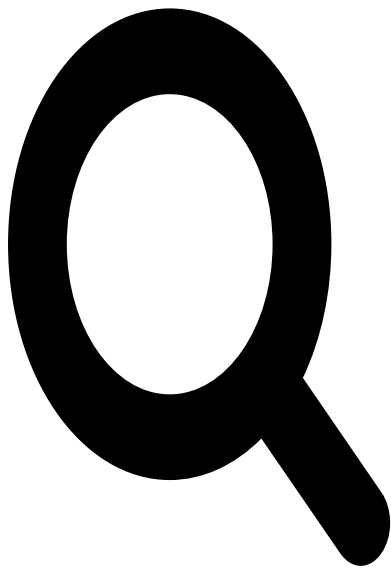


IT WAS FUN UNTIL THE MONEY RAN OUT

Posted on 08/08/2010 by Naider



The title is borrowed from a late 2008 article in the architecture section of the New York Times [,It Was Fun Till the Money Ran Out](#), which in a few words and with great precision clearly marked how many urban projects have been dealt with in recent years and how only the crisis has been able to break with the state of mind regarding star architecture in recent years:

Who knew a year ago that we were nearing the end of one of the most delirious eras in modern architectural history? What's more, who would have predicted that this turnaround, brought about by the biggest economic crisis in a half-century, would be met in some corners with a guilty sense of relief?

Before the financial cataclysm, the profession seemed to be in the midst of a major renaissance. Architects like [Rem Koolhaas](#), [Zaha Hadid](#), [Frank Gehry](#), and [Jacques Herzog](#) and Pierre de Meuron, once deemed too radical for the mainstream, were celebrated as major cultural figures. And not just by high-minded cultural institutions; they were courted by developers who once scorned those talents as pretentious airheads.

The article, which I have already mentioned on other occasions, today is an excuse to highlight the successful article written by Antonio Muñoz Molina, entitled [Milagros ruinosos](#), in his review of the book [Miraculous architecture](#), by [Llatzer Moix](#). The book is presented as follows by the publisher:

The opening of the Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank Gehry worked miracles in Bilbao. Thanks to this prodigy of iconic architecture, the city flew from post-industrial greyness to the glitz of the tertiary economy. Mayors and regional presidents from all over Spain saw the Bilbao example as the key to their future. A spectacular building with a posh signature -Calatrava, Hadid, Herzog & De Meuron, Foster, Eisenman...- seemed to them a guarantee of global visibility, a magnet for tourists and a stimulus for the local economy. Valencia, Zaragoza, Madrid, Barcelona or Santiago experienced this frenzy. They hired the stars of the international architectural firmament, neglecting the proportion between the need and the price of the monumental works they were commissioned to do. Llatzer Moix reviews these feverish years and his impressive but sometimes foolish works. It does so through a report, put together after traveling to the scenes of these episodes and interviewing its protagonists, which confirms it as a reference in the field of cultural journalism.

I haven't read it yet, but I certainly think it can be a good reference to understand what has happened these years and how the powerful attraction of [the Guggenheim effect](#) has spread as a reference for many cities around the world and, particularly, in many Spanish cities as aspiration. Muñoz Molina's review reviews some aspects of interest: the relationship of the big names in architecture with the laymen in the field ("*With rare exceptions, architects think that the fact that almost all of us are affected very directly because of the jobs they do does not give us the right to comment on them. If we say something negative, or inconvenient, they will immediately look at us as painfully retarded. Just like benevolent but firm parents, they know much better than we do what we mean. They smile with tired patience every time we complain about their treeless squares paved with cement or granite, so suitable for plateau climates and for photos in architecture magazines, their public benches without backs, or with backs. in the form of a sharp metal wedge*"), the role that politicians have played in all of this ("*Just yesterday politicians stupefied by vanity and the feeling of power*

continued to feel like emperors or princes of the arts when paying any price to the international stars of architecture"), some specific projects such as the [City of Arts and Sciences](#) (Valencia) and the [City of Culture](#) (Santiago de Compostela) and, lastly, the scant social and civic response to so much excess.

But the money ran out, end of the feast.

[Federico García Barba](#) dedicated an extensive post to this subject and it is worth reading it in its entirety.

There are no comments yet.