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Carretera San Vicente del Raspeig s/n 03690 San Vicente del Raspeig. Alicante (SPAIN)

[eurau@ua.es](mailto:eurau@ua.es)

# TILIBFOP\*: A research on the European architectural identity

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\* (Things I learned in Barcelona from other places)

**Grau Valldosera, Ferran<sup>1</sup>**

1. Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona (ETSAB), Department of Architectura Design, Barcelona, Spain, ferran.grau@upc.edu

## Synopsis

TILIBFOP is a retroactive research on the European architectural identity, and a cross-cultural experience developed by foreign (non-European) master students. TILIBFOP is a European and interdisciplinary tour searching for non showy architectural and artistic practices, and looking for the origins of some current, critic and independent architectural practices in Europe.

TILIBFOP is a research on the work of independent contemporary creators who recover a committed attitude that outsiders architects adopted during the fifties and the sixties.

TILIBFOP is an academic experience framed in "All scales of the project" subject, taught at ETSAB<sup>1</sup> MBarch International Master (Architectural Design Department).

**Key words:** TILIBFOP, culture, identity, interdisciplinary, independent.

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<sup>1</sup> ETSAB: Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona, at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC)

## 1. Historical frame

During the late seventies, and the mid-eighties, a series of architectural practices were developed in Europe proposing alternatives to the predominant postmodernist strength. The global reach of the architectural postmodernism put back on the table the status of local cultural identities. These alternative practices studied the redefinition of local identities, and retake the thread of the Team X' nonconformist statements, which were activated during the postwar period reacting to the lacks of the modern movement architecture. Not so far from the critical regionalism statements<sup>2</sup>, these alternative practices also considered that contemporary architecture had forgotten the relation with the city, the territory, and the real needs of the users. These practices considered that the search for a local, urban, territorial and cultural features could be a first step towards the definition of a renewed identity. This architectural (European) identity that payed attention to past but concern about the future, is focused during the TILIBFOP exercises.

## 2. Definition of the investigation

TILIBFOP analyzes and studies the link between architecture and contemporary art, aiming to identify the roots and specificity of local identity. TILIBFOP is developed during a (virtual) European tour and is enriched by the fresh (foreign) gaze of the students.

TILIBFOP approaches the European culture paying attention to those nuances that figure out the diversity of architectural practices. The richness of the European diversity is crucial for the construction of a continental cultural identity.

TILIBFOP is also a student booklet that gather cultural realities and creates academic knowledge. Architecture and art are constantly blurring the boundary between them, and reassert the values of the cultural diversity.

## 3. Creative references

The TILIBFOP' artists and architects shared certain affinities. Almost all of them could be considered outsiders and independent creators making original works. TILIBFOP specially focuses on ópera prima works because these are usually essential and able to foster future influences.

Generally, the creators from the seventies, eighties and nineties studied along TILIBFOP exercises, developed their work in contexts geographically displaced from large urban concentrations (as Gallego and Hondelatte), or worked accepting the uncomfortable conditions of research processes (as Hertzberger). This fact emphasizes its rare profile, and points out specific conditions that influence the essential creative fact.

## 4. Methodology or how to make a booklet

TILIBFOP is a study that links disciplines and cultures and confronts foreign students with diverse and specific identities. Students introduce global inputs through this methodology. The research on the work of artists and

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<sup>2</sup> FRAMPTON, Kenneth, *Historia crítica de la arquitectura moderna*, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 1987

architects is merged in personal designs that are gathered in the TILIBFOP booklet, which is considered a conclusion of the course.

TILIBFOP is also a methodology that suggests a critic review on the European architectural identity at the present time. This retroactive exercise figure out the essence of the European identity and underlines the values of its own culture.

## 5. Achievements

TILIBFOP aims to be a fundamental tool for learning in the first semester of the master. TILIBFOP promotes the students training for interdisciplinary exercises, specially by using approaches that deal with abstract processes and divers representation systems. TILIBFOP is an architectural design exercise devoted to creation. TILIBFOP establishes a starting point of a personal research, that will probably be developed in a new cultural context.

## 6. Face to face



Figure 1. Figure 2.

Manuel Gallego<sup>3</sup> (Galicia), is an architect interested in the knowledge of tradition and the granite materiality of his region. His historic but contemporary projects show his concern about the territorial respect. Perejaume<sup>4</sup> (Catalonia), is an artist who artistically grows rooted in the Catalan culture, and specially attracted by the geography and the essence of the country site. His artworks are absolutely built into the Catalan landscape, and are the consequence of thoughts on nature.

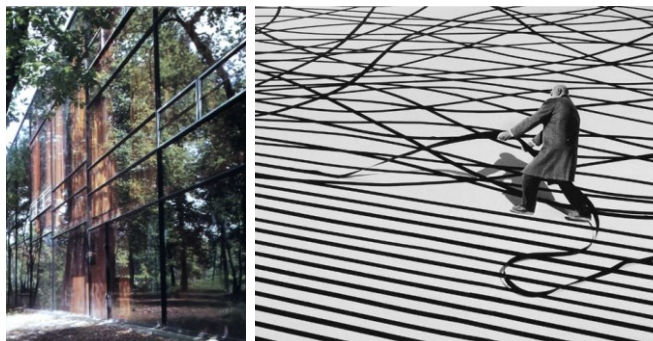


Figure 3. Figure 4.

<sup>3</sup> GALLEGO, J.Manuel, Manuel Gallego: arquitectura 1969-2015, Fundación Barrié, A Coruña, 2015

<sup>4</sup> PEREJAUME, Deixar de fer una exposició. Exhibition catalogue, MACBA/Actar, Barcelona, 1999

Jacques Hondelatte<sup>5</sup> (Bordeaux) was the architect of “la tête”. Hondelatte is the spiritual father of Lacaton & Vassal architects. He is the architect devoted to ideas that arise from a reasoned and deep thought and from an attitude that opens up to the possibilities of modernity. Gilbert Garcin<sup>6</sup> (Marseilles) is aged but young; he is the anti artist who self-psychoanalyses and took auto portraits (mainly with his wife). Garcin test the human behavior and creates surreal scenes that suggest original architectures from an introspective exploration.

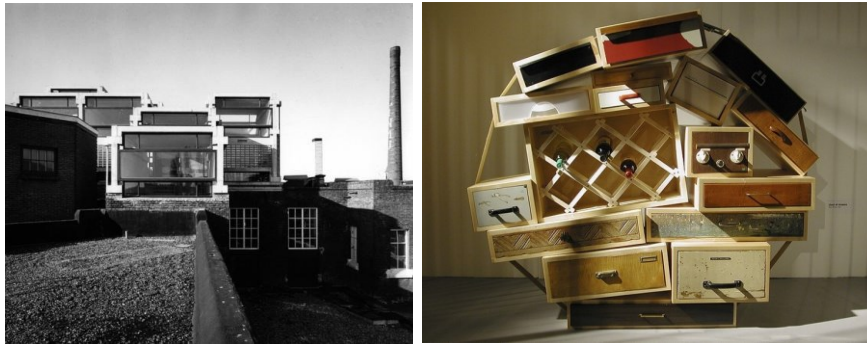


Figure 5. Figure 6.

Herman Hertzberger<sup>7</sup> (Amsterdam) is an architect and a generous pedagogue. He is contemporary and anachronistic, radical and conciliatory. He is a builder of unfinished architecture that invite users to adapt and transform it by themselves. Droog<sup>8</sup> (Amsterdam) is a group of industrial designers who, like Hertzberger, also works with the idea of the unfinished design. Droog is devoted to recycling aesthetics that surprises us and domesticates the space. Droog projects foster democratic participation.

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## Biography

**Ferran Grau Valldosera.** Architect (1996) and PhD (2013) from the ETSAB, He is currently associated professor at the Architectural Design of Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona, where is leading the "All scales of project" subject, framed in the MBArch programme. He taught at several schools of architecture, including the ETH Zurich, Azriely School of Architecture in Ottawa, TU Faculty of Architecture in Delft, Yıldız Technical University in Istanbul, and Arquitectura en Alicante (AeA). In parallel he has collaborated with the Institute of Advance Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC) and the Barcelona Institute of Architecture (BIArch). His architectural projects were exhibited in the Biennale di Venezia (Unfnished - Spanish Pavilion, 2016, and Vogadors, 2012). His office (GrauCasais Architecture), has got many awards in competitions, and in 2018 he won the competition for direction of the QUADERNS magazine (num. 273), with Nuria Casais and Rafa Mateo.