

## **EVERSIONE CONSERVATRICE**

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1 One of the characteristics of these times is society's growing loss of interest in architecture. On the other hand, this indifference is inversely proportional to the growing attention given by the media to this subject.

Therefore, at the same time that architecture watches its natural territory disappearing and weakening, the recognition and notoriety of its authors is connected to their ability to turn a project into an event, providing the market with the advantage of a recognizable brand.

The professional is paid attention to and respected according to the economical profit he can provide. This mechanism works in a circuit of many orders, with a lot of restrictions, but has, however, disastrous consequences for the building construction sector, which is more and more restricted by the economic competition and the stress caused by artistic qualifications.

The phenomenon, obviously global, is beginning to face some occasional opposition, but the indications of a possible setback are of a weak and uncertain nature.

It's the end of the slogan era and of the programme manifestos, when everyone looks for "resistance" in their profession. This is a situation rarely discussed in public.

I believe that RBG's work is a good example of the disenchantment and the resulting guidance of his own activity in relation to a context I will define as "conservative rupture".

The novelty, the intellectual exercise and the investigation are observed in the work of rearrangement of a professional horizon that we would wish to be more deep and autonomous.

What is revealed by this work is a desire to simplify, to capture the radically essential.

One of the essential aspects of this approach to the project is the growing interest of RBG in building techniques and in less standardised building components.

This choice, which increased with the preference for the most mature and eclectic age of modernism, can be explained with the nostalgia for a cultural time when there was a specific selective affinity between the orders and the professionals.

One of the lessons RBG seems to have learned from this recent past is that joining a movement (modernism) should never leave out the architect's ability to express his thoughts in an autonomous way and in checking its effectiveness, using the building instruments.

The enthusiasm with this knowledge is a result of the disenchantment and of the distance towards those who state that the quality of the construction is a sure guarantee of the project's quality.

This quality isn't opposed to the ability to operate in a vaster territory, in a country where the traditional techniques were replaced by the new "emigrants" and in a context that has lost memory of art itself.

It is, perhaps, through this lucid knowledge, that we can see the modern aspect in RBG architecture. It is never limited by programme resources or bonds because,

with his own strength, he overcomes the bad working conditions, the economic limitations and the anachronism of building regulations.

**2** In a decade, RBG's architectural language became gradually clearer until it reached what is purer in its essence. This specificity does not harm, in any way, the quality and sophistication of the space solutions continually tested and adjusted.

The two holiday houses in Boliqueime and Quelfes are a clear display of this objective.

In the Boliqueime house the building is designed as a stronghold. The residence, anchored on a sloping terrain, becomes a levee. The volumes of the house are determined by the coherence to this premise, the linking of the environments refers to the passing-through rooms in the country houses, the openings are rhythmical and sober.

A horizontal plan makes the exterior circulation easier and leads to the pool, which, like a huge reservoir, looking towards the sea far away.

The materials used in its construction show no desire to embrace the present time: they are rough / unpolished, rustic and the light shines on them in an intermittent way.

The result is a timeless building, upsetting in its clarity, without a reference that could put a date on it.

The Quelfes project is, in a way, more attractive. It contains more detailed references and is, nevertheless, an original project.

Form and volume become substance, showing that we don't need anything else to understand it. I don't believe this is something only perceived by the eye of the critic.

The scale of the little covered courtyards and their closeness represents a quality shared by all of them, as well as an independence of the environments achieved without harming the unity of the body.

It is the kind of house anyone would want.

I like to imagine RBG's architecture as a great work of reconciliation between the one who inhabits it and the one who plans it.

It is an ambitious goal.

Everyday, what should be built to grow old with us is replaced by something perfect, but ephemeral.

To the luxury represented by the space and by the light we oppose an idea of 18<sup>th</sup> century revival in decoration as the simple joining / addition of valuable objects. The order should be the starting point for the architecture to be thought, planned and to come to light.

Everything is favourable for a project seen as the gluing of finite components, of a brilliant addition of surfaces, more than a slow moulding of filled and empty.

The form without substance wins, considered, by the way, as an inconvenient motive.

**3** It should be obvious to everyone that the dimension, understood as greatness, is not by itself a synonym of quality. It is less so in architecture where, without harmony and proportion, there are no basis not even for the simplest of the works built.

In his projects, RBG always respected dimensions and proportions, which is shown in a sublime way in the apartment in Lapa. The same happens in the apartment in Pena or in the office in Av. Guerra Junqueiro, the three of them almost forming a trilogy of urban architecture with characteristics of a new "existenzminimum".

To play with dimensions some experience is needed and, definitely, something else that shows the maturity of a draughtsman because it concerns directly his life experience. To plan and predict the dimension of architecture we have to work with a complex group of empirical and other rules, controlling the doses of perception and consistence.

This growing process is the one we can observe, for example, in the project for the residence of the Portuguese Embassy in Brasilia. Here the game of dimensions becomes complex, the necessary institutionalism meets the exotic in an extreme way, in a city that is not only the capital city of the Brazilian Federation, but also of the modern architecture, inviting in and accepting virtuosity.

In a first stage, it was born as a container for a botanical collection in the centre of the city. The project for the residence, in its several evolutions, became an emblematic container of the type variety, which only the Brazilian architecture could achieve.

The two residence projects of Pousos e Casa Queimada, in their type variety and dimension, are worthy of important comments.

In Pousos, on a sloping terrain, on a platform, we can see four volumes where the house is divided in its visible part. The functions and the variety of inhabiting produce independent volumes that face the Sun like in a village. The reflexion about the scale of architecture is: is this a very big house or is it a small village?

In the original sketches it is already clear that in Casa Queimada, on the Algarve's mountains, it is orography that sustains the architecture of the two twin houses.

Apart enough to be different close enough to create some tension between them. The dimension grows, including the landscape, and making us imagine other inhabited places, beyond infinity.