CBB. Papers #04

MATTER AT LANDSCAPE
HOUSE AND STUDIO FOR AN ARTIST. VILAFAMÉS

2015                                      ... Blanca Barcelona
Project Design IV [m]. 3rd year
ETSAB Barcelona School of Architecture
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View from Vilafamés. Picture by Luis Amorós
Since the industrial revolution, the growth of cities has completely transformed the way we live. Successive waves of people of different origins are still alive and have allowed the development of the system in exchange for a gradual abandonment of the territory.

This is accompanied by hypertrophy of the cities, especially in recent decades, a gradual abandonment of the rural world. This also occurs in the production side, leaving the countryside for the first time in centuries, not the rule of men.

Conversely, while gaining strength movements are going to demand the return to a life closer to nature and the origin of the human condition. We witness some phenomena in the opposite direction beyond the second residence or domestic tourism, postulate rural life as one of the aspirations of contemporary society. Nature not conceived as a balsam but as an emotion as Toyo Ito would claim.

Good transport links and the development of information technologies make this fact can be considered not as the result of a dreamed of escape but as a reality in scope.

SESAM VILAFAMÉS

These could be the conditions of the locality in which propose to work in the second semester of the third year of the project ETSAB. Vilafamés, a town of about 1,500 inhabitants located 28km inside the coast, reached in less than 30 minutes from the city of Castellón, is situated in a natural and strong personality environment. With a height that reaches 400 meters and protected from the sea by mountains, Vilafames has a preponderant view of the entire region of Alta Plana, dedicated to the cultivation of dry land with olive trees and vineyards, the ceramics industry, and crowned by the peak Penyagolosa, the highest in the Valencian Community.

The relationship between physiognomy and territory is very explicit, not only by the steep topography but also for the use of the material itself of the mountain, a kind of limestone called Rodeno -of which are Piedra Gorda his best exponent - often whitewashed but gives it a particular colour quality. Its streets are characterized more by the presence of abundant gardens and patios and overhangs the power of their roofs.

For what makes his story, his Muslim origin, is still preserved in the castle but also traces the area's highest village, where precisely place the work area of the course. The castle, the Gothic church La Sangre, or the baroque Church of the Assumption are witnesses of its long history, which also includes heroic episodes at the time of the Carlist wars.

The village is also chosen because its tradition with student workshops as the one that took place in 1992 organized by EASA (European Architecture Students Assembly), called SESAM Vilafames. A workshop that left very interesting proposals spread along different areas and that some of them are still at the city hall. Its collaborative spirit is meant to be extended to the work of the ETSAB students and professors.
MATTER AND INDUSTRY

Vilafamés is situated at the Centre of the main productive area for ceramic material in the country, and probably in Europe. Tradition comes from the proximity of material and the initiative of a rural society that at the second half of the XX century transformed some small industries and a powerful cluster. Onda and Alcora were the two first areas were this industrial tissue was developed. Soon a real ceramic road was linking both cities with Castellon and Vila-real with a near issue to the sea and transports to Europe.

Vilafames is then at the centre of this system. The vision given to the students is not only historical, artistic or just picturesque, but integrates this industrial side. In this sense, the visit to the site included a spectacular one to the most reputed companies, Porcelanosa and its robotized headquarters. The visit to the site ended up with the Vila-real library, one awarded application of the ceramic conceived as curtain, linking technology with tradition.

THE SITE

The site chosen for the students work is placed at the most historical area of the town. Beside the castle and close to the Muslim neighbourhood, the site has also a very steep topography. At present, the area is in ruins, despite formerly being the core, at the foot of the castle, near the old town hall and adjacent to la Sangre church, whose crypt has been dated to the 14th century. The area was formed by housing leaning against the church, a cemetery and an hospital. Even it exists a rest of an old wall in short, a fortified tower, theme for several students. The differences of level in this section are considerable, in the upper part remains a narrow and well cared for street. The area enjoys privileged views of the castle, the village and the whole Maestrazgo. In addition, it is placed in the middle of the way to the castle taking the whole flow of visitors.

This workshop is about town planning on a smaller scale but, at the same time, it gathers elements of landscaping. The program has to be defined, and the project must always evaluate the area as a public space and for public recreation.
THE ARTIST'S HOUSE

Undoubtedly, one of the most important events of its recent history was the pioneer founding of the museum of contemporary art in the early 70's by the prestigious critic Vicente Aguilera Cerni. The Rehabilitation Batlle Palace, a magnificent example of civil Gothic, was accompanied by the renewal of numerous houses in the village to be occupied by artists and making an important cultural centre Vilafamés at the time. The collection brought together makes the MACVAC one of the first contemporary art museums in the country.

The multiple relationships between art, nature and architecture are thus at the centre of the project that we proposed in the semester. An architecture with popular and rural roots but linked to the techniques of today and committed to the environmental conscience.

Recovering the original spirit of the museum, and based on a real situation, an artist has an imaginary land in the western part of the church. He usually lives abroad but wants to build up his home to spend long periods in Vilafamés, work and organize courses and creative workshops. There is then a need to include a house for someone to take charge of the centre regularly when he is not present.

Students choose previously to the visit one of those artists that have art works exhibited in the museum as the inhabitant of his project. The student builds up the program, personalizes the proposal and has a real approach to the project. Thus the visit to the site includes a look not only to its geographical conditions or industrial surrounding, but also a deep dive into the artist work.

PROGRAM AND THE INHABITANTS

The site coincides with the area indicated on the municipal approach as Renovation Plan and on a scheduled reserve building. It is an area of about 1,600 square meters doorway to the South with the urban village, the East with the Church of La Sangre, the North with Cuarticho Old Street and the West with the magnificent countryside views. The plot is crossed by the street La sangre that
gives access to the church and placed in the high point of the ascent that takes place across the street del Pilar, one of the most picturesque in the village.

The proposed program defines its contents, leaving margins of freedom both in dimensions and in character, depending on the artist choice.

1) THE HOUSE OF THE ARTIST:
- Bedroom, bathroom, living room, dining room and small kitchen. In the living room there will be a small space library.
- Guest room with separate entrance but connected inside.

2) THE ATELIER OF THE ARTIST:
A space with light conditions suitable for work with access also from the outside in order to organize small exhibitions as a kind of extension of the museum. It will also content a small classroom for students to give lectures or classes.

3) THE STUDENT RESIDENCE:
The artist wants to organize workshops and courses for a maximum of five students. The residence will have a shared room with kitchen and dining room.

4) THE FAMILY HOME:
Program for a couple of about 50 years (one of them works in the ceramic industry) with two children with their partners occasionally visit them on weekends accompanied by five clean. The house will have a space outside where you can have a small garden for their own consumption.

5) OUTDOOR SPACES that tie these programs will be the subject of a specific definition.
CÁTEDRA BLANCA

The attention given in the first four months of the course about new forms of life, here becomes the detailed definition of a character either real or imagined. The use value of the architecture is acquired through the imbrication of this character in a semi-collective life model of greater complexity than a strictly single-family housing program. The legacy of professor Albert Illescas gives content to this aspiration by wonderful statements. They become elements of project in itself and help to shape the relations between the pieces. Use before function, life before form.

The disciplinary complement is obviously the notion of landscape, of “wise country”. The integration to a place, the adaptation to its idiosyncrasy emerges as a fundamental condition of the project that will imply the elaboration of a collective cartography. The landscape inevitably transports us to scale. The student’s work swings between 1/10000 of the territory to 1/1 of the matter and introduces us fully into the question of concept and technique understood not as an instrument but as a resource.

The technique is at the centre of many social considerations and the course allows the student to deepen for the first time through a comprehensive exercise where he reaches 1/1. The swinging of the scales is accompanied by the diversity of the workshop model. From the conceptual kick off, that support new and stimulating formulas such as the Pecha Kucha, until the configuration of a collective workshop at the end of the course. The latter again refines this ambition and renders it closer to the constructive fact, an unquestionably collective reality.

Again, sustainability appears as a central element in the discourse as inherent to good architecture, indispensable in the territorial area but also without ignoring the social responsibility of the architect and his technical expertise. If in the collective housing the questions related to the rules are translated to common sense, in this case not only the global strategy but also the constructive detail appears as an element of negotiation with the concerns of territorial integration and environmental issues. “Detail Matters”, (Kees Kaan), putting together detail, and matter, and indicating the indissolubility, against some postulates of the modern movement, of conception and realization.

The relationship with some pre-existing built often scores this type of exercises. It is here on the near and reduced scale where we find a better pedagogical tool than on the scale of a city.

Finally, territorial exercise is the pretext to point out the importance of example and travel, as pedagogical instruments. The reference to other projects, as a step beyond the mere bibliography, is not a strict model that can limit the freedom of the student. The necessary look towards the reference is stimulated by the presence and presentation of projects through different invited architects that are completed with the contribution of various specialists in the territory or in the content of the program, generally linked to the landscape through its balsamic capacity (Retreat, rest), evocative (painters, sculptors or musicians) or even to their productive potential. All this wants to approach a model of open and transversal school that is at the base of Catedra Blanca, not only as the centre of its activities but also as its real raison d’être.

Alberto Peñín
Coordinator of 3rd year Design Studio [m] at ETSAB
Selected Projects

This section shows and highlights only one selected project from each of the six studios in the 2015-2016 spring term.

HUGO CHARTIER - DIEGO CASAL
EDUARD GASCÓN STUDIO

ANDREA MARCHESIN - ALEJANDRO GUTIÉRREZ
RAMON GODÓ STUDIO

GUILLEM ORÓ - ALEIX SALAZAR
JULIO MEJÓN STUDIO

JAVIER OLACIA - GERMÁN BOSCH
MARA PARTIDA STUDIO

CLAUDIA GARCÍA - AINA MARQUÉS
ALBERTO PEÑÍN - JUDITH LECLERC STUDIO

MARC CASTAÑO - JOAQUIM ESCUER
JORGE VIDAL STUDIO
The below lectures have been held in parallel to the development of the project at the workshop. They put special attention to territory, landscape, architecture, inhabitant, and construction. Thoughts, architectural projects and project processes feed and enhance student interest both in their training and their own project.

On 2015-2016 spring term we would like to highlight the following lectures. Ignacio Díaz Torrijos gave an approach on geographical tools for analysing landscape, both from its physical and anthropologist sides. Architect Miguel del Rey reviewed all kind of popular architectonic typologies. Daniel García Escudero and Carlos Soler presented in a comparative way how Alvar Aalto and Frank Lloyd Wright used to prepare the landscape approach of their respective buildings. Alvaro Galmés, pointed out time as a main issue for designing housing, putting ahead fenomenological questions.

Finally, Carlos Ferrater closed the Seminar with a deep review of his work from the place point of view.
HABITAR EL PAISATGE

DL.08 FEB.
IGNACIO DÍEZ TORRIJOS
“A propòsit del projecte d’habitatge: El territori”
10.30h / Sala d’Actes

DL.22 FEB.
MIGUEL DEL REY
“Una mirada a lo rural: un campo fértil”
10.30h / Sala d’Actes

DL.29 FEB.
DANIEL GARCÍA-ESCUDEIRO
CARLOS SOLER
“Formas de aproximación a la arquitectura. Aalto vs Wright”
10.30h / Sala d’Actes

DC.20 ABR.
ÁLVARO GALTÉS
“Morar, desentrenando la experiencia de habitatge”
10.30h / Sala d’Actes

DC.27 ABR.
5 CONCURSOS D’HABITATGE
Presentació i taula rodon a amb el Patronat d’Habitatge
10.30h / Sala d’Actes

DL.09 MAI.
CARLOS FERRATER
“A place for Architecture”
12.00h / Sala d’Actes
Visiting Vilafamés

Letter of appreciation from the town hall of Vilafamés to the university of Barcelona.

We want to give a special thank you to the city hall of Vilafamés in the persons of the major Abel Ibáñez and Xavier Allepuz, to the Museum of Modern Art MACVAC and its director Rosalia Torrent and specially to the architect Arturo Zaragozá.
The final jury of all course projects was held in the classrooms of the ETSAB on June 2016, and was attended by guests architects Arturo Zaragozá and Xavier Llobet.

Each workshop shared their own way to develop the projects during the term, and some of the most relevant projects were highlighted and discussed under the critical dialogue among students, faculty and guest.
IMPRINT

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