



Bernard Rudofsky (Moravia, 1905 – New York, 1988) was an architect and designer whose significance is probably due less to his practice than to his critical and theoretical work, and to the efficient communication of his discourse, which always made great use of the visual to transmit his ideas. We might say that the core of his thought, his *leitmotiv*, was the revision of so-called progress in the contemporary world and the consumer society. Regarding the media he used to publish his ideas on the subject, we should emphasize that, apart from specialized journals, books and university teaching, he made very skillful use of exhibitions. In all, his influence was that of a venerated author whose thought has become increasingly assimilated until it has now become part of our common heritage. This means that his figure is even more relevant today, even though he continues to be largely unknown to the general public. To date there has been no monographic study of Rudofsky in Spain, and now the José Guerrero Centre has stepped up to fill the gap as part of its course of action in spreading awareness of the work of important figures in contemporary culture that are still unknown in Spain.

The choice of Rudofsky as subject is not random and has its own history. Bernard and Berta Rudofsky were good friends of the Guerrero family, and it was thanks to them that the Rudofskys decided to build what was to be their last house, and the only one in Spain. This was their own home, simply called La Casa and located in the borough of Frigiliana (Malaga). Here was where Rudofsky projected his entire ideology, and this is why it became his most intimate legacy.

As a climax to this story, we now present the first Bernard Rudofsky exhibition in Spain, of which this catalogue is a testament and a further development of the information provided during the cycle of lectures dedicated to the author in the autumn of 2013. Rudofsky's most successful piece of work, *Architecture without Architects*, will be fifty years old in 2014, and we felt it would be appropriate for our exhibition to be held now. That famous exhibition and the little book accompanying it contained a delicious collection of carefully chosen and ordered images illustrating the importance of popular, anonymous constructions throughout the world. Most of these photographs were taken by Rudofsky himself in the course of his travels, and included some of the province of Granada (Guadix, Sacromonte), which in this way found the best context to appreciate their beauty.

In short, this exhibition fulfills a long-held aspiration of the José Guerrero Centre and helps to link the institution with one of our most influential visitors. I wish to express my gratitude once again to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport for its support for this project, affecting both the already concluded series of lectures, and the present exhibition and the book the reader is now holding. I also wish to thank all the people and institutions that have made possible this project, which we hope will contribute towards greater awareness of the legacy of this unclassifiable creator.

José Torrente García
Councillor for Culture and Heritage

Bernard Rudofsky (Moravia, 1905 – New York, 1988) was an architect, critic, exhibition curator, publisher, clothes and furniture designer, photographer, researcher, and university professor in different countries (Yale, MIT, Waseda). A multifaceted creator and irreverent critic, his figure is seen now more than ever as that of a tremendously up-to-date creator, not only because of his critical attitude towards the *progress* of the consumer society, but also because of his pioneering claims for the economy, intelligence and sustainability of the anonymous architectures of the world, which he documented and studied on his travels and in his publications. He was an outstanding design theoretician, specifically in the field of comparative socio-cultural design, as shown in such works as *The Kimono Mind*, *The Unfashionable Human Body* or *Now I Lay Me Down to Eat*. To all of this we can add the profound impact of his activity as curator of provocative exhibitions and his work as editor and art director of important architectural and design journals such as *Domus*, *Pencil Points* and *Interiors*.

One of his most influential projects was the *Architecture without Architects* exhibition presented by the New York Museum of Modern Art in 1964. *Bernard Rudofsky: Critical Disobedience of Modernity* celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of *Architecture without Architects*, whose catalogue is perhaps one of the best known on vernacular architecture. However, despite his international reputation, during his life Rudofsky's ideas were silenced by the preponderance of modern theories, closer to academic institutions and the discourse of the great masters. His production is therefore not well known even within his spheres of reference – design, art and architecture – nor by the public at large.

The project of which our exhibition is part started out in 2012 with the organization of a monographic international seminar in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. Coinciding with the International Architecture Week, from 7th to 9th October 2013, the seminar brought together a numerous group of specialists in the work of Rudofsky. Rather than providing a linear or chronological overview of Rudofsky's work, the researchers reviewed its critical framework and his role in vernacular architecture from the viewpoints of anthropology, architecture and photography, and they discussed his presence in the architectural panorama of Italy, Brazil and the Spanish Mediterranean. The book the reader is now holding brings together the contributions to this seminar, with the addition of some complementary texts and a selection of the work on show.

True to the spirit of the author, the exhibition presents his sophisticated, sensual legacy and the originality of his biting criticism. Following Rudofsky's own proposals, it builds up a discourse which, while not ignoring historical accuracy, places visual logic before chronological or geographical sense. The exhibition proposes a stratified analysis of some "new ways of living," using a selection of often unpublished photographs, designs, drawings, publications and projects from a number of collections. It also reveals his intense, many-sided production touching on spheres such as clothes and footwear design, historical criticism and architectural projects, culminating in a monographic study of La Casa in Frigiliana – his house-cum-studio in Andalusia and his last building. This synthetic

manifesto of contemporary habitation was declared a monument in 2011. Despite legal protection, it has undergone a profound transformation affecting the values that made it unique. The ultimate goal of this exhibition is to denounce this aggression against our most fragile heritage and to learn to appreciate our so-called minor architecture, such as this simple house in a Mediterranean setting.

Layer 1: Rudofsky's universe. Towards an unpackaged body

On its first layer, the exhibition reveals the interdisciplinary nature of Rudofsky's career, from the start of his professional activity in the thirties. His interest in the contemporary culture of the body represents a permanent denunciation of the atrophies undergone by our sensuality as a result of social prejudices and the dictates of fashion. It is significant that the exhibition *Are Clothes Modern?* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, November 1944 – March 1945) was the first by this thinker trained as an architect. His preparatory gouaches and the Body Idols made for the exhibition by Costantino Nivola surprise us with bodies deformed by fashion, trapped in a corset or standing on impossibly high heels, victims of the stringency of social norms. After the Second World War and with the American Dream in full flight, Rudofsky called people's attention to the flamboyance of "the modern man's suit", the uselessness of buttons, and the unnaturalness of its pockets and parts. By putting images of modern industrial culture side by side with others considered primitive, he confronts us with their similarity and dismantles the traditional categorization of opposites. In contrast, the designs by Irene Schawinsky or Claire McCordell free the body and show a woman with loose garments and simple shapes. Rudofsky proposed his own designs, known as the *Bernardo Separates* (1951), which were very cheaply produced, versatile dresses that minimized storage space. The first clothes he designed in the thirties for his wife Berta and close friends were loose, simple garments with minimal seams and no buttons or pockets. In the sixties, *The Unfashionable Human Body* brought together several of his texts on the subject and reproduced illustrations of works by Christo, such as *Torso or Femme empaquetée*, symbolizing his general criticism of the control that contemporary society exercised on people's bodies.

In 1949, Rudofsky was contracted to design textiles for Schiffer Prints, a company for whom Salvador Dalí and Ray and Charles Eames also worked. The exhibition shows several of his original fabrics and one of the preparatory drawings. His textile designs reproduce the contrast between nature and geometry also found in his architectural work. A little later, in 1956, he designed the exhibition *Textiles USA* for the MoMA, in which he decontextualized the materials, freeing them from their customary usage and offering a sculptural dimension of some that were not usually visible, such as shiny materials used for insulation or to reinforce tyres.

The foot most certainly holds pride of place in his somewhat fetishist approach to the female body. Identifying the shoe with an "instrument of torture", he insistently shows its anatomical incongruence with the human foot; the drawing of the symmetrical foot by Bernard Pfriem, the outstanding portraitist of the human body, makes us aware of this abomination, by comparing it to the publicity for I. Miller Shoes. Considered by many to be the person who introduced sandals

into the USA, Rudofsky's designs became reality in Bernardo Sandals, which began production in 1946 with the active participation of his wife Berta and were highly successful for more than two decades. Rudofsky left the company in 1964, but it continues to produce to this day.

Layer 2: *Architecture without Architects*

Travel is one of the essential components of Rudofsky's thought: "life as travel; travel as a style of life," he stated in a 1986 interview two years before his death. He documented his peripatetic experience in numerous notebooks, drawings and especially photographs. Rudofsky, who admitted his snapshots were taken on the run, was much more interested in the phenomenological approach to architecture than in any technical or aesthetic use of the camera. Through his photos he shows traditional ways of building, discovering in them an intelligence that dismantled the prejudice of seeing them as a reflection of the underdeveloped world. Rather than analyzing architecture as an object, his interest lies in showing the landscape it creates, the social values of the community it shelters, and its sustainability – values from which contemporary architecture should learn.

Architecture without Architects was criticized and labelled as subversive by the institutions of the world of architecture. But this rejection could not prevent its recognition and the exhibition continued to be shown for over a decade in different countries and the book was translated into over ten languages. Rudofsky created with it a spatiality shared by diverse, distant landscapes linked through the wisdom of tradition.

This exhibition shows unpublished documents from *Architecture without Architects*, as well as publications such as *Streets for People* (1969) and *The Prodigious Builders* (1977) that continued to develop these ideas with a stronger theoretical basis. Using the author's own photographs, the gallery presents a review of the central themes of his critical production – the intelligence with which our towns are placed in the landscape, life in caves, cemeteries, the city as a lived in, festive space, its streets as an extension of domestic and work space: its awnings and pavements, its shop windows and shutters. The Spanish, and especially Andalusian landscapes, far removed from standard monumental itineraries, seem to enter into dialogue with very distant landscapes.

Fifty years on, the claims made by *Architecture without Architects* continue to be very much of the present. Despite some change for the better, we remain unaware of the wisdom of our architectural heritage. The condemnation of the destruction of anonymous architecture by global processes such as tourism or speculation is just as necessary now as then.

Layer 3: Rudofsky's domestic proposal

The last layer of our exhibition deals with Rudofsky's architectural production. The dwelling holds a fundamental place in his integral proposal of the art of living. Critical reflection on domestic space runs through his entire career. Together with the numerous articles he wrote on the subject, his 1955 book *Behind the Picture Window* (whose original title was *Are Houses Modern?*) was the first of a series culminating in his last exhibitions (and catalogues) *Now I Lay Me Down to*

Eat (Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York, 1980) and *Sparta & Sybaris* (MAK, Vienna, 1987), the latter just a year before his death.

Under the title *The Mediterranean. The dream houses* this last layer of the exhibition begins with original drawings and watercolours of his first domestic projects. From the outset, the Mediterranean was central to his imaginary, from his days as an architecture student, in his collection of watercolours, and in his Ph.D. thesis on the anonymous vaulted architectures of the Cyclades Islands in Greece.

The Mediterranean likewise impregnates his first architectural designs. Buildings drawn and dreamt of as one's own or another's paradise had their primary argument in the coastline and contact with the sea. The patio as an outdoor room and the sensual austerity of its spaces designed for a fulfilling life are premonitory of his later constructions. In the thirties he lived in Capri, Procida and Milan, during a period marked by his collaborations with Luigi Cosenza and Gio Ponti. In 1935 he designed a house on the island of Procida (Naples) for his wife Berta. Its intimate compactness developed around a central patio caused suspicion among the authorities, who vetoed its construction. "What we need is not a new way of building, but a new way of living," Rudofsky stated in 1938 in an article dedicated to this unbuilt building. In 1937, Luigi Cosenza and he designed a house in Positano (Italy) that was never built either, although his photomontages of the time allow us to imagine it. His Italian period, therefore, was marked by projects that enquired into an architectural modernity filtered through the legacy of the Mediterranean.

Few of Rudofsky's houses were ever built, but his scant production is widely scattered between Italy, Brazil, USA and Spain. While studying at the Vienna Technische Hochschule (1922-1928) he travelled through Germany, Bulgaria, Turkey, Switzerland, France and Italy, thus rooting his architectural work in the architectural tradition of the direct experience of place.

The Casa Oro, which he built together with Luigi Cosenza in Naples (1935-1937), was his first completed project and today represents the only example of his architectural legacy preserved in Europe, with the exception of his house in Frigiliana. Brazil is the country where most of Rudofsky's completed architecture is found. The exhibition shows illustrations of the Frontini and Arnstein houses, both built in the late 1930s in São Paulo, after Rudofsky left Europe in 1938 when Hitler annexed Austria. Shortly after arriving in America, Philip Goodwin included his work in the 1943 exhibition at the MoMA and later the book, *Brazil Builds: Architecture New and Old 1652-1942*. The Hollstein house in Itapeperica is the other of his completed houses in Brazil. In the USA, he built the garden-house designed with Nivola for the artist himself in Amagansett, New York (1949-1950) and an extension of James H. Carmel's house in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (1962-1964).

La Casa, 1969-1971

Rudofsky's encounter with Spain took place in the sixties, when he began to visit regularly and to take an interest in astute Spanish vernacular architecture. Through his friendship with José Guerrero he discovered the Mediterranean landscape of Frigiliana, where in the seventies he decided to

build his summer house-cum-studio among the hills some three kilometres from Nerja (Malaga). Built according to a design by Rudofsky – although his friend José Antonio Coderch signed the project for legal reasons – La Casa has been defined as being at one and the same time sensual and Spartan. It makes a claim for the values of traditional architecture and the economy of the local: a simple architecture of volumes and patios, with strong links to the landscape in its setting, based on the respect for the place as opposed to the transforming aspirations of designer architecture. The project of La Casa appears in the framework of his proposal and integral criticism of contemporary domestic space. The value of empty space as opposed to the accumulation of useless objects, the liturgy of the bathroom, the liberation of the body in the intimacy of the house, and the joy of austere, sensual living make this house the tangible representation of the author's thought. The study of the terrain and the identification of its values – the landscape, contours, trees and former agricultural terracing – are shown here by the preliminary research on the site and Rudofsky's own plans and photos. There is also a scale model built as part of a research project on La Casa for clearer understanding. Despite its having been declared an Asset of Cultural Interest, the house has recently undergone profound alterations, affecting the values that made it unique. The ultimate aim of this exhibition and its accompanying catalogue is to denounce this attack on our most fragile heritage and to learn to appreciate our so-called minor architectures, such as this house, half-way between two towns, where José Guerrero and his family came every summer.