

**A WHISTLING OF GENTLE AIR**

**Sibilus aurae tenuis**

PUBLICADO EN

Cultura y Natura. ETSAM 2003-2004. Ed. Mairea. Madrid, 2004

10X10. Ed. Phaidon. Londres, 2005

Pensar con las manos. Ed. Nobuko. Buenos Aires. 2009

Paisajes con alma. Eduardo Delgado Orusco. Editorial RU Books, Sevilla, diciembre 2013

## A WHISTLING OF GENTLE AIR

Sibilus aurae tenuis

We are already immersed at breakneck speed in an exciting new millennium, and many are asking themselves, where is the future of architecture, what are the keys to discovering what will happen, what is happening with this architecture that is so much in turmoil today?

I believe that, in the future, as it has been in the past and is in the present, the heart of the matter lies in IDEAS. Over and above just the forms. I have always said that "Architectura sine idea vana architectura est"<sup>1</sup>. An architecture without ideas is vain, it is empty, banal forms. Although always in the end the inescapable form appears as the material translation of those ideas.

I believe that the future lies more in original thought capable of generating meaningful forms than in fatuous formal novelty. More in conscious freedom than in arbitrary caprice. More in profound originality than in today's fashionable "anything goes".

I believe that the future lies in an architecture that is more profound than superficial, wiser than witty, more logical than ingenious. Supported by structures capable of building architectural space. Illuminated by light capable of constructing time. An architecture that dominates gravity and light. Capable of remaining, of remaining in the memory of men, in history.

In the meantime.

And in the meantime, the architecture of our days is entertained by banal games of brilliant appearance capable of seducing us. Like Ulysses, on our life's journey as architects we should stick to the mast of reason so as not to be swallowed up either by Scilla or Charybdis<sup>2</sup>. Neither by money nor by fashion nor by fame.

Today we worship the skin of the building without considering that time is often cruel when it is to this quality alone that we entrust the resistance of our architecture to time. However brilliant the solutions may be.

Architecture that neither twists nor turns nor twists is considered boring. Floors and sections, pillars or windows, dance today to the sound of cheap melodies far removed

---

<sup>1</sup> This and many of the ideas contained in these lines are included in the book "La idea construida" which I wrote several years ago and which is now in its sixth edition. The first two were published by the Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid and the second two by the Universidad de Palermo (Argentina). And the other two are free. Soon the English edition will see the light of day, which has already been finalised.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth re-reading this beautiful episode from Homer's Odyssey in which Ulysses, attached to the mast, crosses the Straits of Messina. I have already used this fitting image to speak of the resistance of a master of architecture such as Fisac in the article I wrote on the occasion of his Gold Medal for Architecture.

from those effective variations with which, to give a clear example, the Baroque worked<sup>3</sup>. Agitation and shouting are worshipped. Serenity and calm are forgotten.

At the voice of everything is possible, the impossible is set up, which will last as long as the silicones with which everything is sustained are capable of withstanding. Arbitrariness and caprice are worshipped. Reason and logic are forgotten.

And so do the critics. All the above and more, which I do not mention for the sake of brevity, are seasoned with vain and abundant words that never get to the heart of the matter. Ingenious verbiage. But all this will pass. It always has and always has.

It would seem that the images referred to by the prophet Elijah in a beautiful passage in the Book of Kings where he describes the mighty signs that falsely announce the coming of his Lord have materialised. God was not there in "the mighty wind that overturned the mountains and broke the rocks" nor in "the shaking of the earth" nor in the "fire". Only at the end, behind the fire, in "the breath of a gentle aura" was God<sup>4</sup>.

Perhaps architecture, creation par excellence, must find its *raison d'être* in something as ineffable as this "breath of a gentle aura".

Leap into the future.

One of the foundations on which a creator must base his work, an architect when conceiving and building his architecture, is to look to the future, knowing how to discover the keys to his creation. Understanding the times in which we live, which is also a profound knowledge of the past and with one foot in the air, and sometimes both, to leap into the future<sup>5</sup>. Italo Calvino considers this leap to be the key to the future. And he materialises it brilliantly in Cavalcanti's leap.

Our architecture is not about pleasing those around us. True creators have never been fully recognised in life. On the contrary. With our architecture it is about conceiving,

---

<sup>3</sup> When one enters Bernini's works, one understands at a glance the absolute effectiveness of his variations, of his spatial operations of such fascinating beauty. His Scala Regia, to give just one example, where there is almost no right angle, neither in plan nor in section, is a paradigmatic example of how, with a precise movement of all his planes, spatial effects of the first order can be achieved.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to transcribe this passage from the Old Testament Book of Kings (I Kings 19, 11-12):

11. And the Lord said to him, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord," and behold, the Lord passed by. And there was a rushing mighty wind, cleaving the mountains and breaking the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake either.

12. After the trembling of the earth, fire; but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire a breath of soft aura.

<sup>5</sup> Italo Calvino proposes as an image capable of synthesising everything he would like for his proposals for the new millennium the leap of Cavalcanti, to represent the future that he analyses in his Six proposals for the new millennium.

raising and building the house of man, the city of man. To create and recreate the world by building ideas.

Some key points.

Steel, and with it reinforced concrete, and large-scale flat glass, were wonderful materials that made it possible in their day to create new spatial themes: continuous space, the underlined landscape, total transparency, large linteled spaces, the decomposition of the box, the floating plane, are some of the themes that were the protagonists of so many modern architectures.

We would like to know, if only we had the keys, what are the new points of support that will enable us to move forward. Issues such as the mobility of the planes that make up the box<sup>6</sup>, or the possible variations in the quality of light in the walls, or the change in the structures of the bones for cartilage, or many other issues that appear in the current architectural panorama and on which we need to reflect deeply.

It is up to us to discover these keys and move forward. We architects construct ideas with reason as our primary instrument. Gravity and light are the central themes of our work. Gravity that constructs space and light that constructs time. I would also like my architecture to be able to serve and move people. With the rigour and precision of reason. Able to remain in memory and to build history. Capable of summoning Beauty for the greater happiness of mankind.

---

<sup>6</sup> When I analyse Rem Koolhaas's very interesting house in Bordeaux, and I see the moving platform, the moving horizontal plane, I miss the fact that this change of plane was capable of producing a more intense spatial change. And I am reminded of the vertical plane of the large window of the Tugendath house in Brno, where Mies van der Rohe, almost a century ago, was able to change the quality of space by moving the planes that made it up.