

**CARESS AND SILENCE**

**David Chipperfield conference and exhibition in Madrid**

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On the last day of September 2015, on the occasion of his exhibition in Madrid, David Chipperfield gave a lecture at the School of Architecture of the UPM in Madrid, inaugurating the Academic Year. Led by Luis Fernández-Galiano, who made his presentation, David Chipperfield gave a sober and precise lecture that was a true master class, a *Lectio Magistralis*. The room was packed with students, as never before, and it was necessary to enable other areas of the school to follow the event through screens.

David Chipperfield was sparing with words, like his architecture itself, and managed to convey the precision with which he works, the true research character of his work, and the ability to transcend his creation. These are the characteristics that I once pointed out for Siza, and that are eminently present in Chipperfield. In short, the achievement of beauty.

He deployed only two projects: The James Simon Gallery in Berlin and the Jumex Museum in Mexico.

The Berlin Gallery is a model of how contemporary architecture can act on historical architecture in perfect continuity. The new construction responds to the rhythms and measures and scale of the previous one and embraces it and rests on it with the utmost naturalness and delicacy. It could be said that it "caresses" it. With the precious performance creates a real gateway to the island of museums that, in addition to providing it with all the necessary services, enhances the value of the whole. It has both enormous strength and great delicacy.

The Jumex Museum in Mexico starts from a completely different situation. Surrounded by buildings that struggle to be seen through exuberant forms, Chipperfield opts for silence. The building raises its powerful volume like a stony mass of Roman travertine, crowned by a crest of four sawtooths that will bring a marvelous light into the interior. To lighten the closed volume, it frees the first floor by creating a shaded plinth. He also produces slight staggered recesses in the facade so that the shadow lines make the scale recognizable, and the mass lightens. And he opens some openings in the façade to introduce well-framed exterior views. In short, it applies effective architectural mechanisms to achieve its purpose.

All this, explained by David Chipperfield in a sober speech, after the consequent introduction and finale, also of great sobriety, constituted, at a time when architecture is undergoing an enormously superficial formal removal, a true *Lectio Magistralis*.

In the exhibition, in the rooms of the ICO Foundation in Zorrilla Street, models, only models, are shown in all possible scales, with a surprising result. From general models like the one at the James Simon Gallery in Berlin to large scale models like the one at the Jumex Museum in Mexico, which are the two projects that were explained at the conference. For any architect, and even more so for students, going through the models

is like walking through a dream city, through a set of buildings that are dreams come true. The analysis of the projects through these models makes it possible to understand the three dimensions simultaneously and to reproduce the walk through these spaces, exteriors and interiors in a very tight way.

This is how the architect's creative process is recognized, which, in the case of David Chipperfield, is impeccably rigorous. It is not an accumulation of forms but a collection of constructed ideas, a collection of architectures born of reason. For that is one of the characteristics of David Chipperfield's architecture, an architecture capable of being explained, or in A.E. Goldberg's apt expression, "a conscious architecture".

The catalog, published by the ICO Foundation for this occasion, is magnificent and sober at the same time, and synthesizes very well with the title "Essentials" the intentions and the beautiful results of its author. With texts by Chipperfield himself, Fernández-Galiano, Fulvio Irace and Rik Nys, it brings us closer to David Chipperfield's latest works through beautiful images.

How good it would be for architecture, the most beautiful profession in the world, if this architecture were to be awarded the Pritzker Prize, as an example for so many architects working in this new millennium.