

# DC.17-18

TEXT AND SHORT REVIEWS BY THE EDITION

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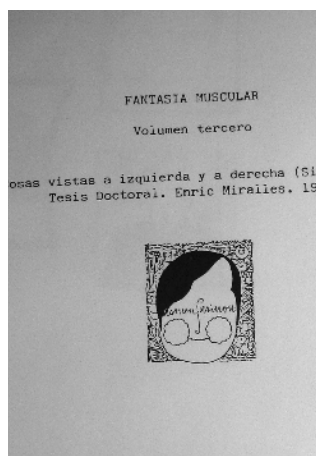
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ARTÍCULO:

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## VIEW THINGS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT (WITHOUT GLASSES)

A COMMENTARY ON THE DOCTORAL THESIS OF ENRIC MIRALLES MOYA, 1987

Rafael Moneo

### KEYWORDS:

ARCHITECTURAL OFFICE VIAPLANA/PIÑÓN - E. SATIE - SIMULTANEOUS - WRITING - TRAVELERS OF THE 18TH CENTURY - F. JUVARRA - A. CARRACCI - G. B. PIRANESI - K. F. SCHINKEL - ANNOTATIONS - INDETERMINACY - L. KAHN - MARGINS - M. TAFURI - A. COZENS - SANTS' SQUARE - J. SOANE

With the perspective obtained over the last twenty years, the Enric Miralles thesis episode, -his frustrated first reading on November 4, 1987, which the jury was not willing to admit, and later admission on February 25, 1988 after a re-writing and a new submission to the jury- acquires undoubtable interest because the moment it occurred is that which marks the beginning of his career as an architect. I will try with this document to convey the episode, using a memory that can be fragile or, perhaps, filter what happened at that time in a personal and, therefore, biased way. Thus, I will start by saying that in November 1987 a jury composed of Felix de Azua, Josep Muntañola, Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Josep Quetglas, (the latter being the secretary and I was acting president), considered that the document presented as a thesis by Enric Miralles was an intimate and personal text, without proper academic content and so we requested that he re-write it, expand on it and complete it, so it could be read again. In so doing, the jury unanimous-

ly believed (I say "believe" because I am writing this without having with me the minutes of the meeting) that the content of the argument should be something else altogether. He understood that a thesis was not an occasion to appear before the jury with a handful of attractive and carefully chosen pictures, even though they were accompanied by sophisticated comments, and so Enric Miralles was asked to proceed, as so many other doctoral student candidates, by presenting a written document to contribute to expanding the knowledge of the discipline of architecture, thereby giving proof of being entitled to the degree of doctor.

One might have understood Enric Miralles' thesis as a controversial statement about most of the thesis at the time. Well, undoubtedly there was a wide open field for discussion about what the thesis of someone who simply wanted to be a project teacher in an architectural school should be like. But the jury found that it was not necessary to enter into such a discussion and rejected the thesis presented by Enric. I will try, therefore, since the reader does not have in his or her possession the text of the thesis, to give an account of what it was like. Hence, I shall start this document by transcribing paragraphs from the letter sent to me by Enric Miralles accompanying his thesis: "... with a few more pages (the first two or three), this text is what I thought I would read... I have sent it to the other members of the jury ... I will await the comments of those who are closest: Pep, Azúa, Muntañola... I will tell you their opinion on how to proceed with this... take a look at it if you get a chance. I have added text and images, which will work like slides that deserve further comments. I really thank you for your interest in this... see you soon, Enric". As can be seen, the letter transmitted some concern about the suitability of the materials that were provided as a thesis and was possibly a response to some critical comment that I had made. As will be seen, Enric's fears were justified. The document, which Enric called his thesis, was composed of two small notebooks. The cover of the first read:

"Things seen to the left and to the right (without glasses). Abstract (text). Enric Miralles. Doctoral Thesis 1987". It was a 31-page typed double spaced text and a one-page appendix. The cover of the second was identical to the first except that it read: "Summary (illustrations)". It consisted of 68 pictures that were supposed to help make more explicit what he intended to say with the text. As Enric said in his letter, "text and images' work together "like slides" and were able to raise "further comments". But before trying to make a brief summary of what the document was, I would say that I have found its contents, in this second reading, done when writing this paper, clearer and more transparent. It would seem that it is now, when free from the supposed "bureaucratic objectivity" that is required for being a member of the thesis jury, that the text has taken on new value. This is because, unfortunately, when the game is over and Enric is no longer among us, we better understand the meaning his words have. The thesis episode now finds a suitable place in the intense and passionate life to which Enric gave himself, perhaps pushed by a premonition of the short time that fate would give him.

Nowadays, I see the thesis as a statement of principles, of what architecture was to Enric at the time when he was writing. Enric had already reached maturity in 1987. He was no longer that kid who I remember entering one of those decrepit classrooms on the upper floors of the School of Barcelona where classes were taught on the Elements of Composition. He was slender and graceful like one who had been a major player in secondary school basketball, interested in everything and everyone, enthusiastic, a very bright student. Helio Piñón and Alberto Viaplana soon took an interest in him and took him on in their office while he was still in school. After finishing his studies in 1976, Enric Miralles became a prominent contributor at Viaplana and Piñón's office, and no doubt his presence at the studio became more notable when, at the beginning of the 80s, the work of these architects from Barcelona arose on the Catalan

architectural landscape as an enlightened alternative to the excesses of post-modernism. I will obviously leave aside Enric's reasons for leaving Viaplana and Piñón's office, but the fact is that in 1987 Enric thought his career needed to be developed independently of those who had been his mentors. And it was time to find a way to approach architecture from positions that could be qualified as his own and personal. This can already be seen in his thesis, as his own contribution, the notion of "annotating", a notion he explains in the text and that becomes more explicit in the first four pages of the notebook of illustrations. Enric's first four pages offer us light, minimal designs. They show well what the architectural office Enric left was like. The notes, always lines, without shading, suggest perspectives and two of them even seem to hint at scenographic stairs; the image of an open space is suggested in which vertical planes appear that do not conceal the artificiality of the area that is projected despite the fact that we find trees and palm trees. The last one is a more hermetic drawing, which shows the meeting of straight lines and curves that anticipate an intervention in an urban area. They are notes", as Enric told us, but I dare not say that they are dictated by a spontaneous gesture of the hand following the instructions of the subconscious. The immediacy needed to claim the concept of annotations is not felt in these designs", which is what they are in that lines prevail and refer us back to the tradition of architectural drawing that the modernists used. I would say that Enric is trying to go beyond that, doing away with everything that can be used to understand the picture as a representation of reality and seeking help in abstraction. To think that the drawings of Le Corbusier, or even De la Sota, served as models for these drawings is somewhat unavoidable.

Enric wants, from the start, to explain to us how he proceeds. He wants to be the one who "reads as it is written". Browsing, jumping from one page to another, proposing an interpretation of the work of architecture that implies simultane-

ity. "These pages tell us that this way of annotating is almost a way of writing, which stems from writing, and which is regulated by writing." Hence, "this thesis tells how annotating -on this surface of slip ups- only occurs if the thought that encourages it moves jerkily ahead, can stop it in its infancy and is produced in repetition." Notes understood as an intentional slip of the tongue, the form appears, and is produced in repetition.

There is something instinctive, direct, immediate "Allow, even desire, that after this first point at which the pen meets paper something unknown appears, something we did not expect." Annotating as something akin to automatic writing. "I need this draft -understood as the sheet of paper- to say what annotating is." Making architecture sensitive to direct contact from the inner being of those who exercise the profession of architect with a sheet of paper, and establishing this contact, which, moreover, acknowledges the presence of the world around them, is what Enric seems to seek and tries to explain with his thesis. After what was said in the previous paragraph, one will understand that, to my understanding, what the thesis proposes is more the expression of a desire than the demonstration of a method, of a procedure that, ultimately, was not as spontaneous as Enric might have wanted.

It is Satie who inspires Enric to give his thesis its title, "to remember that music that should occupy space just as furniture does." Enric aspires to his buildings occupying any kind of space, or said in a more rhetorical manner: spaces, which deserve to be recognized as architecture. The immediate, what is concrete, -furniture, buildings- predate the abstract discipline whether it be music or architecture. They are like lowercase letters with an ambition to take the place of uppercase letters. The headings are also inspired by Satie, "Groping to Escape", "Coral Hypocrite" and "Muscular Fantasy", which will be used by Enric to establish pauses and give meaning to his texts. The text begins with "Groping to Escape" -the trip- through those examples or quotes that illustrate his ideas.

Enric's trip takes us to "...the English around 1760, the Germans at the start of 1800... The first chosen traveller, Wolfelin Adam, the father of John and Robert, was sent to Italy by Lord Arundel for the purpose of collecting the drawings of Filippo Juvarra". Splendid drawings by Juvarra open this chapter of illustrations. The living -yet precise strokes- by Juvarra lead us into late Baroque spaces in which there are still present some of the purposes set out in the Renaissance. But the corporeality, the spatiality that the architect of Torino was so concerned about, was not what Enric was seeking. He was concerned about other issues. In a moment of weakness Enric writes, "...to return to find the geometry of a sky dotted with constellations". The traces, filaments, initial strokes... is what is of interest. From Juvarra to Sangallo and on to Saenredam through Agostino Carracci... and from there again to the travellers of the end of the eighteenth century.

The text and illustrations reflect Enric's restless interpretive spirit, a spirit that remained with him throughout his life and that would be confirmed by examining his library. He was a reader -at times practically a book-lover- who took pleasure in strange and quirky things and who enjoyed finding something unexpected. He was a reader who bought books I would almost say compulsively: I remember running into him in a bookstore and seeing him buy by the dozen while I bought by the single unit. He was that way in his architecture as well. Like many others, Enric wanted to be next in line to Piranesi. The architectural drawings that Piranesi raises over Roman ruins lead Enric to think that this is the task that awaited him. He imagines himself to be a contemporary Piranesi, capable of raising-up a new architecture over what remains of what was modern architecture. To do so, one must allow themselves to be imbued and possessed by everything surrounding them. I can only once again quote Enric literally to back up and give meaning to my comments. "What counts now is the impression within oneself: evocation, metaphor and personal allusions are the

mechanisms... Shaftesbury somewhat before, proposes living the static experience in an intuitive way. The barrier between the inner and outer world disappears." Enric tries to explain the intimate relationship between, "the eye and random-chance, that random-chance that disappears on paper and that moves to the occasional, to blots and to the fantasy of looking".

Annotation –that nearly automatic scratching on paper– becomes real when we accept that there is inevitable continuity between the two despite the fear that this discovery inspires us. "I do not get to adequately explain why it is this or that... or why it is done in one way or the other ... in other words, it is hearsay."

Afterwards, as was predictable to a certain extent, the text of Enric's thesis would appear and the illustrations accompanying it: Blake, Flaxman, Ingres, Cozens, Schinkel, Fuseli... Nearly all of them express themselves with lines, without shadows, as if only the contours of things and their position in space were that which one is interested in leaving proof of in the drawing. The stroke, the annotation Enric pursues as the origin and foundation of what is built is presented as a quasi-exclusive dialectic transmission belt between the outside world and the inner world, transmission and contact that Enric was so concerned about in those years. The text of the thesis recurrently insists on that and one cannot but once again quote Enric to try to move the reader of these pages to that which is the spirit of the text that I am commenting on "finish and start over again... every time, constantly. Everything becomes a moment, a look. Not knowing how the pictures appear... Even more so, except for Adam, nobody has drawn them or have I? One such moment is the point in which one believes he understands."

I hope I have transmitted in this synopated summary of the 31-page text of the thesis, at least some of Enric's concerns. The text of the thesis was a text that had nothing to do with what a conventional –and I stress the word deliberately– academic exercise required.

A text that read today, once the lights on what was the stage on which Enric's life was played out are turned off, excites us and brings us closer and greatly, to its author. The text was just an intimate allegation. Thus, as I have already mentioned, the jury unanimously came to the conclusion and decided that the doctoral candidate should re-draft the text. I only have available the comments written by Josep Quetglas. His written words are of the greatest interest and perhaps deserve to be published in full. I quote here the opening lines: "I take as accepted that the document is illegibly written. Unreadable in the sense that the reader cannot know about what has been written, neither can he take the writing as the object about which the author writes... more precisely, it is not that the text is poorly written, but that it cannot be read because it has not been written down. It is not constructed to be read. It cannot be interpreted by reading; just as a hearing would not interpret colours..." (So far I am not proposing any value judgments, I am only trying to describe the way the material presented was perceived.) Because, as I said, the decision was taken unanimously by the jury, we must assume that the other committee members, from different positions, did not feel very differently from Quetglas.

But since what I was asked for was a report of what happened, let us continue. Enric is notified, with regrets from all, what our opinion was and it must be acknowledged that he accepted it like a gentleman and days later sent an appendix in which he sought to clarify his position. Previously, Enric had sent me another letter from which I will quote one of its most significant paragraphs: "...although this letter is to speak to you of the possibility of a public reading of the work... it is not a rushed job... from 1980 to 1985... it is a job worked on alone. Tomas Llorens accepted following it up with me but then his office in the Generalitat de Valencia made it impossible. Viaplana was my official tutor. Professional problems cut off the direct relationship that the follow up of the thesis required... then Steegman as

Department Head helped me with his report that the thesis continue forward ... It is impossible to throw away all this work... this last annex that I have written continues to explain some of the qualities of a manner of thinking that is interspersed with graphics and that places its source of material expression in a few strokes that are closer to writing than to any artistic learning... you should not see any false scholarly pretence." The letter ends like this: "Do you think that the jury could meet on your next visit to Barcelona"?

The newly submitted document bore the title, "Work/Writing. Annex. Things seen from left to right (without glasses). PhD thesis. Enric Miralles Moya. 1987' and it was a 37-page booklet, –this time numbered– in which, as in the previous submission, text and images were mingled. Enric Miralles attempted to clarify in them what the first submission was and insisted with the same attitude. He begins, "These pages do not want to erase that of Things seen from left to right... just explain their origin... these pages tell how this way of annotating is almost a form of writing. It is born of writing and is mixed with writing. It has its origin in that writing that mixes with writing. It has its origin in that broken writing that allows for simultaneous interpretations of the page. That simultaneous way of looking at the whole page, that script that comes from replacing the ordinary interpretation, where it is necessary to go from one end to the other for the spectacle of the simultaneous word.' If I had to condense the ideas behind an introduction like this one, the terms "annotation" and "simultaneous" would be those around which I would make my argument. Enric Miralles tells us that he wants to see architecture, or better yet, do it with the tools of a draftsman and a convinced vocation of a reader. Ingres and Valéry. Picabia and Barthes. Klee and Eluard. "Desired indetermination of words when they appear on paper.' And in the illustration on page 8, a fragment of his architecture as a paradigm of what the author of the thesis is pursuing. Enric, from drawing, traces the origin of what things are: a design

that should be spontaneous and direct in order to be considered an "annotation", and from it discovers the solution to a specific architectural problem. He uses Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson as a pretext. A drawing by John Trumbull "View from Benjamin Franklin's window" and an autograph of Thomas Jefferson give rise to and explain the intuitions about Franklin's celestial electricity and the layout of Jefferson's University of Virginia.

Enric strives to show that it is there -in the drawings- where there is a simultaneous and multiple vision of reality, which enables our ability to annotate and where the keys to build are found. Then Soane and Schinkel are given as references: the lesson from history, on the one hand, and the impact of the sublime on the other. The image of an everyday street where a gas lamp draws our attention, the work of ill-fated Gilly, and the wonder at the landscape by John Robert Cozens complete the picture. Enric Miralles finishes the pages of this "Annex" with a hermetic dedication by Louis Kahn -pure spontaneous graphics- saying: "Here LK leaves this text through which he teaches all architecture to think". The "Annex" did little to change the panorama of what the first submission had been, so the jury requested that the candidate write another paper, a thesis, if you know what I mean.

I cannot remember exactly how the events occurred, but it seems that Enric Miralles was determined to finish the thesis process and a few weeks later submitted it "formally bound" (the quotation marks are my own this time). The thesis was now composed of three volumes. The first bore the title "Coral Hypocrite" and consisted of 94 pages with alternating text and images. Enric started these pages expressing himself in Catalan: "I have to accept that there is nothing on any of these pages. They are margins that do not even define what we will do within them. It has always been written in the margins: just a game around things. Then he continued in Spanish: "...We will advance by starts and stops." Text

and images are intertwined. The writers are alike: Sterne and Shaftesbury, Benjamin and Vila Matas, Savinio and Javier Marias, Julien Green and Adorno, Octavio Paz and Blake... There is a long break with Soren Kierkegaard, seen almost certainly through the eyes of Deleuze, Calvino and Kafka. The drawings of Ramon and Cajal... "Seeing is identical to drawing" and on the next line illustrations by Saenredam "About the images found in an apple tree. 1628"... Susan Sontag "On Photography"... Gerard de Nerval... I will not go on. I think the tone of the 94-page booklet that Enric called "Coral Hypocrite" has been well demonstrated by naming the authors and drawings that attracted and interested him. But I can only transcribe the last page. "Then P. Hanke in the doctrine of Saint Victoire, brings us to the mountain to which Cezanne devoted so many years and drawings... 'Within a few centuries everything will be flat', the painter had written... shapes like punctuation marks, lines that become spells... eyes that stay home... All this is what travellers who arrive in Italy throughout the eighteenth century speak of".

The second volume, more extensive, in that it had 262 pages, bears the title first used in the thesis, "Groping to Escape". The journey continues. Enric continues to explain to us how "everything" -even that which attracted him so much at that time- was sensed by travellers from England and Central Europe, travelling to Italy in the late eighteenth century. A quote by Sciacia leads to Juvarrá, with whom he stops until arriving at Robert Adam and Piranesi, on whose images the eyes of someone who has this text in their hands take pleasure. As was said, Piranesi was -let us not forget the interest that Tafuri showed for him- one of the characters to whom Enric feels closest. "The drawings of Giulio Sangallo unite the external and internal, mental pictures... they propose the broken walls of buildings that allow us to see inside... an abstract section... the most important thing is the spatial impression... designs that are architectures and as such are not in this thesis." Greece would be

rediscovered later. Blake, once again, as if it were an obsession, by Frances Yates. Botticelli and the lost illustrations of the Divine Comedy on the way, with the help of André Chastel. These are Enric Miralles' interpretations poured into the thesis. A note by Leonardo and after stopping and having a bite to eat, at the home of Lord Hope and on to Flaxman's drawings. The attraction Enric felt for lines as compared to volume is met in Flaxman, and establishes a road that leads to Matisse. In contrast, the drawings of Alexander Cozens and the landscape. Cozens' drawings take us into lush landscapes and make us feel nostalgic for the nature that captivated the enlightened. Gilly like a witness of another nature: the city, in an impeccable design. "Discussing the site and buildings would lead us time and again to that placement in what exists -the natural- what interests us, what we were looking for." Gilly gives way to Schinkel and his drawings. "Those spots of ink that are windows, profiles of smoke clouds..." Enric sees Schinkel more as an architect in his drawings than in his buildings. Soane is something different and Enric can say "the line no longer accompanies John Soane... John Soane's house can no longer shelter us." Enric protects himself in Constable and in Turner. Enric brings in his thesis -as allies- beautiful notes by Turner in which their designs enable us to guess what inspired them.

"The speed, the hand going from one segment to another in alternating different areas of the paper... like scrawling here and there. None of the fixed architectural points describe that image of the constellation we already know... the capitals are not recognizable as a dotted series, or the distant backlighting... or sculptural reliefs. Neither of the base trim, or the profiles... I do not know what is annotated. They are lines that I no longer know". This is how Enric Miralles drew and thought his architectural works. The drawings by Leo von Klenze would be the opposite of this way of understanding drawing, of seeing things. Fuseli. And after drawing as a silhouette. "The alphabet is a silhouette." Alice in Wonderland and Lewis Carol, Beatrix

Potter, Edward Lear. Enric has recorded what attracts him, of what he would like the world around him and its architecture to be.

The third part of the thesis is entitled "Muscular Fantasy" and is a collection of his own drawings placed under the protection of Ramon Gomez de la Serna. It consists of 52 pages. The first unnumbered ones are a series of unfilled sketched caricatures, delineated and with shading. Ramon with his pipe, with his shock of hair drawing on a white background. Or the reverse, Ramon's round face framed in black. Finally, a collage in which Ramon masters Pombo. Afterwards, the text begins this way: "This 'Muscular fantasy' from 'Things seen to the left and to the right' is the things themselves... although I am not talking about the projects or of the designs... The attention—and that is how I propose going through the pages—is everywhere. There are no significant points." Five pages of text,—all with the same tone—serve as an introduction to Enric's drawings. They must all be understood as architectural drawings. In some volumes they are hinted at. In others, interiors can be glimpsed. Some are freehand. Others are geometrically constructed perspectives, like those for the canopy of the Plaza de Sants. Gardens often appear, in which slender trees are always integrated into the world of artificial constructions. Some plans. He even attempts to present some projects so that sections and elevations have the same value as plans, in search of a synthetic representation of architecture. The series ends in a picture that we already know, which would illustrate a sentence like this: "Two arches that cross without any more sense than the hand that draws them, they birth the echo of correspondences there are in these pages ... the arc of the hand is the counterpoint to the horizon".

As can be understood by everything said so far, the content of the second submission of the thesis was not substantially changed from that of the first. It just showed that Enric accepted that a thesis could not be a fly and that he

could base his opinions (and feelings) in a lengthier text, thereby complying with the jury's way of understanding the minimum standards that had to be met. The jury was satisfied with Enric's attitude, which was generous, in that it laid aside a conflict that would have been painful for all, and accepted the document he submitted, given that the abundance of evidence and citations ensured the seriousness of its academic commitment. In the notes I have saved about the comments I made on the day of the reading of the thesis, you can read, "I think Enric's thesis should be considered an exception. Respect for his work as an architect makes us tolerant". Thus, that is how Enric passed the thesis process with a "suma cum laude," if my memory serves me correctly. We celebrated the occasion with a luncheon that the jury attended at a restaurant in Barcelona, which Enric knew we liked. And so the thesis episode demonstrated his eager talent and once again highlighted some of his innate virtues: giving up a radical and uncompromising stance that undoubtedly would have brought despair and sadness. A text like this one, which aims to keep the memory of what this episode in Enric's academic life was like, should have been more precise, more complete, and have thoroughly documented speeches and comments from various members of the jury. But I hope that with what has been said here, the seasoned reader can form an opinion about the events.

I would like to conclude by saying how glad I am to have had to dust off these papers, which has enabled me to bring myself closer to Enric, the thesis has enabled me to feel close again to him. Well, in fact, the thesis—besides having enabled him to meet the academic requirements implied with being a professor in the School—made his way of understanding architecture more transparent. In 1987, Enric, after his apprenticeship in the office of Piñón and Viaplana, believed he was able to cope with his own professional adventure. Enric had worked on many projects by the architects from Barcelona, projects that, on the other hand, he felt were

nearly his own when some of the designs in the Piñón and Viaplana projects were included in his thesis and so he believed that he had sufficient experience to start his own office in the company of Carme Pinós. The need to address the procedures that are required in the standards for being a college professor encouraged him to submit the thesis. And in a moment of excitement, and a small lack of self-criticism, when he thinks that his interpretive experience and as an architect is sufficient to resolve the process of the thesis. So begins the story, which I have briefly tried to relate. With the perspective that distance gives, I believe the jury proceeded as it should have. But reading the thesis greatly clarifies the possible interpretation that is given nowadays of Enric's work. Much of what was his work is already implicit in it. I now see Enric's work with the help of his thesis. His architecture is, in effect, linear, fragmented, many times without embodiment and always more conscience of the design and lines than volume or of space. Both the Igualada Cemetery and the Parliament in Edinburgh are works that can be drawn. Or put another way, the result of "building" one of those designs of his that Enric called annotations in his thesis. Something that would also explain the interest his work gives to materials. The form itself, as such, has no value. It is the textures, the tactile condition of the materials that counts. And it is the movement that the use of memory leads us to what enables Enric's work to be seen as the work of someone who loves reading. Eager to collect in the texts the clues that allow him to thread together an architectural story line. If things are seen like that, the thesis takes on a great interest and becomes an indispensable source for the study of what Enric's work was. The old saying "God writes straight through crooked lines" becomes valid once again when you think of what was Enric's controversial text "Things seen from left to right," a thwarted thesis at first, and crucial and indispensable, in my opinion, for any future critical study of his work.

Rafael Moneo, December 2008

## SHORT REVIEWS BY THE EDITION

Texts in english by Marc Marin Webb

## INTERVIEWS

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### RETROSPECTIVE LOOK

INTERVIEW WITH CARME PINÓS, 1980-1991

Carme Pinós

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#### KEYWORDS:

J. TURRELL - TRIP TO U.S. - DISCUSSIONS -  
CRITICAL OBSERVER - PERGOLAS AT ICARIA  
AVENUE - HOSTALETS DE BALENYÀ - TORRE  
CUBE - TRACES - S. HOLL - W. PRIX - MEMORY  
OF PLACE - P. SMITHSON - R. SENNET

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In the interview by Verónica Esparza, Carme Pinós revises her professional practice beginnings with Enric Miralles. After staying in New York with a fellowship at the Columbia University between 1978 and 1980, the usual presence of the couple in competitions allows them to explore different ways than those dictated by the Catalan power along those years; developing freedom as an ability to elaborate their proposals against a previous context. The architect pays attention on how they possibly influenced one another.

Plunged into an enriching discussion in which each partner used to take a role, Pinós recognizes herself as a critical observer of the overwhelming amount of Miralles proposals. Their investigation will crystallize in their first executed project, the Hostalets de Balenyà School, regarded by Pinós as one of the most important works of their partnership, due to its mathematical-structural rigor, together with the Igualada cemetery, a work provided with an unbeatable poetic and rhetorical evocation.

The Igualada cemetery was the work that set Miralles and Pinós in an international stage. Steven Holl and Wolf Prix, among others, were the first witnesses of this international diffusion, partly thanks to the *El Croquis* publication, in 1991, the same year of their breakup.

*"The architect must love life, because, basically, we create a part of the scenery for what happens in it". And that which shapes the life is memory. "Memory is a reality that sometimes becomes stone and sometimes becomes movement, and we can be creative both for one thing and for another, we must only be conscious".*



### OTHER NARRATIONS...

INTERVIEW WITH  
FABIÁN ASUNCIÓN, 1992-2000

Fabián Asunción

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#### KEYWORDS:

SEVILLA - IGUALADA CEMETERY - PHENOMENAL -  
COPENHAGEN THEATRE - KOLONIHAVEN, PAPA,  
VIENT CHEZ MOI! - EDIMBURGH PARLIAMENT -  
THE NORDIC TOUR - MACBA - VENECIA CEMETERY

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In the interview by Carolina B. García, Fabián Asunción declares to be entering a process of change in the life of an architect. He starts in 1991 his professional collaboration as an associate in the Miralles & Tagliabue office, just after Miralles breakup with Carme Pinós. His work will soon face towards the ephemeral architecture and the expositions and stagings of the office, being at the same time responsible for their modeling workshop.

Asunción meets the architect in 1992 in Seville, in a seminar that makes a great impact on him. At that time his wife, Soledad Revuelto, and himself decide to move to Barcelona to finish their studies of architecture in the university where Miralles teaches.

Asunción joins the Miralles office at the time of the collapse of the ceiling of the Huesca sports pavilion, in 1994. In those years the office focused much on public calls, presenting their proposals to some 15 or 20 per year, looking for their place in the international stage. A

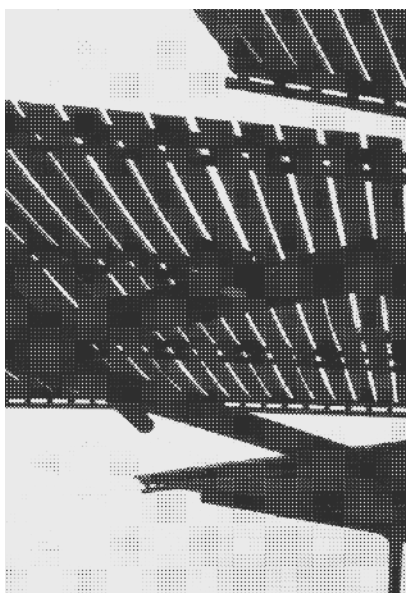
status they would not reach until 1998, 4 years later, with the Parliament in Edinburgh.

The architect explains with special care his collaboration in the project Kolonihaven in 1996, year of the culture in Copenhagen, in which Miralles remembers the words of Le Corbusier "Papa, vient chez moi!", working on the transformation of space as time evolves. All thanks to a process of work in which the architect started with the plant, the drawings and the overwhelming geometry he so perfectly controlled.

The modeling, a process always supervised by Asunción, represented for Miralles the world of understanding. A world in which Asunción soon takes a leading role in the ephemeral installations like the Nordic Tour, in 1998, or some interventions in the MACBA or in Diagonal Mar.

## CRITICAL ESSAYS

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**IN THE BEGINNING IT WAS THAT**  
PERGOLAS IN PARETS DEL VALLÈS, 1985

Josep M. Rovira

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**KEYWORDS:**

M. CACCIARI - M. DUCHAMP - LISSITZKY -  
MELNIKOV - VERSTAND - MUNDUS IMAGINALIS -  
WEISHEIT - KRISIS - L. KAHN

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*That* was either too weird or too different; it is just a matter of language. It appeared like a ghost, suddenly, in Paret Del Vallés, a town near Barcelona in 1985, leaving many of the high professionals of the moment quite astonished.

*That* was not inspired by Venturi or Rossi. Neither it tried to establish links with the Catalan tradition. Nor modernisms, nor *noucentismes*, nor refunded mediterranean rationalisms.

*That* was weird. A pergola unfolding over modules supported by only one foot is, at least, a strange structural

choice. The disintegration in squares without precise linings, nor uniform heights, is also unusual. Scaling and moving towards some undefined objective, without any specific beginning or ending. Seen from below, it shows a Z cross section that generates a visual alteration to be repeated, willing to punish the memory of those wanting to forget. Neither surrounding previous buildings nor integrating in the environment; not being in a park has not giving any shadowed... Some crossed bank becomes the enemy of its sunshade, disallowing any previously imagined route, declining comfort and peace, forcing the thinking, being nervous. It rises; it becomes a table, a trampoline or a tribune; breaking its own limits. You will not find any sort of peace in Paret. The ceiling of the modules does not follow any rules or common logics. It binds randomly; it offers instability instead of protection. The accompanying Z emphasises the sensation; last element of the abecedary, closing the speech and keeping it at the same time suspending, open to the upcoming reappearance: Igualada.

*That* had a lot of the Russian avant-garde, of the Vesnin brothers, Melnikov and Lissitzky. It explored further from the Catalan borders and in the mentors of the vanguards a legitimatizing model. Models, that in Miralles mind were constantly brought back to memory: Raffaello de Sanzio or Giulio Romano are another sort of mentors.

And *That* is criticised from the figures of Marcel Duchamp and Massimo Cacciari, who become the critical observers which Rovira invites into scene. "I love the beginnings. The beginnings are marvellous. I believe beginnings guarantee continuity", as Louis I. Kahn used to say. *That* was the beginning.





## 'CAP I POTÀ'

DISSOLUTION OF THE IDENTITY  
IN MIRALLES & PINÓS

Ramón Faura Coll

### KEYWORDS:

ARCHERY VS BALL PAVILION - REPUBLIC PAVILION IN 1937 - PESSAC - MAISON VAUCRESSON - BEFORE AND AFTER - ANDY WARHOL - VIRGIL STARKWELL - FRANCE AGAINST ITALY AND ITALY AGAINST GERMANY - L. BENEVOLO - S. SERLIO - LE CORBUSIER VS VAILLAT - IDENTITY - J. LL. MATEO - I. DE SOLÀ-MORALES - SPORT HALL IN HUESCA - THE COLLAPSE - L. FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO - BLAISE PASCAL - JEAN PROUVÉ - PATCH AND DARN - F. LL. WRIGHT - WINSLOW HOUSE - TALIESIN WEST

Three buildings are fated to share em-  
placement: the *pelota* pavilion of the archi-  
tects Garcés and Soria; the bow and  
arrow pavilion of Miralles and Pinós  
and the republic pavilion, originally  
from Sert and Lacasa. Three buildings  
without history, in an environment that  
forces them to nomadic state. Three  
buildings in the hostile *Vall d'Hebrón*.

From this context Faura very ably  
selects throughout history two authors  
that developed the architectural com-  
parative critics through images: Sebas-  
tiano Serlio and Leonardo Benévolo.  
Both sheltered under Warhol's lithog-  
raphy, *Before and After*.

It is so that the intervention on su-  
perficial architecture begins: The pro-

portions of a face, the restoration of a  
façade. All discovering architecture as  
a question of identities: the sensible  
expression of the will of a community  
—either a kingdom, a village, or a local  
school. In any case, the expression of  
something identical to itself and, most  
of all, different to the rest. Something  
upheld by the dispute between Le  
Corbusier and Léandre Vaillat, in the  
beginnings of the twentieth century.

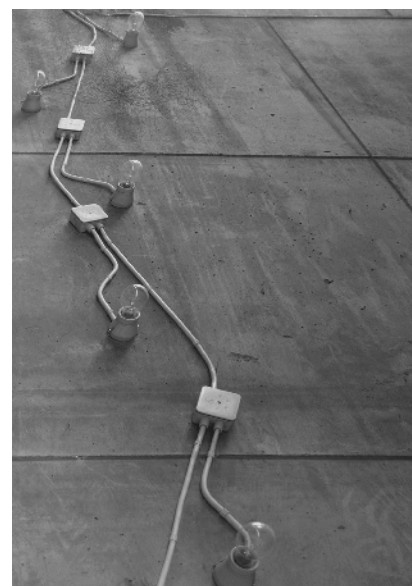
Up to this point, Faura asks him-  
self: *Is there in the Vall d'Hebrón a juxtaposition  
of identities like in Serlio or is there between both  
buildings a temporary abyss like in Benevolo?*

A text by I. de Solà-Morales pre-  
sumes the Catalan architectural identi-  
ty in the 90's far from the *high-tech*, and  
places in a same front Garcés and So-  
ria next to Miralles and Pinós, though  
from the last ones only the body depot  
in the Igualada cemetery is mentioned.  
Intentions are clear.

Both in *Tiro con Arco* and in the Hues-  
ca sports pavilion the architects design  
a ceiling-building. And against the  
tranquillity that brings to be a part of  
an identity, Faura investigates the tur-  
moil of the always-transforming, acci-  
dental spirituality, on the boundaries  
of the physical body.

And from this ceiling-building,  
Faura explains clearly how the collapse  
of the ceiling of the Huesca sports pa-  
vilion never was originated by a design  
failure, but from an execution failure.  
The mechanism of suspending the ceil-  
ing was copied from Le Corbusier in his  
Popular Feasting Centre from 1937 and  
from the geometries of Jean Prouvé.

Just like Enric Granell will report  
on the next article, Faura posts that the  
designs of Miralles and Pinós refuse  
to conceptualise the space. In other  
words, the Huesca sports pavilion op-  
erates from the land that will hold it  
and from the ceiling that will embrace  
it. The main floor and the flat ceiling  
that Le Corbusier made disappear be-  
comes the essence of the architecture  
in Miralles and Pinós project. They  
stop considering the box as an object.  
*"Cap i potà"*.



## DRIFTING MOMENTS

NEW CÍRCULO DE LECTORES  
HEADQUARTERS IN MADRID, 1990-1992

Enrique Granell

### KEYWORDS:

AUTOMATIC WRITING - MEMORY AND  
IMAGINATION - DENIAL TO SPACE AS  
ARCHITECTONICAL MOTOR - J. JOYCE -  
SITUACIONISM - INTERRUPTION - SURREALISM -  
A. BRETON - G. B. PIRANESI - R. QUENEAU -  
R. FLUDD - A. ZAERA - F. GOYA - E. MANET -  
A. WIERTZ - R. MAGRITTE - S. LEWERENTZ -  
MALMÖ CEMETERY

Three basic ideas are developed by En-  
ric Granell in his essay: the use of non-  
plastic techniques by Miralles —espe-  
cially writing—, an unusual relationship  
between memory and imagination, and  
the denial of space as an impulse of the  
architectonic creation.

1. Miralles develops imagination skills  
inspired by James Joyce's writing, the  
automatic writing of the surrealists and  
some situationist derived ideas. This  
tramp skill will improve with the time.  
He understands his drawings as an in-  
finite writing, like Raymond Queneau  
on his *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes*.

2. The imagination architects develop  
in their work does rarely go beyond  
the limits of architecture. This limited

imagination is, for example, defined in the work of XVIIth century English intellectual Robert Fludd. However, Miralles breaks the classical frame that held a connection between memory and imagination, guided by an infinite course due to his anxious personality.

3. The spatial expression was one of the Modern Movement's great achievements, and this obsession for space was often a restriction that facilitated the entry of new variations to the project. Miralles understands space in his architecture as a creation only reachable by the superposition of a series of plants drawn by his sketch-script.

Once this triad has been enunciated, Granell analyses the *Círculo de Lectores* cultural center in Madrid, designed and executed by Enric Miralles between 1990 and 1992.

The site is imagined by the architect as a fluid that materialises into a fishbowl, in which pillars turn into slippery fishes with metal scales. Over this humid surface, clouds will appear to instantly turn into balconies –the amphitheatre– where spectators will be lodged. To discover the origin of the hall chairs we will be taken through a fascinating trip over a sequence of paintings, starting from Goya, through Manet and Wiertz, to end in René Magritte.



### TENDERSI COME UN ARCO

SANTA CATERINA MARKET  
IN BARCELONA, 1997-2005

Josep M. Rovira

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**KEYWORDS:**

THE FALL - MICHELANGELO - STILL LIFE -  
DISPLACEMENT - H. DAMISCH - FRANCESCO DI  
GREGORI - PALAZZO TE - GIULIO ROMANO -  
PIETÀ - FRANCISCO DE ZURBARÁN - GANÍMEDES -  
THE FALL OF FAETÓN - ALEGORY - SANTA MARIA  
IN FIORI - VICENZA - ANDREA PALLADIO -  
CHARLES DE TOLNAY - BLADE RUNNER

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The Santa Caterina Market presents an unstable balance that deserves special attention. A flight that starts and ends irremissibly in front of the static thinness of the cover of the architecture preceding it. The downfall is a western art subject used by several artists on their work. Michelangelo, for example, who Miralles admired.

A market, to someone who loved the allegory, is a dead nature to face. To someone who movements of forms, composition systems and quotations became a required mechanism on his architecture. To play with the History of Art of a vastly extended genre with interrogations and winks, necessary for the professional exercise, collecting and liberating at the same time so much tension in order to establish the limits of the present, in order to break with the

mimesis. And the fact that it all is related with the courses of life or personal situations gives the possibility of taking lectures further from the strictly professional point of view.



### PARLIAMENT IN A MINOR, OP. 56

EDINBURGH PARLIAMENT, 1998-2004

Carles Serra Hartmann

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**KEYWORDS:**

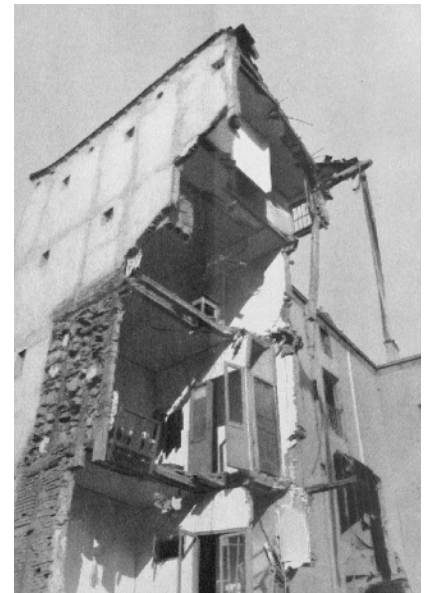
PARLIAMENT - SCOTLAND - MIRALLES -  
EDINBURGH - ENLIGHTENMENT - GRAND TOUR -  
JAMES HUTTON - GEOLOGY - FELIX MEN-  
DELSSOHN

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In July 1998 Enric Miralles won an international competition for the construction of the new Scottish Parliament. The rise of the first Blair government

helped to return some independence to Wales and Scotland. To this last one, this "independence" meant the creation of a sovereign parliament, three centuries after the Union Treaty and of the entry of Scotland in the British Union. This generated an agitated time in terms of politics, in which architecture would have to dispute against non-architectural arguments. A time of intrigues, complots and accusations between the different political parties represented in the Parliament –and their controlled opinion media– that would seriously affect the advance of the project. The controversy began already with the choice of the emplacement for the new parliament. In such a city like Edinburgh, so full of stones and history, it is not an easy task to look for an agreement between all the political parties for its location. The Scottish Labor Prime Minister Donald Dewar disapproved the acropolis of Carlton Hill –the option of the SNP– and finally forced to place the new parliament in front of the Royal Residence of Holyroodhouse, not without receiving several accusations of corruption and despotism. This controversial decision would initiate the project development process, deciding not to restrict the competition to national firms, and finally giving to a foreign firm the responsibility of building the symbol of the national identity, in a non-transparent process. Not being this context hard enough, the development of the project would turn out to be even harder. The Barcelonan firm EMBT joined the Scottish based RMJM in a joint-venture that worked quite dysfunctionally, with a big lack of compenetration derived from the geographical and cultural distance between both firms. The deaths of Miralles and Dewar –both on the year 2000, with a few months difference– would leave an even harder situation for their successors in EMBT.

This work follows the process of projecting one of the most significant contemporary architecture pieces in Great Britain, and collects the points of view and opinions of some of the agents involved, relating them with the previous designing and the later execution: a project of huge symbolic and metaphoric importance, with opinions from politicians, journalists and architects. The way Miralles understood national identity and how he conceived his building provides an interesting basis upon which to compare different ways to understand national or cultural realities by other people who somehow got in touch with Scotland in other historical periods – from the Enlightenment to the present. In the case of the architect Enric Miralles, a vision that makes us think about the representative and evocative power of architecture in a paradigmatic process, through the difficult relation it develops with the government.



## **SOMETHING SOLID WILL NOT VANISH IN THE AIR**

NEW GAS NATURAL HEADQUARTERS  
IN BARCELONA, 1999-2008

Carolina B. García Estévez

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### **KEYWORDS:**

ALEGORY - LA BARCELONETA - BALUARTE DE DON CARLOS - EL TORÍN - INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION 1888 - CIUTADELLA PARK - JACINT VERDAGUER - JOAN SALVAT-PAPASSEIT - ENRIQUE VILA-MATAS - ADOLF LOOS - WALTER BENJAMIN - IN THE FLAME - MARIO SIRONI - JOSEP RENAU - AYUDA A MADRID - THE GAS FLAME - FRANCIA STATION IN BARCELONA

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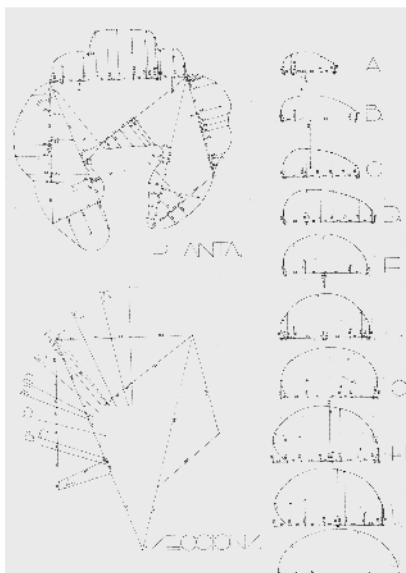
The building for the New Office of Gas Natural in Barcelona is the last competition won by the firm EMBT, being Miralles very weak by his illness. It was the year 1999. The same company decided to choose Miralles and Tagliabue's design instead of the one presented by Torres – Lapeña. According to the jury, both understood vertical architecture throughout very different ways: throughout tradition and throughout experimentation.

The proposal of EMBT, far from the tradition, presented an *assemblage* be-

tween a tower, according to the buildings surrounding the Ronda Litoral, and a horizontal building, respecting the Barceloneta tracings, a site to which Gas Natural returned after leaving the Doménech I Estapà building in Portal del Àngel from 1905.

And in between both volumes, in that undefined space of the figuration, where so many projects of Miralles seem to take place, "one day with a pencil, he filled in one of the drawings, the space between the blocks, generating a flame only stopped by the sky". Flames of fire, the shelter of a poet. Flames of gas, like those generated by the bombs that in the past devastated the area, as we will see. Destruction as a creative process that evokes the architect more than once.

In this way, and against all prognostics, the last building of Miralles in Barcelona is located in a triple context: urban, poetical and architectural. Responding in a site full of history, to a literary work, embracing from the avant-garde to the feelings, with his obsession with displacements, elaborating a critic towards the idea of vertical architecture, introducing the value of allegory that Miralles always insisted architecture should not lose.



## THE STRUCTURE OF A CROISSANT

A BALANCE EXERCISE

J. M. García Fuentes

### KEYWORDS:

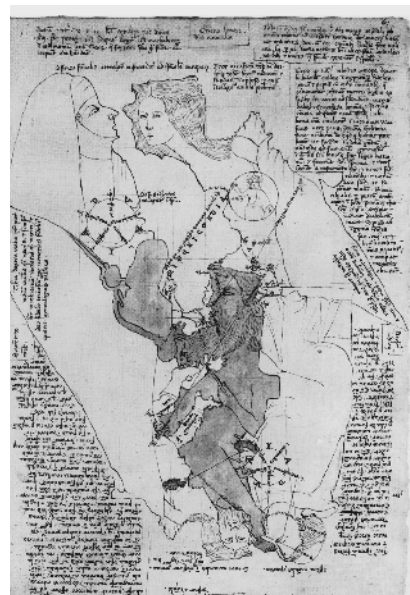
DRAWING - COMPLEX ARCHITECTURE - NON EUCLIDEAN GEOMETRY - NARROW - TRIANGLE HORIZONTAL BALANCE - HIERARCHY - PERGOLA IN PARETS DEL VALLÉS - TATLIN - EL LISSITZKY - LADOWSKI - OVERLAP - HOSTALET DE BALENYÀ - ARCHERY

In his essay, Josep M. García Fuentes analyses the logic of a well known text Miralles wrote in 1991, "How to measure a croissant". The intuition of García Fuentes is without a doubt verified when the architect decides to measure that complex form through triangles. It is through this complex method that he looks for the structure of the croissant.

But, how is it? Shall we expect a simple exercise of hiperstatic balance in which the different loads and the forces become vertical vectors, due to gravity? Can the exercise be resolved through euclidian geometry? Was the architect defying the classic laws of static?

Starting from these questions the author remembers all those mentors that somehow inspired Miralles: the Russian constructivist vanguards, architects such as El Lissitzky, Ladowski, Melnikow, Tatlin,... Mentors of the horizontal balances that defied the laws of static. Dinamism against the stillness of the present they wanted to revolution.

The masters lead the path, and Miralles follows them: Hostalets de Balenyà, the pergolas in Parets del Vallés or the ceiling in the Huesca sports pavilion are not alone. They are part of a tradition, as García Fuentes will carefully report.



## JUJOL REVIEW? MIRALLES' GRAFFITI IN IGUALADA CEMETERY

David Caralt

### KEYWORDS:

ROSER HERMITAGE - JOSEP M. JUJOL - AVE - THUMBNAILS - IL MASSO DI BORNO - STEINER - CARVINGS - GRAFFITIS - BRASSÀ - FLÂNEUR - PARC DELS COLORS DE MOLLET - BALZAC - PICASSO - WALTER BENJAMIN - JEAN DUBUFFET - OPICINUS DE CANISTRIS - LE CORBUSIER - GRANDVILLE- IGUALADA CEMETERY

Between 1988 and 1989, while the Igualada Cemetery still was under construction, Miralles wrote an article about the work of Jujol. It is from this point that Caralt starts his brief and intense journey through the history of the anagrams and inscriptions of the man in the world.

And so he goes, from *il masso di Borno* in Brescia, passing through George

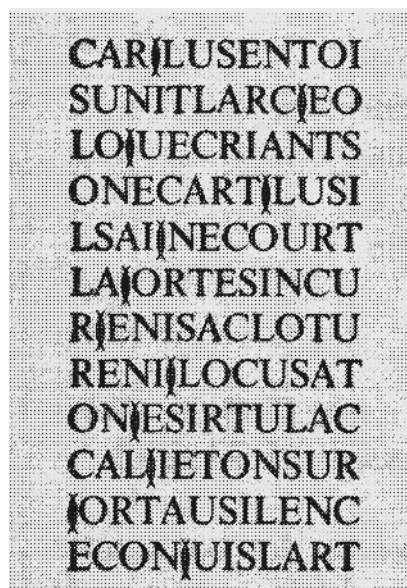
Brassaï and his *graffiti*, published in *Minotaure*, Picasso, Dubuffet, Grandville or Opicinius de Canistris, ending with the intervention of Le Corbusier in Cap Martin.

Caralt pays special attention to the design process of Miralles. In several occasions the architect used the concept of repetition to explain his projects. Repetition as the incarnation of another project; like when we catch an idea that is flying through our mind; when a coincidence or just a distraction happens, always aware to the connections established by the private thinking. Because once inside, ideas rest in different levels of our memory, waiting to arise to the surface unconsciously, at any time.

And so it refers to the sliding door of the body depot in the Igualada Cemetery, when Caralt uses the term "superficiality", so many times used by Savinio to talk about the free thinking that slides over the things, placing in his surface everything that should be hidden. Hofmannsthal said: "may the deep be in the surface". So shall it be.

for Venice is clearly influenced by it, as much as the *oulipian* concept of constriction.

Queneau very clearly explains this possibility in his *Exercices de style*: 99 constrictions that allow us to tell a story in 99 different ways, going much further than the inherited traditional constrictions: *Notations, Metaphorically Surprises, Dream, Forecasts, Rainbow, Hesitations, Precisions, Subjective point of view, another subjective point of view,...* The constriction of a prisoner, so close to some of the mental maps of Miralles.



**ENRIC MIRALLES  
AND RAYMOND QUENEAU**

Maurici Pla Serra

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**KEYWORDS:**  
ANNIE BATS - RAMÓN LLADÓ - RESONANCES -  
LITTÉRATURE POTENTIELLE - INVISIBILITY -  
CENT MILLE MILLIARDS DE POÈMES - 1001  
PROJECTS FOR VENICE - JACQUES ROUBAUD -  
OULIPO - 99 CONSTRICTIONS - THE PRISONER'S  
CONSTRICTION

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Maurici Pla establishes the point in which Miralles introduces the figure and the work of Raymond Queneau in his workshops in the ETSAB. It was the year 1994, and its sessions were joined by the translators of his works from Catalan to French, Annie Bats and Ramón Lladó.

But like most of the times, the origin of the inspiration was kept hidden, and the invisible strings that tied the architect with his muse were rarely revealed. Only in one occasion, the work of Queneau inspired "literally" some of the principles Miralles established in his workshops. It was *Cent mille milliards de poèmes*, and the title 1001 projects

