

AN ORCHARD OF ROSES

About the Antonia Mir Museum by José María Lozano in Catarroja, Valencia

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"Yesterday I read in the newspaper that a rationalist architect had died. Yes, but your father had an orchard of roses in his garden". So wrote Gustavo Torner to Julio Cano Lasso's children shortly after his father's death. And with these moving and beautiful words he summed up well the spirit of an architecture of the first order that was Julio Cano Lasso's work.

Well, I believe that José María Lozano also has his rose garden. And he also has solid rational roots that make him always put up that luminous and serene architecture that characterizes him so well. An architecture of rational roots where the well deployed *firmitas* and *utilitas* always make the *venustas* claimed by Vitruvius appear in all its splendor. A luminous architecture as befits a very good Mediterranean architect.

It is no longer surprising, in this day and age, that when opening an architectural magazine one finds the "more difficult still". And not so much because new materialized ideas appear, but because a multitude of extravagant forms appear to which it is not easy to find any sense. Everything is as if invaded by what we used to call formalism when we were students.

It bends, twists and twists, folds and folds back, turns, bends, shakes, colors, wrinkles, and it is no longer clear how to describe so much formal agitation. And on top of that, there are those who do it with a certain grace. And others, a few, do so many works that they are capable of doing it one day straight and the next day crooked, one day horizontal and the next day inclined. And they are even capable of doing it both straight and crooked, horizontal and inclined, all at the same time. And they get everyone to applaud. A prodigy of nature.

And it is not because the history of architecture does not continue to teach us like an open book. When Mies van der Rohe drew the plan of the transparent tower for the Friedrichstasse competition in 1921, he did not use a single right angle. But there were profound reasons for doing so. Such was his determination to show and demonstrate the crystalline transparency that architecture could reach, even vertically. And in a further turn of the screw, he conceived and drew that very modern curved crystalline façade for his Glass Skyscraper of 1922. More than just formal proposals, Mies was trying to materialize ideas, to raise manifestos.

Well, that, materializing ideas, building them by the hand of light, in the eternal struggle to overcome gravity, is what José María Lozano does. And so, straight by straight, box by box, with handfuls of light and air, he has built a beautiful building that is the Antonia Mir Museum. This Museum is a small jewel, or better yet, a precious collection of boxes well concatenated to temper the air contained therein. And to tense the clear Mediterranean light that reaches there so well. Ideas such as spatial continuity or transparency are materialized there. And the light and the air flow through those orthogonal plots as freely as the musical notes do on the staves.

Of course, this architecture that we now see is in logical continuity with the previous work of José María Lozano. From that impressive and luminous Casa del Alumno for the Polytechnic University of Valencia, to the prodigious social housing of Castellón where the curve rises with force and where he builds a garage with very beautiful concrete bevels. From the new Valencia-Carlet Metro station to the new Valencia Casino. All coherent, all first class.

In the rational logic of his architecture, José María Lozano is a very good teacher. He is Professor of Projects at the School of Architecture of Valencia, where he began as a teacher with Miguel Colomina, a magnificent architect and professor who built a series of works of enormous quality in Valencia. José María Lozano's international prestige has also led him to teach in countries as diverse as Poland and Cuba. And his exemplary research work at the University of Valencia is reflected in his numerous books and publications. And his eagerness to disseminate architecture, of which he continues to be an enthusiast, has led him to work effectively in the media.

A wonderful poet from Cadiz, Pilar Paz Pasamar says that she dedicated herself to Poetry when "I discovered that words have music". And I believe that José María Lozano, with his Architecture, has long since discovered that air has music. That music is in the air and Architecture is nothing more than an instrument to make it sound. And as God lives, the air sounds like divine music in his Architecture. Divine music that resounds now in a sublime way in this Museum Antonia Mir of Catarroja.