because architecture is a true labor of research. And as Zubiri himself advised in his address, with guidance from Saint Augustine: "Seek as those seek who still have not found, and find as those find who are still seeking."

Poetic precision And the beauty we are discussing comes to architecture by the hand of precision. That same precision with which poetry is chiseled. When I defend the poetic nature that all architecture in search of beauty must have, I am not defending something vague and diffuse. I am looking for the precision required in poetry to achieve beauty, which is the same precision that I look for in architecture.

María Zambrano defined poetry as "the word in harmony with the number". What better way to define the precision inherent in poetry. A word, which in one position says nothing special, placed in a precise position is capable of moving us and making time stand still right there. The same is true, with the same precision, in architecture. Because if Poetry is words conjugated with precision, capable of moving the hearts of men, so too is Architecture with its materials.

Capacity faith transcend. Beauty appears in architecture that is capable of transcending us. Architecture that achieves beauty is an architecture that transcends us. The true creator, the true architect, is the one whose work transcends him. Stefan Zweig explains this so well in *The Secret of Artistic Creation*: "There is no greater delight or satisfaction than recognizing that man too can create imperishable values and that eternally we remain united to the Eternal through our supreme effort on earth: through art". Zweig links that beauty with the Supreme Being, which Von Balthasar was to do more explicitly years later.

Moreover, that beauty that transcends us is not something unachievable or simply reserved for a few geniuses. I always try to convince my students that to achieve beauty is a possibility. It is possible to achieve works that are caressed by the "sound of a gentle

whisper” with which the Divine Presence was confirmed in the sacred scriptures and which in architectural creation is the sign that beauty is present.

In Chapter 19. 11-12 of the Book of Kings we read: “The angel said to the prophet Elias: ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by’. And Elias went out. And behold, a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper”. And there in that gentle whisper was the Lord.

So it is that same gentle whisper, the *silibus aurae tenuis* as Saint Jerome writes in the Vulgate, that we architects yearn for our works of architecture, and what all creators long for. It is a clear sign that there is beauty in our works when they are worthwhile.

### UTILITAS, FIRMITAS, VENUSTAS

How could architects not understand that the truth of the idea generated by the fulfillment of function and the truth of construction are essential if we are to achieve beauty in architecture? As Vitruvius so clearly stated: reaching *Venustas* demanded the prior and exact fulfillment of *Utilitas* and *Firmitas*.

*Utilitas*. “When it is said that Architecture must be functional, it stops being functional because it only attends to one of the many functions it has”, Oíza so wisely stated.

Ósip Mandelstam at the beginning of his superb *Dialogue on Dante* said in reference to poetry: “Where a work can be measured by the yardstick of narration, the sheets have not been used, that is to say, (if I may be allowed the expression) Poetry has not spent the night there”. So, in this very pedagogical way, Mandelstam explains the quid of the question in artistic creation. The narrative elements must never be central, nor should they be in architecture. The *Utilitas* demanded by Vitruvius as a primary condition, the function, must be fulfilled and fulfilled well. But architecture is something more, much more, than merely the perfect fulfillment of function. Function in architecture is the narration.

When Bernini revealed the white marble of the ever so beautiful *Proserpina* raped by Neptune, above and beyond the description of the scene and beyond the loveliness of the sculpture, what he is basically doing is demonstrating his capacity to make the hard Carrara marble appear soft, morbid. He manages to dominate the material, bending it, taming it. Something so much more universal than simply representing a scene. The strong hand of Neptune grips *Proserpina*’s delicate thigh and this is the over-riding interest of the sculpture, managing to make that which is hard appear soft. Once again the creator is conveying a universal theme that goes far beyond the mere narration of a story. Something more than just a sculpture. Bernini himself in each and every one of his architectures seeks and finds something more than the mere perfect fulfillment of a function or the mere perfect construction. He seeks and finds beauty.

This is what Alberto Corazón translates so graphically when speaking of painting: “The vanguard movements of the 20th Century start out from a plate of apples by Cézanne, precisely because there are no apples there, only paint”. And he continues: “Reality is

not what I look at, but what I see through memory. It is memory that illuminates it". And may I add, it is memory that makes us capable of discovering beauty. That is very clear.

Firmitas. And if in order to achieve beauty in architecture, the timely fulfillment of function, Utilitas, is important, none the less important is its good construction, Firmitas.

Viollet le Duc in his *Entretiens sur l'Architecture* defended the construction, Firmitas, as the fundamental basis of architecture. He called for the judicious and adequate expression of materials in order to attain beauty in Architecture. Beauty emanated from a well conceived and well constructed structure. "Any form that does not adapt to the structure, must be repudiated". It is the structure which, as I have repeated so many times, in addition to bearing the load and transmitting it to the ground, establishes the order of space; that establishment of the order of space, which is a central theme in Architecture.

From construction, which, of course, is a source of beauty, Rafael Manzano tells us:

"To the lintel and the column of Greece, Rome added new structural prototypes, the arch and the vault, and devoted all its energy to reconciling the Greek legacy, which transmitted beauty, with the new structural order, that was capable of building spaces very superior to what Greece had invented in dimensions and in building capacity, developing a most powerful architecture from which we still derive".

And he adds: "beauty in whose past is the future". It would seem that, aside from clarifying how much beauty in architecture owes to the guiding hand of firmitas, it is as almost as if he were thinking in the opening lines of T.S. Eliot's first quartet, *Burnt Norton*: "Time present and time past / are both perhaps present in time future/ and time future contained in time past / if all time is eternally present / all time is unredeemable". Time and beauty, a theme that leads us on to another interesting dissertation.

Venustas. And finally, how could it be otherwise!, with the precise fulfillment of Utilitas and Firmitas, as prescribed by Vitruvius, comes Venustas, beauty.

## PANTHEON, ALHAMBRA, BARCELONA PAVILION

Let us now take a look at some buildings that in the history of architecture have clearly materialized the ineffable beauty that we are discussing here.

Few buildings in history have the quality of making us lose the notion of time like the Pantheon in Rome. Not only does it fulfill its universal function to perfection, not only is it extremely well constructed, but it is also of undeniable beauty. All the great creators have understood that when they have seen it. Suffice it to quote Henry James when he describes the memorable scene of Count Valerio kneeling inside the Pantheon illuminated from above, by the light of the moon. The scene is quite beautiful. In this marvelous story, *The last of the Valerii*, the count states: "This is the best place in Rome. It's worth fifty St Peter's".

The Pantheon in Rome is an extraordinary container of beauty, of total beauty. If we stand with our backs against the wall inside the Pantheon, we feel that the space still fits inside our visual angle and therefore, inside our heads. Its 43 metres in diameter make possible the miracle that is the result of the application of precise measurements by

Trajanus's architect, Apollodorus of Damascus, to whom it is attributed. The same dimensions wisely used by Pedro Machuca in the courtyard of the Palace of Charles V in the Alhambra many years later. And the same dimensions which, having discovered the secret, that I myself used in the white patio of Granada.

From the point of view of *utilitas* the Roman temple is universal, so universal that it still remains a space for the future. There is no other architecture in Rome so much of the future.

And in terms of *firmitas*, it is so firm, so well constructed that it always emerged unscathed from the onslaughts it suffered. After its construction by Agrippa it suffered such a great fire that Hadrian had to reconstruct it. And even Domitian and Trajan were involved in it. And nothing happened, as Douglas Adams said of buildings destroyed and built again: "it is always the same building". And indeed the Pantheon, its beauty, is an idea, a built idea, precise in its dimensions and in its proportions and in its light. An enduring and eternal beauty. It is always the same building.

And if we are to speak of the light in the Pantheon we would never come to the end. Suffice a reference to Chillida embracing the column of light that entered through the oculus, who described the sensation: "the illuminated air was lighter than the rest of the room". Perhaps what he felt, what he touched, was the breath of that "gentle whisper".

Another paragon of Beauty is yet another architecture that was constructed, destroyed and reconstructed so many times while still remaining "always the same building": the Alhambra in Granada. Built by Yusuf I, reconstructed by Mohamed V, with the restoration of Mr. Leopoldo Torres Balbás in the last century. What could I at this stage say about the Alhambra? We have to go back to the lyrical passages that those vizier poets of the emirs of Granada recorded on the walls of the Alhambra. Ibn Zamrak puts the words in the mouth of the Alhambra itself, in the decoration of the fountain of Daraxa's garden, such lovely words as these: "And he has granted me the highest degree of beauty, so that my shape causes the admiration of the sages" and without the least restraint continues: "for never have any eyes seen a greater thing than myself, neither in the East nor in the West and in no time has any king, neither abroad nor in Arabia". And we would never finish if we were to continue with the beautiful inscriptions of the Alhambra. Beauty speaking about beauty itself.

Then there are the words dedicated by Barragán:

"Having made my way through a narrow and dark tunnel of the Alhambra, I was delivered to the serene, still, solitary and delightful courtyard of the myrtles of this ancient palace. It contained what a well crafted garden ought to contain: nothing less than the entire universe. I have never forgotten that memorable apparition and it is not accidental that from the first garden I did in 1941, all those that have followed humbly attempt to echo the immense lesson of the wisdom of the Alhambra of Granada".

Of course if we are to discuss contemporary architectures full of beauty, capable of resisting time, their physical destruction and their reconstruction, then we must speak of the Barcelona Pavilion of Mies van der Rohe, which appears to have been built only yesterday. Or tomorrow.

It is perhaps not only a synthesis of the principal conceptual achievements of modern architecture, but, in addition, a prodigy of beauty. A simple podium in Roman travertine, at the exact height for transporting us to another world. A light slab as a roof, perfectly tensioned, and supported, like a dance on pointe, by cruciform pillars which, on account of their form and brilliance seem to vanish. Exquisite walls of onyx that serve as an epigraph to time with abstract signs and move with the freedom that the continuous space affords. And all with precise measurements and proportions: nothing over here, nothing over there, and the miracle takes place. An architecture that has conquered beauty forever.

These three examples of architecture are capable of resisting time and reconstruction while always remaining the same building. But, in addition, in all of them time stands still. In all of them past, present and future are there, suspended: time suspended for beauty to emerge. In all of them one can verify what Michael Bockemül expressed so well when referring to Rembrandt: “he converts the conceptual understanding of the canvas into its visual perception”. These three works of architecture convert so well their conceptual understanding into visual perception.

The three architectures cited here corroborate to what extent architecture is a built idea whose beauty remains forever, indestructible.

#### MIES VAN DER ROHE, LE CORBUSIER, FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

I could not conclude this address without bringing before the Academy, however briefly, the words of some of the great maestros of contemporary architecture, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright who, unsurprisingly, constantly alluded to beauty as the ultimate goal of architecture.

Mies van der Rohe spoke prolifically about beauty. In a well-known text of his titled “Build in a beautiful and practical way. Enough of cold functionalism!”, he tells us:

“It seems completely clear to me that, on account of our modified needs and the appearance of new mediums that technology has placed at our disposal, we shall attain a new class of beauty. I do not think that we will ever again accept beauty for itself. Beauty is the splendor of truth”.

And he asked:

“And what in reality is beauty? Most certainly, nothing that can be calculated, nothing that can be measured, but rather something ineffable. In architecture, beauty –which is equally necessary in our time and continues to constitute an objective, as it has been in previous ages- can only be achieved when something more than the mere finality is taken into account.”

How could we not be in agreement with him?

On my table is a complete collection of Mies van der Rohe’s most important texts in a fine translation with a prologue by James Marston Fitch in which he says that Mies achieved “intrinsic beauty”, and that “he gave free rein to his platonic ideals of architectural perfection, of beauty”. I could not resist the temptation of underlining the word beauty in those texts, of knowing how much the maestro was preoccupied,

obsessed even, with finding beauty in his work, with the result that beauty is the most repeated word.

Le Corbusier was not to be outdone in his defense of beauty:

“The architect, by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is a pure creation of his spirit. Through forms and shapes, he affects our sense to an intense degree and provokes plastic emotions. Through the relationships which he creates he wakes in us profound echoes, he gives us the measure of an order which we feel to be in accordance with that of our world, he determines the various movements of our heart and our understanding. And it is then that we experience the sense of beauty.”

And of Frank Lloyd Wright so many things could be said concerning beauty. But let us here just echo the last sentences of the manuscript found on his desk on the day of his death. In it he tells us: “Architecture, the greatest of the arts, begins there where mere construction ends and the dominance of man is imposed”. And he goes on to say “The human being appears dependent on inspiration from a higher source. Because neither through legacy nor instinct does man attain beauty”. And he continues: “only when the spirit of man becomes conscious of the need for the benediction of beauty, beauty attends and architecture appears, the greatest of mankind’s arts. And in the same way, sculpture and painting and music”. And he finishes with the very explicit words: “When man proposed that beauty would enter in his buildings architecture was born”.

#### MELNIKOV, BARRAGÁN, SHAKESPEARE

Melnikov. However following this incursion into the idea of beauty in Mies, Le Corbusier and Wright, for very personal reasons, I cannot leave out Konstantin Melnikov, the Russian architect contemporary of all of them who best defines that beauty that some of us architects strive for: a bare, radical, essential beauty:

“Having become my own boss, I begged architecture in turn to take off her marble dress, remove her make-up and reveal herself as she is, naked, like a young and graceful goddess; and, as corresponds to true beauty, renounce being agreeable and obliging”.

Barragán. And for similar reasons, once again the words of Barragán. The universal Mexican maestro expresses himself clearly in relation to beauty in his Pritzker acceptance speech, 1982:

“Mr. Jay A. Pritzker stated in an announcement to the press that I had been chosen as the recipient of this prize for having devoted myself to architecture as a sublime act of poetic imagination. Consequently, I am only a symbol for all those who have been touched by beauty. It is alarming that publications devoted to architecture have banished from their pages the words beauty, inspiration, magic, spellbound, enchantment, as well as the concepts of serenity, silence, intimacy and amazement. All these have nestled in my soul, and though I am fully aware that I have not done them complete justice in my work, they have never ceased to be my guiding lights.”

“All those who have been touched by beauty”, is not this Academy a propitious place within whose walls’ beauty is prepared to continue whispering to each and every one of the members of this house?

And Shakespeare. I have searched explicit references to beauty in the poets. And I have returned once again to Shakespeare, using a well-known bilingual edition. And when I found that the word beauty did not appear, as in that prestigious edition in Spanish only beautiful or lovely figured, I returned to the original in Shakespeare's English and yet there is hardly a sonnet in which the word Beauty does not appear, that the traitorous translator did not dare to translate as beauty. Are they so afraid of the term beauty? How could Shakespeare not speak of beauty? And he starts his first sonnet with "That thereby Beauty's rose might never die". And he ends his last sonnet, the 54th, with "O how much more doth Beauty beauteous seem". The term Beauty literally invades Shakespeare's texts with its arms. How could it not be so! Just as all of us would like beauty to invade our works.

### HUNGER FOR BEAUTY

After all these considerations one ought to consider if beauty is or is not necessary, if it is or is not useful. Nuccio Ordine, in his brilliant essay on "The usefulness of the useless", defends the need for useless beauty. Of course, we could defend the contrary: that beauty is useful to satisfy the hunger pangs of the soul, the hunger for beauty that is in everyone. Of course beauty is useful, indispensable. Man hungers for beauty. Venustas, compatible and complementary to the usefulness of function, or good construction, is what really interests us.

Einstein summed it up rather well: "I am in truth a solitary traveller, and the ideals which have lighted my way and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Beauty, Kindness, and Truth."

### BEAUTY, FREEDOM, MEMORY

Francisco Calvo Serraller tells us "the term beauty has had and always will have ample capacity to incorporate the desired free exploration of new perspectives giving freedom as a reply to the question regarding the present-day meaning of beauty." And while it is not easy to completely comprehend ineffable beauty, we can readily understand that freedom found in memory.

Is not memory the deep and inexhaustible well for recognizing where beauty appears? How could someone devoid of memory recognize the fact that something, especially architecture, is part of beauty?

How could an architect be blown away by a Mies van der Rohe if he had not previously known of Palladio, or the Greek temples, or the Pantheon in Rome?

How could a painter admire Rothko without having adored Velázquez and Goya?

Today, fully immersed as we are in the third millennium, we are in no doubt about the depth of beauty in the paintings of Rothko or in the architecture of Mies van der Rohe. It is clear that the concept of beauty has not only opened its doors but with the guiding hand of understanding, it will always remain open.

And evidently this is largely true of Architecture. Nonetheless, it may be as difficult for society to understand Rothko well as to really understand Mies van der Rohe. One of the merits of the masters of modern architecture has been managing to convince society

that beauty was to be found in their works, that they were the bearers of beauty. Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright knew this very well and endeavored to do so and almost achieved it.

In short, capturing beauty and being capable of demonstrating it as such to society-beauty!

#### CODA

And to end, let me tell you a brief anecdote, something that occurred very recently. Imagine the scene: on a visit to the wonderful exhibition on El Greco's Library in the Prado Museum, there I was, looking through the edition of Vitruvius, and perusing El Greco's detailed entries, when on page 28, where Vitruvius speaks about Venustas, suddenly I discover the handwritten sentence: "That Venusta embraces it all" "That beauty embraces it all! "That Venusta embraces it all, because born out of proportion, fortitude cannot be missing". What nicer way of summing up all that I want to say in this address. Because in truth beauty embraces our lives, beauty is all-encompassing. Clearly, Vitruvius had previously written: "*La Venusta procede dalla intelligenza dell'Architetto, la utilità dalla bontà et la fermezza dal potere.*" Absolutely clear.

#### QUASI FINALE

I have pursued beauty vigorously. I have sought beauty with tireless dedication. I have chased after beauty desperately. I have searched and still search and will continue to search for beauty unto death or until I kill her. When I kill her with love on finding her because I have put my heart and soul to it. That much coveted beauty that many of you academicians listening to me today also strive to achieve with your art, every day of your lives.

#### FINALE

Being the last to enter this house, I hope to contribute towards maintaining the doors and windows of this prestigious institution wide open to allow in the light, air, and freedom that the Academy looks for. And at the hand of freedom, beauty. The same beauty that permeates this beautiful building, the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts. From its interior with its superb Churriguera staircase which is a joy to tread, to the noble facade on Alcalá Street by Diego de Villanueva that stands out for its discreet sobriety. Here is beauty as the splendor of truth, of order and appropriate form.

Because the search for beauty always speaks of the search for freedom. Seeking in architecture the freedom arising from the radicalism of undeniable reason agreed with the desirable dream, always leads to truth resulting in beauty. The English poet Keats encapsulated it to perfection in the well-known lines of his Ode on a Grecian Urn: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, -that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know".