

MIES ALREADY HAS SOMEONE TO TALK TO

Viñoly's skyscraper in Manhattan

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Finally, after so many years of solitude in Manhattan, Mies now has someone to talk to him. So many inadequate things have been built around the Seagram that the old German master did not say a word, which is how we Spaniards say that someone keeps quiet when he is angry. And now, after so many years, very close to the Seagram, a skyscraper has arisen that has made Mies so happy that he has broken his silence: he has said that he likes it, and very much. And among the things Mies said, a very nice one: that it has straw proportions. Well, he, as the good smoker he was, said cigarette. And then he gave Rafael Viñoly a thumbs up.

Spanish people, to ask for a cigarette, we say ¿tienes un pitillo? because we call every cigarette a pitillo, with or without filter. Many years ago, the expression was an American cigarette, or better still, an American fag. Those were the days of Chester and Winston, how many I must have smoked!

For several years now, I have been giving my students at the School of Architecture in Madrid a tower, a skyscraper, as an exercise. In different places. This year we have worked with a tower in Madrid and, to finish the course and my official teaching as a professor before becoming Emeritus, with a skyscraper in New York.

And many times, when talking to you about proportions I have proposed as an ideal, the proportions of a blond cigarette with a filter, leaning on the filter acting as a plinth. Well, here it is that such a skyscraper is being completed in the center of Manhattan. Because the beautiful skyscraper that now presides over Manhattan, the work of Rafael Viñoly, is like this, like an American cigarette.

When we landed a few days ago at JF Kennedy and took the efficient Bus Express to Manhattan, as soon as we left the airport, a new New York skyline appeared before our eyes, now presided over by the Viñoly building. In Spain we have a very nice expression which is to put a spade in Flanders. Because that is what the Uruguayan-born architect Rafael Viñoly has done, put a spade in Flanders, sorry, in New York.

I must admit that I saw the tower again on Christmas Day, after having lunch with friends opulently, as the occasion demands, on a walk along the north side of Central Park on a beautiful day and with an angular view of the Viñoly tower illuminated by the evening sun, pink, which is the one that favors it the most. It was beautiful again.

And one would think that it could be circular and glass. Well, no sir: it is a square tower made of reinforced concrete, and well reinforced. Well, although the circular plan, the straw, is so tempting, the square plan is more rational for a thousand reasons both functional and constructive. And if it were made of glass, with that slenderness never achieved, I suppose it would have presented some technical problems not easy to solve with elegance.

As it is already well advanced, it has now uncovered the technical plants through which the air and light pass, as can be seen in its beautiful distant perspective.

It is so logical, so clear, so beautiful, that it is the tower that I would have liked to build.
Congratulations Viñoly, Welcome to the History of Architecture!