highly aggressive, triangular, perpendicular to the wall, of crisscrossing planes, possibly a product of his personal situation. At the same time, he presented a marvellous piece of work placed in the most poetic way possible, with its back to the spectator. To start with, the work showed a large, beautiful curved backside that seemed to hide something—impossible to tell what—from the spectator's view. It was simply a way of attracting people’s attention. The piece was in fact another furniture sculpture, an exceptional, sensual Chaise-longue, where the seat, the horizontal plane and leg, arm and back-piece are powerfully deployed in space.

Prototypes

All these works are unique. But Anda had always had the idea of producing small lines of quality wood furniture at his brothers’ workshop. I have no doubt that what Anda was looking for was to make a break with traditional furniture making. So it was no coincidence that Anda should have taken first prize in a National Design Competition for his design for an elegant sofa-bench in chestnut with major 8 to 9-centimetre sections. Once again he applied the principle of separating the seat from the back, the sides being completely blind. Another important feature common to all parts was the edging in round arch-shaped curves. All parts were passed through the workshop’s milling tool, which worked quarter by quarter until the required curvature was arrived at. As ever, the joints, underscored in the sides, were crucial. Once again the coincidences with Utzon, with his furniture and, more specifically, with the benches for the church at Bagsvaerd, Denmark, built between 1973 and 1976 are curious, and even more so when one remembers that Anda knew nothing about them when planning his own. But, as I noted previously, they share a way of understanding problems and solving them. Finally a few benches were produced and recently, when someone suggested a commission for Anda to design street street furniture, the sculptor went back to the bench, now in teak wood, to adapt it for placement outdoors.

Subsequently (1993-1995), Anda made an armchair in a 70 by 70 by 70-centimetre cube. The principle of separation (Rietveld), laterals almost completely blind, joints and curved parts, are all repeated from the earlier design discussed above. However, the fixing elements and the slightly lifted back legs that gently perforate the laterals add some quite interesting nuances and alterations. The chair’s title, Cubo Rampante (Rampant Cube), emphasizes some of them, the back part being higher than the front part, when traditional practice points to things being the other way round.

Another piece of furniture Anda thought about for “mass” production and of which he actually produced ten units was the dining chair. He called this linear chair based on a 45 by 45 by 45-centimetre cube with minimum section and inclined independent back emphasizing the cube, Cubilínea (Cubilinear). The inclined back solves the problem of the spigot fitting of the most vulnerable point of the traditional chair, the fitting of the structural cross pieces with the back leg, while actually relating it formally to the “Egyptian chair” we know above all from the tomb of Tutankhamen and the chair kept in the Louvre, simpler and more elegant than most and which has captivated many an artist, consciously or otherwise, not least Finn Juhl and José Ramón Anda.

The Maite chest of drawers was a private commission from that time named after the client and bears witness to the artist working for the pure pleasure of creating something. Done in oak and boxwood, the chest has twelve boxwood drawer handles, all different shapes and sizes, giving rise to an endless series of variations.

37 For example, around that time (1991) sculptor Jaume Plensa produced a sculpture in Auch, France where a ray of light played a very important role.

38 A number of external factors made the long period of recovery necessary after the accident that much harder to bear. One was the crisis on the art market, beginning in 1992, when not even Tápies could sell his work; some gallery owners lost their dignity. Anda himself was forced to lay off some workshop assistants and collaborators who had, until recently, worked together.

39 Jorn Utzon: “For an architect to be able to work with complete control over his purposes, he must experiment, and, just as a musician plays his scales, practice with mass, with rhythms for masses grouped in combinations of colours, light and shade; he must feel fervently, intensely, and perfect his capacity to create forms. This requires great familiarity with the materials: we have to be capable of understanding the structure of wood, the weight and hardness of stone, the nature of glass; we have to become one with our materials and be capable of showing them and using them in accordance with their constitution. If we understand the nature of the material, we will have its potential at our fingertips, in a way much more tangible than if we based what we do on mathematical formulas and artistic manners. One has to comprehend life through a correct, healthy common sense. An understanding of walking, stopping, sitting down and finding the most comfortable position, of enjoying the sun, the shade, of the water in our bodies, of the earth and of all the less definable sensorial definitions. A desire for well-being is fundamental for all architecture if we want to achieve harmony between the spaces we create and the activities that take place in them.” From “The Innermost Being of Architecture” (1948)
Ezustekoa (The unexpected, 1990-92), (the titles of Anda’s works are, by the way, almost always in Basque, and are always apt, significant and revealing), is a large work measuring 130 by 118 by 46 centimetres in oak and maple. Presented in Barcelona with a reddish patina and the shavings from the work process on the floor around it, Ezustekoa was the origin of a series called Troncos Huecos (Hollow Trunks) that has continued to the present day. Starting from the unexpected observation of the form of a hollow, hundred-year-old fallen tree, the sculptor makes the series more and more radical, taking the concave form he started with to the limit, until it finally acquires formal autonomy and, as occurs with this piece, a certain lightness and arrogance even. In 1995 this work was completed with another piece of the same characteristics, the shavings being eliminated, the colour nuanced and the set of two came to form an indestructible entity with the same name, Ezustekoa (1990-95). Now the work had resonances of the sea, like sails, as if the wind had pushed the material until it finally acquired that particular form. Sand blast erosion helped to create this impression.

A later work in coated oak, entitled Babespe (1996-1999), comprising two pieces that also started out as empty tree trunks, takes this same series further on. But while the two linked parts in Ezustekoa were open and suggestively welcoming, Babespe is hermetic, almost closed off. It is an extremely svelte two-piece work measuring 210 by 100 by 110 centimetres. And if the whole suggests some kind of protected, shelter-like place, with a hollow internal space, the knife-edge borders of one of the pieces at the same time make it an obviously dangerous and defensive place, like a fortress.

In formal terms these works have occasionally been likened to the works of Richard Serra, the contemporary sculptor most admired by Anda. But although they may coincide on occasion on formal and structural issues, the starting point of the Navarra-born artist, who in this series seems to concentrate on the suggestion of the material, leads to a work of a much more organic nature than

Iruki IV (1995), a drinks cabinet, was another prototype from those years. This is a really beautiful triangular prismatic piece in oak and boxwood and is surely the most Italianate of all. Between border strips is a boxwood piece recalling the façades of the cathedrals in Siena or Orvieto, or the Byzantine, Mameluke and eastern architecture that Scarpa felt so close to. Despite the wildly capricious adjustments, bevel cuts and hinges, the cabinet works perfectly and some serious attempts have been made to produce it, although they are on stand by for the moment.

Many of these pieces of furniture are in daily use in Anda’s home and in his aterpe or shed, a Japanese space measuring 2.75 by 12 metres built by the “constructor” at the beginning of this century and which, despite its size, is a major work of architecture, and a place where the comfort and well-being Utzon talks about in the quote above are assured.

The models Anda has made on his own initiative (1985-1998) and on commission (2003) for the possible production of street furniture complete this section of his work, which remains open to further developments.

New series, recent works

It’s clear by now that as an artist Anda has been incredibly versatile, moving freely between figurative and abstract, sculpture and furniture, studio workshop and foundry, private and public, typography and even architecture. And while his oeuvre is not especially large, thirty years of work devoted exclusively and single-mindedly to sculpture in a broad sense, with a natural tendency to break through frontiers, have really paid off. Anda’s exhibited work reflects the diversity of his interests and of the themes explored; it may be that, occasionally, this multiplicity has worked against him being readily understood by the spectator or by the rare attempts at critical appraisals. In the present essay I have tried to structure the oeuvre by themes, families or series, series which, on occasion, have developed over a long time, like the ones I discuss below.
those of the American sculptor, which are subject to some much stricter geometric laws. In short, the works in this series were not made to any preliminary sketch leading to a particular form but are works with a form that arises unexpectedly out of the form of the material.

Another very attractive piece from the same formal family, although quite distinct, is Zeharki II (Through, 2000), which did have a preliminary sketch. This involves three concave roof-tile-shaped parts, two of them vertical and one horizontal. The first version in bronze, measuring 35 by 14 by 10 centimetres, was enlarged and executed in wood to become a work called Umbral, (Threshold) with the cross piece being more developed. Like the Pasos-Puerta (Steps-Doors) series, the enlarged crosspiece is big enough to walk through. A preliminary sketch was done for this sculpture, which means it is more rigid and less organic than the works in the Troncos Huecos (Hollow Trunks) series.

This work also relates to a previous, highly productive and very versatile series that provides a sort of leitmotiv in his work from the late 70s on. The Cruce de Planos (Planes Crossing) series, which may have originated in Polifemo (Polyphemus) in Pamplona (1982-1993), and its development in Leihoa (Ventana) (Window, 1989) in Zarauz, in Belak (Velas) (Sails, 2000-2001) Baquio, in Besarkada (Abrazo) (Embrace, 2002-2005) Lejona, are all public sculptures whose versatility lies in the way the planes cross, a feature prolonged in wall pieces particularly in the 1990s, in angles, in corners, in right angles and laterly in Acanantonadas, in wood or bronze, all of them more domestic works. The pieces in Acanantonadas and their distribution are remarkably resonant. They manage to evoke Baroque windows and the way coats of arms are distributed in certain architectural styles, while at the same time suggesting the distribution in space of Malevitch’s paintings, deconstructing the box.

Anda is currently in the studio workshop bringing the process for other works and series to an end. The new production will be seen in this exhibition, and provides a suitable place to close this provisional review of the artist’s oeuvre.

But before I do, I would like to mention two of the most recent of his sculptures that I find particularly interesting. One is Obeisso (Obelisk, 1999-2003) and the other Gianbologna (2002-2006), and what is interesting about them is that they synthesize many of the themes and preferences discussed here.
Obelisk was Anda’s prize-winning entry in a competition restricted to just three sculptors. He submitted a model in wood, intuitive like its creator but also very precise, of a block on a hexagonal base that decreases as it rises, going from a pentagon to a square to a triangle and ending in a point. The clear spiral movement recalls what we have referred to here often enough as “the spiral.” The earlier versions were stubbier, less pointed than the definitive version, vividly recalling Tatlin’s 1919 project for the monument to the 3rd International, although that was a spiral tower with metal rods. This allusion to the old avant-gardes is typical of Anda, although he has always kept his distance, possibly on account of their destructive arrogance.

He subsequently produced another more stylized and particularly beautiful model in wood that reflects a shift towards Max Bill’s geometry, which, as I explained at the beginning, is one of the cornerstones of Anda’s oeuvre.

I am really looking forward to seeing a quite large wooden sculpture I know is being done for this exhibition. Anda is also working on sculpture in a block of Carrara marble involving a figure and growth in a kind of inverted obelisk. All these variations and changes of scale are a reflection of the different materials used and the variations in size so typical of the sculptor’s private thought processes. On the subject of materials, some mention is needed of Anda’s longstanding admiration for the work of Eduardo Chillida. Chillida had a special gift for materials and his works in iron, alabaster, stone, ceramics and wood evidence a special sensitivity and understanding towards his materials and an extraordinary taste in his selection of the material for each sculpture. Chillida was greatly concerned with process and finish in his works, aspects that, as we have seen, are for Anda part of his responsibility as an artist.

His outdoor variant on the obelisk is much more stylized, standing 16 metres high beside the dual carriageway between Alasaua and Olazagutia. For financial reasons chiefly, this variant was done in steel, although Anda thought long and hard about using stone and chipping away in the old manner. And the title is highly appropriate, evoking as it does the obelisks of ancient Egypt.

Gianbologna is a quadrangular prism, a triangular prism and a cylinder all linked vertically in a sinuous line. Geometric components are constant in Anda’s work, with structure and composition as a whole acquiring the lightness and mobility of a dancer. Formally, although it may put some in mind of the work of the Russian Formalists and the explorations of the Russian Constructivists, the title is absolutely straightforward: Gianbologna, Jean de Boulogne, the sculptor who produced, among other things, the Rape of the Sabines in marble now in the Loggia of the Lanzi in Florence. Anda, perceiving compositional associations with his own work, clearly wished to pay explicit tribute to the sculptor.

So how do we place Anda? Is he a modern or a classical sculptor? A very good question, and one I’m not sure we can answer yet. Time alone will tell. But what Anda’s work may be about, and more than thirty years of work would seem to back this up, is not a light-hearted game with the present, with the ephemeral and changing day-to-day of the mass media of in-communication, from which we arrive at his inactuality—to use the beautifully accurate word coined by historian and maestro Manfredo Tafuri to describe the architect Carlo Scarpa and the inability of Italian critics to get to grips with his work—but a genuinely serious game involving sculpture, the studio workshop and no shortcuts. This is a game—and an oeuvre—that uphold the constant cultural and human values of all time.

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40 In a 1986 interview Anda declared: “an idea has a particular scale, the one you consider is suitable. I’ve got loads of sketches for outdoor sculptures that might never get done. They’ll only see the light if I hit on the right scale. Otherwise they’ll be lacking in interest. They’ll just be slightly bigger models, rather than genuine sculptures.” Navarra Hoy, Saturday 5 April 1986.

41 “Chillida I really like. He brings an acute sensibility to every material he works with. He does forms specially conceived for iron. When he uses alabaster, the does it in a different way. To me Basque sculpture is a question of understanding materials, of understanding each single material. Every idea has a material in which it can be properly expressed.” Interview in the Cultural arts supplement Diario de Navarra, 22 December 1995.