

SOUTO, SOUTO, SOUTO

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"For years now, since my first project, I've been designing the same house."

Eduardo Souto de Moura is one of the most recognized figures of the international architectural scene. And one of the most important figures of the magnificent Contemporary Portuguese Architecture. With Tavora, Siza and Aires. To mention only one of each generation.

If we were to qualify Souto de Moura's Architecture we would have to look for words such as logic, clarity, rationality and poetry. The logic of Tavora, the clarity of Siza, the rationality of Aires or the poetry of Sofia de Mello. And I cannot resist summarizing all the characteristics of all this Architecture as a true poetic exercise.

Eduardo Souto de Moura's architecture has a precise sharpness, as if it were the perfect focus of a lens. And, as Siza rightly pointed out about him, "the feeling that his Architecture transmits is one of serenity". We are before a clear and serene Architecture, a resounding and precise Architecture.

Ceán, in speaking of Velázquez's mastery, referred to the fact that he "represented air" like no one else. I think that is what Souto de Moura does in the competitions and in all his work, materializing the air. That, materializing the air, is what Architecture does. And with the greatest naturalness.

FASHIONABLE

There are architects who are very fashionable today, and who invade with their images all the numerous media that are offered to all architects. And who elaborate without ceasing a huge number of projects and works capable of filling all those media that do not stop growing. And they are capable of producing the astonishment of the West.

To do so, instead of speaking, they shout. And instead of writing to be understood, they write in such a way that almost nothing is understood. And their documents, always well colored, are exhibition fodder in any gallery, although they would be unreadable by any foreman who would have to build it. If there were any will to build it.

To do this, they turn the plants, twist the sections and break the facades. They cut, slit and fold. They pleat, dye and oversize. They crease, stack and corrugate. They do everything and everything and with everything. They do everything possible and impossible to show that they have been there. And they make such a fuss that it is no longer clear who is who. They end up resembling each other so much. So much artistic art they ooze. It seems as if they had all embarked on Rimbaud's *bateau ivre*.

Eduardo Souto de Moura, far from those, belongs to Architecture.

ARCHITECT OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Souto de Moura makes an Architecture of our time, of the Third Millennium, capable of being not only unmistakable but also of resisting the passage of time. His houses in Nevogilde, built yesterday, seem to have been built today, they are so timeless. And I would sign today that recovery of a ruin in Gerés, which appears as one of his first works, and whose result is so beautiful. Or the white box of Quinta do Lago, like a dream, exquisite. Then came the Braga Stadium, very powerful, to certify that Souto is an architect of the greats also on a large scale. And then so many other works. Always measured in quantity and enormous in quality.

Eduardo Souto de Moura seems to go his own way, with great tranquility. Alejandro de la Sota, the old Spanish master, spoke of going the other way. With silence, serenity and calm.

Eduardo Souto de Moura, as an architect, is still young and already has a wealth of works of great intensity. This is a quality that all works in the History of Architecture possess and that few architects achieve.

He is always related to Siza, (I soon understood, with perfidious disgust and greater joy, that he had no collaborator for a long time), just as Siza was related to Tavora. Just as the Aires are related to both. They are all clearly distinguishable. They are all united by logic, rationality and sobriety. Qualities that, once again, are typical of the best universal Architecture. Although each one has its own aroma.

I recently saw a catalog of an exhibition of photographs by Alexandra Chemollo, on works by Siza, Souto and Tavora. In that order. It would seem that Souto, the youngest at the time, was tucked in by the two older ones. It was good that it was not done in the logical order, from oldest to youngest or youngest to oldest. Very meaningful and very nice. Showing once again, all together, the enormous strength of Portuguese Contemporary Architecture, of the universal David of artistic creation against the Goliath of the market.

THE CONTESTS

Roberto Fernández, professor at the UNA of Buenos Aires, says that "architecture competitions represent the combination of the art of choosing and the craft of being chosen". And he is not wrong. Eduardo Souto de Moura has a real addiction to competitions. Sometimes he wins, sometimes he doesn't win and sometimes he builds some of the ones he wins. But he never stops.

Today we are not here to give an account not so much of Souto de Moura's built work, but of his competitions. Of the titanic effort involved in continuing to enter all the competitions. With an enviable inner youth. It is an exhibition of all the competitions held by the architect, won and not won. As if it were a collection of realized and unrealized dreams. I imagine Souto in a cloud of dreams, which is really a cloud of tobacco smoke that he smokes with such fruition. It can be seen that tobacco, in his case, helps to dream.

Souto de Moura's projects for these competitions could be said to be his most radical projects. Which is what one should demand of oneself in the competitions: strong, radical ideas, capable of generating the best architecture.

And although I imagine that they will be cited by everyone in all their texts, we can not fail to refer here, and less speaking of Souto de Moura, the Friedrichstrasse Competition of Mies Van der Rohe to see to raise the most elegant skyscraper in the world. Nor of Adolf Loos's Chicago Tribune where he emulated History in the form of a column, a tower is a column, and the new times. Or how could we not bring up here Le Corbusier's League of Nations, won and then betrayed, lost after won. Or Melnikov's project for the Columbus Lighthouse in Santo Domingo. All of them Competition Projects with such a force that they have gone down in the History of Architecture.

As in the case of Souto de Moura, some of the best architecture in history is the result of the corresponding competition won and then built. Which is not always the case. From Brunelleschi's incredible dome of Santa Maria delle Fiori in Florence in 1418, logical, beautiful and economical. To the Sydney Opera House by Jorn Utzon, with a very long history since it won the competition in 1956 until it was inaugurated in 1973.

The first competition won by Souto de Moura was for the S.E.C. Cultural Center in 1981 in Porto. Built and very beautiful. Before that, in 1979, he participated in the Japanese competition "A House for Schinkel", and in the one for the Monument to G. Humberto Delgado in Porto. Precious both.

After that, two other competitions were also won. In 1982 the Restructuring of the Giraldo Square in Évora and in 1986 the Pavilions of the C.I.A.C. in Cascais.

Then, in 2008, the competition for the Multifunctional Building of the Serralves Foundation in Matosinhos. And in 2008-2009 the TGV Station in Vesuvio, Naples. And the Aquapura Hotel in Heredade do Barrocal in Alentejo.

Also in 2008 three other important competitions: the Hospital de Todos os Santos in Lisbon, the Parque Mayer - Botanical Garden - Building for the Polytechnic in Lisbon, and the Crematorium in Belgium.

In 2009 another first prize with the LIWA College in Abu Dhabi. And in Évora, the new Évora Hospital and the Salao Eborense Competition. And the Sanjotec in S. Joao da Madeira and in Switzerland the Winterthur Competition.

All Competitions. All the effort. All the enthusiasm. Competitions, the eternal resource of the young. By the young Portuguese architect Eduardo Souto de Moura.

FINAL

I would like to underline how much the Beauty of the formal result of Eduardo Souto de Moura's architecture does not come only from a mastery of form or from a well-developed skill. On the other hand, the Beauty of Souto de Moura's architecture comes, in Plato's

words, from the splendor of the truth that lies in it. The Platonic Beauty as splendor of Truth is punctually fulfilled in our architect. There is always behind every project, whether it is a competition, a project or a work, a convinced and convincing latent idea.

Michael Bockemühl said of Rembrandt that "he converts the conceptual understanding of the painting into its visual perception". In a similar way, Eduardo Souto de Moura in his Competitions and in his Projects and in his works, being very clear and strong in his ideas, very conceptual in the themes he proposes in all of them, translates them into enormously simple forms capable of convincing us. Souto de Moura, the master.

Included is this more recent letter to Eduardo Souto responding to a publisher's request for a book about him.

500 WORDS ABOUT EDUARDO SOUTO DE MOURA

Dear Eduardo:

I have recently discovered that books talk to each other. The books in my library, after having spent so much time together, tightly packed, say things to each other. So I took all the books I have about you, of which there are many, and I started to listen to them. And they were saying such wonderful things about you that I'm not going to transcribe them here so as not to make you blush. But I do know that the words they repeated the most were: truth, order, splendor, poetry, transcendence, radicality, calm, and above all, above all, beauty. And 400 words more (the publisher has asked me for 500 words). In addition, Sota's and Stirling's neighboring books have said, zealously, that they want them too.

A very strong and affectionate hug,

Alberto Campo Baeza