

Call for Papers

Architecture Symposium

April 13-14, 2012

New York University-King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center

New York

Spanish Architecture: History, Criticism, Practice, and Propaganda. (1950s-1990s)

During the last decades of the twentieth century and until the beginning of the current economic crisis, Spain became a place of pilgrimage for architects, students, and photographers from all over the world. Among the buildings they were interested in, frequently were some of the most outstanding and significant works of international architects belonging to the so-called 'stars system'. At the same time, Spain was also contributing to the international scenario exporting some of its most talented architects such as Rafael Moneo, Enric Miralles, Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Josep Lluís Mateo, or Alejandro Zaera-Polo just to name a few. After decades of ostracism, Spain was finally partaking in the international flows of architecture.

One of the main reasons that explains the capacity of the work of those architects to cross borders without apparent friction is that the kind of commissions were always the same ones around the globe, equally accepted by local administrations, state governments, and cultural benefactors: airports, communication towers, congress centers, parliaments, city halls, sports facilities, and above all, museums. During the second half of the 80s, while the end of history was proclaimed and the clash of civilizations was theorized, the different administrations, (in Spain and elsewhere), began the processes of re-institutionalize their own identities through the theatrical use of representation, providing in turn attractive images for media dissemination and mass-tourism. The more the public interest became subordinate to private revenues, the more hysterical and emptied of its original content the image of the institution appeared. Architecture was instrumental, as it was never before, to represent the new economic and political times. Hence, architecture's ultimate commercial success arrived hand-in-hand with its own disappearance: architecture's eagerness to become the scenario of human relationships—as it was the case during the *heroic* times of the artistic vanguards—, was finally achieved as the always-present background of post-industrial media. In other words, becoming overwhelmingly visible while at the same time fading away. This process of dissolution of architecture's essence in favor of media distribution had specific characteristics in the Spanish historical context since it coincided with the moment of integration of the country in the political, economic, and military European institutions.

The prolific amount of articles, books, catalogues, and guides devoted to Spanish architecture of the recent past was directly proportional to the almost absolute absence of critical ethos. The symposium is an opportunity to revisit the historical origins and indebtedness of the internationalization of Spanish architecture. Which ones were the possibilities of modern architecture in the autarchic period following the Spanish Civil War? How was architecture represented during the first moments of wealth after the arrival of mass-tourism during the 60s? Which one were the challenges that architecture faced between the end of Franco's dictatorship and the so-called *transición*? Which one was the role of journals and books during the second half of the century? How did they stage the relationship between architecture, its critical disciplinary content, and the political situation? How was learning and criticism interwoven with public political intervention in architecture schools during the 70s and 80s? How was the always-fragile relationship between architecture, history, and criticism unfolded? And, to conclude, can we describe recent Spanish architecture as a moment of climax or as a conscious mechanism of tabula rasa, oversight or deliberate manipulation of its own historical roots?

These among others are the topics that the symposium will address. Please submit a short abstract (250 words) for a 30 minutes presentation, together with a CV to spanisharchitecture.kjc.nyu@gmail.com by Friday, December 16, 2011. Participants will be notified no later than January 20, 2012. Final papers are expected by March 23, 2012.

Scientific Direction: Juan José Lahuerta, Spring 2012 King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center Chair in Spanish Culture.