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Thirty Years of Spanish Architecture

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by César Ortiz-Echagüe

It was around 1930 that the first buildings in Spain handled along modern lines appeared (a little sooner in Barcelona). The three years of civil war (1936-39) checked this trend abruptly and the ideological influence of Nazism and Fascism led artists—without any pressure being exerted—into a search for a "national" art, with the result in architecture that from that time onwards buildings were erected which were claimed to be derived from the principal work left in the country as a result of the domination of the Habsburgs: the Escorial. But after the end of the second world war several artists travelled abroad (especially in Switzerland, Scandinavia and the United States), at the same time as architectural publications coming from outside Spain were for the first time allowed in the country. The impressions caused, after so many years of isolation, were immensely stirring. Even a number of the older architects, aware of their mistakes, attempted to change step, but for them it was too late and it was left to the new generation (justifiably called "the orphans") to form the pioneers of the revival: Fisac, Coderch, Sainz de Oiza, de la Sota, etc., whereas foreign prizes (the Triennale, the Reynolds prize, for example) helped to win the esteem of public feeling.—Three comments of a general nature: (1) the extreme climate is an influence on architecture and town-planning; (2) the still semi-underdeveloped economy maintains the use of traditional methods and materials; (3) in general architects work in isolation although since a short time ago certain of them have been meeting at two annual assemblies.

Vegaviana

192

1954/58. Architect: José Luis Fernandez del Amo, Madrid

A building complex on a recently irrigated site comprising 400 blocks: 340 for farmers and 60 for workers. One church, one school with 7 classrooms, workers' centre, etc. There are six types of blocks, ranging from 1 to 6 storeys, the flats having from 3 to 5 bedrooms.

Villalba Calatrava

194

1955/59. Architect: José Luis Fernandez del Amo, Madrid

A hundred houses grouped in villages some way apart from one another, with 6 houses for workers, 1 church, 2 schools, etc. There are one- and two-storey houses.

Caño Roto

195

1957/59. Architects: José Luis Iñiguez de Onzoño, Antonio Vázquez de Castro, Madrid

This is one of the residential villages planned for the outskirts of Madrid. There are 1,660 dwellings in C. R. divided between one-family houses and 4-6-storey blocks of flats.

"Pallars" Workers' Housing-estate, Barcelona

198

1959. Architects: José Maria Martorell, Oriol Bohigas, Madrid

130 inexpensive homes for the workers in a metalware factory. Simple, traditional materials. Highly concentrated plan, with internal courtyard for ventilation.

Flats in Barcelona

200

1961. José Antonio Coderch, Manuel Valls, Barcelona

This is a block containing flats intended to be sold. The architects were limited in their scope owing to the building regulations for the area. 28 flats, 4 shops, garages. Oil-fired heating.

Children's Home at Miraflores de la Sierra

201

1958/59. Architects: José Antonio Corrales, Ramón Vázquez Molezún, Alejandro de la Sota, Madrid

The groundfloor was carried out by quarry workers, the upper floor (iron and wood) in Madrid. The pitched projecting roof has led to the children's assembly point being called "the broody hen".

School and Boarding-premises at Herrera del Pisuerga

204

1955. Architects: José Antonio Corrales, Ramón Vázquez Molezún, Madrid

Two sections: school (8 classrooms, each for 40 pupils) and the boarding-premises consisting of a block for 50 pupils and another offering accommodation for the teaching order. Acting as a junction between these two sections there is a large hall, which can be used a gymnasium, chapel and assembly hall. The boarders sleep in bedrooms for 8 in bunks set one upon the other. The construction is utterly simple and very inexpensive.

Building Complex on the Outskirts of Batán

207

1958. Architects: Francisco Javier Saenz de Oiza, José Luis Romany, Manuel Sierra, Barcelona

Out of 18,000 m² 17% has been built upon, 76% given over to green spaces, the rest being devoted to roads; 1,340 residents; four types of dwellings divided between high and low buildings.

Laboratory Building for the "SEAT" Car Factory, Barcelona

208

1958/60. Architects: César Ortiz-Echagüe, Rafael Echaide, Madrid; engineers: Adrián de la Joya, José and Constantino Laorden

These laboratories are used for the testing of materials. Three sections: mechanics, physics, chemistry.—Cost: 110 fr./m².

Faculty of Law at the University of Barcelona

210

1958. Architects: Guillermo Giraldez Dávila, Pedro López Iñigo, Javier Subias Fages, Barcelona

A complex modular arrangement where pains have been taken to stress the various functions: movement and rest, area for large amphitheatres, seminar area, prestige group (dean's offices, professors' rooms, great hall), library, chapel. This is a steel construction where the building material has deliberately been left visible.

"Vista alegre" Residential District at Zarauz

212

1959/60. Architects: Juan Mario Encio Cortazar, Luis Peña Ganchequi, San Sebastián

A town-planning complex on a beautifully wooded site covering 100,000 m². Multi-storey buildings, each containing 6 fine flats.

The Basque Sculptor, Eduardo Chillida

213

by María Netter

Although the large exhibition held in Berne in 1955 which presented Chillida for the first time in Switzerland was called "Homage to Gonzales", this expression of admiration for the inventor of sculpture in iron should not conceal the fact that Chillida's marks an autonomous return to the wrought-iron work of his native land and is therefore a modernization of the traditional. Three periods can be discerned: the solid cubes of his first work in stone (1948/49); the sculptures in iron projecting into space (1951-60); the wooden works, which no longer penetrate into space but, on the contrary, tend to enclose it (1960/61). In every case the beauty of the shapes goes in hand with a "workmanlike" handling of the material.

Antonio Tapies

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by Werner Schmalenbach

This is one of the most significant of present-day phenomena for we have here a form—a highly artistic one, let it be said—of what has been called anti-art (as we talk of the anti-novel), an art of nothing it could be called, which nevertheless has to exist if it is to designate nothingness, for the artist for whom the Nothing is the essence of all that is cannot evoke it except by employing something. The author of the present article writes: "Thanks to the process of simplification that has taken place in Tapies' art, in his works there often appears nothing but one large shape covering the whole surface which, although 'devoid of meaning', has the same effect as if it had a representational or even symbolic significance... The object quality of these abstract shapes is married to their magic... Tapies is a portraitist of shape, which for him provides the bulwarks for his magical realism..."