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*TECHNIQUE, ART AND FUNDAMENTAL  
ISSUES OF EXISTENCE.*

THOUGHTS ON PAULO MENDES DA  
ROCHA'S DISCOURSE

#### ABSTRACT

The focus of this document intends to discuss the relevance of the technique and the art in the discourse in the architecture of Paulo Mendes da Rocha. It observes the texts of the architect committed to praxis and discusses the value of the "technique" in the architecture configuration and its attachment to a program of life humanity. The dimension of "art", in turn, also integrated into life, is seen as the one that always guarantees the condition and the extension of the attributes inherent to the ordinary processes of everyday life. The ideas of the text are based in the words of the architect – considering the published texts that mention the concepts of the projects, the lessons, the testimonies and the interviews. It advocates the position that the reasoning and the ethics revealed in the speech integrated a "body of knowledge" inherent to the "modus operandi" of the projects. For those who know or want to approach to this architecture, the hospitality of the words of the architect clarifies that the design's knowledge is in the discussion of a horizon that implies the subject, the mankind and the fabricated world. This intentional arch, which reveals itself in the individual trait of the work, is based on rationality. It teaches that spatiality is a condition and a value of lifetime, and even a speech and a historical action interdependent to the artistic sensibilities of human nature. To get to know the architecture of Paulo Mendes da Rocha, which aspires to be the expression of objectivity as designation "radical" of the technique, it is essential to go back to the texts of the architect committed to praxis and involved directly with the production of meanings of architecture. The involvement with the speech reveals that is the "natural inclusivity" of the aesthetic dimension that introduces the negotiation between desire and experience. It also reveals that the senses of human beings are those that organize the structure of rationality and knowledge.

#### KEYWORDS

Rocha, Paulo Archias Mendes da, 1928-. Technique. Art. Discourse. Fundamental issues of the existence Project.

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CONSIDERACIONES SOBRE EL DISCURSO DE  
PAULO MENDES DA ROCHA

RESUMEN

El enfoque de este documento tiene como objetivo discutir la relevancia de la técnica y del arte en el discurso en la arquitectura de Paulo Mendes da Rocha. Examina los textos del arquitecto, comprometido con la praxis y discute la “técnica” a la luz de la importancia que asume en la configuración de la arquitectura y de su dependencia a un programa de vida inherente a la humanidad. La dimensión del “arte”, por su parte integrada a la vida, es observada como la que siempre garantiza la condición inaugural de la obra y la prolongación de las características inherentes a los procesos ordinarios de la vida cotidiana. El argumento del texto se hace a partir de las palabras del arquitecto, considerando las memorias del proyecto, las clases impartidas, los testimonios y las entrevistas publicadas. Defiende la posición de que las especulaciones y la ética que revela el discurso son miembros de un “cuerpo del conocimiento” inherente a el “modus operandi” del proyecto. Para aquellos que conocen o se acercan a la obra, el amparo de las palabras del arquitecto explica que el saber de la arquitectura está en la discusión de un horizonte que implica al sujeto, a la humanidad y al mundo que construye. Este arco intencional, que se revela en el trazado individual de la obra, se ampara en racionalidad y enseña que la espacialidad es una condición y un valor de la vida, un discurso y una acción histórica interdependientes a la sensibilidad artística de la naturaleza humana. Para la comprensión de la arquitectura de Paulo Mendes da Rocha, que aspira ser la expresión de la objetividad como designación “radical” de la técnica, es necesario retroceder a los textos del arquitecto comprometido con la praxis e involucrado directamente con la producción de los sentidos de la arquitectura. El discurso revela que: en la “naturalidad inclusiva” de la dimensión estética se establece la mediación entre el deseo y la experiencia y que son los impulsos y sentidos del ser humano que organizan el fundamento de racionalidad y conocimiento.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Rocha, Paulo Archias Mendes da, 1928-. Técnica. Arte. Discurso. Temas fundamentales de la existencia. Proyecto.

TÉCNICA, ARTE E QUESTÕES  
FUNDAMENTAIS DA EXISTÊNCIA.  
CONSIDERAÇÕES SOBRE O DISCURSO DE  
PAULO MENDES DA ROCHA

RESUMO

O enfoque deste documento tem como escopo discutir a relevância da técnica e da arte no discurso na arquitetura de Paulo Mendes da Rocha. Examina os textos do arquiteto comprometido com a práxis e discute “técnica” à luz da importância que assume na configuração da arquitetura e de sua dependência a um programa de vida inerente à humanidade. A dimensão da “arte”, por sua vez, integrada à vida, é observada como a que garante a condição sempre inaugural da obra e o prolongamento de características inerentes aos processos ordinários do cotidiano. A argumentação do texto se faz a partir das palavras do arquiteto – considerados as memórias de projeto, as aulas ministradas, os depoimentos e as entrevistas publicadas. Defende a posição que as especulações e o sentido ético que revela o discurso são integrantes de um “corpo de conhecimentos” inerente ao “modus operandi” do Projeto. Para os que conhecem ou se aproximam da obra, o acolhimento das palavras do arquiteto explicita que o saber da arquitetura está na discussão de um horizonte que implica o sujeito, o gênero humano e o mundo que constrói. Este arco intencional, que se revela no traço individual da obra, se ampara na racionalidade e ensina que a espacialidade é uma condição e um valor da vida, um discurso e uma ação histórica interdependentes à sensibilidade artística da natureza humana. Na arquitetura de Paulo Mendes da Rocha, que aspira ser a expressão da objetividade como designação “radical” da técnica, é no retroceder aos textos do arquiteto comprometido com a práxis e envolvido diretamente com a produção dos sentidos da arquitetura, que o discurso revela que: na “naturalidade inclusiva” da dimensão estética se instaura a mediação entre desejo e experiência e que são os impulsos e sentidos do ser humano que organizam o fundamento de racionalidade e conhecimento.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Rocha, Paulo Archias Mendes da, 1928-. Técnica. Arte. Discurso. Questões fundamentais da existência. Projeto.

## INTRODUCTION

*"lo que me interesa es [...] 'el poeta en un poeta,' o el ser poético aborigen."*

Harold Bloom (1973), *La angustia de las influencias*, 1991

The architects, as men of their time, are defined in relation to lines of thoughts. The writing exercise is not actually familiar for them, although, everyday more architects publish their own narrative, risking themselves in theoretical texts, critiques, testimonials, and manifestos. However, in Brazil, for many architects, the value of architecture is only in the formal singularity of the work. Theoretical considerations, which follows production and make explicit reasoning arising from the cultural universe that are constantly appropriating, overlapping, and transforming multiple references, most times are not published.

The Brazilian architecture reflection owes to theories and interpretive schemes that belong, almost exclusively, to critics and historians. However, when considering that *"the architect was very interested in the distribution of forces used and their proportion to the result, while the critic considers the results, in which the tension of forces appears already appeased"* (BENEVOLO, 1983 *apud* FAROLDI; VETTORI, 1997, p. 17), the reflective procedure of the project gains interest as the interpretation focus.

During the project course, two orders, in interaction, are developed: *"the order of speech in charge of explaining, prescribing and planning; and the order of action that recognizes the possibilities formalized in intentions, and which are, afterwards, put into practice"* (BOUTINET, 2002, p. 254). The reasoning of the project, as a "method" that considers the primacy of experience and gathers theory and praxis, adds a discourse to the formalization. This discourse involves the authors as social beings enrolled in reference systems in which genealogies of influences and affiliations are apparent and unique individual situations understood in their own socio-cultural parameters.

It is in this perspective that the focus of this paper has as scope to debate the relevance of technique and art in the discourse of Paulo Mendes da Rocha's architecture, from his reasoning of project and his own texts – considered as texts the project memories, lessons given, testimonials and published interviews. When returning to the texts of the architect committed to the praxis and involved directly with the production of architecture senses, it is accepted to consider the directions and hopes, the speculation and the ethical sense that reveals the individuality speech (SCHWARZ, 1979, p. 158-159)<sup>1</sup> as participants of a "body of knowledge" intrinsic to the project's "modus operandi."

THE UNIVERSAL AND POSSIBLE TECHNIQUE: THE  
ESSENCE OF THE TECHNIQUE IS NOT THE TECHNIQUE

In a time whose spirit exposes the uprooting of men and their surrender to the instability of technical things, the old school architect recognizes the importance of the technique as intrinsic to his architecture. Therefore, he assumes and incorporates it in his craft.

<sup>1</sup> *"the individual's experience with his distinction and casualness component is also an element of the social process, and, perhaps, one of those that, today, is more necessary to deepen in"*. SCHWARZ, Roberto (1987). "Crise e literatura." In: *Que horas são?: ensaios*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. São Paulo: Schwarcz, 2006, p. 158-159.

For the modernity of Mendes da Rocha, the world of technique is not something foreign to the human dimension. The knowledge of the technique is a transforming thing, and the production of knowledge and discoveries belong to the world. The technique is an universal, available, patrimonial, anonymous knowledge. And it is, precisely, this impartial disposition that allows rationality to reach humankind<sup>2</sup>.

The technique, for the architect Mendes da Rocha, is not solely a conquest, it is a colonization project. And, in Brazil, still in the modern and *avant-garde* ideal of emancipation, it is configured as an opportunity for social equality, so that, in the words of the architect:

*We have to [...] address these extreme poverty issues already in the context of a transition to new historical moments. That is, the poor housing, the house of the poor with a hovel appearance, it is something utterly foolish! The moment of inertia, the stability of materials, the train speed, the comfort in aircrafts, cannot be poor or rich. There is no such a thing as second class airplane: even if you put people in a space with less comfort, the plane itself has to be a perfect artifact. [...] Which means that nobody is poor in the world anymore. For someone to identify somebody as a "poor person" it is a misrepresentation. [...] The quality of the message and the result of the mathematical calculus have to be the same. You cannot play the cello in a poor or rich way (ROCHA, 2012, p. 51).*

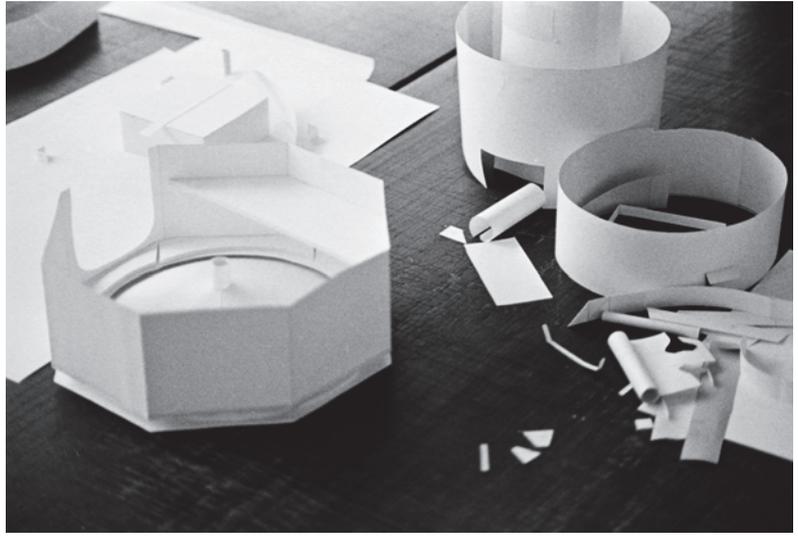
<sup>2</sup> "This logos (or "reason"), therefore, can only be axiologically neutral, since it is available to a rational being, from which he can make a therapeutic or criminal use as his desire leads him in one direction or another." LEBRUN, Gérard. "Sobre a tecnofobia." In: NOVAES, Adauto (Org.). *A crise da razão*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras; Brasília, DF: Ministry of Culture; Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Nacional da Arte, 1996, p. 491.

The world of technique is inseparable from Mendes da Rocha's craft and performance. The technique seeks order and perfection: it is a mathematical equation, a model, a rational efficient system, abstract and reduced from reality. But it is a momentary, contemporary absolute, and, as such, it is an essayistic possibility. The technique and its possibilities allow immersion in his time, not only as an instrumental element, but as an essential value, an authentic way of determination and creativity of man's work at the opening of modern times. From which, as the architect states,

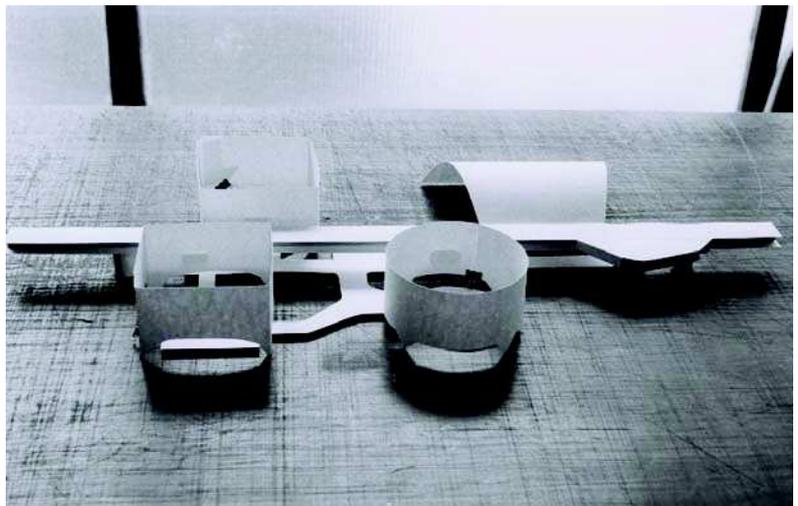
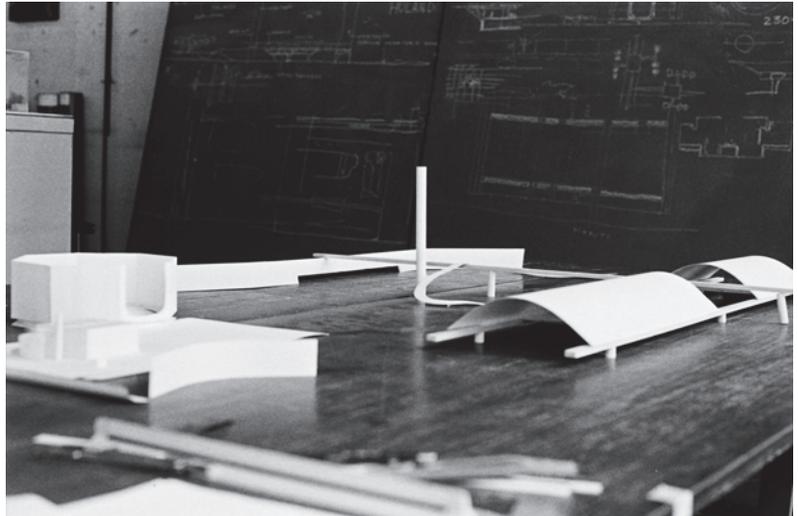
*nature is seen when it is replicated and produced by ourselves. We can only contemplate and understand what we produce. Contemplation says, accurately, that the sun revolves around the Earth. It is the machine that shows that it is not. And microscopes, meters, reading mass spectrometers say how old a star is by its light. They are machines (ROCHA, 2012, p. 53).*

Both for Mendes da Rocha and for his generation, in architecture "the shapes came from the 'engendering' of construction, but even then nothing would be radically Cartesian, nothing" (Rocha, 2012: 38). What reveals the architect relationship with the world is not intellectual: it is a real contact, a decision by constructiveness – for a technique. And acts that presuppose and carry within themselves the invention of a procedure, of a new possibility, and that leads to the manufacturing of artifacts are a result of such technique.

Since the beginning of the process of invention of Mendes da Rocha's project, there are, "as consequences of a logic intrinsic to the architecture: virtues of the technique, of the beauty of constructive geometry and of the essential adjusting of speeches and experiences on the transformation of nature and city design" (Villac, 2004). Under this reasoning, for the architect, "imagination is a human issue, highly technical. The one who imagines has to imagine something, and therefore must he know how to make that thing" (ROCHA, 1999, p. 37).



Author's photos. Taken to illustrate the proposal of the projects and works of Paulo Mendes da Rocha exhibition at IUAV, Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia – “Paulo Mendes da Rocha architetto” – and at ETSAB, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona – “Paulo Mendes da Rocha. Exhibition in Barcelona,” concluded in February and March 2004, respectively



<sup>3</sup> “el hombre, merced a su don técnica, hace que se encuentra siempre en su alrededor lo que ha menester — crea, pues, una circunstancia nueva más favorable, segrega, por decirlo así, una sobrenaturaleza adaptando la naturaleza a sus necesidades”, ORTEGAY GASSET, José. *Meditación de la técnica*, Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1961, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> “La vida humana, pues, trasciende de la realidad natural, no le es dada [...] sino que se hace él, y este hacérsela comienza por ser la invención de ella.” ORTEGAY GASSET, José. *Meditación de la técnica*, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> “la técnica no es en rigor lo primero. [...] a la técnica le es prefijada la finalidad que ella debe conseguir. El programa vital es pre-técnico [...] hay, pues, una primera invención pre-técnica, la invención por excelencia, que es el deseo original”. ORTEGAY GASSET, José. *Meditación de la técnica*, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> “La cupiditas, el deseo, constituye la esencia del hombre, la razón no es su culminación, sino sólo [...] el estrato más ‘frío’ y ‘tranquilo’ [...] El hombre es, pues, un animal que desea, más que un animal racional”. BODEI, Remo. “La razón de las pasiones.” In: JARAUTA, Francisco (Org.). *Otra mirada sobre la época*, Murcia: Colegio Oficial de Aparejadores y Arquitectos Técnicos / Librería Yerba / Caja Murcia, 1994, p. 185.

<sup>7</sup> “los deseos son — en el lenguaje filosófico — un tipo particular de pasiones: pasiones de esperanza respecto a un bien futuro”. BODEI, Remo. “La razón de las pasiones.” In: JARAUTA, Francisco (Org.). *Otra mirada sobre la época*, Murcia: Colegio Oficial de Aparejadores y Arquitectos Técnicos / Librería Yerba / Caja Murcia, 1994, p. 181.

Understood as an act of knowledge, the “manufacturing”, when is an invention of a “supernature”<sup>3</sup> (ORTEGAY GASSET, 1961, p. 17) or transformation of natural circumstance is, for the architect, an engineering problem that allows the organization of a foreseen desire. As Mendes da Rocha reports:

*I have seen engineering works, transformations, from early. What is the point of engineering transformation and work? First, as engineering work, knowing that you are in love with something, projecting achievable desires upon it — you are mobilizing carts, tractors, shovels, tools, that you know that you own to do what you want. Nobody dreams pure fantasies!* (ROCHA, 2012, p. 58).

The engineering accuracy reveals the constructive way of adapting the natural environment to human presence. The need, which enquires nature, and that is proposed to its transformation to engender the desired habitat, confirms the technique as a specific procedure for human adaptation. Technical acts confirm the humanity of man, since “there is no man without technique” (ORTEGAY GASSET, 1961, p. 29), and also confirm him as “inventor of his own life” (ORTEGAY GASSET, 1961, p. 32).<sup>4</sup> Since,

*when you understand these settings, in the light of the social conditions, let us say, already integrated with the problems of the city, the city at last becomes a true science drawn from these emotions and this man’s curiosity about nature, which is basically a curiosity around the question “what am I in this universe”. And it turns out that we are only what we make. Not anything else* (ROCHA, 2012, p. 59).

Therefore, the technique, not understood as a Cartesian view of the world, is the affirmation of the existence; it allows access to the evidence of the setting and enables the embodiment of a vital program, because “the technique is not in the foreground. [...] the end that the technique must achieve is established to it. The vital program is pre-technical [...] there is, therefore, a first pre-technical invention, the invention par excellence, which is the original desire” (ORTEGAY GASSET, 1961, p. 47)<sup>5</sup>.

And this intention, i.e. of meeting the psychic needs and desires to build a new livable reality, materialized by technology, establishes a relationship with nature, vitalizes the abstract form. Since, when performing a technical, constructive act which leads to technical operation is fundamentally an original desire<sup>6</sup>. The technical capacity of man — which requires a rational process and strictness of logical thought — enables performing what has been anticipated, in advance, in the horizon of emotion<sup>7</sup>, since,

*when you blast a rock — which may be a pity —, and with that debris, those pieces of stone, you build a breakwater out front and then, between the breakwater and the mainland, you land everything and drain, and you get a plan piece of land from the sea, and you expand the space of the city, because you want to be there, by the sea, because what remains by the wall becomes a pier, and then the boat stops and suddenly comes the warehouse that will sell the goods that will come in the canoe ... you organize that first emotion* (ROCHA, 2012, p. 58-59).

## IS ARCHITECTURE ART?

Mendes da Rocha's works are born of emotion; they are transformations of nature and of a certain equation of the dynamics of reality that organize emotions. The architecture that is originated in the domain of the emotion establishes that a mediator role between aspiration and knowledge is organized within the aesthetic imagination and refers to those committed to her. Similar to something that it is about to come to life and is in constant mutation, architecture feeds itself from the potentiality of desire and providence of need. Therefore, it reconciles the aspirations of the senses with the laws of reason (SCHILLER *apud* MARCUSE, no data available, p. 169), as an essential dimension to the exercise of freedom and autonomy.

The architecture configuration, the constructive and functional decisions of which belong to the rationality of technique, is associated, therefore, with the human vocation for art. They are buildings that rely on technical and constructive dimension, but mediated by artistic operations and settled in a vital program that takes place in experience. The vital program, prior to the technique, reveals that human subjectivity acquires real and rational life when it assumes a desire that is the argument of its own life<sup>8</sup> and that, ultimately, contains the amplitude of social argument of its art.

Consequently,

*all the individual work contradictions must, as a work of art, be seen in its universality content when it has it. This is why projects are distinguished by the name of their author; they are projects that we would do. That is, they are projects that contain our desires and, as individuals, they are a contribution to the universal* (ROCHA, 1974, p. 13).

The dimension of art universality consists of ensuring a public, open, permanent critical plan<sup>9</sup>, such that the artistic attribute must be understood anthropologically, as a manifestation of creativity and social commitment. The art work seeks formal freedom necessary to discover, establish and experiment new ways to provide meaning to the world. Art as construction, as an understanding of procedures, and as an organic and aesthetics perception reveals that the action, when it gives a new meaning, is historical. Additionally, it should occupy a place in existence, as phenomenology recognizable by all men, since *"The architecture accomplishes what men, in the totality of their history, have really conquered"* (ROCHA, 1974, p. 12).

By the artistic expression, man accomplishes *"The condition of his existence"* (ROCHA, 1986, p. 28). It is in the artistic expression that an ever inaugural condition is reaffirmed.

*That is, [man] is a being, as we are, who invents himself. Man is an invention of himself. I say this, not in relation to the 20th century, but in relation to 2, 3, 4 million years, since life was managed by ourselves, by our species. We invented ourselves and we always will* (ROCHA, 1986, p. 28).

For the architect Mendes da Rocha, the essence of humanity is artistic: *"Man is an artist, an artist of the universe, he is the intelligent part of the universe"* (ROCHA, 2012, p. 42). This is a proposition with a clear naturalistic basis that, unlike the aestheticism that separates art from life, conceives all human experience as an artistic issue (DEWEY *apud* LEAL, 1995, p. 10). Thinking of art as something integrated to life is to propose that this is already prefigured

<sup>8</sup> "El técnico o la capacidad técnica del hombre tiene a su cargo inventar los procedimientos más simples y seguros para lograr las necesidades del hombre. Pero éstas, como hemos visto, son también una invención; son lo que en cada época, pueblo o persona, el hombre pretende ser," José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditación de la técnica*, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> "In art, the critical component is always present and active." ARGAN, Giulio Carlo (1964). *Projeto e destino*. 2<sup>nd</sup> print. São Paulo: Ática, 2001, p. 56.

in everyday life and that it triggers the aesthetic experience as the extension and intensification of certain characteristics inherent to the ordinary processes of life.

For the architect, that says “*I cannot do anything, I am doomed, I cannot do anything that is not a work of art*” (ROCHA, 2012, p. 42), the artistic condition is ultimately, it is “*the reason of human existence*” (ROCHA, 2012, p. 42), and its dimension opens the horizon of knowledge as relentless revelation of the natural creativity to the human being.<sup>10</sup>

### ARCHITECTURE: TECHNIQUE, ART AND SPEECH

For the architect Mendes da Rocha, an emotion urges to seek a unique and distinctive image and the technique perfection seduces as a means to achieve the inventive purpose of the work. As to say that architecture is subject to significant procedures and it aspires to achieve the expression of objectivity as “radical and inclusive” designation of work of art. Art qualifies the humankind, and technical acts confirm the humanity of man. But “*an architecture of will and desires*” (ROCHA, 2012, p. 34) and that “*has always been a work, a construction with attributes linked to the possibility of doing*”, (ROCHA, 2012, p. 56) is also “*an account of what we imagine to be the reality, that is, first of all what is the reality: an instrument of transformation. Nothing that crystallizes to remain. The architecture as a discourse*” (ROCHA, 2012, p. 34).

In the human condition, the possibility of artistic expression supported by technique rediscovers the beginning of time which is confused with the speech, because “*art has always been science..., and philosophy – so to speak, to be able to understand, ease with words – the wide universe that you use to represent things*” (ROCHA, 2012, p. 40).

Therefore, there is not fraying between the creation of new values, the set of propositions of scientific character, the theoretical study of reality. The view, that unifies technique, art and discourse, take us back to the old conceptions of art as *poiêin* – how to “do”, in which there was no distinction between art in its own sense and as a technique –, and art as *techne* – as “trade” or a “way of doing [including thinking in doing] something.”

What finally points out that the art and architecture of the technique are not just about designing things, works, cities, territories, but about awaking the subject and inducing that subject to a free and inventive attitude – a ‘habitat’ – as intelligence action<sup>11</sup>. This is translated in the projection of a reasoning, which teaches us that the issue of architecture is, at the same time, in the engineering strictness – that unveils the constructive way – in the art that mediates the immanent character of the equation form/space and in a critical view about the historical progress, since “*architecture as a form of knowledge is not shown [...] [and] is far behind the speech scope of what is our comprehension about ourselves*” (ROCHA, 2012, p. 46-47).

Consequently, it is imperative to add a discourse as a liability principle to the innocence of pure productive force, which does not deny the technical essence of humanity – because it would claim a defensive, technophobic position and would keep a state of delay, inconsistent with the imagination. Similarly, it must mention that, in the age of technology, the technique needs, on the one hand, a control through the reason of its purpose<sup>12</sup>, and, in the

<sup>10</sup> See: OSTROWER, Fayga (1977). *Criatividade e processos de criação*. 23<sup>rd</sup> edition. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> “*la manera más inteligente de ser inteligente es crear la dignidad humana como proyecto supremo*”. MARINA, José Antonio. *Teoría de la inteligencia creadora*, Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993, p. 235.

<sup>12</sup> See LEBRUN, Gérard. “Sobre a tecnofobia.” In: NOVAES, Aduino (Org.). *A crise da razão*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras; Brasília, DF: Ministry of Culture; Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Nacional da Arte, 1996, pp. 471-494.

other hand, that in architecture, when the technique is technology, the project must be mediated by artistic operations.<sup>13</sup>

For Mendes da Rocha, there is not really a dichotomy between technique and art, but both procedures are *techné* and *poiesis* of the same work, they occur within the same creative-formative act of intentionality that seeks to affirm values. The architect says that “*philosophy, science and art are just one thing*” (ROCHA, 2012, p. 42). In effect, in his architecture, inventive nature is associated with a voluntary action, in which the technique is a productive force that draws nears the inventive notion of genealogy to mankind. This intentionality defines “*the state of consciousness of the ‘in situation’ man, in the objective situation of the [always] current world*” (ARGAN, 2001, p. 51). But mostly his “*humanity*” revealed in discourse, since “*a project comes out of the mind to the pillars, beams, walls, and you have to be competent to carry out the transformation of an idea into something. This idea, however, is all that men can think about their own lives*” (ROCHA, 2012, p. 39).

### THOUGHTS ON PAULO MENDES DA ROCHA’S SPEECH

An architecture in the process of formalization, complex and in continuous accomplishment, does not allow a conclusive text of its senses, because the work is still being developed. Not just because the architect keeps adjusting his work, but also because the work summons the reflection of its sensitive attributes remaining opened to other senses, to the temporal dynamics and to the ongoing historic scheme.

The architecture of Paulo Mendes da Rocha admits provisional syntheses of meaning, the limit of which is in the tension that is established with a passionate core and is opposed to a unilateral and reductive vision of the project, the creative process of which is part of a reasoning that requires mastering complexity that, certainly, includes “*the thought, reflection, on the one hand, and mastering simple things that would include the action, on the other hand*” (MORIN, 2001, p. 115).

Although in the architecture the outcome of the project is always a shape and this “*is never a concept*” (OSTROWER, 2008, p. 69), one must think that “*the ‘chosen’ shapes [...] within the latent possibilities of matter [...] refer to the cultural value*” (OSTROWER, 2008, p. 40), since “*there is no object without a subject (that observes, isolates, defines, thinks), and there is no subject without an objective environment (that allows himself to recognize, define, think, et. but also to exist)*” (MORIN, 2001, p. 67).

Therefore, when considering the practical architect discourses, his capacity of appraisal, worldview and reasoning substrata, the social role of architecture becomes part of an extended cultural universe and, at the same time, it challenges a “*critical view that, within the benchmark used as postulated, adds itself to a specific form of study, removing the subject of the process, precisely because it is beyond words, according to the objectivism criteria*” (MORIN, 2001, p. 65).

The value of these discourses, often hybrid, inaccurate from the philosophic theory point of view and expert analysis, remains – as in the artists texts – “*despite, or because of, its intellectual deviation, closer to reality*” (CAUQUELIN,

<sup>13</sup> “*In the art projection, there is a sense, an interest, a passion of life that we cannot find in the impeccable logic of technological projection: the projection that grows on itself, by successive conclusions, ignoring the alternative of death that follows every moral action, and, therefore, it is always in danger of exceeding, without even realizing it, the limit of life.*” ARGAN, Giulio Carlo (1964). *Projeto e destino*. 2<sup>nd</sup> print. São Paulo: Ática, 2001, p. 58.

2005, p. 133). His particular contribution to architecture theory and interpretation is in the fact of ensuring intermediation between verbal and non-verbal; of reflecting the close contact with the uniqueness of the project, where the theory appears in the form of choices arising from a repertoire, but also of what is elaborated as “structuring consciousness” (ARGAN, 2001, p. 51)<sup>14</sup>, in the experience engaged with the socio-cultural imaginary of this present times.

<sup>14</sup> “The project is the most current and accurate sense of the term [...] structure of the society [...] [that] is not conceivable as finished and still form, but as structuring, ‘structuring consciousness’”. ARGAN, Giulio Carlo (1964). *Projeto e destino*. 2<sup>nd</sup> print. São Paulo: Ática, 2001, p. 51.

Shapes, backed by the technical availability and inventive capacity, remain. But it is the “matrix of ideas” (MERLEAU-PONTY, 2004, p. 111), related to the work and open to interpretation, which indicates that the habitat setting that sets the architectural work depends on an aesthetic ethos<sup>15</sup>. It is the discourse that

<sup>15</sup> See: PAREYSON, Luigi (1954; 1988). *Estética: Teoria da formatividade*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1993.

*thinks on praising his own job done, when projecting how to do it as a joy of earned wealth, giving it especially human value, with a shape. Not as a monument to some circumstances, but with the essential monumentality to the exercise of his own life, in the society* (ROCHA, 1981, no page number available).

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#### **Author's note**

This study is part of an unpublished doctoral thesis, with its title mentioned above, advised by prof. dr. Josep Quetglas, at EscuelaTécnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona (ETSAB). It presents thoughts on the value of the technique and art, and fundamental issues of existence in the speech and work of the architect Paulo Mendes da Rocha. It is a version that has parts of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter, "The construction of the architect's sight. Nature, City and Discourse on Architecture," and of the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter, "Paulo Mendes da Rocha's Architecture. Thoughts about limits. A conclusion view."

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