

**IN VERY GOOD FAITH**

**About the new building for Gráficas Palermo by Amann, Cánovas and Maruri**

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A Chinese proverb says that "good memory is not as good as a little ink". That, a little ink, or rather a lot of ink, rivers of good ink are what will flow through the building presented here: the printing press for Gráficas Palermo, the last work built by Amann-Cánovas-Maruri.

We are all well aware of the fascination of the letter and the printed image. Printed by such good printers as Palermo that have devoted much of their attention to Architecture. On this last occasion it is Architecture that gives back its best image in a good building made by very good architects.

Amann-Cánovas-Maruri, belong to that group of young architects whose high project quality, their sharp critical sense and their teaching work, make them be in the eye of the hurricane. Their work has been exhibited by right, with that of the youngest Spanish architects in the last Venice Biennale, which under the title "Resistid malditos" speaks explicitly of the resistant character of its authors.

There they presented many of their best projects. From the award-winning border of the Ebro River in Zaragoza (1999) of great rotundity, to the first prize of the apartments of Lorquí-Murcia that now they are going to build. And the interesting project, very rigorous, for the C. E.U. of Madrid. Or the stupendous prow of houses in Coslada, as if it were a wall. Or the curious housing towers for his proposal in Baracaldo. All of them show some characteristics that are already in this building of the printing house of Rivas-Vacia Madrid (rigorous order, formal rotundity, adequacy in the materials, etc...).

The Gráficas Palermo building, in its radical approach and its emphatic resolution, conveys a certain pedagogical air that comes from the fact that its authors are professors and good teachers at the Madrid School of Architecture.

This building draws attention from the first moment in the industrial estate in which it is inserted. Using Siza's image to qualify Barragán's work, it appears with "great clarity in the unfocused landscape", a very horizontal piece in concrete with great expressive force.

In a panorama that in general neglects the industrial aspect of architecture, this piece by Amann-Cánovas-Maruri stands out, which without losing its purely industrial character reaches very high levels of quality. Contemporary architecture has always bet on its proposals for industry, and great buildings have come out of it. From the headquarters of the Turun Sanoma newspaper by Alvar Aalto to the Fagus by Walter Gropius, to cite two foreign masters, or the Clesa by Sota or the Arriba newspaper by Cabrero, to cite two Spanish masters.

Industrial themes are a good place to exercise the best architecture, and so they have done in these Palermo Graphics our architects. And so, far from being just a set of ships with head, following the usual bad model, they have developed a clear scheme that

keeps its interest on all four sides. It is a building that can be read as unitary and far from those models mentioned above, it is interesting in all its parts.

I would especially like to emphasize some aspects, such as its clear composition, its interior luminosity and its relationship with the landscape.

Compositionally, it consists of four solid pieces, two warehouses and two "bars". The two warehouses contain the more industrial part of heavy machinery and storage and the "bars" the area of more sophisticated equipment and offices. The office block opens its eyes to the landscape under whose head one enters the vertical axis that articulates all the circulations. The linear circulations that run through the joints of these four pieces connect with each other with simplicity and clarity. Although at certain moments (the entrance itself, with its boxes, the turning of the staircase, some circulatory breaks due to the demands of the user, etc ...), the building seems complex and with a certain dose of ambiguity. When you have the floors in front of you, the game of reason and simplicity is evident.

In short, the compositional clarity corresponds to a clarity of circulations that make the required functions effective. The interior luminosity of the building, which is surprising when it appears quite closed from the outside, is the result of a certain transparency that accompanies all the routes of the project. The circulations open to one side or the other depending on the needs, as with the high window overlooking the main nave. The surprising transparency of the entrance where the small white boxes intertwine. The almost Japanese filtered light that the aisles receive from their sides. Or the counterpoint of the high ceiling of the vestibule that, painted blue, plays at being a sky studded with 21 stars that let the midday sunshine through in a surprising shower of light.

And as for its relationship with the landscape, the facade of the offices overlooking the future park to which the building subtly opens up is particularly interesting.

The windows that appear there are framed by long boxes that qualify the neutrality of the building. Being these windows like eyes, one would say that they have opened their eyelashes to look at the landscape, because, as well as framed by large metal eyelashes, they are seen from the outside.

The structure is of reinforced concrete, halfway between prefabricated and cast-in-place. The panels used for the enclosure are also prefabricated concrete. Some are ribbed and others smooth, as required.

At the end of his beautiful text "Advice to a young writer", André Gide describes how Gericault, when he was painting *The Raft of the Medusa*, his great work, aware of the greatness of what he was doing, shaved half his head so as not to dare to go out of his studio into the street and work in concentration without resting on it. Gide also notes that, although he thought the gesture was a good one, it would not have been bad if the painter had done the same, concentrating, without the need to shave his half head, or that, half shaved, he had dared to go out into the street. Amann-Cánovas-Maruri sometimes shaved his half head, and dared to go out into the street, and even put eyelashes on his

buildings. Perhaps these brilliant Palermo Graphics are, with their eyelashes on, a beautifully shaved half-head.