

nature of urban landscapes, of the synthesis of the axis of the direction of the cities. It is without a doubt within the sector where the architect can create the architectural space and draw the architectural synthesis itself. And it is within the sector where we must conform with the aesthetic not of the machine, but rather of the man. The machine, the car, will be confined to the grand avenues where it is pertinent (...)

In the human sector, on the contrary, where people walk, the values of architecture continue to be the old ones. An architectural scale exists within the house, which can connect with the architectural space of an exterior patio, and this, in turn, with the street, from the largest or smallest plazas or even from the park (...). These human sectors are going to replace the antiquated city block, and will become the basis of the city of the future (...)

If there is not a large number of cars, or we do not want them circulating through the (residential) streets, but rather maintain them at a certain distance, then the streets will have dimensions that are only human. In this way the streets can be better, from the micro-climatological point of view, for hot zones, able to create a greater sense of community, besides being more economical in their construction, maintenance, etc. That is how the streets are that we have designed in projects for Iraq and other warm climate countries. They are not only more economical for the city and the inhabitants and better adjusted to the local conditions, but they also create a much better space that allows people to feel at home inside as well as outside of their own houses. Making men feel at home in any part of a city is one of our biggest obligations, especially if we want to be and continue being the owners of our cities.

(DOXIADIS, Constantinos A.: *Arquitectura en transición*, Ariel, Barcelona, 1963, pgs. 121, 123, 126, Trans. into Spanish: Xavier Rubert de Ventós)

Notes

1 DOXIADIS, C.A.: "Engineers and Housing", pgs. 2-3

IRAKI HOUSE IN LONDON (1960-1961)

Alison and Peter Smithson

"Iraq has an excessively rich history to be inspired by, a climate that displays a sudden flowering in the desert in spring; pleasant autumns; an architecture as varied as the history of the country; a legendary capital- Baghdad; objects of trade as old

as dates: all this remains somehow gathered in the Iraqi House project, but it is subdued, almost secretly arranged at the discrete service of the principal theme" (Alison and Peter Smithson, memoirs of the project)

The so-called "Iraq House", destroyed in 1970, formed the headquarters of the Iraqi airline. Situated in the center of London, (Picadilly Road, number 188), it stood out from its neighbors and the very visible offices of the North American company Pan Am. Peter and Alison Smithson commented that the Iraqi airline company, upon being so small, looked to distinguish itself by an almost personalized treatment of the passengers, and by promoting some unique cultural characteristics of the country. Perhaps with a bit of British humor, the architects mentioned the regional dress of the stewardesses.

The location was very small. It consisted of an elongated space, with a narrow façade facing the street, whose color scheme (white, black and green) on the signpost (symbols and letters) evoked the country's flag. The tubular form, which was reticent of an airliner's carriage, was even accented with a curved covering of the walls and ceiling.

The glass façade was deeply set back, trying to call the attention of the passers by (the English, they alleged, enjoyed meeting in front of a hole), who, upon coming closer, discovered a deep ditch or well behind the window, like a bird's eye view, similar to that of an archaeological excavation, at the bottom of which was a recreation of a scene with a mannequin dressed like a Bedouin, with a falcon. The architects maintained that falconry, of Arab origin, was imported to Europe twice: with the creation of the first union or European conscience, with Charlemagne, and, centuries later, when the crusaders returned from Palestine, tired and dazzled.

This symbol of flight (which united two different cultures), with which the space of the gallery opened, was repeated on the wall at the end, in a reproduction of an Assyrian relief (in the British museum) that showed a man-bird (a protective deity of the home).

In the middle there was nothing, or almost nothing. The wavy walls were sand colored, the floor the same, with one continuous bench built into the wall, covered with small, fabric mats. There were only two rectangular displays, covered with tiles with oriental motifs, which, according to the architects, evoked the sudden and fragile flowering in the middle of the desert, after the fleeting rains announced and carried forth by the flight of the birds.

The Iraqi House (the only project from this exposition not carried out in Baghdad), commissioned by the government of

that country, resembled a Bedouin tent or a bare mud house. It invited viewers to fly, in their imaginations, to those far-off lands.

PROJECT FOR A SECTOR OF THE NEW RESIDENTIAL AND FINANCIAL NEIGHBORHOOD DE BAB-AL-SHEIKH

Ricardo Bofill and Taller de Arquitectura

"This is about a job from the Iraqi government for the development of a neighborhood in Baghdad. The zone for the project is situated some one hundred meters from the Al-Gaylani Mosque with a group of old houses that should be conserved. We are planning for the construction of more than one hundred and fifty single-family houses with a maximum height of three floors. The urban renovation sought by this project is based on a linear rationalism that can be easily inserted into the existing design, with much traditional flavor. The streets are mainly pedestrian, clearly defining those streets for circulation and services and giving special treatment to the passageways for communication with the walls of the Mosque. The new neighborhood consists of a layout of parallel pedestrian streets, perpendicularly crossed by a transverse street that in every intersection forms a covered patio. This street acts as the dorsal spine: with two more levels of height, with porticos and covered patios, it becomes a point of attraction for the inhabitants. The two nuclei of existing houses flow together, a place that adopts a more noble form, in a form of hipostilic hall. The architecture conjures the attraction of existing traditional constructions, with the design of a few new buildings faithful to the Islamic cultural legacy. The political problems that have affected the country have postponed the construction of the project various times."

(Memoir of the project)

PROJECT FOR THE COMPETITION FOR THE STATE MOSQUE OF BAGHDAD (1982)

Ricardo Bofill Taller de Arquitectura

First Prize¹

"The design of the mosque is based on Koranic concepts which indicates what parts should form the house of worship: mihrab,

minbar, prayer hall, exterior patio with a pond for ablution and a minaret visible from all four cardinal points. The architectural reference taken is the mosque of Samarra, a prototypical Arab mosque where the prayer hall is a large hipostilic room with a very straight shape for the building, with a small dome over the mihrab. Within the Islamic cultural tradition it is important to take into account the vital elements: light, water, land and vegetation. The alternation of sun and shadow in patios and covered spaces is strongest in the hall of 300 columns, illuminated by skylights, which enhance the size and define the spaces. The water follows a path from the outside to the interior of the mosque. It begins in the minaret, situated in the center of the building, on the other side of the mihrab, and flows through a canal to the central patio and toward the ablution fountain eventually ending in a lake behind the mihrab. The equilibrium between the constructed and space and the vegetation organized like a geometrical garden represents the relationship between sacred places and nature".

(VERGANO, Serena- revision-: Ricardo Bofill, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2005)

Notes

- ¹ The bibliography about Ricardo Bofill and the Taller de Arquitectura publishes that he won the international contest for the State Mosque of Baghdad. The verdict of the jury was made public upon ending an international symposium that Saddam Hussein organized in Baghdad in 1982 to talk over the appropriateness of the proposals presented. Upon ending, the jury's decision was made public. The records show this, as do the films of the symposium (included in the exhibition), in which one hears the name of the winner in Arabic: Rasem Badran, from Jordan, considered one of the best Arab architects of the time (Aga Khan Foundation Prize for the Riyadh mosque in 1995). The result was surprising. Was there political or religious pressure? Undoubtedly, Badran's project was excellent. What happened? Were there two decisions? According to some specialists, the decision by the judges would not have been well received by the institutional representatives, which provoked the organization of the symposium. The projects from Bofill and Venturi were the favorites of Chadirji, the mayor of the city, and of Saddam Hussein. However, given that Venturi's representatives denied that he was declared the winner together with Bofill, the judges' verdict ended up being accepted (HOLOD, Renata, KHAN, Hasan-Uddin: "State Mosque (Competition), Baghdad, Iraq", *The Mosque and the Modern World*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, p. 85. About this negative response, Denise Scott Brown writes to Octavio Learco Borgatello (in response to the question as to the veracity of the previous information) in an e-mail from April 23, 2008, "Renata and Hasan are more or less right. From what we heard, someone or ones in high authority, maybe including Saddam (who attended at least one assembly where Bob was present) liked our project and presumably Bofill's. I never heard of a prize, but there was pressure on us to get together with Bofill and unite our efforts in going further. "This we were reluctant to do. But