

MARC BARANI

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I still remember the first time I saw photos of some of Marc Barani's architecture that impressed me: the extension of the Sain Pancrace cemetery. Since then, I have followed his works and they have struck me as being of such quality that I proposed him for the Grand Prix Nacional de L'Architecture 2004 in France. In the end, that award was given to another wonderful architect with whom I coincided as a teacher at the EPFL of Lausanne: Patrick Berger. As Barani is still very young, I imagine that he may receive that award one day.

Since 1998, he has taught at different centers, lately at the Special School of Architecture of Paris. And it is clear that an architecture as strong and as radical as his cannot help but be read with a certain pedagogical sense. Each project is a spatial proposal, a constructed idea.

The Roquebrune-Cap-Martin cemetery is of a striking beauty. The sturdy volumes of concrete frame intermediate spaces with horizontal planes opening to a view of the sea that are truly impressive. One could imagine oneself in the Le Cimetier marine of Paul Valéry. There is a palpable silence in the air. Carrara marble on the floor and the socles accentuates the timeless nature of the performance and frames the sea with tremendous intensity. The scale is just right. And time there is suspended: it seems like yesterday, or tomorrow. There is a certain theatrical air, like a beautiful staging.

Barani behaves in a different way in the Pedagogical Workshops of the Mouans-Sartoux Art Center. If on the one hand, the upper plane is magnificent for its simplicity, the well implanted toit terrace, the building is characterized by its transparency. The architect works masterfully with the air flowing through the box that seems to be buried and with the light that tenses its spaces. It is as if he had trapped the air. He makes another call to silence and serenity. The impressive brut concrete wall responds appropriately to the landscape of the surrounding forest.

And the pôle multimodale of the tramway in Nice is a performance of a greater scale on which he operates with the precision of a surgeon on the body of the city. Or better yet, he carves and digs out like a sculptor, modeling a base which later, once again, he fills with air and light, evoking there the miracle of architecture.

In the Villa in Cannes, his most recent work, he reveals once again his timeless sense of architecture. The house looks like a pair of very horizontal bodies, joined by a central stairway. There is a great ceiling without pillars, under whose deep shade the more public functions are housed. It is an impressive space. The other body, housing the bedrooms, follows a simple linear pattern.

Marc Barani's work, far from the tumult of fashion, takes us to the serenity and silence that have always been characteristics of an architecture capable of transcending time: the architecture that summons Beauty.