

Order of the award ceremony

Welcome from the rector of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya · BarcelonaTech,
Prof Daniel Crespo.

Reading of the Governing Council's decision by the general secretary, Ms Ana B. Cortina.

Oration for Mr Ricardo Bofill by the sponsor, Prof Félix Solaguren-Beascoa.

Conferral of the honorary doctorate in Mr Ricardo Bofill
by the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya · BarcelonaTech.

Acceptance speech by Mr Ricardo Bofill.

Speech by the rector, Prof Daniel Crespo.

Gaudeamus igitur, university hymn. Arranged by Joan Casulleras

Gaudeamus igitur iuvenes
dum sumus (bis),
post iucundam iuventutem,
post molestam senectutem
nos habebit humus (bis)

Ubi sunt qui ante nos
in mundo fuere (bis)
adeas ad inferos, transeas
ad superos
hos sivos videre (bis)

Vivat Academia, vivant
profesores, (bis)
vivat membrum quolibet,
vivant membra quaelibet
semper sint in flore (bis)

Oration for Mr Ricardo Bofill

by the sponsor Prof *Félix Solaguren-Beascoa*
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya · BarcelonaTech

WHY RICARDO BOFILL DESERVES TO BE AWARDED AN HONORARY DOCTORAL DEGREE

Francisco Mitjans was sitting on a two-seater sofa, a sofa born from an armchair whose structure had been cut in half and lengthened to create that new item. Two people sat on the novel piece to be able to talk more comfortably.

And so the conversation began.

“Give me the name of a church in Barcelona that is more beautiful than Santa María del Mar.” It was a question to which he did not get an answer.

Let’s imagine another conversation on the same stage. Another topic starts the conversation. “Give me the name of a Catalan architect who is as important to our culture as Antoni Gaudí and is as widely recognised internationally.” There would be no doubt here. Ricardo Bofill would be the answer, to which he would add, “Exactly”.

A few months ago now, the ETSAB’s directors told the School Board that they wished to propose awarding architect Ricardo Bofill an honorary doctoral degree. This initiative had been started some time ago, and multiple conversations were held before it was formally presented. The proposal was accepted, so the directors were asked to submit their request to the University’s governing bodies.

Ricardo Bofill is from Barcelona.

We often think that, for the recognition of scientific, professional, academic or research merits, people from abroad, from distant or even mythical lands, are always better. We probably believe that their recognition will echo longer and louder and that this will allow us to reach higher stages of self-affirmation. We are undoubtedly mistaken. Don’t we know how to look around us rather than being permanently obsessed with what’s on the horizon?

We believe that if anyone among us –the most recognised architect of our time, the one with the greatest international prestige, with highly renowned, award-winning work, and someone who is also close to us– really deserves it, this person is undoubtedly the architect Ricardo Bofill Levi. He is close to us and on the horizon at the same time. His value is two-fold and that is difficult for some to accept.

But some say that time puts things in their place. Perhaps this is one of those occasions. Ricardo Bofill enrolled at our school in 1957, when it was located in the centre of Barcelona, at the current University of Barcelona, *La Central*. It was a time of a country in black and white, a time of incense and scapulars, a time of censorship and repression.

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 led to the country’s invasion by the Soviet Union. In Barcelona, the price of a tram ticket went

up. These were reason enough for a rare occurrence since the end of the Spanish Civil War: the first student demonstrations. The first Free Student Assembly was held on 21 February 1957.

It was a time of censorship and repression, and that year the young student Bofill was arrested and expelled from the University. He was not able to fulfil his wish to study architecture at the school in his hometown, at the ETSAB, at our ETSAB.

I think that now, with this recognition as a pretext, it is a good time to talk about architecture.

His father, Emilio Bofill i Benessat, was an architect. He had been a student partner of the Group of Catalan Architects for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture (GATCPAC) GATCPAC. From his firm, called the Taller de Arquitectura y Construcción, he designed and built his own projects, such as the Llacuna house in Ciudad Diagonal, which was completed in 1962.

The house was published that same year in issue number 50 of the journal *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo* of the Architects' Association of Catalonia (COAC).

The design was built of brick, and it's worth highlighting the beginning of the article, a veritable declaration of intent:

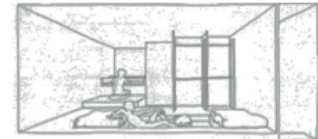
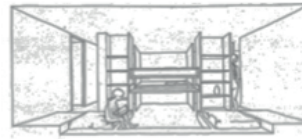
"This design essentially seeks to link the architecture to the site and to use materials that are appropriate to the local construction system and are treated according to the function they perform."

The professional career of the young student who moved to Geneva to continue studying architecture begins in this context.

He continued studying in Paris, and at the same time the Taller de Arquitectura in Barcelona would progressively take on a new international dimension that would be reaffirmed with reference works in our city.

I am not going to talk about them; they are in his CV and they all speak for themselves.

Paris, the 1960s: a time of rebellion and reinvention that changed society forever. A time for daydreaming. "Sous le pavés, la plage" was one of the slogans of May 1968. Today, we would probably identify more closely with "sous la neige, le vert". It proclaims a commitment to nature, to new concerns that have not gone unnoticed by the Taller de Arquitectura.



Now let's go back to the ETSAB a few years later.

Ricardo Bofill was invited to give a lecture. The anticipation was immense. Never had an event of its kind stirred up so much expectation. We were one of those spectators made anonymous by the darkness at the back of the room.

That has always happened and on all of the very rare occasions that he has visited us: there is an expectant and attentive crowd, and the privilege of the back of the room.

This interest in his work and his person is something that the establishment hasn't quite been able to get its head around.

His relationship with the School and the UPC was not new. The Taller de Arquitectura had been involved substantially since the second half of the 1970s. Anna Bofill taught at the school in the Vallès, and Peter Hodgkinson at the one in Barcelona. It was a

time of doubt and mixed emotions, in architecture too. It was a time of monotony, exhaustion and eccentricity in which brutalist guidelines, even late brutalist ones, were countered by postmodern ones. Critical regionalism appeared.

Ricardo Bofill and his Taller de Arquitectura were able to get the best out of each of the trends and propose what we could call a new technological classicism, whose aim was for man to regain prominence.

To visit and, if possible, live in Walden 7, for example, was longed for by every intellectual. Who didn't dream of being an intellectual?

Faced with such contrasts, a friend who was studying architecture went into crisis.

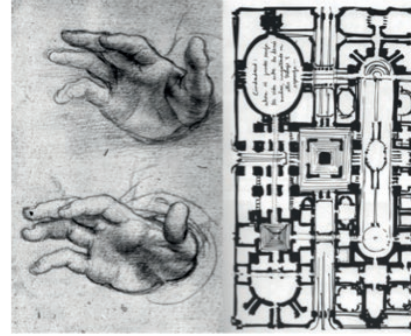
He embarked on a trip to Finland to see the work of Alvar Aalto in the hope of settling his doubts. He stopped in Paris on the way. It was 1978. He told me that he bought a book there that had just come out, called *L'architecture d'un homme*, by Ricardo Bofill.¹

He read it during his trip. It still has the two bookmarks he used: a small booklet from the Alvar Aalto Museum in Jyväskylä and a SNCF train timetable from Paris to Quimper.

The text is a conversation that starts with the proposal for Les Halles in Paris and reflects a journey through the various stages so far. It talks about his projects, about the Marxism that would help him to understand certain situations, about the Taller, its people, Gaudí, the living room as a meeting place, symbolism, but especially the theory and practice of design and the importance of history.

My friend was utterly seduced by the content, the photos and particularly by the sketches of his works. He compared them with those attributed to Leonardo da Vinci for the refectory of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, the *Last Supper*.

They were vibrant, ambiguous, magical drawings we might even dare to say tremulous. His aim was none other than to embrace



a moment, the moment when the betrayal of one of the apostles was announced.

The drawings in Bofill's book are black-and-white reproductions. They are not ambiguous. They are clear, confident, insistent, vigorous, full of character. They do not intend to capture the moment; their aim is another: to embrace time, immortal time. They have a will to eternity, to universality, which is in some way what his work is permanently demanding.

Ricardo Bofill's architecture recovered the lintel as an archetype of modernity, but his gaze also alighted on the arch as an indelible element of historical architecture, of memory. They both defend empty space as a permanent value. It is no longer the point that differentiates an outside and an inside but a new concept that also reaffirms the idea of passage, of lost spaces² and, in

¹ Librairie Arthaud, Paris 1978 ISBN 2-7003-0201-X

² Is there anything more profitable than a lost space?

addition, of the relationship between rooms, which culminates in the ambiguity between interiors and exteriors, as in popular architecture.

The contrast between the inside and the outside would never again make sense. It was one of the concessions to modernity, since this concern had always floated in and around man's existence. It was definitively cleared up. These are the moments when the magical doubt appears, those moments of that emotion on which the spirit necessarily feeds.

At the end of the book is his biography. It is divided into seven periods. The last, the seventh, presages his future: "1980, Il se retire dans un oasis du désert saharien".

My friend, who was perplexed, said, "How can he say that he is going to retire and go and live in the desert if it's 1978? Does this foreshadow his future?"

What is most impressive about the desert? The general answer would be "large areas of sand or granite". But in the desert, as in the Sargasso Sea, what's most important is undoubtedly silence and absence.

And the architect must be able to transform that absence, the void, into place and space and to flood it with poetry, a space that should always be defined as "light in time". Is there anything more beautiful? The rest is mere speculation.

But to define that space we need to "draw" it in the void, limit it, define it.

The vibrant drawings in the book are formalised into images of that constructed reality that the photographs reflect at the end of the book, but they all contain aspects and disciplines that Ricardo Bofill's Taller de Arquitectura and architecture have promoted since then, relying on technology, construction and even mathematics. The result materialised in the cities, in dreamed-of spaces, in the magic of the light and fragrances of the Mediterranean. The result, I insist, would be rewarded with social regeneration, with the relationship between human beings, with the places where people meet: a city with streets, squares, pub-

lic spaces and mixed uses. Why not buildings? Goodbye to the *banlieues!*

That was the goal of humanity when it built the first shelter and the first group of dwellings, something that would thrill it when it managed to make of that impression no more and no less than the crystallisation of its desire.

"But Bofill seems to be a classic," explained my friend, with a play on words, referring to both the statement itself and the style that was announced in the book's drawings and that definitively catapulted him onto the world stage.

But what is a classic? That was the title Eliot gave to a lecture³ in which he attributed this quality to the great Roman poet Virgil.⁴ In it he resorts, regarding this question, to the article that Sainte-Beuve wrote on Monday 21 October 1850,⁵ which is a reflection on the concept of "classic" in literature but also a reflection on the work of Virgil and Homer, Dante and Firdusi, Shakespeare and Molière, among others.

According to him, in literature a classic is a "model author".

But a true classic is one that enriches the human spirit, one that frees itself from what limits it.

In architecture, one of the architects that practically everyone would identify with that figure would be Frank Lloyd Wright.

One day Wright picked up a brick, held it up in front of the auditorium and said, "Give me this brick and it will be worth its weight in gold". And architecture emerged.

But if literature is born when two words are delicately joined, architecture appears when two bricks are carefully brought together. This is what Mies van der Rohe used to say.

3 "What is a Classic?" Conferència de T. S. Eliot per a la Virgil Society de Londres, pronunciada el 16 d'octubre de 1944.

4 "Thus Virgil acquires the centrality of the unique classic; he is at the centre of European civilization, in a position no other poet can share or usurp". T. S. Eliot. *What is a Classic?* pàg. 29. Faber & Faber, Londres 1946.

5 Charles-Augustine Sainte-Beuve: "Què és un clàssic?". A "Causeries du Lundi". Garnier Frères, Tome Troisième, pàg. 38-55. París, 1858.

In written language the problem arises when one goes on to the next line, and in architecture it arises when the plane changes or the corner has to be solved.

If we analyse Ricardo Bofill's drawings, texts and designs, let's look at the unions of the elements that compose them. Let's look at "line breaks", let's look at "rhymes", let's look at "punctuation marks". They are not the same. There is no "style".

The Greeks solved the turning of the façades, the corners, by addressing the problem suggested by the triglyph when it extends from one face to the other. As a result, the column at the corner of a temple would determine the exact position of the rest.

This concern was clearly recovered by Friedrich Gilly and later by Schinkel at the Altes Museum in Berlin. Here the canton allows the turn to be carried out harmoniously. We might not notice it, but our spirit surely will.

The modern movement would be hesitant, but Mies van der Rohe would be firm. As materials changed, the objectives changed. The corner disappeared. Technique allowed this privilege. He repeated it in all his work, over and over again.

Can we establish a model for corners in Ricardo Bofill's work? The answer is no. There is no model; there is no reiteration. They are all different. There is no style, but balance is systemic. His style is all of them; restlessness in front of the blank sheet of paper and research are constant. It's a permanent discovery, of what is there and what isn't, of what does not yet exist. Is there anything more academic?

A classic, Eliot would say, is only produced in a mature civilisation and its work can only be done by mature spirits, and maturity is only reached when there is a critical sense of the past, confidence in the present and capacity for the future. What difference does it make to have style or not when one is able to maintain the essentials of the environment and of life?

On the way back from that trip, after that personal crisis, my friend changed and reaffirmed his vocation as an architect thanks to that text that accompanied him during the trip.

It was a text that illustrated the works and concerns of an architect, as convincing as those of a teacher.

I understand that, in the university field, recipients of honorary doctoral degrees must meet this requirement: to be a point of reference in their work, in their profession; in short, in their research. Like that of a teacher, like that of a "model teacher".

For us these aspects are precisely reflected in this proposal that the ETSAB and the School Board have put forward. What we propose is no more and no less than to award the highest academic distinction by our university and our school to our most international architect, Ricardo Bofill Levi, and in passing to settle a debt that all of us had.

Félix Solaguren-Beascoa

Acceptance speech by Mr Ricardo Bofill

Good morning. It is a double pleasure to be with you all receiving this doctoral degree in this marvellous location of Santa Maria del Mar, perhaps the best space in Barcelona. I would like to speak in Catalan but as some people do not speak it I will use Spanish.

Rector, members of the University Senate and Board of Trustees, Board of the Barcelona School of Architecture, many thanks for this award.

Many thanks for your words, Félix.

I am deeply moved to reconnect with the Barcelona School of Architecture where I began my studies in 1956 and from which I was expelled for creating the Sindicato Libre Universitario (Free University Union).

I am sorry that the UPC and especially the architecture school are having economic difficulties that prevent them from training university students in the conditions for knowledge that are needed to address the current changes and uncertainty in the world of architecture. Without a doubt, the current generation will have professional difficulties in the future.

Since its creation in 1875, important figures have passed through the School: Gaudí, Doménech, Puig i Cadalfach, Sert and Coderch, among so many others.

Gaudí is the greatest genius in the history of architecture. He never repeated two elements or forms. He was considered a great expert in the Greek classics. He believed that pure form was only found in Classical Greece. He saw himself as Classical and considered his architecture a distortion of Gothic, which he also considered Classical, according to his interpretation of history.

In any case, it is crucial to understand the pre-Socratic and Socratic Greek philosophers, the architecture of the Renaissance and the French Revolution to obtain a full view of history. Knowledge of Western history is required to be able to create the designs of the future.

Gaudí believed in the notion of the “total work of art”, which is what architecture today should still be.

What is my position? The teachings of Gaudí cannot be continued, but I learnt from him that nothing can be repeated, that no design can be the same as another.

We cannot create the same architecture anywhere in the world. Knowledge of the *genius loci* leads us to different designs for different places.

My life and the circumstances of my career, the need to be a nomad, have led me to create different designs in each place that I

have worked in. I have completed around a thousand projects, and I have built in 35 cities.

On my father's side, I belong to a family of the old Catalan bourgeoisie, Republican and liberal, which brought the classics and contributed to the Renaissance. My father was a great teacher for me.

On my mother's side, I am from a Jewish Venetian family of antiquarians. My grandfather León Levi was a great antiquarian. My mother, who was also Venetian, was a great patron who only liked excellence and talent. My paternal grandfather, José María Bofill, was a doctor and worked with Ramón y Cajal.

The atmosphere at home contrasted with that in the streets of Barcelona in the 1940s and 1950s. These were dark times in Francoist Spain.

Educated in this context, I thought about how to move towards the construction of the total artist. As a result, I became interested in cinema, psychiatry and politics, among other disciplines.

I chose architecture because I thought that the architectural work of art transcends a person's lifetime. I was excited by space, and I liked the idea of tackling the physical construction of space-time.

I studied vernacular architecture and the work of Alvar Aalto, as well as that of Louis Khan, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe.

After studying at the Geneva School of Architecture, I returned to Barcelona and was privileged to work with my father, who was an architect and property developer, and a victim of reprisal by the Franco regime. Working with him enabled me to construct, when I was 19 years old, my first **house in Ibiza** and my first block of flats in **Compositor Bach 28**.

I wanted to tackle another scale and created **Barrio Gaudí**, a new type of social housing, for which I was awarded the Fritz Schumacher prize from the University of Hannover.

To shift from the scale of pedestrian to neighbourhood, you need a command of small and intermediate scales, and I wanted to check my own errors in this process.

In 1963, I formed my first team, which I called the **Taller de Arquitectura**, composed of architects, engineers, writers, poets, philosophers, mathematicians and others. The Taller brought together people from different disciplines, including Luis Goytisolo, Xavier Rubert de Ventós, Salvador Clotas and Anna Bofill, among others. I thought that architecture was the centre of an interdisciplinary system and that it should be associated with the various scientific and technological specialisations. The boundary of the discipline, locked in its own logic, should be broken, and it should be opened up to address designs with these alternative approaches.

In this way, I planned **Muralla Roja**, **Xanadú** and **Plexus**, where the design reflected the desire to integrate architecture in the place.

The distinct geometries were crucial to resolve the various systems. Both for the public space and the private space.

I have been anti-Corbusier since the start of my career. I considered Le Corbusier a great architect, but he did not interest me as an urban thinker. He divided the city into functions. He resolved the city in one gesture and, in reality, he hated the city and especially the Mediterranean city.

All my life in different parts of the world I have supported the modernisation of the Mediterranean city. The Mediterranean city, the city as conflict and at the same time as utopia had to be redesigned with the characteristics of the new times.

Modern architecture had proposed a break with history, and I believed that it was necessary to recover it.

Henri Lefebvre and the Situationists defended the right to the city.

Instead of the model of the commuter town, we were committed to creating neighbourhoods with mixed functions, while supporting urban continuity: the street and the square.

At the same time as Archigram was designing the technological city and Japanese Metabolists were creating cities with large urban infrastructure, I designed **La Ciudad en el Espacio** (The City in the Space), a social utopia.

The design is based on a social theory of communitarianism that breaks with the traditional idea of family, the idea of property and the predetermined idea of the city and constructs spatial structures that were developed over time.

In the attempt to construct 1,500 dwellings in Madrid, Carlos Arias Navarro, who was then mayor, forbade me from building in Spain again, and I had to move to work in Paris for 30 years.

The only built example of the City in the Space is **Walden 7**, in the suburbs of Barcelona. It is a monumentalised *kasbah* for a new type of community, with public spaces and shared and private gardens. The design was inspired by the Californian movements of 1963 and the ideas of May 1968. To be able to carry it out I had to fund, promote, design and construct it.

The result of all of this is a social dwelling monument in the suburbs and a community that has ended up working. Utopia was carried out, partially.

In 1980, I built the **Houari Boumédiène Agricultural Village** in the Algerian desert, using minimal technology, just one

kind of brick and trained soldiers to do the work of labourers and builders. There I built the first agricultural village adapted to the place. Then I drew up a set of proposals for cities throughout Algeria.

At the **Venice Biennale of Architecture** of 1980, directed by **Paolo Portoghesi**, we defined postmodernism. International architecture was too repetitive, it could only be built in technically advanced countries and the language had to be opened up to new teachings that came from history. They were applications and tests of urban monuments in the city.

In the mid-1970s, the French government and administrators of the **Villes Nouvelles** (New Towns) for the Paris region came to me. Paris has been the base from which I opened studios in the cities of the world in which I have been commissioned to carry out projects.

La Petite Cathédrale, Les Espaces d'AbraXas, Les Colonnes de Saint-Christophe, Les Arcades du Lac, Le Viaduc, La Place de la Catalogne and **Antigone** are examples from this period. We produced urban fabric, pieces of the city that are a mix of uses and social classes, defining the public space that surrounds them.

France is the city of reinforced concrete. Massive construction systems had to be created for social housing. I worked in the factories to change the models and be able to create varied dwellings, as well as streets and squares, using the new system that was invented. All of this led me to rewrite classical geometry, to develop a new language to be able to achieve these types of dwellings and urban complexes.

Antigone is an example of a new centrality carried out with prefabricated materials. The need to construct series of prefabricated elements got me interested in studying the great architects of the Renaissance and the Baroque to learn how to create all types of

spaces for the city. For example, Borromini was my maestro for the creation of the **Place de la Catalogne** in Paris, in the 14th arrondissement.

Through these specific experiences, the Taller de Arquitectura formulated a theory of design of the city in which urbanism and architecture are developed simultaneously. This is based on the famous treatise by **Francesco di Giorgio Martini**, whose maxim was “The city is like a house in which the corridors are streets and the rooms are squares”.

Why are historical cities more beautiful than cities today? The city today offers a panorama of anonymous forms, without identity.

Subsequently, I worked with prefabricated materials in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, where there is a major housing shortage problem, and I had to shift from 7-ton parts to 14 ton. Doubtless, this experience influenced my work. It had a particular impact on aesthetics, because prefabrication makes you write the architecture considering at all times that the technical system is essential for the design.

We investigated other materials and we invented the unsupported glass façade, as well as the double curtain wall with which we built the headquarters of **Dior**, **Cartier** and **Paribas** in the Marché Saint Honoré in the centre of Paris.

The **Marché Saint Honoré next to Place Vendôme** is a temple of glass cut by a passage in the middle of an existing square.

At the same time, in cities such as Tokyo, Stockholm, Houston and Chicago, we constructed technologically advanced buildings that were not prefabricated, which made the architectural language evolve. Examples of diversification, examples of an impossible city.

The building **77 West Wacker** in Chicago is the first example of a skyscraper created with this technology. I had to learn to design skyscrapers, tall buildings, and understand their logic. At that time, **Daniel Burnham**, **Frank Lloyd Wright** and **Mies van der Rohe** became my maestros. In 2000, I created my second skyscraper in Chicago, the **Dearborn Center**.

My projects in Tokyo, such as **Shiseido**, **United Arrows**, **Aoyama Palace** and **Kawasaki Plaza**, reflect the meaning of empty space in Japanese culture. In Japan, interior space itself gains a fundamental value again. Kyoto’s gardens show how to sublimate the small space.

Subsequently, I have built in Russia, China and the Middle East, designing buildings and cities. Currently, I am developing on behalf of the central Chinese government an intelligent city with zero carbon emissions and 5G technology, which has become a model to be replicated in the entire country.

I am also building a city of knowledge for the OCP Phosphates Group in Ben Guerir, Morocco, through the campus of the **Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique**.

Moroccan architecture is a historical reference for planning this city of knowledge. This requires us to produce a new urban design and a new architectural vocabulary based on north African architecture, with a geometry that is different from that of the West.

Ultimately, designing in Riyadh and the Red Sea forces me to develop a different vocabulary for each project.

The cultural complex that we are designing in Riyadh, the **Royal Arts Complex**, is part of the programme **Saudi Vision 2030**, a strategic programme to reduce the dependence of Saudi Arabia

on oil and diversify its economy. We are also competing to design the new capital.

If I had to show in lines on a map the chronology of my career after my early days in Spain, first I would draw a perpendicular line from north to south, from Stockholm passing through Saint Petersburg, Holland, France, Spain, Morocco, Algeria, etc. And then I would draw another transverse line through the United States, Japan, China, India and the Middle East.

Each project is different; the vision of Earth and its current problems changes. Travelling has enabled me to establish relations with other places, and this gives me knowledge about other mechanisms. You cannot design in Beijing in the same way as you would in Barcelona.

With deepening knowledge of different parts of the world the vision changes, because from each place Earth is angled in a different way.

Architecture is a strange profession: it is signed but carried out in a team; it is an artistic creation but undertaken within economic, political and administrative mechanisms. The loneliness of the creator does not exist, it only exists in one moment: that of creating itself. Before and after this moment, everything is constructed on the ground.

Architects, even before they start to design and even after they have conceived the project, have to know the social and economic structure that surrounds them, they have to meet the expectations of users and continue with their investigation. Vitrubio, Giorgio Martini, Palladio, Borromini, Bernini, Otto Wagner and Mies van der Rohe should form part of the background of their knowledge.

Architecture has evolved in parallel with the advance of technology and sciences. It has changed from a traditional trade to the

creation of scientific, methodological and technologically complex systems. The development of construction techniques, the emergence of new materials and the requirements in terms of sustainability need increasingly specialised professionals to participate in projects.

Of the various definitions of architecture as an independent discipline, I prefer “the art of organising space”. However, architecture is also a discipline affected by economics, sociology, technology and all human sciences. The style is the writing, the language that architects use to express themselves, and in no case is it an aim in itself.

The ultimate *raison d'être* of architecture is to express at each historical moment the relation of the individual with time and space. In each historical period, from the beginnings in Mesopotamia or Egypt, scientific and technical revolutions have been accompanied by a revolution in architectural conception, producing the different civilisations.

The only utopia that is currently possible is Knowledge.

The enlightened philosophy that launched what is really modern thinking was established with Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, among others. In Spain, thinkers like Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset disseminated the ideas of the German philosophers. For the Enlightenment, university culture was based on the principles of freedom to think, study and publish. But the new perspectives are uncertain and random. There are no theorists with the capacity to synthesise our period.

My story is that of someone who left their country, Catalonia, an interesting but small country. If you are in a place like Barcelona you have to be interested by others, by other cultures, by other systems, by other ways of doing that enable you to enrich yourself and understand the world.

My personal experience, my biography, is different to the usual. My personality is constructed based on personal circumstances. A nomad proposing ideas and projects in different places.

Encountering other civilisations, thoughts and cultures has shaped my way of working in this marvellous profession.

Sixty years of experiences, journeys and meetings have defined and shaped me in a precise, measured way. A polycentric view of the world, as if the Earth were seen through a kaleidoscope.

Architecture has also helped me to interpret and understand reality from two perspectives, the local and the global, and to appreciate the differences in every continent, region, city and neighbourhood. This way of living and understanding has led me to consider design as a main axis of my life and my work.

The design: understanding the specific place, its culture, its financial and legal mechanisms, its aspirations, in short, its way of life have become the centre of my curiosity, and my motivation.

The design as a way of thinking, as attraction to the Work of Art, as satisfaction for the arrangement of space and time. Creativity as the only resource.

A strategy of life focused on your own challenge. Control of fear and a way to understand life as will and representation.

I have always worked with a controlled system of emotions, and I live in emotional spaces that I have constructed myself. I believe that spaces that provoke strong emotions are those that are closest to excellence. However, sensitivity to space is not a faculty that everyone has. From an emotional perspective, this sensitivity enables you to understand the space. I have cultivated this sensitivity all of my life; I am thrilled by the sensation I feel in the middle of the sea, at the top of the highest mountains, in the immensity of the desert, but also going up the stairs of Michelangelo's Laurentian Library.

The history of architecture began 10,000 years ago. What happened at the end of the eighteenth century in Vienna was a change within a longer process. Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos expanded the view in the history of architecture, but the history of architecture did not start at that time.

The urbanistic ideology of the last century separated urbanism and architecture. I think the city has to be designed, and this involves recovering a discipline halfway between planning and architecture: urban design. Designing the city means learning to draw up streets, squares and urban spaces, based on a discipline that has always been used in Europe.

The design of the empty space, the street and the square requires a work in process. With planning on different territorial scales, urban design considers public space and private space, with the individual always at the centre of this space. We must look at reality from a bird's eye view and learn to design our homes, our towns, neighbourhoods and cities.

The quality of urban aesthetics is linked in our subconscious with simple ideas that are barely considered, the empty space that separates volumes, the relation between space and time.

Demography, economy, technology, politics: cities are at the same time the intersection between these forces.

Creative architects, those who thought about the city, have practically disappeared. Architects today follow social evolution. The role of architecture could disappear. If relations are not strengthened with other scientific disciplines, architecture could contribute little to the new vision that is needed of the future.

I feel incredible love for Barcelona. It is an interesting city, distinct; it is not like any other. It has a particular characteristic that lies in the variety of architectural styles. No façade is like any other.

Barcelona and Catalonia have had varied, remarkable architecture in keeping with their history. Civic Gothic, *Modernisme*, Grup R and the Olympics, among others, have been historical moments that have produced singular works and special designs that are far from international theoretical movements. Catalonia is a particular case.

Barcelona experienced a void during the Renaissance and the Baroque, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because the city was at a standstill.

This is also why the ideas of the era did not arrive, the ideas of the Enlightenment when the ideal city was designed, the axes, the squares, in Italy above all. When the Renaissance was formed, in Catalonia there was practically no architecture.

The city of Barcelona has produced and continues to produce extraordinary architects, with a great capacity for design and re-organisation of the suburbs, but the system prevents the large scale from being addressed in urban design, in the territory, the city/region.

Catalonia has barely been studied from the perspective of overall planning. There has not been a vision of the whole, of the territory.

Catalonia is a country under construction, unfinished. Contradictory and small. And, currently, with a vision that is excessively endogamous. The current situation of architecture is not good. Most architects can only work in an excessively limited environment.

Currently, and at the global level, architecture is organised in large companies, partnership systems, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States. In some cases, these are studios with over 2,000 employees.

However, if the company is bigger the design gets diluted. The design is the result of other systems, of other logics.

Architecture can be written with various vocabularies, with different syntax, and no aesthetic ideology should determine it. Personally, I am interested in inventing vocabularies, processing them, developing different vocabularies and producing new languages, new vocabularies, new writing that is possible in this multiple, standardised world. Language as a form of expression, as a challenge to oneself.

All architects want to produce their own style and reproduce a brand. But I am particularly interested in the architecture of the periphery, of poverty, of scarcity, the vernacular architecture of the Mediterranean. I went to explore the origins of this architecture. I went further south; I found the architecture of the desert and the architecture of nature. The material is rock. The energy is the wind. And the wind against the rock produces sand. This was a journey through the Mediterranean to Africa, in the sphere of purely minimalist elements. This is the environment of the Tuaregs, who build very simple forms with the materials available to them in the middle of the Sahara, with their own ideas and customs. It is minimalist, very simple and very poor. Monumentalism is generally associated with luxury; I believe that luxury and beauty are distinct, separate concepts.

I am a totally self-analysed person. Each period of my life has been a critical analysis of what I have done and a projection of what I try to be, questioning myself and projecting myself towards the future. My work reflects the evolution of my personality over time, the drive to do and design, and knowledge and outside influences. Mine are varied, as I have said, from vernacular architecture, that of the desert or classicism, passing through the architecture of the Renaissance, that of Borromini or the perfection of the works of Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe and the temples of Kyoto.

But when I design, I empty myself of references. When I concentrate in front of a sheet of blank paper, I feel satisfaction. When I manage to produce a logic, a system, an emotion, I celebrate it. But when the project is completed, I only see imperfections. I only see my own errors.

I am critical with myself. Criticism of my own work is the only thing that enables me to create something new. The best way to understand my work is to interpret each one of my designs from a critical perspective.

The constant stimulation of my career is dissatisfaction. I think that each design needs to be constructed to be able to make mistakes. I want each building to be a way of analysing the design and detecting errors, to be able to change. I have never wanted to do the same design.

I am an architect because what I like is space, the architectural way of observing space, which is different from pictorial space:

in architecture the view is broad and we move within this space. I like it when the relation between the individual and the space is aesthetically powerful.

The fusion between the way of living and creativity, the design; the challenge to oneself and the capacity to learn, to change, to organise oneself as a person who lives in one's time until the last consequences; where, in the end, beauty and intelligence are components of happiness.

In short, design as a form of life. The insecurity of the current time, the implementation of the design.

I am sure that the Barcelona School of Architecture will evolve to adapt to the new times, to train new generations of architects and urban planners who will accept the challenge of improving our environment and contributing to inventing the city of the future.

Many thanks.