

A partir de este título evocador, Paz Soler ahonda en el Jardín Seco Japonés extrayendo múltiples vértices al silencio de estos paisajes artificiales. Ausencia de autoría, fusión con la naturaleza, memoria, obra inacabada, la renuncia a la geometría y a la representación, son atributos que bien pudiéramos asociar a la arquitectura y que nos vienen prestados en este caso de un exquisito trabajo de doctorado. Recogiendo esta inclinación por la ligereza, Alvaro Moreno, fruto también de otra tesis, responde a la llamada de originales del anterior número con un análisis de varias arquitecturas, dos viviendas temporales de Le Corbusier y la casa de Burdeos de R.Koolhaas, que le sirve para definir el papel de la intuición y la transcripción en el proceso arquitectónico.

Precisamente estos dos trabajos dan cuenta de la oleada de tesis leídas en el último curso académico en nuestras escuelas debida al cambio de normativa. En "Doctores en proyectos", presentamos un primer estudio sobre sus contenidos, enfoques y distintos ámbitos, donde destaca la dimensión intelectual de los trabajos por encima de su carga operativa. El arquitecto como investigador aparece también en este número con el artículo de Jaime Ferrer sobre Charles Correa donde apunta, tal vez otro silencio, a la transformación de las estructuras del pasado como estímulo para una arquitectura inscrita en el paisaje cultural de la India.

Otras investigaciones de figuras más próximas reseñan, bajo el pretexto del centenario de Sostres, uno de sus edificios más notables en un artículo conjunto que recupera dos textos de los profesores Carles Martí Arís y Coque Bianco.

Si hablábamos de la renuncia a la geometría como un recurso del silencio, otras propuestas pretenden trascenderla a través de su construcción o de su carácter como instrumento de pensamiento. El proyecto de para un mausoleo en Vila-real, de Camilla Mileto y Fernando Vegas, plagado de resonancias pasadas y presentes -a cuya datación convendría estar atentos-, apunta hacia una sofisticada y al mismo tiempo artesanal construcción. Por su parte, Claudio Alsina la reivindica como una parte de las matemáticas cuyo "primer gran objetivo debe ser pensar mejor" y así verse reflejadas en nuestros actuales planes de estudios.

Pensar mejor, nada más oportuno para una revista que cumple 5 años de existencia. En una intensa entrevista, Dietmar Eberle se siente cómodo con una cierta idea de atemporalidad de la arquitectura sin por ello renunciar al más sofisticado conocimiento como sustituto de la tecnología, otra manera de pensar mejor. Edificios atentos a su construcción, pero también equidistantes con el programa que los origina y cada vez mejor inscritos en su paisaje cultural y tecnológico: renovadas formas del silencio como recurso arquitectónico.

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Interview with Dietmar Eberle

Alberto Peñín

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Mr. Eberle, thank you very much for granting us this interview. In line with our tradition of interviewing great practice architects with a deep body of thought behind we are very glad that you agreed to lend us some of your time. Being aware that instead of a 'just-do-it' behavior sometimes we speak (and ask) too much about architecture, we dive into the following dialogue.

P Beginnings and influences

How did you become an architect? It has been said that the craft tradition in your Voralberg area was indeed an influence, or was it more of an inner impulse?

When I was a child I did not even know the profession of an architect. I wanted to become someone who would contribute to increasing the quality of living for ordinary people and so I was interested in becoming a writer or a craftsman. Because of my childhood experience, craftsmen were the people who built the buildings. So I was always interested and deeply impressed by the feeling when a building sight was changed and it became a valuable part of our built environment. So in my understanding to make a building means two things: on one hand it is determined by a question of understanding and knowing and the ability to make use of this knowledge and transforming materials into reality.

During your formation period, did you have any master that influenced you deeply, personally or otherwise?

There were two people who influenced me deeply during my application period. One was Hannes Meyer. Not as an architect but because of his way of radical or fundamental thinking and the other one was Schulze-Fielitz, with whom I worked personally for many years and who was the partner of Yona Friedman who did super-structural visions, for example city of Paris on the 12th level or city over the Channel.

There, the main concern about architecture was thinking about the geometrical and naturalistic questions of these super-structures.

Which could be your affinities with architects such as Roland Rainer, who was also close to the structural engineering field?

As an Austrian educated in Vienna, the main figures of classical Austrian architecture are Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos. They were the leading influences in which I have been very interested. But in this tradition from the beginnings of modernism it has always been very clear that the material and its very specific geometrical expression, related to the material, were the main focus and interest of architecture. How to deal with this given conditions is determined by the very different cultures of Europe. The richness of Europe is the variety of knowledge related to the different cultural backgrounds and the way we deal with this issue.

One could think that this position is not only a Voralberg matter but something that links German culture with construction, even with a certain continuity with Werkbund. Hannes Meyer could represent the less artistic position at Bauhaus, more committed to a specialized work far from the praise of creativity.

The question is not about creativity, but rather a question of what kind of orientation the different directors of Bauhaus focused on, or -in architectural terms- which are the driving forces that generate the form. Gropius was very much focused on the question of industrialization and the working process which generated the form. Hannes Meyer was very much related to the social and political issues generating the form, and Mies did not give a specific orientation to Bauhaus but followed very much the structural possibilities that generate a building and, which very obvious, he was not interested in program or function at all.

P Discipline

You used to speak about "participatory construction" as a wider understanding of the traditional construction at Voralberg where the participation of industry and the influence of crafts, especially wood, were very deep. How can the international expansion of the architect's field, particularly at your office, maintain this level of control?

My discourse about participatory construction involves a wider understanding of how to use all the knowledge of the people who are working in the buildings - so the participation of craftsmen or the building industry is a very valuable decision in our architecture. Thus, it is very clear that already in the stage of the design process, we think very much about integrating these people into the decision making process of design. Therefore, the traditional understanding of doing a schematic design, a detail design or a construction design does not really relate to our way of working. I may say it more easily - we only have to take the decision once but it has to be done on a very high level of knowledge. It is true that in our area there are craftsmen with a deep knowledge of wood, glass and concrete and the performance of these people in their field is definitely excellent in relation with other areas.

What is the role of the construction site process in your projects? Is it simply a linear execution of the conceived project or is there any kind of interaction with local agents once the building process has started?

The building site process is a linear process in the execution of a project. The interaction with local agents and craftsmen and people who work in the industry is part of the design process, not part of the construction process. So if the amount of time dedicated to planning increases, it will result in a less expensive building and shorter construction times.

We feel that you lean towards a certain autonomy of Architecture as a discipline. Can we still speak about volume, structure, envelope, efficiency away from any kind of intellectual speculation?

To talk about architecture as a discipline, talking about volume, structure, envelope, program and surfaces involves speculation on an artistic, intellectual and social level regarding the architectural process in every field. These five subjects are the questions you have to answer in every project. These speculations and your interests will have influence in answering all of these questions but the main question in 21st century architecture will be the contribution to the public sphere, not the use of the building any more.

Compactness, central core, do you think that your architecture could be recognized from a formal point of view?

I hope that my architecture will not be recognizable in terms of personal authorship, as a person, but can always be seen as a contribution to the site in which it is built. Only one of the contributions of the architecture is the formal point of view understood by me in the question of the dialog to the existing environment.

Are compactness and neutrality values that still stand today?

Compactness is, in certain climates, the most efficient answer to reduce the carbon dioxide footprint of buildings - especially in the most populated areas in the world. The depth of the building used nowadays is only a backwards orientated tradition, thinking about cross-ventilation. But since this problem can be solved in many other ways it is only a leftover of wrongly-understood modernism.

Neutrality is a word I would never use, but maybe it relates to two different questions: not to fix the



▲ 2226 Lustenau _archphoto, inc. © baumschlagler eberle

The traditional understanding of doing a schematic design, a detail design or a construction design does not really relate to our way of working; we only have to take the decision once but it has to be done on a very high level of knowledge.

program and to make an open building, which means that the use of the building can be very easily adapted. I think that this is a very important change in the understanding of architecture because in current buildings, the lifetime of the program of the building is only 20 years. Maybe the 2nd question concerns the atmosphere and characteristics of the buildings, so the word "neutrality" may become dangerous in relation to banality. But in my opinion, avoiding banality is not a question of the program but rather a question of material, dimension, light - the central architectural features on which we are working. So to answer your question, compactness – also in your Spanish tradition – is a highly efficient strategy in order to deal with economic and ecological questions. The openness of the building will generate a lifetime for our buildings which is far longer than the expected lifetime of their use. The characteristics of the buildings are not determined by the use of the building but by its architectural consistence.

Does the envelope in your architecture not only play an urban or technical role as a membrane but also a formal one contributing for example to the dematerialization of the box? Could we say, the simpler the volume, the more sophisticated the envelope and vice versa?

Of course, the envelope is a question from the inside to the outside but also a contribution to public space. The matter of a building being, or not, a box is not a question about dematerialization but a question of its architectural characteristics from the outside.

P Site and place

Your site plans both at your website and in your beautiful books are just a graphic contrast between empty and full shapes. Is there any intention to disregard any other considerations?

Yes, the initial question is about empty and full spaces. Many other considerations about the cultural, social, economic and material background are integrated in our projects as much as possible. Why do I use this black-and-white drawings? Because in my understanding the dialog with the surroundings, as I mentioned before, can be seen very clearly in these drawings and, also as I mentioned before, the goal of design is to develop it as much as the buildings cannot be found any more clearly in the black-and-white drawings.

In your opinion, how have the Voralberg landscape and geographic conditions influenced your architecture?

Voralberg influenced me in two very different ways. First the necessity to deal with topography, and second the very specific way of dealing with the built environment as an expression of the cultural thinking and background which were developed throughout its history. The most important condition was the poverty of this area for hundreds of years, which generated a very high awareness in terms of using the materials available in the most efficient way.

But we could also consider the Voralberg landscape as a social organization system; a certain number of settlements that create a flexible and not bureaucratic network with a really contemporary feature: when urban meets rural. Do you think that politics has a link with design?

I am not really interested in this question of urban and rural because the separation of these two is an intellectual misunderstanding, since the urban environment never existed without any rural backgrounds and rural never existed without any urban concentration. But there has always been a strong interaction between urban and rural environments. If you analyzed Voralberg with social key figures such as income, education, profession, divorce rate, lifespan, you would always understand Voralberg as a city. When you see the built environment you would always understand it as a rural development. Sure, there is a strong relation between design and politics, as long as politics is representing the majority of the society. Therefore, private design in architecture does not exist. All architectural design is always public – a contribution to society and as long as politics represents society, both politics and architecture deal with society.

P Office

Your web site has a tag called "Position" which could reveal the need of doing so for an architect. Do you think this is an intellectual and cultural position or does it rather deal with service and social commitment?

In a company like ours you need many different positions and different understandings of our profession. So if you consider yourself more as an intellectual or cultural person or more as a service orientated person, with a high social commitment – it is a question that is up to you. As a company, it is useful to use all the different positions which I see as resources for contributing to a project.

What is the role, in your opinion, of Professional associations? In your early years with Voralberger Baukünstler you had a strong position towards the chamber of Architects...

My expectation regarding Professional associations is that they should fight for the development of architecture but if organizations fail to do this, I have no reason to join them.

Private design in architecture does not exist. All architectural design is always public – a contribution to society and as long as politics represents society, both politics and architecture deal with society.

Are still computers simply rationalistic tools to enlarge the scope of architects?

No – computers are tool that enhance the ability of architects in a many different ways - first in geometrical terms, second in the ability to have much more available data about your project: structural data, economic data, ecological data and social data. So computers do help to increase your knowledge of the background of the design.

Do models have an increasing role in your design method?

If you think about physical models, they are the central point of the education of architects.

P Social

What would be, in your opinion, the links with other disciplines? Despite some experiences in your practice with Olafur Eliasson or Adrian Schiess, would it be social sciences rather than artistic or philosophical ones?

When we speak about collaboration with other disciplines, how would they be considered to belong to very different groups?

One group is related to a better understanding of the project like physicians, social scientists, economists, philosophers etc., and the other group is disciplines who can contribute something in the question of the formal appearance of the building such as artists or structural engineers.

Can design be democratic?

Design can never be democratic, but there can be design choices, and in a lot of public issues I think that this is reasonable.

*Today we read, view and listen much about cohousing, progressive housing, unfinished housing. At your 'Cooperative' or 'do-it-yourself' houses, were you using those concepts *avant la lettre*?*

Yes, 35 year ago we practiced a lot of the elements that you mentioned about the development within houses, co-housing, self-built-houses, unfinished housing, cooperative housing – that is how I started dealing with buildings; but in all these models, also as an architect but mainly as a craftsmen and a mediator of these processes. When I show these examples to the young people nowadays there are always two phenomenons: first I tell the young people that what they talk about nowadays, we already practiced 35 years ago. Second they ask me "why don't you publish again a book on these projects, which I did 35 years ago?" and I always answer: maybe.

Why are there no people in your photographs?

Because my respect for people is too high for using them as decoration for architecture. I know too many architectural photographs where always the same 2 girls, the same models are on the picture.

When program is not conceived to have a big influence in the project, could not this lead to some other problems? Some experiences in the 70s, like the Pompidou Center for example, show us that when everything is possible, nothing is really possible at its best level of performance without a strong technical support.

I never say "everything is possible" but there should be a certain range of possibilities and before we speak about this in such an abstract manner, let me say this: 65% of the built environment is related to housing – a very different way of housing – according to the generations and the cultural differences according to regions. About 15–22% of the buildings are office buildings – either public or private, which is very similar to housing.

Only 5 % of the buildings are dedicated to religion, sports, museums, industry, or infrastructure. Even if I consider specific demands in this field, far more than 90% are dealing with the everyday use of the buildings. So sometimes I speak about everyday architecture which is more than 90% of the building stock and Sunday architecture, which is less than 5%.

So when I speak about an open building, I speak of more than 90% of the existing buildings. So a strong technical support is never necessary in a building except to compensate for the mistakes you made in architecture. I am interested in everyday architecture, which is more than 90% of the built environment. When you try to do Sunday architecture with the knowledge of everyday architecture, it will probably fail. But also, when you try to do everyday architecture by using the knowledge of Sunday architecture, it will be a disaster. This kind of thought we practice too many years now in the education of students.

When you see the Venice Biennale slogans or even some excellent practices like Lacaton&Vassal, could it be provocative today to speak about quality rather than square meters?

There have been many Venice Biennale slogans during the last 10 years. All of them have something in common, that they did not change anything in the understanding of the architectural phenomenon. So your question is about the relation of quantity and quality. But, and this is a result of the development of the 20th century, quantity is for most of the people the biggest quality that architecture contributed to their individual life. Nevertheless, I believe that the big difference between the 20th and 21st centuries, is the development of quantity towards quality. But nevertheless every quality is related to quantity and every quantity is related to quality. That is what you can see in every architectural phenomenon.

From other starting point as we asked Anne Lacaton, it seems as if the architectural speech has reached you at the field of sustainability. Is this also the point where social considerations meet technical ones?

Sustainability is so boring because it is so complicated to understand how the social, cultural and physical phenomena meet each other. But in general the main idea of sustainability is how can we give these different phenomena a long term lifespan to open new possibilities of development, to increase the quality of living.

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P Sustainability

Le Corbusier was labeled by Reyner Banham as the biggest delinquent when it relates to "Well temperate environment" because it generated the resignation of this competence for the architects. Your work and research show the contrary, maybe motivated by the architect's capacity to face complexity and the need for synthesis. Do we definitely have to recover this skill?

There are different ways to understand the work of architects, but to say it very clearly - I consider the knowledge of Rudofsky more important for future architecture than the, for me, very much admired capacity of Le Corbusier.

Is real life in the 2226 building as good as you planned? Rural and popular architecture used to introduce cows and other animals inside the spaces to temper climate. At the end there is once again a lesson from popular architecture. You stated that your architecture was more 'every day architecture' than 'Sunday architecture'. Do we need to look backwards to move forward?

No, we do not need animals inside the room but real life is even much better than we ever expected. Therefore, at this moment, there are 6 other projects of 2226 in Zürich, Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Paris and Lingenau in progress.

As an architect I think it is always necessary to look backwards and forwards at the same time and to manage the future; it is necessary, if we want to increase the quality of living by reducing the resources, to use the knowledge of the past to manage the future.

It is true that, in this idea of modernism, we lost a lot of knowledge of the past but I believe that this knowledge is very much represented in the old buildings, or in a theoretical way in books like "architecture without architects" (Rudofsky). So the most important resource to manage our future will be knowledge – and it is not a question of how old this knowledge is.

You spoke of the difficulty of measurements. What is the role of perception, of physiological factors in this, such as light or thermal sensation? A dark corridor with a window in its end can be more lit than any other. How can we measure that?

To measure the feelings, experiences of the people is achieved with sociological methods. And it is a big mistake that we do not use these methods for architecture like they are used by every large company all over the world. Why don't we use it for architecture? Because we are not large companies?

Back to the subject of envelopes, in our Mediterranean climate, membranes need to be exploded. How could you introduce intermediate and adjustment spaces to your approach towards efficiency?

Intermediate and adjustment spaces are very useful in different climates because they generate a quality of "in between" the outside and the inside. The better they are, the more the inside will be protected and the capacity of hours per year, where they can be used on a comfortable level, will increase their quality. So 2226 is a principle to use the things you have in the most efficient way, but the goal of efficiency must be the balance between price and comfort.

Do you think there would be a chance to bring the 2226 experience to regulations? There would surely be strong lobbies against it...

With the existing regulations – I do not know about Spanish regulations – but in France, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Poland and so on, 2226 fits perfectly into them, because in most of the regulations it is about goals but not about the way you reach those goals. So therefore I do not see any legal or regulation problem.

Knowledge replaces technology: how far can we go with this stimulating statement? Is the main goal of technology its own disappearance?

No – the main goal of technology is not its disappearance but there must be a development of technologies and what we do in 2226 is that we replace hardware by software. In history many technologies, which were very important, disappeared, because we replaced one technology with a different one. We replaced coaches by trains or cars – so all the coach drivers had to look for a new profession. I could tell you many more very simple examples like this.

So we understand 2226 only as a development of technology which happened in many other industries in the same way that software replaces hardware, which is a big contribution to the sustainable development of our societies by using less resources (grey energy) to increase the quality of our built environment.

P University

Knowledge, practice, we definitely speak about University. How does your teaching practice at University interact with your professional practice?

The interaction between my practice and the university is given by me using the knowledge I have as an architect and bringing this knowledge to the university. But at the university I developed specific methods to bring this kind of knowledge to students, who have specific different backgrounds according to their knowledge. If you are interested in these methods you can find it in a book called "from the city to the house".

Your master at Zurich seems to focus on urban issues as also the interaction with some other professors is based on technological support. Are those the main fields of design research or can we also consider, 'Research by design'?

To measure the feelings, experiences of the people is achieved with sociological methods. And it is a big mistake that we do not use these methods for architecture like they are used by every large company all over the world.

Our master in Zurich is not focusing on urban issues but on the wide and broad understanding of architecture in its different context. The question you ask about the relation of research and design is very complex but at this moment I organized, together with other professors, a PhD about the results of all research by design approaches. At this moment it looks very critical because there does not seem to be a lot of new knowledge based on this method. I believe that we will be able to see the final statement within the next 3 to 4 years but the question is very clear, how do you define research and how do you define design.

In my understanding the main difference is that in research you are defining the methods and everybody should be able to come to the same conclusions by using the same methods. This means that you are looking for a very general knowledge. In design you are looking for the most specific solution in relation either to the situation, the cultural context or the person who is doing this. So in the end I believe that there are two very different ways of generating knowledge and it is bad for both of them if you mix them up. Research and design are two different methods to generate knowledge. In research you are looking for the most general

To place and design an appropriate window more than to bet on a mesh or a conceptual envelope; to introduce reality and phenomenological issues in design, how difficult is to teach that in a school...

Architectural teaching is always based on two very different abilities. An architect has to do the same than a piano player. On one hand, he has to train his hands in relation to the instrument every day – pure repetition. On the other hand he has to increase his knowledge about the person who wrote the music and the historical cultural circumstances, but he does not need to understand the mechanics of his instrument. That is exactly the same way I see architecture.

You have a wide experience as a teacher and also in management, as educational director during your Dean period at Zurich. Do you believe in a common European educational system?

My last obligation at EHT, being the study director, was to develop a new curriculum which will be put in place in 2017. I had to deal with this question. I believe in a common European educational system in the sense that we will share common European goals and many regional contributions or different models of Universities, Academies or Schools, and how to reach these goals.

When a project in Spain?

I talk to a lot of Spanish people and try to understand Spanish culture better.

We would be honored by your presence at Visiting Studio at ETSAB School of Barcelona. We always end the interviews by asking what would be your first decisions if you were the director of the school of Barcelona.

I do not know the school of Barcelona but I hope that they are very proud of their history and try to develop this in a proper manner.

Lastly, we ask you to propose a Call for papers for our readers. This can be formulated by a question, a statement or a text for which our readers will propose some texts that will then follow a peer blind review process.

Replace hardware by software.

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