

**THE KEYSTONE**

**On the architects of Madrid in the seventies and eighties**

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Sobre los arquitectos de Madrid en los setenta y ochenta

On the architects of Madrid in the seventies and eighties

The keystone of an arch, in architecture, is the central point of that structural form, where the maximum tension is produced. And the term keystone has passed to other fields with a similar meaning. The key to what is happening right now, at the dawn of the 21st century, in the architecture of Madrid, is what happened in the 70s and 80s.

The solid prestige enjoyed by contemporary Spanish architecture, especially that of Madrid, was forged in those two decades. The already consecrated masters put up their culminating works and began to receive well-deserved international recognition. The figures of the following generations built their more mature works at that time, with which they entered the international debate. Some of those who in those years we were just beginning to start have already emerged and are the third generation, perhaps now the most combative, which fortunately begin to push the novísimos.

In the first generation, the undisputed masters, Fisac, Sota and Oiza. And then Cano Lasso, Carvajal, Fernández Alba, Corrales and Molezún, Íñiguez de Onzoño and Vázquez de Castro, Ortiz de Echagüe and Echaide, and now Moneo.

### THREE POINTS OF SUPPORT

Three significant publications of that period will serve to mark the territory of the architecture of Madrid.

A+U, published in Tokyo in English and Japanese, published in March 1978 an issue in which I wrote a long article profusely illustrated, with the expressive title of "7 masters of Madrid and 7+7 young architects" where I analyze and propose the most outstanding works and architects in Madrid at that time.

A+U magazine is one of the most prestigious windows on contemporary architecture, as well as being one of the best designed magazines in the world.

The July-September 1978 double issue of Arquitectura BIS, of Barcelona, with an outline similar to that of A+U and with the simple title Madrid'78, is devoted entirely to the architecture produced in Madrid in the 1970s. In Moneo's article entitled 28 non-numbered architects, he gives specific news of all the architects who were then young and prominent, and already involved in teaching. It was a very important number for what would happen in Madrid in the following years.

The magazine Arquitectura BIS, now defunct, was the forum for architectural debate in the 1970s and 1980s, and exerted an enormous influence in those years.

The issue, also dedicated exclusively to Madrid, of an English magazine then on the rise, International Architect, was decisive. Published in London in 1983, it was an interesting

adventure of Haig Beck, Jackie Cooper and David Dunster that gave a good boost to those architects of Madrid. The English came to live for a while in Madrid where, in addition to good field work, they produced a small guide to the city's architecture that is still in use today.

The International Architect magazine, which was a wonderful point of convergence for all the architects of the world, also disappeared.

It is very significant that almost all the young architects who appeared in these three important publications of the 1970s and 1980s are today professors at the Madrid School of Architecture: Navarro Baldeweg (77), Campo Baeza (86), Casas (87), Linazasoro (88), Capitel (91), Ruiz Cabrero (95), Frechilla (96), and Vicens (96). It is no coincidence that that issue of International Architect had an introduction by Hernández León, also today a professor and director of the Madrid School of Architecture.

### SOLID FOUNDATIONS

But if the magazines were punctual witnesses of the Architecture of Madrid in the 70's and 80's, some books also appeared immediately that made that adventure more solid.

Still in 1983, written by Helge Bofinger, *Junge architekten in europa* was published in Berlin where, in a very precise panorama of the young European architects of the time, almost all the aforementioned architects from Madrid (Navarro Baldeweg, Campo Baeza, Linazasoro and Ruiz Cabrero) appear.

And in 1984, with a similar structure, I edited and wrote in English with Charles Poisay the now legendary *Young Spanish Architecture* with a foreword by Kenneth Frampton. There, not only is news given of those then young people from Madrid, but some of the very young ones, many of whom are now professors at the Madrid School of Architecture, begin to appear.

And with many more reasons, the widely distributed *Modern architecture. A critical history*, Kenneth Frampton, published by Thames and Hudson of London in 1985 and with numerous subsequent editions in almost all languages. There are widely included in the texts and images in the work of the architects of Madrid in this period.

And, as a summary of all the above, at the end of the 1980s, with their already consolidated publishing house El croquis, Fernando Márquez and Richard Levene published two complete volumes under the title *Arquitectura española contemporánea 1975-1990* (Contemporary Spanish Architecture 1975-1990). Antonio Ruiz Barbarín collaborates with them and there are interesting texts by Tuñón and Zaera.

Those, today professors in Madrid, who appeared in those magazines, also appear in all these books.

## AND THREE BUILDINGS

And if we had to materialize in built works what the 70s and 80s have been in the architecture of Madrid, we could do it with three buildings.

The always impressive Banco de Bilbao, now BBVA (1972-1977), by Oíza on Paseo de la Castellana. The one that was on the cover of *Arquitecturas BIS* Madrid'78 issue, was the admiration of Frampton on a visit to Madrid at the time. I witnessed his "amazing, amazing!" as he walked admiringly around the building.

Moneo's Bankinter (1972-1977), also in the Castellana, as a paradigm of a splendid dialogue with a historic architecture, also widely published in that *Arquitecturas BIS*. I still remember Cano Lasso's public praise of Moneo's building.

The Social Services Center of Puerta de Toledo (1986-1988) by Juan Navarro Baldeweg, to which his library was later added. It was the first important piece built by the architect in Madrid, in that successful project for the cornice of the city.

## AND AN EARTHQUAKE

In the middle of those two decades, a series of visits and conferences took place in Madrid that are still surprising today. In a very short time most of the architects who are now popular figures worldwide passed through here. From a Richard Meier in full swing, who filled to overflowing in March 1979 all his performances, to Mario Botta, who did the same. A Peter Eisenman twenty years younger who also swept the world by storm, or a Tadao Ando who, in 1982, in Madrid, gave his first conference and his first exhibition in Europe. Or Alvaro SIZA himself, who in 1981 gave his first conference in Madrid. And Mario Gandelsonas and Vittorio de Feo and Jorge Silvetti, today dean of Harvard, Raimund Abraham or Emilio Ambasz. Even Eduardo Chillida and Antonio López participated in those activities. All that was a kind of earthquake whose epicenter was the School of Architecture of Madrid, from the chair of Javier Carvajal.

## AND THEN CALM

Perhaps the last Venice Architecture Biennale in 2000 was not only important because we were awarded the first prize for the red Spanish pavilion but also because, above all, a large part of the architectural harvest of Madrid in the 70s and 80s was gathered there. And if in the center of the pavilion appeared as a tribute to Oíza his museum for Oteiza, we should analyze how more than half of the architects of Madrid who exhibited there, were of the generation of the *novísimos* who had already raised their heads in the eighties: Ábalos and Herreros, Aparicio, Sancho and Madrideojos, Aranguren and Gallegos, Matos and M. Castillo, Nieto and Sobejano, Cánovas and Amann and Maruri, Mansilla and Tuñón, and Zaera. Again, introductory texts by Hernández León, Ruiz Cabrero and myself. And already in this biennial appear the very young artists from Madrid who have been sweeping (Morell, García Abril, Carnicero, Vírseda, Arroyo Alba, Sánchez Vera and del Valle, among others).

## CONCLUSION

The 70's and 80's in Madrid, following the political events, produced in the creative field, what was called in popular terms the "movida". In Architecture, which is slower, there were some events that we have tried to describe in a synthetic way. What is unquestionable is that those architects and those works that were built in that period are key to what today is the undisputed prestige of contemporary architecture in Madrid. A magnificent poet of Madrid, Andrés Trapiello, in his beautiful poem La ventana de Keats, says:

That the song is only one,  
always the same,  
and the branch changes, and the bird changes,  
but not the melody.

The song, the lyrics and the melody of the architecture of Madrid that sounded in the 70s and 80s, is perhaps now heard with more clarity and strength. With the clarity granted by beauty and with the strength provided by intelligence. Intelligent beauty, stubborn "like that shadow that is time".