

Reviews

Carlos L. Marcos, Ángel Allepuz
Pedreño (eds.)

Alberto Campo Baeza.
El bisturí en la línea

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El Bisturí en la línea was presented as part of the XVII Congress of Architectural Graphic Expression, celebrated in July 2018 at the University of Alicante. This book was introduced as a complement to the drawings and models exhibition of Alberto Campo Baeza, Professor at the School of Architecture of Madrid.

I had the great privilege of enjoying the magnificent conference prior to the presentation of the book and exhibition. The first words of Campo Baeza (p. 15) were dedicated to the “most beautiful work in the world”, a profession that the architect, born in Valladolid, defends passionately.

However, throughout his extensive work, that passion was always allied with rational research process on the elements that one day would materialize his projects.

For the Master, “the drawings are like a research”: his graphic tools seek architecture concepts with the precision of a scalpel (“Bisturí” in Spanish). Campo Baeza confirms it in the precious metaphor at the introduction of the book: “What is a drawing but the shadow of an idea after being illuminated by the light of knowledge?”.

The drawings presented in this publication are thus germs of projects, assuming themselves as “signs of the language of architecture”, according to the magnificent prologue by María Elia Gutiérrez-Mozo and Andrés Martínez-Medina (pp. 9-13).

These are mostly schematic drawings that, without seeking graphic virtuosity, manage to explore, fix, and communicate ideas. The editors Carlos L. Marcos and Ángel Allepuz Pedreño carefully organized these drawings in 10 chapters, where by each includes an interesting theoretical introduction that contextualizes the illustrations.

In addition, a suggestive ‘taxonomic table’ (pp. 42-43) is presented which, according to the editors, “allows the material to be exhibited to be grouped according to criteria”, inspired by similar works by Peter Eisenman and Alejandro Zaera Polo (Foreign Office Architects).

The sketches and diagrams of Baeza remind me, due to their synthetic expressive line, those of other masters such as Álvaro Siza Vieira or Oscar Niemeyer. They are, however, more pragmatic drawings than those done by the Portuguese architect (where horses or angels often coexist among project ideas). Obviously, they are less organic than the ones which Niemeyer used to do in his Copacabana office; naturally drawings are always a reflection of the work of each architect, or vice versa.

Other sketches in this book evoke the architect Peter Zumthor. His drawings are like powerful stains that generate gaps or negative spaces to generate living spaces. Although the Swiss architect normally uses materials that directly define the stain, re-

nouncing the outline, while the Spanish master rarely abdicates the line as the limit of the shadows, both seek, with these drawings, the 'stereotomy of architecture'. This concept is very clearly explained by Baeza in his text *From the cave to the hut* and the editors of this book also dedicate several pages to it.

Over the years Baeza produced thousands of drawings (the architect wrote that he had made 7,777, but we know that there are many more). Only a small sample is displayed in *El*

Bisturí en la línea where plans, axonometries, sections, and conical perspectives cohabit. These are mostly central perspectives (one vanishing point) and the vast majority from a 'human' view point, which makes us imagine the spaces that one day will eventually be transformed from 2 to 3 dimensions. I would like to highlight some hybrid representations like the perspective sections. In this type of representation, the American architect Paul Rudolph is always a reference, however, his most popular

drawings are always representational illustrations, while Baeza uses them to think: 'think with hands'.

Fernando Pessoa, paraphrasing the Roman general Pompey, wrote: "Navigating is necessary, living is not necessary". In *El Bisturí en la línea* we can preview the process of how Alberto Campo Baeza 'navigates' his ideas through drawings.

Surely this book, well laid out and treated with an exquisite methodological rigor, will be enjoyed by lovers of drawing and architecture.

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