

**VALENCIA FLOODED WITH WHITE FLOWERS**

**About Kazuyo Sejima's new IVAM in Valencia**

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Valencia has a contemporary architecture of great quality. I have had the good fortune to be honored with the friendship of some of the authors of this stupendous contemporary architecture of the city of the Turia. From Miguel Colomina, who was a professor at its School of Architecture, to José María Velasco, who is also a professor now, to speak of two extreme generations among which there are many well-known names. The latest works, the most spectacular in Valencia, are well known all over the world, and have carried the name of Valencia associated with that of Calatrava all over the world, as Bilbao did with Gehry with great success. And in a surprising tour de force the current director of the IVAM, Kosme de Baraniano has opted for Kazuyo Sejima + Nishizawa, which is one of the figures that now shines more brightly in this firmament in which media fame turns architects on and off at the beginning of this century.

However, Kazuyo Sejima + Nishizawa is not a newcomer. He has a short but intense and high quality work. With her I participated in a restricted competition organized by Mercedes Benz for the realization of its new Automobile Museum in Stuttgart. Together we explained our projects to a conspicuous jury that did not see well the cars moving in my museum. As if the essential thing about the car was not the movement. His was a beautiful project that I wouldn't have minded if he had won. Neither of us won, although it was a great opportunity for us to talk at length about architecture. We met again last year in Lisbon where we toured some of Alvaro Siza's luminous works together. Kazuyo Sejima + Nishizawa is a profound, serious and rigorous architect, and produces a very delicate architecture full of surprises and imaginative solutions. To people who sometimes confuse imagination with superficiality, it will not produce the dionysiac effects that move them with the most formalist architectures in use today.

The project that Kazuyo Sejima + Nishizawa proposes for Valencia is both rigorous and imaginative. A dream come true with the instruments of reason. The wonderful box full of light and surprises that the Japanese architect gives to the city of Valencia is of great beauty. The rotundity of the large cubic volume capable of responding with the appropriate scale to the city as a whole, becomes a paragon of nuances in the new space created between the previous buildings and that encompassing box. The images proposed by Sejima + Nishizawa of "walking in the shade of the trees" or that of a critic who points out how they are going to transform "the wind into a gentle breeze", are more than credible after analyzing this project so simple and so rich at the same time. A powerful geometry tempered by materials that, besides being those of our time, are of extreme delicacy.

The dimensions of the piece that frighten some timorous, have the right scale to make it a monument of the city, in a reference of the fabric of the city in the neighborhood that is now going to put in value. And of all Valencia. What once did so well the Cathedrals in the cities.

The rigor of its geometry (why is it that today's society, as soon as it wants to criticize an architecture, labels it a cube? A box full of light and shadows and breezes and silence seems not bad at all.

That the solution is of great imagination is unquestionable. Instead of sowing the city once again with a string of fallero volumes, we are offered a single all-encompassing space, defined by a single volume that in its interior unleashes a series of unsuspected spaces. I find especially interesting those spaces at the top, like rooftops, almost like hanging gardens. With their canopies of shadows that someone has compared so well to the simple reeds, what more could you ask for?

A successful work by intelligent architects who think, who are full of imagination, who dream. And who give their dream to Valencia.

Years ago I was commissioned a text that I wrote very willingly, giving me as a forced foot the word cube. I did not know then that the term would end up being so widely used in our days to wield it against any worthwhile architecture. And in that text I used a simple trick between literary and mathematical. I raised to the cube ten thousand flowers and these became, by mathematical means, a million million million. Well here I would dare, following the literary effect, to suggest that when the new building is inaugurated, all Valencians, in the same way that they flood the Virgen de los Desamparados with flowers on her feast day, parade through the heights of Sejima + Nishizawa's cube carrying thousands of white flowers there every year on the first day of spring. Thus, by raising those thousands of white flowers to the cube, they will multiply into millions of wonderful flowers that will flood the air of Valencia with their intense aroma. I assure you that I will be there with a handful of magnolias.