

**THIRTEEN TRICKS**

**Thirteen tricks to make architecture better**

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### Thirteen tricks to make architecture better

In order to respond adequately to a group of young professors of the ETSAM who asked me to write about pedagogical mechanisms for a better teaching of Projects in which they are researching, I gave them some texts that I had in preparation to be published in the future in book form. I now undertake this task with great interest. Some of these texts, in a smaller dimension, had already appeared in the section "Mechanisms" of my 2016 book *Varia Architectonica*.

I had decided to stop writing for a while, as a sign I have on my desk, next to my computer, says. On the same paper is written: shut up and listen. Although to be silent, to stop talking, is not to stop writing. Some friends told me that I wrote more than El Tostado. El Tostado is a figure in the Cathedral of Avila, behind the main altar, representing D. Alonso Fernandez de Madrigal. His attitude of writing has not changed in the more than 5 centuries since Vasco de Zarza sculpted it in alabaster, and the ingenious Spanish people have consecrated the saying "escribir más que el Tostado" (write more than the Toasted One), which is how they called the good D. Alonso.

And thinking that it may be useful for younger teachers, and also for students, I now dare to make public this booklet with the cacophonous title of Thirteen Tricks to try to make architecture better, more precise and more beautiful.

These tricks or mechanisms are the ones I have used many times in my works and I have tried to transmit to my students throughout my more than 40 years of teaching Projects at the ETSAM, and in many other Schools of Architecture around the world.

From the first chapter I wanted to clearly distinguish between ideas and mechanisms. The important thing in a work is to have an idea of what you want to build. That is why I gave the title The Constructed Idea to my first book more than 20 years ago.

The tricks I talk about here are mechanisms to make these ideas visible. There are good architects, with good ideas, but who are unable to build them. And there are other architects, skilled ones, who, without having particularly good ideas, fill their works with ingenious mechanisms capable of astonishing many but not convincing a few of us. I would like for younger architects, and for my students, to know how to find their place as architects by building ideas that will last over time.

The different chapters unfold themes that sometimes seem so logical that they seem obvious. As I wrote in the introduction to my last published book, *Palimpsesto Architectonico*:

More than once, a friend of mine has told me that in my writings sometimes the same themes, or part of them, are repeated. Although he is somewhat right, it would be schizophrenic to never repeat anything, especially if one writes a lot. On the other

hand, when I repeat a theme it is because I think it is important, or because it is relevant in that new writing.

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## CONCLUSION

We could go on *ad infinitum* enumerating and developing architectural mechanisms, architectural tricks, that can be useful to architects, and to teachers and students as instruments to translate architectural ideas.

They can and should never serve as a generic remedy, but on the contrary, to help build those ideas effectively. We have brought here some mechanisms, thirteen tricks, not as a *balm*, but aware that architecture has often forgotten them, because they are obvious, and that it is more than convenient, necessary, to remember them again.