

Construction time

EMMANUELLE BORNE

We all know that private commissions have become the main source of business for architects. One of the main consequences of this shift from public procurement is an increasingly limited field of intervention. Among the roles the architect is gradually being deprived of is the works management.

Don't many men and women in the profession (rightfully) boast that they are "builders" as much as they are designers? In the end, does not design testing in the real world determine the quality of a project and the talent of its architect?

At times when it is difficult to distinguish a photo from a 3D, architects who succeed in completing buildings that are true to the promises made by their images win our approval, or at least our respect.

Bernard Plattner, historical partner of Renzo Piano, writes about the Paris High Court (pp.88-105): "The project begins the very day it is designed. Architecture is worth nothing without the construction expertise of its author. The personal project of the architect begins with the reality of the technical and economic feasibility study and continues with the contractor's project. (...) The architect does not withdraw after the project study but remains present throughout the construction." When architects fight for the supervision of the project on site, this is not just because the construction works finalise a project and confirm his skill. It is because they know that at this stage everything can still change dramatically, endangering the work of art as much as distinguishing a modest project, on condition it is well designed. This construction phase is also a time for accomplishments, in which, arguably, the architectural complexity of a project is clearer, as can be seen in the conversion of a convent into a convention centre in Rennes, by architect Jean Guervilly (pp.62-73). In recent years, the construction site has also become the very crux of a project. Since Patrick Bouchain (La Condition Publique in Roubaix, Le Lieu Unique in Nantes and especially Le Channel in Calais), open construction sites (pp.48-53) are no longer perceived as boboising experiments, but as a means to focus on the people the project is built for: the user, and society. The works site of the Confort Moderne, a cultural venue in Poitiers (pp.74-87) managed by Nicole Concordet, who formerly cofounded Construire with Patrick Bouchain, bears witness to this.

Whatever the project, even within the framework of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP), the works are worth nothing without the supervision of the architect. Since he is first and foremost a builder.