

**SHARPENING THE SCALPEL**

**Afilando el bisturí**

PUBLISHED IN

Casas. Ed. Libria. Melfi, 2008

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

## SHARPENING THE SCALPEL

Afilando el bisturí

It is proposed to me to make a book with the designs, with the "line" drawings, precise, of the projects of my houses. At a first reading, this exercise might seem futile to someone. I understand that, far from being a merely formal exercise, it is an exercise of ANALYSIS with the maximum degree of precision. As if it were an ANATOMICAL DISSECTION with a SCISSION. To make this ANALYSIS through a very precise drawing, having passed a long time since the conception and construction of these houses, manifests itself as a subject of enormous interest.

I remember when I was still a child, my father, a marvelous surgeon who will now be 100 years old with a perfect head, body and humor, who after receiving a complete lamb as a gift from a grateful patient, decided to gather his four children in the kitchen and give us a live anatomy lesson. As if it were a painting by Rembrandt himself, accompanying his action with a beautiful and clear explanation, he was cutting with a sharp scalpel the corresponding parts of the carcass with the precision with which only a good surgeon can do it. I will never forget it.

And now that image comes back to my mind, when I am asked to make an ANATOMICAL DISSECTION of my own architecture, of my houses. It is like putting the scalpel, here the AUTOCAD, in the right place to make a dissection and understand with pedagogical clarity what is happening there. How far away is that ROTRING 0'1 that served as a fine scalpel back then.

My interest as an architect is not so much to make beautiful houses to satisfy the specific needs of a special client in a singular place, but to set up universal IDEAS about DWELLING, about the most universal space that is the HOUSE. That is why I will always be interested in making houses.

I have decided to group the houses according to their typology. These houses are presented here, arranged in three main types with which I have worked effectively over the years. The cube house, the house closed between walls and the house on the podium. Or more properly speaking, the "cube", the "hortus conclusus" and the "belvedere".

In the CUBE houses I propose a diagonal main space, resulting from the connection of two double-height spaces displaced and connected by the center and tensioned by the diagonal zenithal light. The spatial mechanism is the same used in the Pompeian house and is of great efficiency and beauty. The resulting space, diagonal, is of an astonishing spatiality, capable of moving us. To this group belong the Turégano House in Pozuelo-Madrid, in which it is done in a radical way, and the houses of Argelia and the Asencio House in Chiclana-Cádiz.

In the HORTUS CONCLUSUS we propose a central space surrounded by two courtyards, one in front and one behind, to which this space opens with maximum privacy. They are INTRAMUROS spaces. The spatial mechanism is the same used by the Andalusian house in the countryside. It creates a sequence of open-closed-open of great efficiency. The resulting space is horizontal supported on the horizontal plane of the stone floor, continuous inside and outside. Server spaces are developed on both sides opening onto courtyards. These houses are always on flat land. To this group belong the Gaspar House and the Guerrero House, both in Vejer-Cádiz.

In the podium houses, the BELVEDERE, the transparent houses on the closed podium, the type of the CABIN on the CAVE is translated. Semper's doctrine is materialized in them through Frampton, of the TECTONIC architecture, the light glass box, on the STEREOTOMIC podium, the heavy solid piece. These houses are always on high points with distant horizon view. To this group belong the Casa de Blas in Madrid, the Olnick Spanu House in Garrison-New York and the Rufo House in Toledo.

The Moliner house in Zaragoza opens a new type, a fourth type of house of sleeping-dying in the deepest, living-living in the most transparent ground plane and dreaming-studying in the highest.

The line drawing, more abstracted than just the actual drawing, not only has the ability to facilitate the transmission of the central IDEA but also to clarify at once everything we intend to convey. Clean and precise plans, sections and axonometries, stripped of all details, help to perfectly understand each proposal.

This precise drawing, I repeat, is like using a scalpel to anatomically dissect each project. And that we now do with AUTOCAD with unusual precision. It is surprising to use this instrument now on projects that were drawn in its day with those Rotring 0'1 mentioned above, thinking then, not so long ago, that they were of unsurpassed precision.

And it comes back to our head and to our heart the deep conviction of which are the central themes of architectural creation: not so much the passing forms, but the deep forms that translate IDEAS capable of resisting time, capable of remaining.

These fine line drawings are accompanied by the first sketches with which these projects were generated. The contrast between the two types of drawings will help to better understand the complete project. What some drawings have of greater tension is compensated by the greater precision of the others.

Finally, the photographs, few and quasi-icons of these works, not only reveal the mastery of photographers such as Hisao Suzuki or Fernando Alda, but also complete the understanding of these architectures.

In the brief texts that accompany each house, as in this text, I have tried to explain what neither in the drawings nor in the photos can be translated, and that, as a teacher, as well as an architect, I would like to be able to convey.