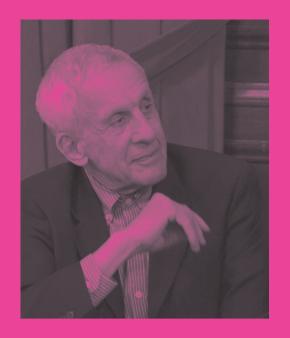
Young Architecture of Spain

Opening speech of the Exhibition under the same title American Institute of Architects, Washington D.C. September 15, 2011

Kenneth Frampton Intro by Jesús Donaire

Kenneth Frampton is a British architect, critic, historian and the Ware Professor of Architecture at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University, New York.



he exhibition "Young Architects of Spain" was inaugurated in Madrid in 2008 with the sponsorship of the Spanish Ministry of Public Works. In 2010 it began its international tour with the support of the AECID, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. The exhibition has opened in 18 cities throughout Europe, the U.S. and Canada. Since the selection process Professor Kenneth Frampton, a member of the international jury along with Juhani Pallasmaa, has been involved in this initiative that had the aim to make a new generation of Spanish architects better known, "A Window to the Unknown" as named by exhibition Curator Jesús Aparicio. An extensive catalogue accompanies the exhibition and, in addition to showing the works of these architects, it also contains essays of the jurors. The general lines of Frampton's essay were publically exposed in the opening of the exhibition at the central headquarters of the American Institute of Architects in Washington DC, in September 2011. These unpublished lines are now transcribed, and published for the first time, in this publication.

As if it were the continuation of the text written by Siegfried Giedion "Vision of Spain" (published in 1932 under the title "Blick nach Spanien"), Frampton also makes reference to the importance of the architectural tradition in Spain, which thanks to the consolidation of its values and its continuous flowering, now stands among those architectural cultures of relevant interest internationally. If Giedion shows how prominently the building tradition is based in the Arabic masonry, and how fertile the experience of the 'walls' as diversity of tectonics is (the walls as boundaries, with no windows, giving shape to the narrow Arabic streets), Frampton not only reasserts this very same tradition but also explains that devolution of political power in Spain was very important after the liberation of the country, following the demise of Franco, together with the strength of the Professional Organizations such as the Colegios de Arquitectos as well as the architectural education. All these points of view are, for Frampton, the reason why Spain has a relevant and interesting modern architecture.

Kenneth Frampton on Young Architecture of Spain

I feel I need to touch on some of the basic points I made in my essay (for the catalogue of the exhibition), and I want to explain my own connection to Spanish architecture. I've been fascinated with Spanish architecture for a long time, probably since 1995 in a very concerted way. I think there is an enormous tradition of really interesting modern architecture in Spain, which goes back to the 1950s at least, and of course before that, but I think what one could identify as a modern Spanish architecture begins in the 1950s particularly in Catalonia. Although there is of course a movement before that, it is to some extent curtailed by the Spanish civil war and by the franquista government.

The franquista government began to change its position in the fifties and Spanish modern architectural culture began to evolve and to, step by step, revive. When finally democracy is restored all of this energy takes off. In some ways I think you could see this franquista period as a kind of retardation in a sense, in terms of modernity. When democracy is finally restored to the country there is such a need for building institutions of every conceivable kind, and this certainly adds an enormous impetus to the building culture. The clan base of Spain is very broad and very active and powerful, and that creates a lot of the energy that lies behind the evolution of Spanish architectural culture in the last half century. Among the points that I make in the introduction is the fact that devolution of political power in Spain was very important after the liberation of the country following the demise of Franco. The fact that the power was no longer in the centre but distributed to the autonomous communities and to the provincial cities throughout what it is, after all, a very large country had an enormous cultural impact on Spanish architecture. This is my own kind of view and whether it is possible to substantiate it fully it is speculation on my part, to some extent. I think the most surprising thing is the power of what I think of as the Spanish city-state.

Colegios (Professional Organizations) and Cultural Patronage

The most interesting thing about that is that there was a system in Spain, which I think goes back to the 19th century at least if

not before, of professional organizations, which I think applied to other professions besides architecture, known as *Colegio de Arquitectos*. Every major city in Spain had one of these organizations. As I understand it, prior to the full, I would say, cultural and economic imposition of the European Union on Spain, the *Colegio* was responsible not only for the quality of the work that architects were producing in that particular city and area, but also the drawings had to be stamped both by the *Colegio* and by the city, in order to be approved. But, as I understand it, they also collected the fees. These gave the professional organization enormous power in the society, because developers, for example, under that rule, could basically not sue architects, because the *Colegio* would protect architects.

Other strength of this point of view is that these Colegios had their own exhibition spaces, they had their own libraries, they had their own archives, they were cultural institutions, and they still are, to some extent, but their power has been weakened by the European Union, in order of course to create a free market and to enable foreign architects to build in Spain, and vice versa of course. It is curious that in fact actually even before this Spain commissioned many foreign architects. This is sort of slightly digressive, but I also learned about the extent to which the Spanish Government has supported this exhibition and has produced an enormous and very beautiful exhibition catalogue. I mean this kind of cultural generosity, not too many countries are going to do that, as a matter of fact. So, that kind of patronage is extraordinary, but apart from the patronage of the state the fact that even after the rules of the game have changed under the European Union, a lot of Spanish municipalities still commission Spanish architects. I think that this also reflects the cultural power of the city-state, and the pride of middle class municipalities, that still want to commission architects of caliber and are willing to pay for that kind of quality work.

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Education

The other thing that I believe has also slightly been affected by the European Union is the quality of architectural training in Spain. This kind of comparisons are very difficult to make, but I think that the professional training in Spain, as in Scandinavia, has been generally much higher than in the rest of Europe. I happen to have in my possession, now are kind of antique documents, final graduating theses from Madrid, in portfolio form. And when I turn over the pages of these plans, I realize that these buildings could be built. The professional theses that these students used to produce, were at such a level that those buildings in my opinion could be built with the drawings. That is not possible from any architecture school in the U.S. And whether this is right or wrong is certainly a debatable point. But I think part of the quality of the work at this exhibition, is the construction of technical competence of these architects. They have enormous capacity, and you can see it in the drawings. And this I think comes from the education that it is one of the things that characterize Spanish architecture.

Tradition and Uniqueness

This takes me to another issue which I'm rather preoccupied with, which is the idea of an architectural culture, because I think there is a tendency in the Anglo-American world, and not only in the Anglo-American world, maybe now globally, let's say. In terms of stars, yes, star architects. The idea of architectural culture is conditioned by the notion of the star, and this I think is a real limitation. What I believe is really a measure of an architectural culture is when you have a society in which you can say there are forty architects, working in this period of history, and having clans -otherwise they cannot realize work-, and these forty architects are all of the same, relatively speaking, very high level. And there is a real level of cultural production in this society. That

I think is not so common, and it is one of the characteristics of Spain, that is the case. If you look at this exhibition you can also sense it in the small works done by these young architects. The level is extremely high, which brings me to talk about one other thing before I talk about a few of the works. In the exhibition catalogue, there is an essay by Juhani Pallasmaa which bears the title "Between Tradition and Uniqueness". I have often talked to Pallasmaa about tradition and I remember that once he told me that there is this aphoristic statement, very ironic, Zen statement if you like, by Catalan philosopher Eugenio d'Ors, who said "all that is not tradition is plagiarism". I love that statement, because it is an enigma in itself. But I think that enigma points to something which also goes along with my idea of architectural culture, or quality, and has to do with this question of tradition and uniqueness.

There is a very interesting polish philosopher and sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, who is now very venerable. At some point he migrated to England and was a professor in the university of Leeds, and after his retirement has been ever more prolific, as a cultural political theorist, one could say. He wrote a book called "Culture as Praxis", where he makes the following statement: "there is no innovation without tradition, and there is no tradition without innovation". These two aspects are in a constant cycle, and they are each equally necessary to the other. It leads to the fact that different cultures are fertilized by traditions other than their own tradition, as if they assimilate or ingest this tradition. Pallasmaa talks about it in a way that this somewhat mysterious aspect of Spanish production is not so easy for a critic, or an outsider above all, to explain why is there this kind of consistent quiet quality. This dialectic between innovation and tradition, between tradition and uniqueness comply with a very beautiful little passage by Pallasmaa that I thought I would even quote: "When surveying the projects by young Spanish architects I was reminded of the motto of the memorial exhibition of the great figurative painter of eroticized interiors Balthus, that I saw a few years ago in Venice: 'I often hear artists speak about their desires to express themselves in their art. Nothing like that has ever occurred to me'. The profound wisdom of a true artist has all but been lost in today's cult of exaggerated and distorted self-expression. The projects selected for this exhibition project a responsible continual thinking often functional and structural organization, subtle materials, an assured aesthetic sensibility and a capacity for abstraction without losing the sense of life". Reading this again reminded me of an aphorism by Luis Barragán: "an architecture which has not achieved tranquillity fails in its spiritual mission". One of the difficult things for an architect, or for anyone for that matter, is how to combine tranquillity and vitality. And I think the works in the exhibition do exactly that.

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Notes on Some Selected Works

Realizing that one cannot talk about all of the 62 selected works for this exhibition, then I sort of rapidly made a few choices to emphasize some aspects that I find relevant on the works.

The project of Gymnasium and covered swimming pool, Villanueva de la Cañada, by architects **Churtichaga + Quadra-Salcedo** Arquitectos is remarkable from the point of view of the light and its modesty and discreet use of fenestration and illumination. One notices the very sober rational organization of the volumes, top lit in many cases, and of these different pools, training pools, diving pools, racing pools, in this one singular space surrounded by service elements.

The little studio in Mallorca, by architect Francisco Cifuentes, for a painter, Damià Jaume, is an extraordinary work because of the use of terracotta blocks, which are usually rendered over to just provide a smooth cement surface. But here they are played with in order to create a wall which has this kind of vibration on the surface, and a slightly uneven vibration, due to unevenness in the blocks themselves. And it is combined with sort of wood boxes that are inserted as frames for windows or doors or even for some storage components in the space. What is a base thing about the terracotta, like the famous Frank Lloyd Wright use of textile blocks, is the same rhythmically vibrating animated surface inside and out, and the major fenestration is carried on these reinforced concrete beams and slabs. It creates this very animate and I think extremely poetic space. We see these wooden boxes become kind of minor rooms off the main space.

What is astonishing in the project for a Single family house in Sant Feliu de Llobregat, by the team of architects **data AE**, is the very delicate way in which it is inserted into the existing fabric, a kind of medieval zoning, including the flat roof in relation to the tile roofs on either side. What is also amazing about this project is the use of material. On the street front it is very neutral, very private, it just has a louvered screen in wood and there is a garage door underneath. A bridge to the main building connects the place of the car, located in an auxiliary build-

(<- sigue en la página anterior)

Sempre ho he dit això. Durant el franquisme -i això no té res a veure amb el franquisme-, Espanya i Portugal, que estaven governades per dues dictadures ferotges, tenien un alt prestigi internacional en engenyeria civil, i jo vaig poder-ho comprovar amb la gent que vaig conèixer, als congressos que vaig anar, a les comissions tècniques a les quals estava... o sigui, quan anaves amb els especialistes de formigó armat i pretensat alemanys o austríacs, els espanyols anàvem de tu a tu. La Portugal sempre n'hi havia algún que et sorprenia. Jo diria que tot això s'ha diluït una mica... El Carles Buxadé i jo vam ser catedràtics l'any 68 i 70. Llavors només hi havia Escola de Camins a Madrid, i Escola d'Arquitectura a Madrid i Barcelona. Quan nosaltres vam marxar de l'Escola ja hi havia escoles d'Enginyeria i Arquitectura per tota Espanya. La qual cosa vol dir que el Buxadé i jo vam estar pràcticament a tots els tribunals d'oposició que van anar cobrint aquestes escoles. I per tant vam ser els que vam examinar a tots els que veníen. Jo vaig notar una gran diferència en el rigor dels propis exàmens i les exigències personals i de tot tipus entre els primers anys i els de després. En tota aquella gent que estava sota el franquisme -i que segurament eren de dretes, perquè els enginyers de camis no eren d'esquerres en aquella època- hi veia molt més rigor i molta menys trapelleria que el que va venir després.

I va haver un moment que va arribar una mena de revolta interna a la universitat i es va dir "els professors ara els farem nosaltres, des de dins, ara no ens creurem els que fan les oposicions", i llavors van fer allò que en dèiem el Palmar de Troya. Es van posar a nomenar professors des del mateix rectorat, sota la capa dels rectors progres... o sigui, tota la progressia mal entesa, el progrés mal entès, l'esquerra mal entesa... llavors és quan van treure el Coderch de l'Escola! És clar, llavors van sortir una sèrie de professors que no sabien res. I diuen "no, és que en aquell moment era la revolució!" Doncs mal començament per la revolució. Malament! Això no anirà enlloc! I efectivament no va anar enlloc. Si ara està malament, el germen va ser allò. La poca exigència... sempre, sempre la manca d'intel.ligència l'has de detectar i negar-la. Perquè la manca d'intel.ligència fot a parir una vida, un país, tot. . Tot allò que et deia del ministre Wert és manca d'intel ligència, és incultura, és no saber. I un país que fot a parir una generació en tarda cinc a recuperar-la.

CO. Com ha estat i com és al teva relació amb Carles Buxadé?

Tota la vida hem estat junts, gairebé tot ho hem fet junts. Els dos vam guanyar la cátedra d'estructures alhora, i els dos vam començar a fer classe junts, i ens ho vam pasar molt bé. Després vam estar investigant, vam agafar els primers ordinadors que van arribar a Espanya, els famosos 16 bits, vam aprendre a programar, el primer llibre de càlcul matricial que es va publicar a Espanya el vam fer el Carles i jo...I també ens vam adonar que l'ofici que teníem necessitava una pràctica...Al món de l'arquitectura sempre hi ha hagut gent que ha acabat la carrera i s'ha adonat que l'exercici de la professió tenia un zona negra, difícil d'assumir, que és el risc; que no tot acabava en la composició. Hi ha un tipus de professional que, davant d'això, agafa por i no exerceix. Nosaltres no, feia anys que estàvem al camp de la investigació, i vam decidir passar al territori de l'acció. Vam començar a fer estructures poc freqüents aleshores, que eren aquelles estructures espacials de ferro, vam fer la cúpula de Vitòria i totes aquelles coses. Hem estat uns tot terrenys que igual hem fet l'estadi de Montjuïc amb el Correa i el Milà, treballant en pla d'igualtat, o la Vil.la Universitària de l'Autònoma a Bellaterra, o el Museu de la Ciència de Terrassa, fent d'arquitectes globals -perquè nosaltres no encarregàvem les estructures a ningú- com hem fet de calculistes d'estructures molt concretes de molta gent, i rehabilitacions, reforços de polígons dels anys 50 i 60, n'hem fet mil.lers i mil.lers i mil.lers... I potser la vessant dins de la meva obra on la poesia i l'arquitectura es creuen més és a través de les cúpules de ferro i a través dels blocs d'habitatges, on hi ha tota aquella pobra gent... És la part dura de l'exercici, però també es una part que t'acosta tant a la vida...Són les dues coses que han quedat a la meva obra, que reflecteixen a on he posat més de mi mateix..

Jo he tingut dues coses a la vida que se m'han sortit de la normalitat: he tingut una filla deficient i un gran soci.

La filla deficient, que quan va néixer va ser un trastorn terrible, perquè la por que t'agafa... no t'ho penses això, sembla que t'hagi tocat una maledicció. Bé, aquesta persona va ser la benedicció de la meva vida, va ser una persona que em va ensenyar el que era l'amor. Era un persona que no tenia cap més eina per funcionar en societat que l'afecte, que l'amor, que el carinyo. No tenia cap més eina. Per tant es el que més s'assembla a allò que abans en dèiem un àngel. Vaig viure trenta anys amb aquesta persona fins que va morir. Trenta anys amb un àngel, per dir-ho ràpid, et donen molta informació, et donen una cosa amb la que no hi comptaves i que la gent habitualment no té. Jo crec que això va ser un do impensat.

L'altra cosa extraordinària va ser el soci. Pel que jo sé un soci no és això tampoc, no és una persona que acabi sent l'amic més íntim que tens i la persona que fora de la teva família està mes a prop, i molt més a prop que moltes de la família. Això ha estat l'altre regal impensat... La resta, i en tinc més, ja són pensats, són esperats, aquests dos són bastant inesperats. I aquesta relació continua, i ens morirem, suposo, amb aquesta relació.

Quan va morir la meva filla ja m'havia jubilat de l'escola, i aleshores vaig deixar el despatx. Vaig dir que jo ja havia... Bé, no cal entrar ara en detalls, però vaig deixar-ho tot. Aleshores el Carles va agafar el despatx. Va ser el moment en que van entrar també l'Àgata, que és la seva filla, i el Carles Gelpí, i hi havia també el Ramón Ferrando. Van fer una societat més grossa, i a mi, que ja era fora, no van voler retirar-me, i allí estic. Encara que no hi vagi ni hi faci res. Ara no faig res, absolutament. Només quan em criden perquè volen saber la opinió sobre alguna cosa, doncs vinc, però per exemple aquesta sala de reunions on estem ara, em sembla que és la segona vegada que la trepitjo. Però quan acabi amb tu ara, anirem a dinar plegats, com cada setmana. Continuem amb la relació de tota la vida. I per tant es una relació molt mes enllà de l'arquitectura, tot i que amb l'arquitectura sempre hem col·laborat d'alguna manera. I en els mals moments, que sempre se'n passen de mals moments, ser dos o ser un canvia molt les coses.

CO. I la teva relació amb l'arquitectura, com és avui?

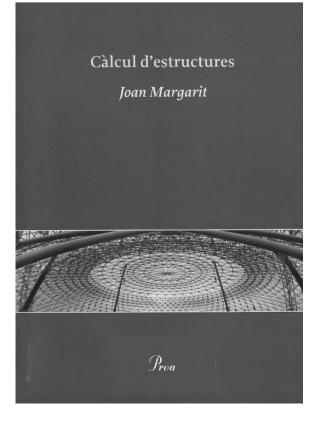
JM. Ha quedat reduït a l'essencial. Però de fet, quan et fas gran, tot queda reduït a l'essencial, tot. En tots els aspectes, des de l'artístic, fins el sentimental, fins el sexual i fins l'econòmic. Tot va quedant reduït a les coses essencials. No és fàcil fer-li un regal a una persona de 70 anys el dia del seu sant perquè no necessita res. No vols que et regalin res. I això passa amb l'arquitectura, és clar. Jo continuo la meva relació sentimental amb l'arquitectura. A l'arquitectura li dec molt després de la poesia, o tant com la poesia. Li dec que m'hagi donat vida i que m'hagi donat moltes coses. Aquesta relació continua sent sentimentalment impecable, però la resta ha desaparegut. Per tant, de tota la història social de l'arquitectura no hi participo en absolut. Tampoc tinc interès ja en visitar. Em passa com amb els llibres, igual que quan et fas gran rellegeixes els llibres que ja has llegit més que buscar-ne de nous, abans entres a Santa Maria del Mar que anar-te'n a veure un castell que et volen ensenyar a no se on. Quan vas a un recital a Valladolid, o a Segòvia o a Mèxic o a Estats Units sempre hi ha algú que et diu vostè és arquitecte, doncs li ensenyaré un edifici". No! Això es una cosa que ja s'ha acabat. De castells, cobert. D'esglésies cobert. Tot això, cobert ja. I Per tant ja només vaig als llocs que jo sé que vull anar. No es que no vulgui veure cap església, és que només vull veure Santa Maria del Mar, perquè no l'he esgotat encara. Això passa de la mateixa manera que tens deu poetes que continuaràs llegint, i això no és un menyspreu pels altres. És que aquesta essencialització és el procés normal de la vida, és que et passa amb tot. Amb la vida sentimental, és clar. La vida sentimental amb 90 anys no és un cosa fulgurant. Vas centrant-te en el més essencial, que és un dels consols també. No haver-te de preocupar d'un munt d'esglésies, i si no les has vist, mare meva! I si no has vist l'última obra de no sé qui... I precisament quan arribes a certa edat, hi ha un moment que dius prou, no necessito veure l'última obra de ningú. I això s'agraeix.

Visitas de obra

Durante tantos años he comenzado el día dentro del ordenado desorden de las obras. Frente a mi casa empiezan una. La contemplo a menudo, recuerdo amanecer en medio del estrépito del disco al cortar planchas de acero y el sonido ultrajante del martillo mecánico. Perforar y romper para construir: es esta música contemporánea de una destrucción justificada.

Después de la visita
buscaba un bar donde estar solo, a salvo
del ruido y a la vez dentro del ruido,
y con el ángel gris
de una estructura en los cristales.
El cielo de hormigón en los suburbios,
húmedo, siempre endureciéndose,
todo el hierro oxidado, laboral,
una ternura que oigo todavía
cuando graniza el tiempo
en los cristales de mi intimidad.
La vida se termina como empiezan las obras:
perforar y romper para construir.

Càlcul d'estructures, Edicions Proa, 2005 V



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ing, with grass on the roof, and the solar collectors. It is a three-storey house with a small tiny back yard. The main diagram shows the cross ventilation through the house and of course the protection of this courtyard from the sun between the auxiliary building and the main body of the house, and also the impact of the sun on the 45° solar collector on the roof. This gives you some idea of the intimacy of that initial courtyard and the living room that follows, and the tightness of the space.

The Nána House, by architect **José Miguel Esteban Matilla**, is a brick house with raked joints. The project is extremely beautiful in its proportions. It reminds me of early Mies's houses in brick in Germany. There is also something about this house that relates to the ways of the rationalist works of the Madrid architect Alejandro de la Sota. Against the rhythm of the horizontal joints there are beautiful metal horizontal louvers that slide over the windows, and they have a very similar sympathetic rhythm in relation to the brick. The house has a kind of three dimensional sculpture forms. The car is brought inside the house as a poetic gesture. There is not a garage cut off from the house, as a kind of unpleasant zone. The idea is the car comes into the house almost like a domestic object, as if it were a perambulator.

The Barrio de San Juan in Zuera, Zaragoza, by **Héctor Fernandez Elorza** combines in one continuous land-scape piece a cemetery, a park and a square. The quality of the drawing is fascinating, the atmosphere I think that the drawings evokes, in relation to the shade planting, in relation to the retaining walls of the park space, that lead eventually to the cemetery. I am really enclosing it for the quality of the hand drawings, and the sensitivity that the drawing represent.

The General services building for the Ertaintza, Erandio, by architect Iñaki Garai Zabala, is an incredibly sophisticated piece. The facade is permeable; it is in fact a wood screen facade in front of a building with glazing. The wood screen provides sun protection but also formally unifies the building. The level of detailing in this building is just, in my opinion, breathtaking. The competence, and the quality of the articulation, I find it is astonishing. The placement of the building in the landscape, in a rather complex configured site, it's something I want to stress much more: the incredible sensitivity of Spanish architects towards the landscape. The reason why Spanish, and particularly Catalan architects are sensitive to the landscape is that there is no profession of landscape architecture in Spain. Architects have always designed the landscape. There are gardeners of course, experts in plant material, but there are no landscape architects. I remember years and years ago, when there was a fashion for Catalan architects coming to Columbia to do a one year post graduate degree, that the portfolios were in many cases filled with projects which were landscapes, not buildings as we normally understand buildings.

In this sense it is also remarkable the Municipal cemetery in Santa Cecilia de Voltregá by Estudi GRV arquitectes. It is a kind of necropolis. Three volumes carry the deposits of the dead, plus an auxiliary building. The way the volumes are put into the landscape, against the surrounding contour is extremely sensitive. The same qualities are also found in the Pathway with swimming pool in Girona, by Hidalgo-Hartmann architects, a drive to the existing house with an added kind of promenade, like a sort of artificial escarpment that leads to the swimming pool, also designed by the architects. Again, it is very much a landscape operation but also the actual work itself is somewhere partly between sculpture, architecture and landscape. A plane, a twisted form, eventually embraces the swimming pool. And the swimming pool is like a sort of fountain. It constantly moves over the edge. The pool is not just sunk in the ground, it is suspended partly above the ground, and it becomes a sort of object in itself, related to the approach. You can either approach it over the grass, or from this sort of counter fold that leads you down to the garden.

The House with two courtyards in Sierra Norte, Sevilla, by architect Felipe Palomino González is a house that to some extent could be associated with a cave, or with introspective Islamic house tradition because there are no windows. There is a door, but the door is not so easy to find, as in the houses of Frank Lloyd Wright, you had to sort of circuit around the house to discover the door. This house also is a question of landscape and architecture. The house is inserted into the landscape; the house in fact adds a dimension to the landscape, and vice versa.

The last building, a football field and service building in Pontequeimadas, Toques, by **Sabin-Blanco** Arquitectos brings me to, again, a remarkable thing about Spain. This is a little service building for a football field. It is hard to think of another country that would spend this amount of care to commission this little service pavilion for a football field. It is an extremely delicate work constructed with elegance and delicacy both externally and internally.

Intro by **Jesús Donaire**, Exhibition Associate Curator Associate Professor of Architecture, ETSAM-UPM

Transcription by Marta López Gómez