

# Visual Construction of an Architecture: A Dialogue between Cabrero and Ferriz

## Construcción visual de una arquitectura: el diálogo entre Cabrero y Ferriz

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### Abstract

When Francisco Cabrero's architecture met Jesús García Ferriz's photography, it encountered a tool for dissemination and thought. Ferriz's photographs present Cabrero's architecture through the most suggestive perspective, the most precise angle and the most representative detail, to produce a form of reception and visual perception that allows us to observe each work with different eyes. One of the consequences of this dialogue is the parallel creative evolution of Cabrero and Ferriz over the space of three fruitful decades towards a gradual abstraction and technical refinement in both media. In addition to putting forward this argument, the aim of the article is to reflect on the role of images and visual thinking within the modes of production, reception and observation of architecture, in this case within the context of Spanish architectural culture. Given the visual nature of architecture, the critical analysis of the meaning and knowledge about images, an essential issue in the current debate on visual culture, becomes essential in the development of a thought that requires seeing phenomena and determining the function of the iconic in the present day.

### Keywords

Visual Culture, Architectural photography, Image, Cabrero, Ferriz.

### Resumen

Cuando la arquitectura de Francisco Cabrero descubrió la fotografía de Jesús García Ferriz encontró en ella una herramienta de difusión pero también de pensamiento. Las fotografías de Ferriz presentan la arquitectura de Cabrero a través de la perspectiva más sugerente, el ángulo más preciso o el detalle más representativo, para construir un modo de recepción y percepción visual que nos permite observar cada una de las obras con otros ojos. Una de las consecuencias de este encuentro es la evolución creativa en paralelo de Cabrero y Ferriz durante tres fructíferas décadas hacia una gradual abstracción y depuración técnica en ambos medios. Además de argumentar este hecho, la intención del artículo es reflexionar acerca del papel de las imágenes y el pensamiento visual dentro de los modos de producción, recepción y observación de la arquitectura, en este caso en el marco de la cultura arquitectónica española. Dada la naturaleza visual de la arquitectura, el análisis crítico de las formas de significado o conocimiento en torno a las imágenes, tema esencial en el debate actual sobre la Cultura Visual, resulta clave en el desarrollo de un pensamiento que exige saber ver los fenómenos y determinar el sentido de lo icónico en la actualidad.

### Palabras clave

Cultura visual, Fotografía de Arquitectura, Imagen, Cabrero, Ferriz.

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## Meeting between Cabrero's Architecture and Ferriz's Photograph from Visual Thinking

"The simplicity, the perfection, the formal "dryness" and the monumental plasticity of Cabrero's works (...) have achieved the transmission of very personal images, in a singular way. But, in an apparent paradox, Cabrero will not seek with his work a personal way of making architecture. On the contrary, in reality, Cabrero always worked, in my opinion, using instruments of the discipline with universal characteristics; instruments that sought both an architectural rationality in their internal mechanisms linked with project processes and a well-legible visual result: a direct message to the rational understanding of form as an image".<sup>1</sup>

The rationality underlying the architecture of Francisco de Asís Cabrero (1912–2005) appears to largely associate it with the search for a universal ideology on which to define architectural form rather than for specific mechanisms that allow the individual expression of such form. For this reason, Cabrero's work seems to provide continuity to the functionalist principles of modern architecture where the resulting form is seen as a rational outcome of function and technology.

It should be added, however, that this search for the rational does not take place in detriment to intensity when the work is observed. The intensity appreciated in Cabrero's work is actually the result of the simplicity with which internal order is expressed and the precision in the use of geometry. Moreover, the endeavour to assert a more universal ideology, general rules that preserve the work from an excess of individual expression, that is seen in his works is the source of its sculptural nature and its condition of visual object. The consequent clean forms that stem from clear and readable order mean that the visual reception of many of his works is closely linked to the actual nature of the work as an essential object.

While the search for a constructive and formal essentialism has resulted in Cabrero's work being tied to the platonism of Mies van der Rohe or to 1930s Italian rationalist architecture, his work also shows the special attention given to its visual nature. Cabrero's early interest in painting is thus visible in works that reveal a production process which, far from immediacy between idea and form, show the earnest search for this process without concealing the contradictions inherent in its resolution. Perhaps this distances Cabrero from the architecture of Mies, where the identity between form and material create a dialectic that takes precedence over the concern for a visual perception of the work for which few direct concessions are generally made. That said, mention should be made of their shared interest in responding to the universal aims of the discipline, in addition to searching for a formal language as an end in itself and not as a mechanism for representing certain contingent principles. The use, therefore, of universal architectural tools, that can be materially recognised in essential and abstract forms, can be considered a synthesis of many of the intentions we find in his works.

This brief, initial evaluation of the architecture of Francisco Cabrero differs little from the way in which his works had been presented since the end of the 1940s. In this sense, it should be pointed out that the reception of his architecture is associated with the photographs taken by Jesús García Ferriz (1900–1988), with whom he had a close and lasting friendship.<sup>2</sup> In each of the stages of Cabrero's career, the architect was firmly supported by Ferriz's photography. Therefore, it is not superfluous to say that the influence Cabrero had on modern architecture in Spain was in part due to the images that accompanied his projects. We can go so far as to say that these photographs, aside from the important part they played in disseminating his work, influenced his own architectural thinking.

It is worthy of mention that the re-evaluation of Cabrero's architecture through the Ferriz's lens exemplifies an idea that has been gaining greater significance in the archi-

1 Antón Capitel, "Abstracción plástica y significado en la obra de Francisco Cabrero", *Arquitectos* 118 (1990): 12-25.

2 About the relation between architect and photograph see: Iñaki Bergera y Cristina Jiménez, "Ferriz y Cabrero: lecciones de una desconocida y paradigmática colaboración entre fotógrafo y arquitecto", *RA Revista de Arquitectura* 18 (2016): 53-60.

- 3 As seminal essays on the “Pictorial turn” and “Iconic turn” see: W. J. T. Michael, “The Pictorial Turn”, in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Gottfried Boehm, *Was ist in Bild?* (Munich: Fink, 1994); Michael Ann Holly, *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).
- 4 W. J. T. Mitchell defines a theoretical framework about images with the intention of overcoming the prominence that semiotics had acquired throughout the eighties as the main source for interpretation and knowledge. He defends a visual field composed of images that exceeds linguistics, advocating a dialogue between pictorial and verbal representations for a more adequate understanding of the functioning of our thought. The field is understood from the dialectic between word and image. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- 5 Continue: “the images are also, and according to one of the common rhetorics, a central nucleus of current communication and culture, and, in this way, a basic place for understanding and researching our societies. Undoubtedly, the history of art offers a powerful motivation for the analysis of the iconic.” Ana García Varas, *Filosofía de la Imagen* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2011), 11.
- 6 German art historians as Hans Belting or Horst Bredekamp have developed interesting studies on images and their visual nature. In *Bild-Anthropologie* (Anthropology of the image, 2001), Belting argues that visual artifacts are embedded in the media and that one cannot be understood without the other. Horst Bredekamp pays attention to the formal dimension of images arguing that is not possible to explain their visual content and effects without a discussion of their forms. See: Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Horst Bredekamp, *Iconic Turn: Die Neue Macht der Bilder* (Colonia: Du Mont, 2004).
- 7 The analyzed images make up part of the large photographic volume of Ferriz, kept by Francisco Cabrero in his personal archive. Since 2014, the photographic archive of Francisco de Asís Cabrero has been deposited in the General Archive of the University of Navarra, legacy AGUN / 273. On the importance of this unpublished file see: Cristina Jiménez, “Ferriz y Cabrero, el valor del legado fotográfico” (Actas I Congreso Internacional sobre fotografía, Nuevas propuestas en investigación y docencia de la fotografía, UPV, Valencia 5 y 6 octubre 2017, 37-45).
- 8 To decipher the keys of Ferriz’s visual language, the next photographs have been analyzed using the methodology proposed by Javier Marzal. Javier Marzal, *Cómo se lee una fotografía. Interpretaciones de la mirada* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2015).
- 9 A black and white photograph of vertical format, with a dimension of 18x24 centimeters and a negative number 19919. “Improvised a few weeks before the inauguration in May 1950, it closes the group of buildings of the representative nucleus. The

tectural debate and that only recently has been described in a satisfactory manner. It shows the transition between the idea of architecture as a system of signs, like a text or language that can be read, to another in which architecture is an image that affects the observer and is experienced. This widely debated transition in the field of visual culture, where photography plays a crucial role, has become a cultural trend referred to as ‘iconic turn’ (in German academic circles) or ‘pictorial turn’ (in Anglosphere academia).<sup>3</sup>

The special attention given to images in visual culture is mainly consequence of its understanding as a tool for the study of our society. The renewed critical study of forms of meaning or knowledge in terms of images, the result of the ‘iconic turn’, fosters a way of thinking that demands to know phenomena and to determine the sense of the iconic in the present day.<sup>4</sup> Given the visual nature of architecture, the debate regarding images yields a theory-based corpus with which to reassess the means of production, reception and observation of the work. The meeting between Cabrero and Ferriz allowed a deeper study of the points of great interest within this debate. It was a meeting where the study of images favours understanding of the ways of thinking and doing behind the works.

The creative freedom revealed by Ferriz’s photographs allowed Cabrero’s architecture to be presented through the most intriguing perspective, the most precise angle or most representative detail, in order to create a form of visual reception and perception of each work that enables us to see it with different eyes. However, if we accept this as the truth, the contrary, or rather a complementary fact, could also be argued: that Cabrero’s architecture guided Ferriz and allowed him to develop his eye for photography and his visual thought process. The meeting between Cabrero’s architecture and Ferriz’s photography, therefore, shows a close and intense exchange that lasted throughout three very productive decades.

## Case Studies: Building Images, Building Architecture

“Ideas and images have been, from their origins, the material of the philosophical. If the history of philosophy has preferred for centuries the path of the former, the iconic turn in recent decades aims to take up the path of the latter for reflection, both in its object and in its form. (...) The turn towards images emphasizes the value and autonomy of iconic logics, of the image as the own place of thought”.<sup>5</sup>

The meeting between the architecture of Francisco Cabrero and the photography of Ferriz defines a framework where the image value and the iconic sense acquire a precise role in order to reevaluate an architectural thinking and making.<sup>6</sup> Ferriz’s photographs, based on a remarkable technical and formal quality, become a visual journey that transmits the intentions of the works and allow us to observe them with different eyes.<sup>7</sup> The adaptation of visual language by Ferriz to the formal logics of each works does not, however, prevent his own evolution, nurturing Cabrero’s own creative process.<sup>8</sup> Thus, through following visual tour we will observe how architecture and photography go together in a gradual abstraction and technical refinement in successive stages.

### ***Vernacular Visual Landscape: Image of the Chapel for the I Feria Nacional del Campo***

This photograph, together with another of the main entrance, are the only images that Francisco Cabrero kept in his study that were taken by Ferriz of the small chapel designed together with Jaime Ruiz for Spain’s First National Country Fair, which was held in Madrid’s Casa de Campo showground, now a park (Fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> The photograph defines three superimposed planes; the foreground, in which emphasis is given to the verticality of the two trees; the middleground, with the clearly lit chapel as its focal point; and the background, with vegetation and the sky as the backdrop onto

[Fig. 1] Chapel for I Feria Nacional del Campo, Francisco de Asís Cabrero, 1948. Photographer: Férriz. ©Familia Férriz. Origin: Cabrero Archive.



which the work is projected. The visual continuity between the three planes creates a dialogue between the chapel and the landscape in which it is set in order to accentuate its vernacular character. The organic nature of the chapel, with the parabolic arch at the entrance and the vaulted space, enhances this. The play between light and shadow gives the entire composition a somewhat scenographic effect, revealing the expressiveness of the forms of the chapel, built using the brick vault technique, with its smooth and regular skin of white plaster rendering. This construction solution – Cabrero had it used in other works at the time, turning the architecture into a direct expression of their construction – was heightened by Férriz’s photography.

only information available is the photograph taken by Férriz that appears in the article in *Revista Nacional*, published in July 1950, after the Fair ended, it will appear again, in 1951, on the third page of the text published in *Informes de la Construcción*. In his doctoral thesis, José de Coca collects notes from Cabrero’s personal agenda noting which photographs of his work are published and where, as well as the author of them. It stands out in these annotations that in relation to the images of the Feria del Campo project, the name of Férriz appears for first time. José de Coca Leicher, “El recinto ferial de la casa de campo (1950-75)” (Doctoral thesis, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, 2013), 189.

10 Antón Capitel, *Op. cit.*, 12-25.

11 Alberto Grijalba titled “Entre lo escenográfico y lo funcional” (“Between the scenographic and the functional”), the section where he analyzes the project of “Feria del Campo” of 1948 within the chapter “Lo estereotómico. La estructura como imagen” (“The stereotomic. The structure as an image). Alberto Grijalba, *Cabrero: la arquitectura de Francisco Cabrero*, (Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial, Universidad de Valladolid, 2000), 13.

The order and balance of the component elements are outstanding features of the photograph. The plant shoots on the sloping soil add rhythm to the image, while the two trees in the foreground, in addition to the tension they create between nature and chapel, add stability to the scene. This characteristic is strengthened by the human figure next to the chapel. Furthermore, the vanishing point is situated inside the frame as the intersection between the upper line of the vault and the line formed by the meeting of the chapel with the ground, offering a highly expressive perspective. The photograph highlights the perspective view of the chapel, a view that is associated to a greater extent with a real view and that in this case takes on an intensely pictorial nature. Perspective would become a view that Cabrero would use in some of his most characteristic images and drawings, and he was familiar with its expressive nature as it had previously been explored by the architects of the Mannerist and Baroque periods.<sup>10</sup> All these resources allow the photograph to achieve a dynamic balance in which elements of symmetry are in dialogue with others that add rhythm to the image.

The scenographic and vernacular nature of the chapel, in which a certain formal inventiveness can already be glimpsed despite its modest scale, represent the initial stage in Cabrero’s career. However, as it progressed, it would shift away from this first approach.<sup>11</sup> The same occurred with Férriz’s photography, because this type of image, which gives priority to the represented work and where the elements

[Fig. 2] Casa Sindical, Francisco de Asís Cabrero, 1949-55. Photographer: Ferriz. ©Familia Ferriz. Origin: Cabrero Archive.



external to the architecture are introduced into the scene to complete the image and provide a more pictorial view of the composition, would not continued in later years. His photography, like Cabrero's architecture, would gradually shift towards greater abstraction by disassociating itself from certain compositional elements in favour of a more pragmatic and essential photography.

### ***Escape and Visual Displacement: Image of Casa Sindical, 1949-55***

The photograph the Ferriz took of the space of the monumental staircase, while not the most representative image of Cabrero's Casa Sindical ('Trade Union House'), serves to illustrate a number of important themes in the work and to deepen the photographer's visual language (Fig. 2).<sup>12</sup> The photograph contains a slightly tilted general view from under the main staircase, a low-angled shot that captures the monumentality of this space. Without showing the actual steps, the curved sweep of waist-slab and balustrade, the light and shadows of the different levels and the verticality of the stairwell give depth to the shot. The repetition of the staircase sections creates a visual axis and a point of convergence that gradually blurs the levels and accentuates the verticality of the space. The light that enters from the exterior through the wired glass panes on the façade, present on all levels except where the observer is standing, plays an essential role in this composition. In addition to enhancing the feeling of depth, the dark and cheerless shadow in the foreground adds clear symbolism to the entire composition. Added to this is the fact that the elements comprising the space, waist-slab and balustrades, become less clear-cut before finally merging with the white background, reasserting the idea of ascent. This space represents some of the essential themes of the Casa Sindical where, as Juan Daniel Fullaondo points out, "Cabrero's cold, dramatic Pythagorism", his "creative, placid, hermetic, hardened and deeply nostalgic temperament prevail".<sup>13</sup>

12 A black and white photograph of vertical format, with a dimension of 18x24 centimeters, that advances the versatile language of Ferriz capable of adapting to the specificity of the work and the motif which represents

13 Juan Daniel Fullaondo. In Paloma Barreiro Pereira, "Francisco Cabrero, poeta de la esencia arquitectónica", *Arquitectura: Revista del Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid*, 301 (1995): 92.

As regards perspective in the image, the alignment of the camera with the top of the stairs causes the levels to close in and the lines to converge, encouraging the eye to move. The composition, linearity and angle of the shot favour abstraction, while the repetition of elements gives the photograph an internal rhythm. Visual tension is emphasised as a result of the directionality, inviting the viewer to scan the image from the bottom to the top. This shot, in turn, reflects Cabrero's instinct for combining apparent regularity and irregularity, with both being resolved without final difficulties.<sup>14</sup> The perception of the staircase as an endless rise, in which the visual weights of the image are gradually distributed, accentuates the transition from the darkness to the lightness of the last, completely white levels.

Férriz creates a view that combines monumentality with abstraction, like the work itself. The viewpoint, perspective and play on light and shadows show the compositional and technical quality of the photograph, with evident dynamism and symbolism that is quite atypical in Férriz's work. This exceptional aspect may be to an extent associated with the exceptional nature of the curve itself, which is also atypical of a design whose strictly rectilinear nature is patent throughout. Given this unique element in the design, Férriz adapted his photograph, which had gradually been shifting away from his habitual compositions and techniques, to embrace an image of remarkable sculptural force. The monumentality that is finally represented, in this case that of a less-known element, only accentuates the overall monumentality of the Casa Sindical, turning it into Cabrero's most significant design of the 1950s.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Visual Grid: Image of Arriba Building, 1960***

The most emblematic photograph of the building designed for the Arriba newspaper shows the main façade of this office block as an urban backdrop projected onto Paseo de la Castellana (Fig. 3).<sup>16</sup> A feature is the rhythmic order created by the vertical lines formed by the metal columns on the exterior, an order accentuated by the shadow cast over the plane formed by the façade. The photograph captures the essence of the work by showing us the building as an abstract structural grid occupying the entire frame. The absence of perspective, given the vertical correction made by Férriz, turns the view into a front elevation and reinforces this reticular and functionalist aspect. This building would be the start of a new stage in Cabrero's architecture, marked by a shift towards the essential and abstract, and this image by Férriz expressed this quite effectively. The photograph is centred on the essential plane on which the ideas of this architecture are supported, and the context, both the street and the sky, lose their importance. Compared to the image of the chapel in the Casa de Campo precinct, in which the relationship with the landscape takes precedence, here it is the structure and functionalist nature of the design. The Arriba building, as part of Cabrero's shift towards the essential and abstract, "draws in its arms to present only the grand 'face' of an office block",<sup>17</sup> a geometric plane comprising steel, glass and brick.

The photograph of the Arriba building reveals the importance achieved by the idea of the grid in this work by Cabrero: the façade as a visually suggestive plane using the vertical lines of the structure. The vitality of this shot recognises the power of the surface, of the face, which exceeds its own materiality to capture the notion of skin in the image. While the ornamentation is based on identity and autonomy, the surface acts as a force field that gives the building a remarkable presence. The intention seems to be visually dissolving a solid materiality into a structural textile of colour, lines and surfaces that enhance the presence of the building. The surface also provides a visual contraction of the real space through signs and materials that open up an imaginary space to create new possibilities for evaluate the iconic, an associative framework that stimulates individual subjectivity.<sup>18</sup>

14 Paloma Barreiro Pereira, "Francisco Cabrero, poeta de la esencia arquitectónica", *Arquitectura: Revista del Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid* 301 (1995): 88-97.

15 "The essential character of the Casa Sindical building is such that perhaps not even in Spain, where always it has been object of admiration, it is recognized its represent achievement." These words of Peter Buchanan value the importance that this project had in this architectural context. Peter Buchanan, "Complejo y contradictorio. Asís Cabrero y la Casa Sindical", *Arquitectura Viva* 4, (enero 1989): 36.

16 A black and white photograph of vertical format, with a dimension of 18x24 centimeters and a negative number 2558, that Ferriz made within a report of three photographs.

17 Gabriel Ruiz Cabrero. In Paloma Barreiro Pereira. "Francisco Cabrero, poeta de la esencia arquitectónica", *Arquitectura: Revista del Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid* 301 (1995), 94.

18 Jeff Kipnis, *A Question of Qualities. Essays in Architecture* (Cambridge: Mass. MIT Press, 2013).

Procesos urbanos,  
dinámicas del agua  
y cambio climático  
Urban processes,  
water dynamics and  
climate change

**CARLOS GONZALVO**

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Estrategias de implantación  
frente al mar: Central nuclear  
de Vandellòs, Antonio Bonet

Implementation strategies  
by the sea: Vandellòs Nuclear  
Power Plant, Antonio Bonet



[Fig. 3] Arriba Building, Francisco de Asís Cabrero, 1960. Photographer: Férriz. ©Familia Férriz. Origin: Archivo Cabrero.

The presence of the Arriba building on Paseo de la Castellana gave Cabrero much cause for concern, as can be deduced from the fact that the building would finally express all of its conceptual strength towards this major urban thoroughfare. This confidence had already been observed in the Casa Sindical, which faces the continuation of this same axis, although in the case of the Arriba building, there is less monumentality and symbolism. Férriz's photograph, by negating the illusion of depth and turning the image of the building into an essential grid – drawing from neo-plasticism – underpins the path taken by Cabrero throughout the 1960s towards architecture as an expression of structure and construction.

### ***Visual Narrative of the Domestic: Image of the House in Puerta de Hierro, 1961***

This photograph of the second dwelling built by Francisco Cabrero in Puerta de Hierro forms part of an 11-photograph feature made by Férriz in which he alternated exterior and interior views of the house (Fig. 4).<sup>19</sup> Unlike the photograph taken of the Arriba building, aside from the slight inclination that avoids a fully frontal view of the façade, there is no clear predominance of lines, although the column at the centre-right of the image does stand out, configured as a vertical line owing to the continuity given by its reflection in the water of the swimming pool. Its visual weight in the shot is directly related to the importance acquired by structure in the design; the steel beams painted red that project from the façade characterise the image of the house. This image anticipates the change Cabrero's architecture would undergo throughout the 1960s with the use of light and malleable materials, such as metal and wood, in contrast with the more conventional solution of brick and reinforced concrete construction. Through this, the geometry becomes more direct and regular.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> A black and white photograph of horizontal format, with a dimension of 18x24 centimeters and a negative number 31008, where we observe the main facade of the house in its relationship with the garden.

<sup>20</sup> José Cabrero, "Francisco de Asís Cabrero. Una visión interior" (Conference in Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid, 4 Oct. 2012).

[Fig. 4] House in Puerta de Hierro, Francisco de Asís Cabrero, 1961. Photographer: Ferriz. ©Familia Ferriz. Origin: Cabrero Archive.



The reflection in the water favours the play between planes and the visual narrative in Ferriz's photograph, the foreground comprising the reflections of the house in the still water, and the middleground being the reality of the house itself. This deliberate optical illusion is magnified by a shot that does not contain the entire façade and lighting that accentuates transitory shadows. The horizontal lines of the roof, together with the lines of the windows, converge on a vanishing point located to the left, outside the image, underscoring a perspective that seems to place the observer within the scene and the domesticity of the home.

The chairs, deck chairs and even the two ducks that appear in the scene provide a certain randomness to the composition, making it a scene expressing a moment of everyday life. However, this does not detract from the rigorous composition of the photograph owing to its horizontal symmetry, with its axis positioned at the geometric centre of the photograph and associating the house with the illusion of its reflection in the water. This is favoured by Ferriz's ability to make this horizontal line coincide with the viewpoint and the height of the observer's eyes. Compared to the photograph of the Arriba building, in addition to negating frontality, the image does not provide an absolute or idealised viewpoint, creating an experience of observing the architecture that is closer to reality and everyday life.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Visual Reading of the Icon: Image of the Glass Pavilion in Casa de Campo, 1964***

This photograph is part of an extensive feature produced by Ferriz of 49 photographs that documents the construction of the Glass Pavilion, designed by Francisco Cabrero in partnership with Jaime Ruiz and Luis Labiano, from the laying of its foundations to its completion (Fig. 5).<sup>22</sup> Through an oblique view, the exterior of the pavilion is shown in the middleground, behind the access road, in order to capture its volume in its entirety.<sup>23</sup> By observing the shadows cast on the ground, it can be deduced that the light comes from the upper right-hand side of the shot. This natural lighting leaves the left façade in shadow and uniformly illuminates the main façade, on which no planes created by shadows appear, accentuating the strict geometric surface of the building. The different lighting treatment given to each of these two surfaces of the prism, whose perspective is continued to two vanishing points outside of the frame, emphasises their dimensions.

21 While the more idealistic Cartesian model refers to a privileged point, from where the scene described is observed in all its fullness, the realistic model is associated to an empirical point of view, any point, which can provide more or less visibility. Martin Jay, *Downcast eyes*. (University of California Press, 1993).

22 A black and white photograph of horizontal format with a dimension of 18x24 centimeters and a negative number 27260.

23 "Perhaps the relationship that Cabrero establishes between horizontal and modernity is excessive (although attractive), but it helps us to understand what his particular obsession was, the one that explains the structural effort of his Basilica, and his relationship with the top floor of the Glass Pavilion". Gabriel Ruiz Cabrero, *Op. cit.*, 74.



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Power Plant, Antonio Bonet



[Fig. 5] Glass Pavilion, Francisco de Asís Cabrero, 1964. Photographer: Férriz. ©Familia Férriz. Origin: Cabrero Archive.

This viewpoint highlights the corner of the pavilion and asserts, in addition to its prismatic nature, the importance that the notion of the fold acquires in the design. The image in turn gives the same value to both the vertical and horizontal lines that comprise the structural directionality of the building, again accentuating the dimensions of its volume. For this reason, the vertical lines of the corners are intermingled with the horizontal lines of the roof, showing the structural reality of the pavilion through the division of its glass façade. The image highlights the qualities of order and geometric rigour that characterise the pavilion through an exterior design that is as direct as it is elegant. Square modules dominate the exterior, although they are divided in half, naturally accepting the limitations of all-glass construction. The contrast between the colour of the structure and the darkness of the glass play an equal part in giving greater interest to the pictorial view of the design. The same can be said of the roof, which at no time tries to conceal the fact that this is not a completely purist prism.

The shot was taken with a slightly raised viewpoint in relation to the base of the pavilion, permitting the eye to be in line with the starting point of the glass volume. This volume, the essence of the pavilion, contrasts with the elements of its surroundings: the sky that wraps around it to enhance its silhouette, and the light colour of the ground that is turned into an ethereal support upon which it is perched. This once again underscores Férriz's desire to capture both the sculptural qualities of the building in front of him and its conceptual fundamentals.<sup>24</sup> For this reason, together with the categorical but delicate representation of this now iconic pavilion, the image successfully captured the intentions behind the idea of the modern box that Cabrero had made with steel, aluminium and glass.<sup>25</sup>

### Visual Dialogue: Cabrero-Férriz; Férriz-Cabrero

Férriz's photograph was not only a tool for disseminating Cabrero's architecture, but also of his way of thinking. A number of the essential drawings made by Cabrero throughout his projects show similarities with the visual language developed by Férriz in his images, including in some cases similarly iconic viewpoints and logic. While, on the one hand, Férriz's ability to adapt his photographic language to the intentions of each of the works he presents turned out to be exemplary, Cabrero was also able to assimilate Férriz's contributions to feed the creative process with which he tackled each project. For this reason, both their pathways moved at a similar pace towards gradual abstraction and technical refinement, with both becoming leading figures in the Spanish modern architecture in the middle decades of the 20th century.<sup>26</sup>

24 "Constructively and structurally, Cabrero limits as much as possible the number of elements that make up its pavilion, in order to its perfect definition." Alberto Grijalba, *Op. cit.*, 175.

25 See: Alberto Campo Baeza, "Reflejos en el ojo dorado de Mies van der Rohe. Sobre el Pabellón de Cristal de la Casa de Campo en Madrid de Francisco de Asís Cabrero", in *La idea construida* (Buenos Aires: Nobuko, 1999).

26 Ana García Varas. *Op. cit.*

[Fig. 6] Watercolor of Casa Sindical, Francisco de Asís Cabrero. Origin: Cabrero Archive.



Férriz's images, gradually approaching more 'canonical' architectural photography,<sup>27</sup> were able to embody in both technical and aesthetic terms the intrinsic condition of the architecture in front of his lens.<sup>28</sup> In the case of the chapel built by Cabrero for the First National Country Fair, Férriz used a more scenographic strategy in order to capture the essence of vernacular architecture and accentuate the picturesque nature of the building in relation to its setting. The choice of a perspective view of the chapel, besides given greater expression to the forms comprising it, creates a vista that allows the observer to be a part of the scene. We gradually take the position of the figure standing in front of the chapel in the midst of the landscape of the Casa de Campo.

We can observe some of these themes in the famous watercolour that Cabrero presented to the competition for the Casa Sindical, at the same time as he developed others that Férriz captured in the image of the staircase, despite the evident differences in the reason behind both images (Fig. 6). The drawing again highlights the perspective view, associated to a greater extent with a real view and accentuating the pictorial quality of the design. In this case, monumentality takes precedence, as evidenced in the design of a façade that we are invited to study by moving the eye up through the successive levels of the building. The definition of a foreground in shadow, as occurs in Férriz's photograph of the staircase and where Cabrero places the observer, in addition to adding depth to the image, accentuates the desired monumentality both of the façade and the space at the entrance, together with the scenographic nature of the composition. In both Cabrero's drawing and Férriz's photograph, the play between light and shadow support these arguments to configure an expressive picture that reinforces the symbolic strength of the design.

Already in the 1960s, we could observe photography underpinned by a more synthetic and rationalist language, accompanying the evolution in Cabrero's architecture. In this stage, Férriz threw off the compositional elements and visual licence and shifted his view to more austere photography with as much technical

27 The 'canonical' photography is the dominant type of view in photography publications, which tend to request and include 'clean' images of buildings generally empty of furniture, plants or people and of course without any time stamps, such as it can be the water stains corrosion of the facades. Laura González Flores, "Técnica e imagen: La fotografía de arquitectura como concepto", *Art Cultura, Uberlandia* 12 (julio-diciembre 2010): 96.

28 Férriz was able to find and value the essence of Cabrero's architecture. In this sense, Bernardo Ynzenga explains how architectural photography appreciates the image that best reflected the architectural quality from the cultured interpretation of its reality. Bernardo Ynezga, "Imagen y arquitectura", in Rafael Zarza Ballugera (ed). *Kindel. Fotografía de arquitectura* (Madrid: Fundación COAM, 2007), 21.

Procesos urbanos,  
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Estrategias de implantación  
frente al mar: Central nuclear  
de Vandellòs, Antonio Bonet

Implementation strategies  
by the sea: Vandellòs Nuclear  
Power Plant, Antonio Bonet



[Fig. 7] San Agustín College, Francisco de Asís Cabrero, 1961. Photographer: Ferriz. ©Familia Ferriz. Origin: Cabrero Archive.

rigour as possible, which developed at the same pace as the architecture that it would present. This is the case of the photograph of the Arriba building, where these qualities accompany an eye that turns Cabrero's prism into a visual grid. By converting the façade into a visually suggestive plane comprising the lines of the structure, the tectonics of the building are transformed into a good example of the the actual visual construction offered by the image.

In the photograph of the house that Francisco Cabrero built in Puerta de Hierro, Ferriz offers a visual narrative in relation to the domestic setting and the act of inhabiting. This is embodied by a scene that gives precedence to the introduction of elements from daily life and a view that is removed from the absolute or idealised. The image also accentuates the renewed range of materials that comprise the architecture of the house without abandoning the constructive essence of previous works. In tune with this image and taken in the same year is the Ferriz's photograph of the San Agustín halls of residence in Madrid (Fig. 7). The relationship between the architecture and the observer, the balance between the horizontal and vertical lines, the use of horizontal symmetry in relation to the vanishing point of the view, the lighting and reflection of the architecture in water, etc. are some of the themes shared by both images that confirm the remarkable rigour and refined technique of the visual language developed by Ferriz, in close dialogue with the Cabrero's architecture that it portrays.

In the case of the Glass Pavilion, located in the same place as the chapel with which this analysis began but distant in intentions, the photograph succeeds in expressing the rationalist and technological essence of the design. The viewpoint, composition and lighting at all times highlight the prismatic design of the pavilion, an image lined to the idealized modern glass box. The evident intention pursued by the image of accentuating the voluminous expression of this glass prism thus matches the iconic nature of the work.

Furthermore, it is worthy of mention that Ferriz's photographs has a notable significance within the historiography of Spanish architecture. These, together with the work of other photographers such as Kindel, Pando, Paco Gómez and Català Roca, comprise a visual discourse that encourages a re-reading of modern Spanish architecture. Many of these photographs have become true icons of this period, and are as illustrious as the actual works they depict.<sup>29</sup> Ferriz's photography, given its

29 On the role of photography in architecture representation: Iñaki Bergera "Ética y estética. Revisión crítica de la identidad y el uso de la imagen en la arquitectura", in VV.AA. *Fotografía y arquitectura moderna. Contextos protagonistas y relatos desde España* (Barcelona: Arquia Temas, 2015), 17.

fruitful and inseparable dialogue with Cabrero's work over the space of three decades, becomes a visual testimony of an essential architecture of our most recent tradition.

However, beyond their importance as visual documents and in addition to their containing significance to be interpreted or depicting the internal logic of the works they present, we have seen that they are themselves turned into places that stimulate their own visual thought. In this sense, we would like to think that the art of photography linked to the construction of images in a way works to break the boundaries of all representation in order to activate different mechanisms in the relationship between thought and sight within the same act of observation. The age of the image alluded to by Walter Benjamin could be understood as the age where photography does not seek so much to please and suggest as to offer an experience and to teach.<sup>30</sup>

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30 George Didi-Huberman, *Cuando las imágenes tocan lo real*. (Madrid: Círculo de Bellas Artes, 2013).