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THE MASTER ROAD OF ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract. In architecture, today more than ever, everyone is called upon to bring “vision – courage – determination”: elements that, when combined and developed, and obviously added to functional use, can change the course of history and of places. From a project, a space takes shape dedicated to welcome, to hope, to life, to optimism. So then there is still room for feelings, for spirituality, while everything else in the building is nothing. At the center is “the human being”: the aim is to improve people’s lives, making them feel unique and irreplaceable, within a natural and dedicated setting. Human dignity in everyday life and, in particular, in pain, is the greatest reward for an architect. The aim is to go beyond beauty, which, while it “must exist,” should become synonymous with wellbeing. Those who live must be able to marvel, to be amazed at how the rest of the world takes care of them.

Keywords: The oath of Vitruvius and the architects

A meaning

After a lifetime dedicated to the profession of architect, it has happened to me, more and more often, to wonder what the meaning of this profession might be, what its usefulness was, and, if it truly existed, how to manage to convey it to people: ordinary people, those gripped by everyday problems, by making ends meet in life, in health, and in responsibilities.

My greatest frustration is hearing, when on a plane or in a public place, the question: “Is there a doctor on board?” And so emerges “the sense of the uselessness of what we do.”

The same years of study, the same commitment to staying informed, current, up to date, forward-thinking; the same sacrifices, the same languages studied and spoken, but, in this case, **the most important thing**, useless.

From here arises the attempt, the absolute effort, to want to exist as a “recognised profession, useful to everyone,” in everyday life, in everything that surrounds us, in everything we touch, made by man for man.

“The oath of Vitruvius for architects, like that of Hippocrates for doctors?”

At the beginning of the book “De Architectura,” Vitruvius outlines the figure of the good architect, who should “possess a literary education, be skilled in drawing, trained in geometry and rich in historical knowledge; have notions of philosophy and music, know something of medicine and law, but also of astronomy and astrology.”

In short, to have a concept of the human being in his entirety, of his physical and psychological needs, given that the building influences whoever lives in it and uses it, through the materials it is made of, the form that distinguishes it, the arrangement of the windows, the doors, and the systems that connect it with light, air, water, and space, according to the order one chooses to give it.

Concern for the effects of buildings on health has accompanied treatises since antiquity, but it has not been lacking in the contemporary era either. This has not, however, prevented the construction of “forced-rearing batteries” for human beings, as happens with hens, and this in every sector: from homes to workplaces, to public gathering places, but unfortunately also in places of care, **“the subject of our ambitious project”**.

I have learned, immodestly, to say, in order to defend and give “a meaning” to my work, that **“if medicine cures, architecture is prevention”**; and never has the aphorism been more fitting than in this case.

Architecture as music, harmony, emotional atmosphere, but also quality of the environment. Sound and matter can lower the frequency of the conditions that compromise the “STATE OF WELLBEING.”

These are considerations that cannot be separated from our being architects. **In our projects we have infused, from the very beginning, a dream: “a place where one dreams of returning to live”**.

But for dreams to come true, one must wake up, and so here is the project.

We try to design places and spaces in which to give value to what individuals have in common, and not to their differences: a community of people that conveys, if not happiness, at least hope, serenity, but above all dignity and importance “to everyone” in daily life.

One must bear in mind that living together in the same space for many hours is already, in itself, complex, and that love for one’s neighbour, for a neighbour who is heterogeneous, numerous, and too close, undergoes a component of inhumanity that generates behaviours, also dictated by suffering, that are aggressive or in any case far from that aggregation necessary to live together, to care for and to convey humanity.

The ambition, very well expressed in our projects, is that there be **no boundaries between human being and the environment**, which, as mentioned several times, already represents a return to life.

In fact, I am in the habit of saying that “he who loves evil hates the light.”

Light, the primary source of “wellbeing”, is essential. To live well we must also involve those who are not easily moved, teaching them to love light, earth, nature, and everything extraordinary that surrounds us. From here arise buildings that are “always” transparent, which openly and without shame manifest goodness and joy.

The responsibility that must accompany us every time we draw a line on a blank sheet of paper, a mark that changes the state of things and of places, is love for people, because we can improve their lives.

“We must not save the world, we must improve people’s lives.”

Readability and orientation

Architecture is completed through colour and furnishing, drawing on the “Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca,” which, under the word “arredare” (to furnish), reports only: “To provide for what is necessary.”

Battisti adds that “arredamento” (furnishing) derives from the Gothic “Garedàn,” which means “to take care.”

From these terms we derive the “principle of necessity,” made contemporary through a language of our own made of forms, matter, technologies, and design, always keeping the human being at the center.

It seemed to us that the source capable of exerting, as Kandinsky said, **“through colour, a direct influence on the soul”**, was the semantic anthology of the **Bach Flower Remedies**, where each colour corresponds to a characterial, emotional, and/or therapeutic entity.

Natural and artificial light

We have already mentioned, in the lines above, the importance of natural and artificial light: the way they enter rooms, delicately or intensely, changes the perception of spaces and furnishings, depending on how they fall upon them, creating states of mind that invite rest or instil reassurance against evil.

The same applies to artificial light: in the twilight hours, when solitude and discouragement take over, light becomes a traveling companion of the mind and, once again, a moment of comfort.

To conclude this “emotional account of the project,” I would like to offer a quotation that for us represents the generating source of this thought:

“We will never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, we must build a new model that renders the existing reality obsolete. We must become the change we wish to see.”

(Mahatma Gandhi)

✉ **Arch. Dante O. Benini**