

UNDERSTANDING THE HOUSE

NUNO LACERDA LOPES

We understand the “house” as a spatiality, as a whole for man to realize himself:

“[...] houses need man. If you close a house and no one visits it, then the house dies, it’s like taking soil or water from a plant. The house does not live by itself, it needs people, it needs human warmth.” A. R. Ponce

In a natural way, the occupation or humanization of the space follows, first, from the civilizational concept that society promotes and architecture describes. Yet how many times does the cultural sense and sense of collective identification overlap with the geographical and territorial aspect, with the space and the concept of inhabiting resulting as a confrontation between the many cultural differences that cultures, in particular Western culture, of Christian inspiration, of a classical nature and with different levels of industrialization and information, sometimes establish as a standard culture, in light of groupings or ethnic groups that Humanity organizes and which has in the way of inhabiting, in “accommodation”, its own true built expression. This dominating and globalizing way of inhabiting, which tends to present itself as a closed architectural object, as the owner of a truth still and always to be validated.

Therefore we can understand that the analysis of the evolution of the concept of inhabiting, in a projective or eminently architectural dimension, develops in another direction, more practical than conceptual, more constructed than ideal, more concrete and territorial than the result of behavioral, civilizational studies or, if we prefer, where Man is realized.

The creation of spaces for inhabiting, by the project, is the result of a series of preconditions that determine and define the “elements” that will make the space that is designed habitable. The entire project denotes and carries an idea of habitability of which the architect is a conduit, an “interpreter” for the construction of a concrete inhabiting, but always pre-conceived, always in continuity with his own inhabiting.

Inhabiting is acting on the space, it is a continuous activity of environmental interaction in a given time and whose effect or result has consequences that multiply concepts or practices which are hard to standardize. We inhabit within the experience that the phenomenon of inhabiting encloses, assuming various and assorted roles that articulate thoughts, places, memories and procedures capable of being connected to the physical environment. The roles we play when inhabiting are social differentiators capable of promoting identities in the creation of other places and thus achieve the unique and complex phenomenon that is the permanent search for satisfaction and pleasure in this so unique experience that is our own, exclusive and unrepeatable, inhabiting.

N. Lacerda Lopes, “*Understanding the House*” in P. Botelho e R. Afonseca (coord.) “Furniture” ed. Transnética, Porto, 2011, p. 178-179. ISBN 978-972-99091-4-6.