

Spanish Architecture – 1950s–1990s (New York, 13–14 Apr 2012))

New York University. King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center, Apr 13–14, 2012

Pep Aviles

Spanish Architecture: History, Criticism, Practice, and Propaganda. (1950s–1990s)

During the last decades of the twentieth century and until the beginning of the current economic crisis, Spain became a place of pilgrimage for architects, students, and photographers from all over the world. Among the buildings they were interested in, frequently were some of the most outstanding and significant works of international architects belonging to the so-called ‘star system’. At the same time, Spain was also contributing to the international scenario exporting some of its most talented architects such as Rafael Moneo, Enric Miralles, Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Josep Lluís Mateo, or Alejandro Zaera-Polo just to name a few. After decades of ostracism, Spain was finally partaking in the international flows of architecture.

One of the main reasons that explains the capacity of those architects to cross borders without apparent friction is that the kind of commissions were always the same ones around the globe, equally accepted by local administrations, state governments, and cultural benefactors: airports, communication towers, congress centers, parliaments, city halls, sports facilities, and above all, museums. During the second half of the 80s, while the end of history was proclaimed and the clash of civilizations was theorized, the different administrations, (in Spain and elsewhere), began to re-institutionalize their own identities through the theatrical use of representation, providing in turn attractive images for media dissemination and mass-tourism. The more the public interest became subordinate to private revenues, the more hysterical and emptied of its original content the image of the institution appeared. Architecture was instrumental, as it was never before, to represent the new economic and political times. Hence, architecture’s ultimate commercial success arrived hand-in-hand with its own disappearance: architecture’s eagerness to become the scenario of human relationships—as it was the case during the heroic times of the artistic vanguards—, was finally achieved as the always-present background of post-industrial media. In other words, becoming overwhelmingly visible while at the same time fading away. This process of dissolution of architecture’s essence in favor of media distribution had specific characteristics in the Spanish historical context since it coincided with the moment of integration of the country in the political, economic, and military European institutions.

The prolific amount of articles, books, catalogues, and guides devoted to Spanish architecture in the recent past is directly proportional to the almost absolute absence of critical ethos. The symposium is an opportunity to revisit the historical origins and indebtedness of the internationalization of Spanish architecture. Which ones were the possibilities of modern architecture in the autarchic period following the Spanish Civil War? How was architecture represented during the first moments of wealth after the arrival of mass-tourism during the 60s? Which one were the challenges that architecture faced between the end of Franco’s dictatorship and the so-called transi-

ción? Which one was the role of journals and books during the second half of the century? How did they stage the relationship between architecture, its critical disciplinary content, and the political situation? How was learning and criticism interwoven with public political intervention in architecture schools during the 70s and 80s? How was the always-fragile relationship between architecture, history, and criticism unfolded? And, to conclude, can we describe recent Spanish architecture as a moment of climax or as a conscious mechanism of tabula rasa, oversight or deliberate manipulation of its own historical roots?

Friday, April 13th

5:00 pm Welcome

Jordana Mendelson. Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, Department of Art History, New York University.

Presentation

Juan José Lahuerta. King Juan Carlos I of Spain Chair in Spanish Culture and Civilization, New York University; Professor of History of Art and Architecture, Escola Técnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona.

Keynote Speaker

Francesco dal Co. Professor of History of Architecture, Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia IUAV; Director of Casabella, Milano.

7:00 pm Panel 1. The Francoist and Transition Context

Modernity Consecrated. Architectural Discourse and the Catholic Imagination circa 1958

María González Pendás. Ph.D.Candidate, Columbia University.

The Thin Red Line. The Conflict Between Written and Architectural Production in Catalan Magazines (1960s-1970s)

Marisa García Vergara. Lecturer, Universitat de Girona.

Albert Fuster. Head of Design Program, Elisava Escola Superior de Disseny, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona.

Spanish Transition. Between Censorship and Propaganda. "Spain: Artistic Avant-garde and Social Reality, 1936-1976"

Joaquim Moreno. Adjunct Assistant Professor, Columbia University.

Respondent: Miriam Basilio. Assistant Professor of Art History and Museum Studies, Department of Art History, New York University.

Round Table

8:30 pm Reception to Follow

Saturday, April 14th

11:30 am Welcome

12:00 pm Panel 2. International Dialogues

Critical Translation: The Laboratori d'Urbanisme de Barcelona and the Italian Discourse on Urban Form

Marta Caldeira. Ph.D.Candidate, Columbia University. Lecturer, Yale University.

Seville, 1975

Francisco González de Canales. Cultural Coordinator, Unit Master and co-director of the visiting school Politics of Fabrication Laboratory at the Architectural Association, London; Professor of History and Theory of Architecture, Universidad de Sevilla.

Urban Tellurics in Barcelona. Between a Heideggerian Rock and a Postmodern Swimming Pool
Edgar Illas. Assitant Professor. Spanish and Portuguese Department, Indiana University.

Respondent: Pep Avilés. Ph.D. Candidate. Princeton University. Adjunct Associate Professor, Columbia University. Visiting Professor, Barcelona Institute of Architecture.

Round Table

4:00 pm Panel 3. The Party is Over

The Guggenheim vs. The Kursaal

Javier Isado-Vigil. Professor, School of Architecture, University of Puerto Rico, San Juan

Notes on Spanish Architectural Practice

Ramon Faura. Assistant Professor, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona-Reus.

Lluís Ortega. Assistant Professor, University of Illinois, Chicago.

Respondent & Final Comments: Maria Rubert. Professor, Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona.

6:00 pm Closing Remarks

Stanislaus von Moos, Vincent Scully Visiting Professor of Architectural History, Yale University.

Scientific Committee:

Juan José Lahuerta

Pep Avilés

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