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BARCELONA WORLD ARCHITECTURE CAPITAL… WHERE ARE WE GOING?

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Abstract. Barcelona was the world capital of architecture in 1996 and thirty years later it is again… the first city in the world to achieve this for the second time. This essay attempts to trace the path of these years, analyzing the legal, economic, demographic, social frameworks and environmental context to understand the changes and new trends that are emerging.

Keywords: Barcelona`s architecture; environment; context

INTRODUCTION

That Olympic Legacy

Barcelona, as a city, has progressed through events… From the 1888 and 1929 exhibitions, which marked the celebrations of Modernism and Noucentisme that left us as an inheritance, respectively, the interventions in the Parc de la Ciutadella and the redevelopment of Montjuïc mountain, to the 1992 Olympic Games and their comprehensive intervention in all the city…

From that period, the late eighties… the idea of moving "from Plan to Project" allowed for streamlining procedures, because urban development plans require initial approval, periods of public consultation, provisional approval, before reaching final approval… and that takes time (precisely what we didn't have before the Games). In other words, a whole series of projects were validated as if they were a kind of Royal Decree-Law that didn't need to go through Congress, thus shortening the timelines.

The policy of creating new squares and parks... Plaça de Sants, also known as Plaça dels Països Catalans (1), which sparked the debate about *hardscaped squares*; the parks of Espanya Industrial, Parc del Clot (2), Parc de la Pegaso, La Sagrera (3) or Parc del Nord (4); the various squares in the Gràcia district; and the renovation of Plaça Reial (5), where Oriol Bohigas, the mastermind and driving force behind this new Barcelona, went to live, just as many architects from 1950s Spain ended up living in the housing estates (the *Poblados Dirigidos*) they themselves designed, as a sign of commitment.

But the greatest legacy, beyond the facilities and countless trendy bars, was the four Olympic Areas (Olympic Village, Montjuïc (6), Vall d'Hebron, and the University Area), strategically located so far apart that we ended up needing the ring road to connect them—more than 40 km encircling the city, a prime example of urban integration (in my opinion, one of the best legacies of the 1992 Olympics). Back in the 1980s, the City Council explained it as a comb providing access to all neighborhoods, rather than a knife slicing through the city, dividing it into an inside and an outside. Because that's what it was. The following are some of the results of those areas:

…all the residential projects in the Olympic Village (some magnificent, like those by Esteva Bonell and Quico Rius, Elías Torres and Martinez Lapeña, or the Viaplana and Piñón housing complex (7)) …

…the renovation of the Olympic stadium and the entire complex of facilities… the Sant Jordi Pavilion, the Picornell swimming pools, the Santiago Calatrava´s communications tower, which was awarded to him because the important one, the Tibidabo tower, was commissioned to Norman Foster…

…the Carles Ferrater housing complex, the Eduard Bru urban development, the Garcés and Soria pelota pavilion, or the (double) archery facilities by Miralles-Pinos in Vall d'Hebron (8) …and in the university area, the rest of the facilities, including the Rey Juan Carlos Hotel and the Congress Palace, also designed by Ferrater…

One thing Barcelona did well (among many) was to involve other Catalan towns as sub-venues for different events (hockey in Terrassa, canoeing in Castelldefels, whitewater rafting in the Pyrenees), thus spreading the Olympic momentum throughout the Catalan country.

THE VARIOUS FRAMEWORKS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: FROM YESTERDAY TO TODAY… AN EXERCISE IN FORESIGHT

Legal Framework

In Barcelona, we have a triple legal framework: local, regional and national. And there are guidelines from Europe that also affect us. And they aren't always more restrictive than others, so one must apply them all… But, given the current state of the law and its interpretation, this creates a certain legal uncertainty. Aside from the fact that the legal texts are cumbersome, they refer to other articles, and for those of us who aren't well-versed in them, it's difficult to navigate such turbulent waters. And just when you've learned them, they've already been changed… There are rules, regulations, provisions, and internal criteria that you often don't even know… You think you know, however, that the only important thing is that the city we leave behind, that the buildings we construct are better than what came before, but that clashes with certain practices by people who, with a constant "no" on their lips, believe they are doing their job better. A good friend of mine, a municipal

architect, once told me that "by saying no, you can never go wrong." It's true that many cases end up in court these days (another consequence of the saying, "when America catches a cold, Europe sneezes"), and the civil servant, the architects employed in the Administration fears being accused of collusion, that isn't the case. Excessive regulations are bad for everyone. Including them.

But the truth is, it's not normal that we spend far more time processing permits than carrying out the project and the construction work (that's the first complaint from architects at every meeting we attend). And this sometimes reaches inexplicable extremes… to the point where we get tired, but above all, to the point where clients get tired and, in many cases, decide to abandon projects once they've obtained the permit, because the initial conditions have changed through the years… an unforeseen illness, a personal change, prices rising because one country decides to invade another and shipping containers from China have tripled in price… You might ask, "What does that have to do with us?" But of course, it does… to the point that projects that were supposed to start never do, and all the work done has been for nothing… It's happened to all of us more than once… Some compare our era to the decline of classical Greece… And, certainly, there are parallels with Hellenism period and its Byzantine debates… Which leads to a paralysis that's difficult to explain.

When I finished my degree, back in '85, a 10-page thesis, a preliminary budget broken down by chapter, and 10 plans were enough to get a permit… Today, the latest Technical Suitability Report (IIT, in Spanish *Informe de Idoneidad Técnica*) for the renovation of a modernist building in Barcelona was 1,440 pages long… and Barcelona sets the standard for the rest of the city councils in Catalonia. In other municipalities, after asking us for hundreds of documents, they've ended up telling me to bring them a plan with *red and yellow lines* (like those of us in the sector know the New Construction -red- and Demolition plan -yellow-) and, if possible, on paper so they could take measurements, because it´s difficult for them to do so with the PDFs sent electronically. Honestly, I don't think we've improved at all. You're always afraid of breaking some rule, and as a good friend of mine, a building surveyor, says… "we're all on probation." I think about young people who haven't known anything else. They struggle too, only they think there are no other ways of doing things. But those of us of a certain age are here to remember… It's the dilemma of whether it's better to be blind from birth or to become blind over the course of your life… I see it clearly.

Economic Context

… "A mi trabajo acudo, con mi dinero pago"

("I go to my work, I pay with my own money,"), wrote Antonio Machado…

The Colleges of Architects were the envy of our European colleagues… an organization that protected you, because, before, all the permits had to go through the College… But, with the abolition of minimum membership fees (now it's even

illegal to suggest reference fees, there are court rulings on the matter) … within the free market, everyone can offer services at whatever price they want (or whatever the market allows). Because there are more and more of us, and when it comes to an open bar, some (clients, I mean) drink more than they should. Because fees are fixed by contract, but all the extra work you can't even imagine before starting isn't. And they ask you much more work for less money. And we, as architects, we tend to give it up, because, above all else, is *our work*… Our work? That's how we were raised. To give a pig in a poke I've always said that, in terms of VAT, architects aren't the tax, but the added value… because without architects, you're left without architecture…

And that's how those who legislate don't do their jobs… and when they do, they break the rules they impose because they recognize that, with them, you can't work… The result? The precariousness of the profession… We work more and more, and projects leave less and less economic margin, because if they ask for many more things (useless, most of the time), you inevitably reduce your profit margin… Spending time dealing with paperwork shapes the brain… and, inevitably, one must nourish oneself with other things, so as not to lose an active, curious attitude towards life (curiosity and work are the beginning of everything).

Demographic Context: The Entry of Women into the Labor Market

I remember when we were students in the 70s and 80s, classes were almost exclusively male, while today more than half of the students are women… often the best… percentages that, in Master's and Postgraduate programs, among international students, can reach around 90%. Is this because men start working earlier? Is it because women are more restless? More curious? … I won't go into analysis… the fact is, it's true…

Technological Framework

Those of us who studied in the 70s and 80s drew with technical pens… In the 90s, the crisis that followed the Olympics gave offices the opportunity to computerize… CAD should have been the panacea, but since then, the rules of the game change every 20 years… because then came BIM (essential if you want to work for government agencies)… and now, with Artificial Intelligence (AI, depending on whether you pronounce the acronym in Spanish or English), a true revolution is coming…

Friends dictate *prompts* and the program does the measurements for them, clients send you 3D models they want improved, which took them two minutes to generate… how are they going to value our work? And I think, what's left for us? But at an age when you've witnessed so many changes while the essence of architecture remains, you already know that all this will only bring more work (because we'll be asked to do more) and more difficulty for young architects who, in addition to being expected to be good architects, are also required to master languages and every technology imaginable. It's the what and the how… And it's bad when *the how* ends up overshadowing *the what.*

At my grandparents' house, they had a pantry that opened onto an interior courtyard for storing food and a coal-fired stove… but in the 1960s, after the boom that followed World War II, it seemed that household appliances were going to solve all our domestic chores and give housewives (today there are also husbands, but back then, they were primarily housewives) time to cultivate themselves, read, listen to music, and go to the movies. It's no surprise to anyone that the current reality is far from what was promised, which has not been the case.

Educational Framework: The Teaching of Architecture

We have been educated by comparison ("look at what Le Corbusier did, look at Mies van der Rohe, or that detail by Alvar Alalto…"). We have been educated to be "a big fish in a small pond rather than a small fish in a big pond"… and having a natural talent, being able to draw well, has been valued… and while this has produced a remarkable level of Catalan architecture (in France, where I have worked for years, they value being a Catalan architect, as if being Brazilian were a footballer—you are automatically considered good simply by being Brazilian, like a soldier's supposed bravery), it also causes some egos to multiply, because work ceases to be a service to others and becomes a projection of ourselves… Thus, there are some colleagues who, when you hear them speak, sound as if they have invented garlic soup or killed the Dead Sea. You are educated to be dinosaur hunters, when dinosaurs have been extinct for centuries… to design… and today, 80% of graduates will have to choose other paths. Career opportunities… which many will see as an undervaluation of their abilities, often leading to a high degree of frustration. But it is true that the general education we receive, among the best in the world, prepares us for many other things, including being managers and conductors of a wide variety of orchestras.

In the USA, where I taught at several universities in the 1990s, I realized the loss of power that was coming our way… because there, 90% of buildings were constructed without an architect… and because none of my students ever imagined they would one day work as architects.

Los Monchos (Cruz and Ortiz) came one day to explain a social housing competition project they had won in the Netherlands, as part of a conference organized at the Barcelona´s Mies van der Rohe Pavilion… The floor plans had already been defined by the public developer, the interior design of the apartments wasn't part of the commission, the building volume was determined by regulations, and they had hired other local specialists for the landscaping. So, they said their intervention was limited to the 30 cm of the facades, and when asked, they didn't know if they had built 15,000 m2 or just that ribbon, the envelope with which buildings present themselves to the public. How the circumstances of the commission have changed since they built their homes on María Colón Street in Seville! … Perhaps, if that's the future that awaits us all, the best architect would be our friend Xavier Ferrés, a facade consultant.

The architect, as the ultimate person responsible for the entire process, is losing ground to Project Management.

Social Context (1): Gentrification

Barcelona, like Venice and some other cities around the world, has a problem with tourism… Because tourism is a source of wealth, we can also be a victim of our own success. The *boom* in *tourist apartments* means that those who own properties to rent prefer to rent them by the room or by the season to tourists rather than to local families who can pay

much less (especially with current salaries) … And that ends up driving their children, those born in the city, out of town. In fact, on the terraces of cafes and bars in certain neighborhoods, you don't just hear Catalan anymore… you don't hear Spanish at all… And that ends up distorting things. Some say that the market regulates itself… that if everyone wants to build hotels and there's an oversupply, many will end up closing or being converted, and that's true. But that's the job of the administration… to give it a push to make it happen. And that ties in with the big problem today: the lack of housing.

Social Context (2): The Housing Problem

Because we were in a hurry, in the 1980s we decided that the designated plots (22) industrial land, with the addition of an @ symbol, would be transformed into non-polluting industries, offices, but never housing… and that's the problem with the 22@ designation… Because now, that @ symbol is a burden, preventing residential development. Because that's the goal of the current Catalan Government: to create 50,000 homes in 4 years, an objective that seems as ambitious as it is unfeasible… because that number can only be achieved by industrializing processes and using prefabrication… and we lack the technology and skilled labor to build them. The senior architects' group, Senyor-a, chaired by Jaume Carner, has held a very interesting series of lectures called "A Room with a View," offering possible solutions and inviting all stakeholders in the sector to participate… architects, urban planners, developers, government agencies of all kinds, etc.

The previous "Comuns" government implemented one of its flagship measures: allocating 30% of social housing in every housing project. The result, in eight years, was barely fifty apartments, demonstrating the opposite of the intended effect… because developers stopped building homes as soon as the numbers didn't add up. And so, to correct this, in the 22@ district, they along with the 2.2 m^2t/m^2s requirement, an additional square meter would be permitted for social housing. Just one anecdote: a client of the firm, seeing that the sector is already saturated with co-working spaces, proposed building all housing, and the municipal response was negative, arguing that it would pervert the spirit of the 22@ district (despite the housing shortage!). The regulations have tied our hands.

Large tracts of land are located outside urban centers, and thus the housing problem is intrinsically linked to another key issue: transportation, traffic flow…

how can you build 500, 1000, or 2000 homes, entire neighborhoods, if they aren't connected to urban centers? Who was the genius who thought it was a good idea to put the Camp de Tarragona station where it was built? Now we're working on a project of 300 co-living units in two 20-story towers in Vallès… because it seems less costly to convert from offices to co-living spaces (community facilities) than to residential use. I wonder if, in an emergency, a doctor who offers to treat a patient having a heart attack is asked to show their degree and certifications before acting. With the land beyond the Olympic Village ruled out, we are left with the Marina del Prat Vermell as a large land reserve where we can act (in fact, action is already being taken) ... And, of course, the towns of the former Metropolitan Area.

Social Context (3): The Concentration of Work in a Few Large Firms

There is a Europe of oil (which coincides with the Mediterranean countries) and another of butter… Catalonia produces excellent architecture and good professionals, but they don't know -or we don't know- how to collaborate with each other. This makes it very difficult to compete abroad (I don't like the word, but that's how we all understand each other) where large British and American corporations with more than 1,000 employees end up dominating the market. Similarly, local clients, especially investment groups, have more confidence in large firms… and thus some firms have grown exponentially. Even so, small studios with high-quality architectural work are still common. Likewise, Catalonia has a network of small manufacturers that still allows us to innovate. Furniture or lamp manufacturers call that "editing"… you go with your prototype and they can produce it for us… that and nothing else is what makes our design so highly regarded in the world (just look at the new DHUB store that we manage from the Jordi Capell Cooperative - under the direction of Marc Longaron – to see how rich our "local design" commitment is).

Environmental Framework

There is no Planet B. Sustainability is (and should be) not the driving force behind our actions, but certainly one of them… It's not a trend; it's something much more serious… Deaths from heat waves can be quantified… scientists talk about the melting of the polar ice caps (what else would *the guy with the carrot-blonde hair* want to seize Greenland about?), about how two more degrees and there will be no turning back, about how little progress has been made since Paris and the Rio summit, and how little progress will be made if major polluting countries, such as China and the United States, don't get their act together. But the greenwashing practiced by many companies also occurs among architecture firms that label their traditional architecture as sustainable, with hardly any evident changes, when the obvious thing is that a building is more sustainable the more hours it is used and the easier it is to change its use, without excessive additional cost. Today concrete is demonized and wood is praised… a few years ago, consuming wood meant deforesting the world… the same thing happened with the debate about whether diesel was polluting than gasoline. Today we talk about wood from controlled logging… But I maintain that there are no

good or bad materials, only materials used well or poorly, in an appropriate way or not, and that's where architects must play an essential role.

***Glocal* Framework**

I once read that economists were people who "spent six months predicting what would happen next year and another six explaining why it didn't." And that their job wasn't to make the economy work (which I suspect they also do) but to invent names (naming) that would encourage the system to function… Of course, I could say similar things about our profession as architects. Or do you really think that preferred mortgages would have been so successful if they had been called "mortgages for the dispossessed" or "junk mortgages," as they later became known? … Everyone wanted a preferred mortgage and look where it got us. The 2007 crisis with the collapse of Goldman Sachs was extremely hard on the sector… Because the problem isn't when prices rise, but when prices plummet, when deflation hits. Why did banks grant so many loans to people they knew, beforehand, wouldn't be able to repay them? This comes to mind because the local blends with the global, producing the *glocal*… In this global village that McLuhan predicted, everything is connected. Orwell's *Big Brother* is more present today than ever.

New ways of communicating: social networks

And speaking of connections… You make an online request, and they send you a "satisfaction survey" (supposedly to improve customer service). As if to improve service, the virtual operator's voiceover tells you that "this conversation may be recorded" … and minutes pass before someone helps you, while you accept the privacy policy… Privacy has never been so important, and we have never been more exposed. These mechanisms are used by government agencies. It seems that if you don't communicate what you do, you're dead, that you're not doing anything. But if a YouTuber (or influencer) is more successful than a thinker or a philosopher, it means the world is not going in the right direction (you can tell me tall tales… "I did it and you didn't" … those short, disjointed texts made up of loose phrases that are meant to be impactful can only generate lazy brains that cannot read a page straight through).

Have you noticed that on social media, even the most clueless person is a content creator?... How many new philosophers have emerged, sending us their daily dose of reflection (one can only imagine who writes them). Many businesses, you no longer know what they're selling, but they bombard you with profound reflections that they assume will open doors for them… Because I suppose their business must still be selling us something. Sometimes I think that if we each dedicated all that time to doing our jobs better, things would be very different.

CITY MODELS

Trends Street Calming

The American city forces you to take the car to go anywhere (Los Ángeles and Miami are prime examples). In contrast, the Mediterranean city makes the "Mix-

ité," as the French call it, its hallmark… a mix of uses, of people. It's the 15-minute city championed by the Spanish-born mayor of Paris, Ana Hidalgo. Limiting car use seems fundamental, limiting speed… to the point that sometimes one thinks that rather than regulating traffic, the aim is to eliminate it, like that person who "ended poverty… by killing the poor."

I used to think that the traffic removed from Consell de Cent St multiplied in Valencia St, but it seems that studies say no, that traffic has been reduced (many of us have gotten rid of our cars, or if we have them, we never use them). And it's clear that at 30 km/h the city is more humane: the historic city wasn't designed for cars. Salvador Rueda, as the ideologue, and the magnificent projects by Cierto Estudio are proof of this… The Superblocks project and the pedestrianization of various thoroughfares was the flagship project of the previous municipal government. It's certainly curious to learn that the original idea came from the Mayor's office in Trías, who, once removed from power due to accusations that proved false, became the idea's staunchest opponent after the others appropriated the project. That's often how it goes in politics.

Major Facilities

If Barcelona has ever been anything, it's a city of culture, of museums… Following the MNAC (9), the MACBA (10), the DHUB, and the historic Miró (11) and Tàpies Foundation Museums (12), now wants to add the Thyssen Museum, in its chosen location on Passeig de Gràcia-Gran Via. Its design has been met with considerable controversy, both for its formal appearance and because a significant portion of the space is intended for commercial activities, despite the former theater being designated as a public institution. We'll see how this story unfolds. Barcelona doesn't want to miss any more opportunities like the Hermitage Museum, which was supposed to be built at the mouth of the port. The MNAC also has significant expansion planned, along with new projects to revitalize the mountain, making it more accessible to the public.

Two of the flagship projects will be located in opposite corners of the city: the *three chimneys* will house the future Catalunya Media City (13), a project by Garcés, de Seta, and Bonet with Marvel Architects, and the Nou Clínic complex, planned for the other side of the city, straddling Barcelona, Hospitalet, and Esplugues, to become a true health sciences center, the result of an international competition. In that part of the city, the entrance from the Diagonal, high-rise residential buildings by BiR and GCA will become landmarks in the urban landscape, welcoming visitors.

And we mustn't forget the incredible story of the new Camp Nou (14) and the completion of the Sagrada Familia (15) especially on the centenary of Antoni Gaudí's death) , two of the city's major projects that have generated countless articles, with all kinds of admirers and detractors...

A MATTER OF NAMES

When asked to list trends, where we're headed, one is tempted to present a whole series of names, an alphabetical list without any commentary… But the public likes to be placed… like a taxidermist classifying butterflies (of course, butterflies don't seem to like being classified so much).

The public likes labels… So does the historian talk about cycles… And so, they cite the Modernist Barcelona of '88, the Noucentista of '29 (in which Mies van der Rohe's Pavilion (16) was like an alien, fallen from the sky), Olympic Barcelona… That's how we began this article. In fact, there are still architects active who led that urban transformation that put Barcelona back on the map… Above all, those who have managed to combine their experience with fresh new blood: Carles Ferrater with his children Borja and Lucía and his son-in-law at OAB (17), Jaume Bach with Eugeni and Anna, his wife (18), Ramon Sanabria with Lidia Planas or Jordi Garcés with Daria de Seta i Bonet, to name just a few… And so many others, many of whom are now in the AxA Association (Architects for Architecture) … Esteva Bonell (who won the Mies van der Rohe Award for the Joventut de Badalona stadium), Ramón Valls, Fran Fernandez or José Mª Gutiérrez, among others. To that generation of "our fathers" -who were our teachers- belong Enric Soria, Joan Pascual (who forms a tandem with Ramon Ausió), and Pepe Llinás, who still strikes me as an essential architect and who recently won the National Architecture Prize in Spain. A disciple of Coderch (a reference for all of us), the housing on Carrer del Carme, the Institute of Ophthalmology, and his Jaume Fuster Library (19) on Lesseps (in the Gràcia district) are just some of his most outstanding works.

Perhaps the large firms have understood, better than others, where our world is headed, flexing their muscles with major commissions and creating significant pieces in the contemporary city (from the numerous office buildings in the 22@ district by BiR or BCA to interventions like the Sagrera by the team of Fermín Vázquez and Anna Bassats of B720). They all go by corporate acronyms, but behind them are faces, architects, friends… BiR (Batlle i Roig), BCA (Blanch & Conca) (20), GCA (founded by Josep Juapere and Antoni Puig), L35 (with Luisa Badia and Tristán López-Chicheri at the helm), B720, MBM (Oriol Capdevila), A&B (Sergi Balaguer), TAC (Eduard Gascón)… as is also the case with engineering firms that employ many architects (notably JG, PGI, BIS, or DOPEC, among others). Opposite them are those who treat architecture as an almost artisanal profession, like Flores and Prats and their advocacy for hand-drawn designs. The other day, a colleague from my generation, with a firm of about thirty collaborators, told me he didn't know whether to expand or shed some baggage (we're all getting on in years) and keep a smaller structure… because he couldn't compete with the big firms in certain areas, and besides, the structure was consuming his profit margins.

There are architects who, while based here, work almost more abroad than here, such as Josep Lluis Mateo (21) (at one time) and today Benedeta Tagliabue across

the globe (France, Italy, and China) (22), Carme Pinós (Mexico, Australia), Josep Miàs (who combines professional practice with teaching and research at the AA in London), Archikubik (in France), Barozzi and Veiga (throughout Europe, from Switzerland to Poland), Ricardo Bofill's Architecture Workshop, now led by his children (with projects in the Maghreb and Asia)... or Mesura (who combine their local interventions, their house in Elche or their houses in the Empordà, with their museums in Saudi Arabia)... And, not for the sake of argument, here, all of them also have noteworthy work. There are those of us from here who go abroad, as there are so many architects from abroad who work here (from Herzog & de Meuron to Jean Nouvel, from Souto to Siza, from Chipperfield to Zaha Hadid), people who have even opened headquarters in Barcelona, like BIG (Bjarke Ingels who was a student of the ill-fated Enric Miralles) or the Belgian Patrick Genard who, from Bofill's Atelier, ended up setting up his own office in this, his home.

There are those who make a specific area of expertise their work (hospital design, perhaps the best-known branch, due to its specificity… with Manel Brullet, Albert de Pineda and Alfonso de Luna (23), Ramón Sanabria, Mario Corea, PMMT, CASA SOLO -Francesc and Roger Pernas and Bernat Gato- or Miquel Espinet, among others) or auditorium design, with Fabré & Dilmé, who already worked on the reconstruction of the Liceu opera house alongside Ignasi de Solà-Morales and the acoustics technician, Higini Arau… And then, there are more generalist architects, like internists doctors or broad-spectrum medications.

Then there are those of our generation, a lost generation, whose constant complaint is that our elders didn't give us space (of course, space must be earned). There are, with BAAS at the forefront (all their work is fantastic) (24), R+B (Roldán + Berengué) whose College of Economists, in the Gala Placidia square, seems to me one of the best buildings in Modern Barcelona (25), Pich i Associats, Forgas Arquitectes SLP (winners of a good number of competitions), Jorge Mañas (who combines design with management), Bailo and Rull, Baena and Casamor, now with their respective offices, each on their own, Juli Capella (who shares an office with Miquel García), BCA (authors of the renovations of the old El Corte Inglés on Francesc Macià or of the old Telefónica headquarters on Avenida Roma), Enric Massip (with his Telefónica Tower, at the end of the Diagonal) and so many others… I don't talk about our work, because "I haven't come here to talk about my book".

In January, we held a moving tribute at the COAC (Official College of Architects of Catalonia) to Manel Gausa, who passed away suddenly last summer. Besides being a great architect, he was an inventor of worlds, because he invented words and concepts to define them. A classmate, a fellow student at the ESARQ (School of Architecture) at the UIC (University of Catalonia), co-founder of the AJAC (Association of Young Architects of Catalonia) and the IAAC (Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia), photos from those times when we were so

young – almost immortal – have recently been circulating on social media. One of them includes the members of ACTAR Arquitectura: Manuel Gausa, Oleguer Gelpi, Ignasi Pérez Arnal, Florence Raveau, Aureli Santos, ADP Arquitectes i Ass, Manuel Bailo-Rosa Rull, Urban Area: Núria Llaverías-Mònica Farràn, Félix Arranz, BCQ Arquitectes: David Baena, Toni Casamor, Josep Maria Quera, Cloud 9: Enric Ruiz-Geli, Xavier Costa, Albert Daniel-Albert Ibánez, Rafael Díez, Eker & Schaap Landschaapsarchitectuur, Alberto Estévez, Toni Gironés, Vicente Guallart, Enric Massip (26), Pich-Aguilera Args (Felipe Pich-Aguilera and Teresa Batlle) (27), Maurici Pla, R+ B (José Miguel Roldán-Mercé Berengué), Vicente Sarrablo, TECNOS: Eva Jiménez-Xavier Llobet, Jaume Valor, Willy Müller + THB Consulting… generations have always been a unifying element. It's interesting to follow each of them and see what has become of them all 30 years later. In 1996, Barcelona was the World Capital of Architecture for the first time, and Manel Gausa, who passed away far too soon, attempted to predict a panorama of architectural families in an article in Quaderns entitled "The State of the Question".[1] 30 years later, we can certainly speak of a guaranteed generational shift.

There are those who belong to the Barcelona School and those of the Vallès School, each with their own voice and characteristics (perhaps the latter being more experimental, with HArquitectes (28) and DATAEE as major examples). We always talk about Barcelona, but in Olot we have our own Pritzker Prize winners, RCR (29), but also Un Parell d'Arquitectes or Xevi Bayona, with his always thought-provoking installations… And the same is true in other places… In Girona, for example, we have several generations, from Arcadi Pla, Fuses i Viader, to the younger ones, like Josep Bosch and Beth Capdeferro. Because Architecture is produced in many places.

There are those who share teaching and the drawing board (there are many of us) ... and those who have sought their own professional paths in other fields... In photography (Duccio Malagamba or Adrià Goula), in administration (it's essential to find good architects in all decision-making areas; it's a shame there aren't more in politics), in management... There are those dedicated to communication (Gaia Pellegrini at L35, Miriam Giordano at Laboh, Miguel Ángel Aguiló at Slowkind) ... There are those dedicated to publishing (Félix Arranz and his SCALAE newsletters, which he defines as "cultural activism" – and it is – Ethel Barahona with her motto "books are louder than bombs," Jordi Badia with his blog HIC, or our magazine, www.t18magazine.com[2], which the Brooklyn Rail Track in NYC included years ago among the best digital architecture magazines of the 21st century).

Young, but equally brilliant, are bxd (Francesc Buixeda), as precise as they are elegant (30); Carles Enrich, with delightful interventions in historical contexts – the Torre de Merola, for example, is fantastic; Meritxell Inaraja; Josep Farrando (also with magnificent work built between Catalonia and Latin America); Twobo; Circular Studio (Fernando Ansorena and Ivan Serano), authors of the brand-new

LCI headquarters in the 22@ district (31); CC245 (Sergi Blanch and Sandra Rodá); Elástiko (with its co-working spaces); Isern i Associats, with magnificent hotels; the members of Cierto Estudio and their urban interventions; MIM-A (Mariona Benedito and Martí Sanz); MAIO (composed of Anna Puigjaner, Maria Charneco, Alfredo Lérida, and Guillermo Lopez) and their interventions in buildings in the Eixample district, understood as matrices; Arquitectura G (Jonathan Arnabat, Jordi Ayala-Bril, Aitor Fuentes, and Igor Urdampilleta), Arquitecturia (Josep Camps and Olga Felip), Lagula (Toni Alonso, Martín Ezquerro, Ignacio Lopez, Manel Morante and Marc Zaballa), Jaume Prous, and the team of Juan Trias de Bes and Marta Pascual (with magnificent heritage restorations, such as Casa Burés- 32-). We have selected single-family homes from several of them for issue t18 of the magazine, which we titled "Proximity Dwellings."

And then there are interior designers who, in many cases, outshine us in terms of interior design and materials, such as the ever-elegant Francesc Rifé, Isabel López Vilalta, Vilablanch, Denise & von Arendt, Ignasi Bonjoch, Tomás López Amat, Adela Cabré, El Equipo Creativo (with its many and varied restaurants), The Room Studio, and so many others… And, to change scale, those who make the landscape their battleground… not only the aforementioned Cierto Estudio, but also Batlle i Roig, pioneers since the 1980s, Inma Jansana, Conchita de la Villa, Michele y Miquel (how poetic The Dark Line is in Sandiaoling -Taiwan-!), or the TER agency, which, together with landscape architect Ana Coello, designed Plaça de les Glòries, the true nerve center of the new Barcelona.

Since people like to talk about generations these days, in the wake of the economic and energy crisis, a group emerged to which the DHUB dedicated an exhibition entitled "The New Realists" (among whom there are good and better ones). Produced by Disseny Hub Barcelona and curated by Carme Ribas and Joan Roig, the exhibition focused on some thirty Catalan and Balearic architects who, aware of the social and professional shift brought about by the 2008 crisis, have questioned the parameters within which they had worked until then. A commitment to sustainability, new models of energy and resource management, co-production, and the use of natural and artisanal materials characterize the work of this new generation of architects. Their approach has strengthened as the climate emergency has become more evident; these "new realists" challenge the parameters that had previously prevailed. Concepts such as sustainability and environmental impact are fundamental to understanding the working methods of this new generation. Their projects incorporate new models of energy and resource management. Regarding materials, natural elements such as stone, wood, and ceramics reappear, presented without coatings or superimposed treatments, and almost artisanal materials are revived. It redefines the relationship with the user, who takes on a more central role, almost generating a co-production. All of this defines a proposal that strengthens as the climate emergency becomes more evident" (I quote from the catalog).

Among these 'new realists' are names such as Harquitectes, TEd'A, La Col (33), Bosch-Capdeferro, Peris+Toral, Albert Faus, Un parell d'arquitectes, Josep Bunyesc, Ciclica, Martí Franch, Aulets, Carles Oliver, Dataae, Carles Enrich, Nua, Arquitectura G, Flexo, Comas-Pont, David Sebastian, Gerard Puig, Ágora, Cierto Estudio (34), MAIO, Núria Salvadó, Aixopluc, Arnau Estudi d'Arquitectura, Societat Orgànica, and Architectural Agonism Casa OE, 08014 estudi, Dawoffice, Michele&Miquel, and Vora. They all have in common that they studied in Barcelona and the Vallès region, even though they later develop their work throughout Catalonia and the Balearic Islands

They all champion Arte Povera and the exposed materials as a metaphor for honesty… However, those of us who have had the opportunity to build extensively throughout our careers don't quite believe that leaving the installations visible is cheaper than plastering and installing a false ceiling. Are they fashionable and therefore destined to go out of fashion? … Is it a style? … Does it reflect the Zeitgeist, the spirit of our time? I don't know… But we must acknowledge their collective response and the fact that they have carved out a niche for themselves, always difficult in this highly

competitive world (today, being an architect is much harder than when my generation started out). Except for fully established firms like P+T (35) or Harquitectes (both magnificent), they will have to contend with larger-scale projects (because "size matters," even though one can be a great architect with smaller works) ... It's worth highlighting the importance of the Administration in all of them, especially the initiatives of IBAVI (the Balearic Housing Institute), which has promoted a whole series of exemplary programs... I maintain that the collective's approach, without a certain convincing formal result, would not succeed, because architecture involves not only the "what" but also the "how" (as we have already said). And fame is like a shadow (I once wrote): sometimes it's ahead of us, sometimes behind us; sometimes it's longer than ours... other times it's shorter. Time will tell.

Peris and Toral (P+T) have won every possible award with their housing in Cornellà (a project where the dwellings are conceptualized from an undifferentiated matrix, based on the modulation of Japanese tatami mats, allowing each user to create their own home within the home), while Harquitectes and their headquarters for the Prodis Foundation, in the Vapor Cortés building (Terrassa), is a finalist this year for the Mies van der Rohe Awards (four Catalan works were among the 40 selected across Europe, along with the Green House, also by P+T, the Casa 10K by TAKK, and the intervention in the Plaza Mayor of Olot by Un parell d'Arquitectes), which speaks to the health of our architecture.

There are many names, yes… And there are all those I've left out and could list (let no one see this as ill intent, but rather due to space constraints) … or the writer bad memory.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

Catalan architecture is possibly one of the most vibrant and attractive examples of architecture being developed in Europe, that is, in the world. Its future and continuity are guaranteed. Barcelona´s architecture moves from Modernist architecture (36) to the Modernity of Jean Nouvel & B720 (37)

NOTES

1. In 1995, the journal Quaderns from the Colegio de Arquitectos de Catalunya (Catalan Architects Association),under the direction of Manuel Gausa, published a triptych (207-208-209) on 50 years of Catalan architecture(1944 – 1994). This analysis aims to be an update, 30 years later.

2. Together with Xavier Alba, I direct a digital architecture magazine, the t18, which the Brooklyn Rail Track of NYCconsiders one of the best digital architecture magazines of the 21st century. Since then, we have reached 34,000 entries by issue and have subscribers in 110 countries.

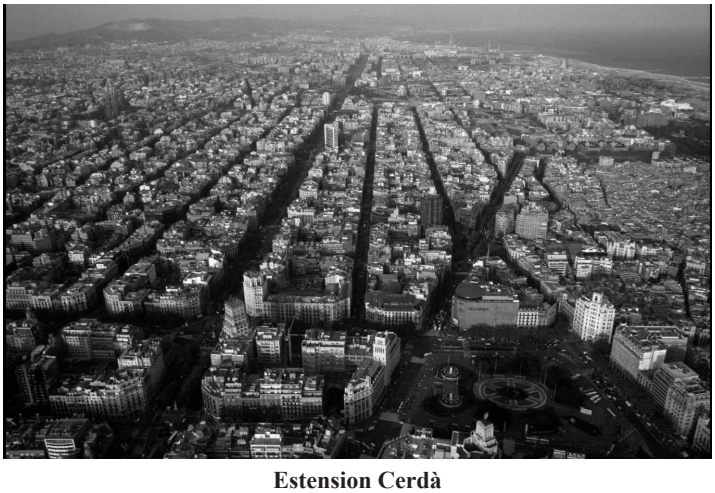
Acknowledgement

I thank Felix Arranz and Alberto Estevez for inviting me to write this article for RACO PANORAMA DE TENDÈNCIES Nº3 / magazine, which I myself translated into English and reworked for this publication.

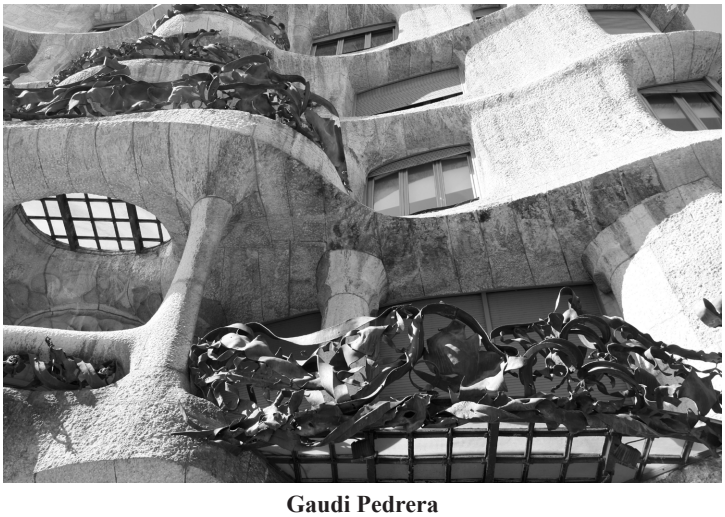
I also thank Boyko Kadinov for suggesting I contribute to this publication in Bulgaria.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



Estension Cerdà



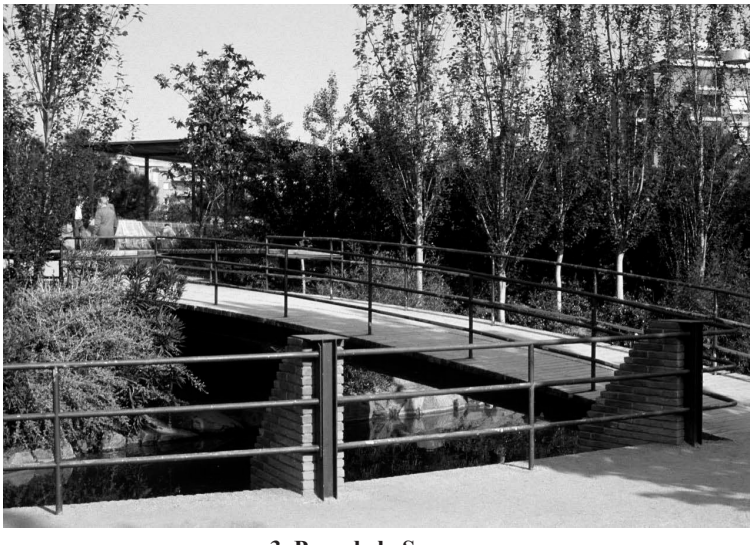
Gaudi Pedrera



1. PL Paisos Catalans



2. Parc del Clot



3. Parc de la Sgreara



4. Parc del Nord



5. Plaza Real



6. Montjuic



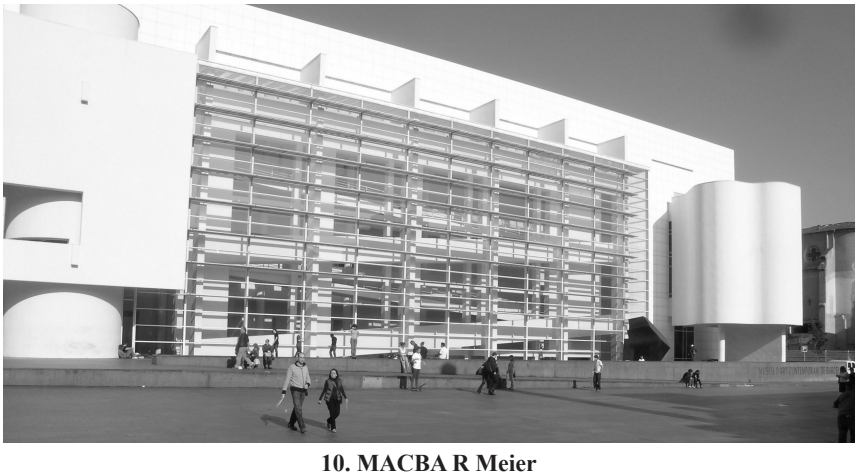
7. Villa Olimpica Viapalna-Piñón



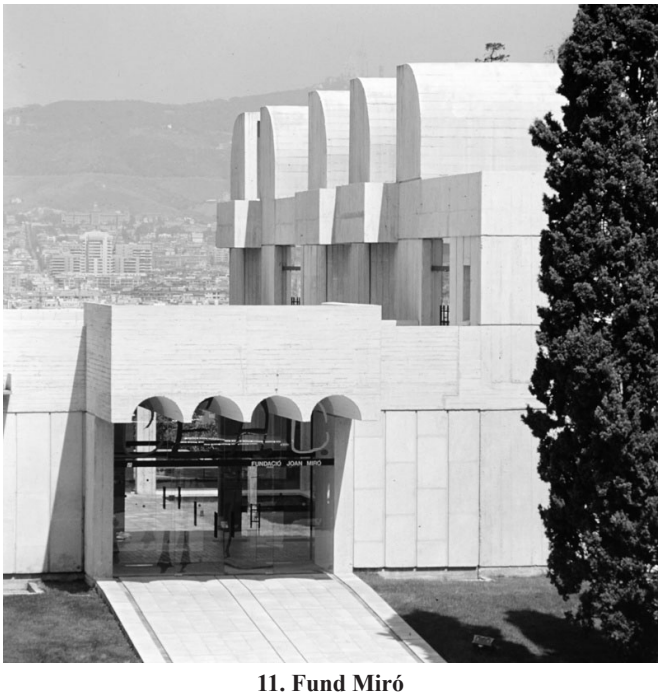
8. Tiro con Arco y pab pelota



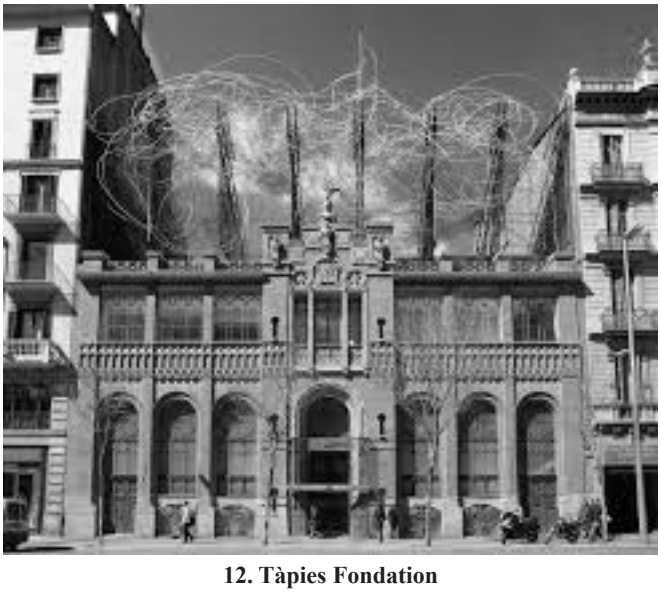
9. MNAC



10. MACBA R Meier



11. Fund Miró



12. Tàpies Fondation



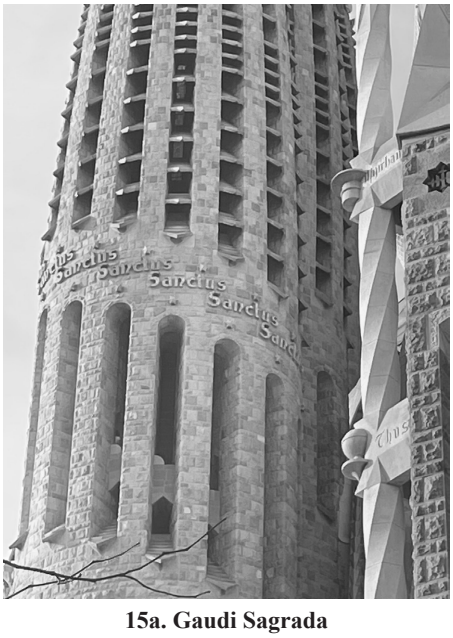
13. 3 Xemeneies GdSB



14. New FC Barcelona Stadium



15. Gaudi Sagrada



15a. Gaudi Sagrada



16. Mies Pavilion 1929



17. Roca Gallery OAB (C Ferraeter)



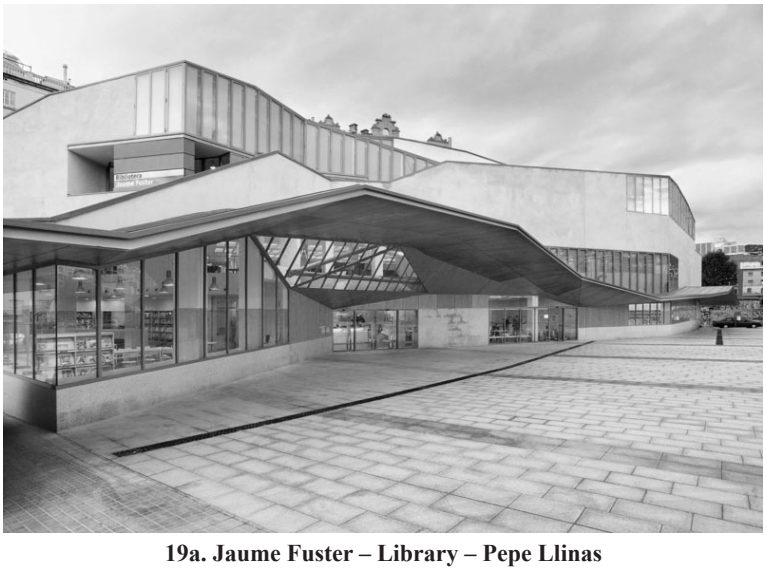
18. Bach-Dwelling in the extension



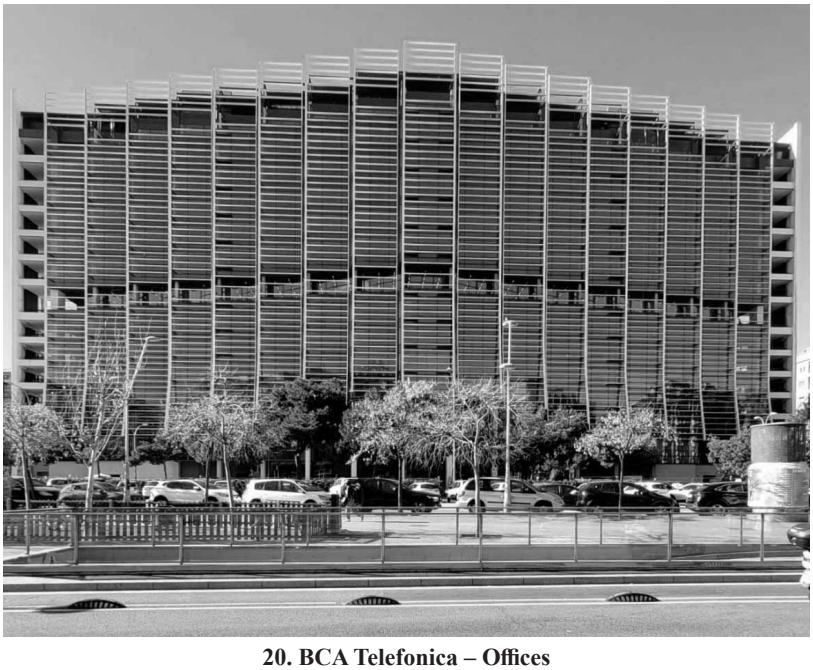
18a. Bach-Dwelling in the extension



19. Jaume Fuster – Library – Pepe Llinas



19a. Jaume Fuster – Library – Pepe Llinas



20. BCA Telefonica – Offices



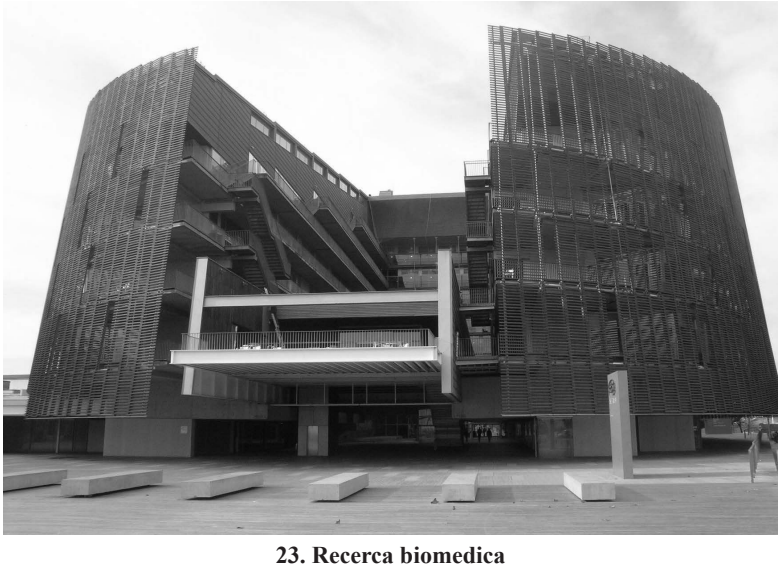
21. J L Mateo Filmoteca



22. Catalana de gas EMBT



22´ EMBT Sta Catearina



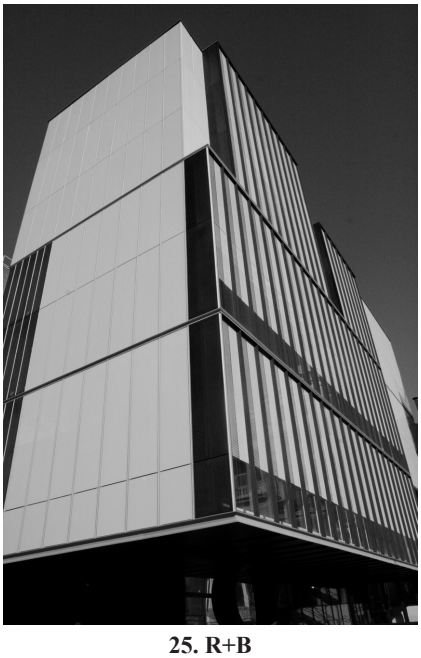
23. Recerca biomedica



24. BAAS



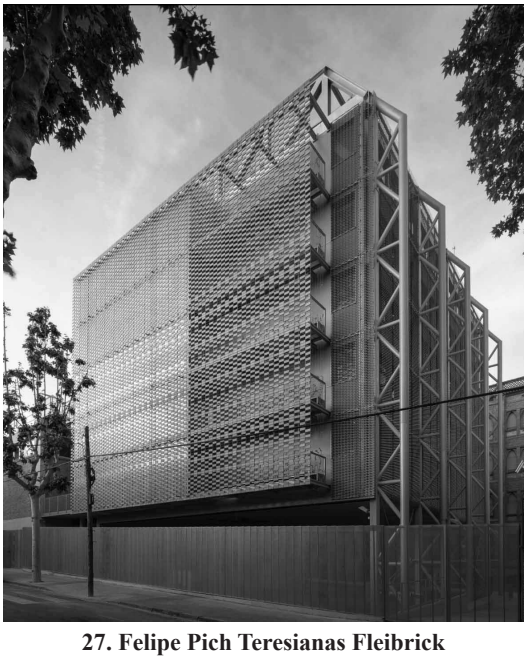
24´ BAAS OLiva Artes staircase



25. R+B



26. Telefónica. Enric Masip



27. Felipe Pich Teresianas Fleibrick



28. Harq Prodis Fondation in Terrassa



29. RCR Biblioteca



30. BxD frente Sda Familia



31. LCI-BCN-1



32. JTdB Casa-Bures



33. La Col. Social Housing



34. Cierto Estudi Housing project in Glories Sq



35. P+T (2)



35´ P+T



36. Palau



37. Torre Agbar