

# Review of the book *La cultura arquitectónica en los años de la Transición*

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The idea for this book is part of the great cultural and bibliographical project that Professor Carlos Sambricio has undertaken over the last few decades through several initiatives. The project involves a rigorous collaborative mapping of twentieth-century Spanish architectural culture, addressing all its variables. Future generations of architectural historians—and inquisitive architects—will be grateful for the ambition and passion that this professor is imprinting into this enterprise that, beyond fashions and inclinations, is enriching and transforming the vision we have attained of the architecture of the period.

Salvador Guerrero, in his text for this book, which he dedicates to critical historians of architecture and urban planning, outlines some notes on its origins. Professor Sambricio's tireless work has also made a significant contribution to the training of a whole generation of architectural historians and critics—invaluable and evident for years in publications similar to the one we are discussing today. In Spain, Professor Sambricio's role will surely be publicly recognised only when he is gone. I would like to offer this modest review as a brief tribute to his colossal work and his teaching career.

The book we discuss today aims to move forward in time, extending the period of analysis to enter a luminous and hopeful moment: the so-called Spanish political transition, which was also social, cultural and of all kinds. The period was more confusing and, probably for this reason, less heroic than Franco's dictatorship, when everything seemed clearer. A time, the Transition, when the conquest of freedoms did not necessarily mean an increase in the quality of cultural and architectural proposals. A time of openness but also of turbulence in which the roadmap of culture and the city incorporated new programmes.

The texts included in the book are fragments of a turbulent history and can be grouped in different ways: according to chronology but also to geography, although some “*auteur*” chapters respond to research or personal experiences that go beyond the boundaries of these categories and, therefore, their ascription to these classifications would be merely circumstantial.

The book is a varied summation of texts that are both approximate and personal. In fact,

the study of some chapters—which could be termed preparatory—is explained in the image of that time of transition that was a process rather than an instant, the death of the dictator. Said chapters, still immersed in the previous period, were experimental trials—and, therefore, partial conquests of certain freedoms—analogue to others that took place beyond our borders. These chapters are disjointed but, nevertheless, outline a memory of search and longing, a shared vision of openness and departure from the previous political situation.

The study by Raúl Martínez and Diego Lopes on the “*Pequeños Congresos*” (small conferences) that took place between 1958 and 1968 can be included in the texts about preparatory episodes. Other chapters are in the very border of change, as the relevant text by Alejandro Valdivieso on the San Sebastian architecture weeks held in 1973, 1974 and 1976, which opens the focus of attention beyond Madrid and Barcelona.

Along the same lines, Victoriano Sainz details what happened in Seville after Aldo Rossi's visit to the city, Julio Garnica addresses the same influence but in the context of Catalonia, and Josep María Rovira with the role of Manfredo Tafuri in the same sphere.

Luis Rojo de Castro studies the construction of criticism in Madrid by approaching Capitel, Fernández Alba and Fullaondo. Jorge Torres examines their counterpoint in Barcelona, the omnipresent and all-embracing Oriol Bohigas, and the role of Manuel de Solà-Morales is commented by his disciple, Javier Monclús.

Finally, in this more territorial approach, the text by Carmen Díez Medina focuses on Rafael Moneo, whose trajectory intertwines the cultural panoramas of Madrid and Barcelona at the time. His connection with North America serves as a possible introduction to the article by Silvia Colmenares on the presence or, rather, the influence in our country of the “Five”.

In this brief review of the chapters of the book, Ricardo Sánchez Lampreave summarises the architectural journals of the period and Carolina B. García-Estévez focuses on two publications in Catalonia: *2C* and *Carrer de la Ciudad*.

Of particular interest is the attention paid to the discipline of urban planning—the XL scale of architecture—which is broadly discussed by Antonio Font, in the context of Catalonia by María Rubert de Ventós and Eulàlia Gómez-Escoda—through the *Urbanism Laboratory of Barcelona* of the Architecture School of Barcelona—and in Andalusia by José Seguí, with special attention to the 80s, prelude and preparation for the profound transformations brought about by Seville Expo '92.

Also in this field, the contributions of Ángel Martínez García-Posada—on the interpretation of architecture and the city—and that of Eduardo Prieto—who studies in depth the weight of semiotics in the

discipline of architecture in the tempestuous 70s—provide two approaches from dominant currents of thought that serve to describe the environmental density of the period.

This quick breakdown of the texts that make up the book ends with the contribution by Raúl Castellanos, who analyses the role of the schools of architecture in Madrid and Barcelona during the Transition, and Iñaki Ábalos, who writes an intrahistory—too brief in my opinion—of the Architecture School of Madrid from his role as a student.

Finally, dedicating the volume to María Teresa Muñoz is a thoughtful gesture worth mentioning. Linking her name to this period, in which she was a leading actress, is both right and an act of justice. Many generations of historians and architects recognise in her, through her *savoir-faire* and her work, many of the values that our time wants to recover.

Cheers, Maite.