



Donald Gray: The Architecture of Ecology, Civility and Beauty

Donald Gray: La arquitectura de la ecología, del civismo y de la belleza

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At first glance this monograph on the work of Donald is a beautiful book on his magnificent architecture and urbanism. Its photographs in lush color, accompanied with plans, elevations, details and perspectives all bring a multi-dimensional description of this extraordinary architect's work. As one peruses the pages, it becomes obvious that aside from the first impression, this a textbook for anyone, but especially for architects, to understand the inextricable relationship between architecture and urbanism, typology and character, the monumental and the vernacular. That all of the work is set in Andalusia, Donald Gray's adopted home, is also a portal into understanding how a regional architecture alludes to the universal language of cities, villages, hamlets and their buildings.

The section illustrating urban and architectural projects is loosely organized in accordance with a rubric that allows the reader to unfold and understand a design process that concludes with a rational, resilient, accessible and beautiful place for a community of people to flourish. Each project begins with aerial photographs of the villages giving a comprehensive overview of streets, squares and blocks, building types and the walls, openings and roofs that give character and identity to each project. The aerial views are followed by photographs and drawings that explore the streets, the individual buildings and finally the details that include floor patterns, ironwork, masonry, carpentry and all of the crafts that provide a sense of place and purpose.

Donald Gray in his work has posited the best critique of the modern suburban model by presenting to us an alternative that has been with humanity for centuries and continues to be relevant as it addresses the critical ecological and social issues of our time. Each village and building is an essay in ecology. The principle of durability conserves the energy expended for its construction for generations, its urban form facilitates community and protects the social contract between its denizens with a clear definition of the public and private realms. The materials and methods that shape the architecture and the built environment are local and reflect an adaptation of the collective accumulated wisdom through to the regional climate and culture of the place.

Of particular note is the subtle and nuanced diversity of urban forms that through the architecture are given a unity of character through the tectonic character defined by the buildings' walls, openings and roofs. Throughout the pages one can explore the particular language of each project by observing the means of construction at the level of detail. The spans over windows and doors, columns, pilasters and eaves combine to give the reader a comprehensive understanding of what an integrated approach to the making of habitat can be in the modern world. The regional character is a universal lesson for us all in making each place on

the planet more adapted to its climate and local resources using the principles of conservation and investment as compared to the modern cult of consumption and waste.

This monograph by Javier Cenicacelaya and Alejandro García Hermida is a significant contribution to the architectural literature required to understand how humanity can continue to flourish and maintain what is human about our culture. In an age of domination by a techno-utopian monoculture, the lessons from this book provide a powerful antidote to the unsustainable and tragic contemporary planning and building practices that have brought us to the brink of climatic upheaval.

Javier Cenicacelaya, Alejandro García Hermida

Donald Gray: The Most Beautiful Designs of Traditional Neighborhoods in Andalusia

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