FLYING IN SPACE. BORDERING THE LAWS OF GRAVITY

About a Building by Pablo Fernández Lorenzo and Pablo Redondo in Zamora

PUBLISHED IN

Pensar con las manos. Ed. Nobuko. Buenos Aires, 2009

Alberto Campo Baeza

FLYING IN SPACE. BORDERING THE LAWS OF GRAVITY

About a Building by Pablo Fernández Lorenzo and Pablo Redondo in Zamora

On my last visit to MoMA in New York, whose new extension I will be very careful not to mention, I discovered a small picture by Paul Benson that showed the image of a mysterious elongated plane floating in the air. Like a bridge of air in the air that almost flew. And it reminded me of the latest building constructed by two young architects from Madrid: Pablo Fernández Lorenzo and Pablo Redondo. A truly beautiful building-bridge that floats enigmatically, that almost flies over a landscape with a powerful topography. The site, on the outskirts of Villar del Buey, a town in the province of Zamora. The function, a residence for the elderly of the area.

The building is like a large bridge, measuring 80 meters long and 11 meters wide, with only one floor, and that rests on only three points, the most prominent rocks that are 43 and 21 meters apart, respectively. The final image is very impressive and the proposal is impeccable.

Structurally it is, and it couldn't be otherwise, a large triangulated bridge beam that is later suitably complemented with a metal roof and "belly". The support points are very clear: fixed and imbedded in the center, in free expansion/protraction on one side and a joint on the other.

If the role of structure is not only that of transferring the corresponding loads to the ground, but also that of establishing the spatial order of the building, then here it is done in an exemplary manner.

The origin of this entire radical operation is the determined will to barely touch — if at all— the natural landscape on which the building alights. What Mies Van der Rohe might so often have done, is here achieved fully. The building's other body with the service elements is resolved in an opposite manner: the volume is rooted to the ground without interruption, even in the material it is covered with stone. Once again, the distinction that Kenneth Frampton made so well between the tectonic and the stereotomic. Between the cave and the cabin.

The work resolves itself with great simplicity in its materials and its details, within the maximum economy of means.

While spending nearly four years on this work, Pablo Fernández Lorenzo invented, designed and constructed his award-winning small-large folding table that is like a carbon copy of this building. It is a metal table with a steel top and legs that measures, when closed 70 by 140 centimeters, and 70 centimeters high. When the wings on its sides are opened, it reaches, logically, the dimensions of 70 by 280, and it seems ready to fly. As surprising and marvelous as this building.

And it is that bordering the laws of gravity, flying in space, like lasting in time, has always been an old aspiration of rebellions man. That is the way the best architects have always done it to erect their best works. Like this one.