

21 FOOTBRIDGES IN 21 YEARS

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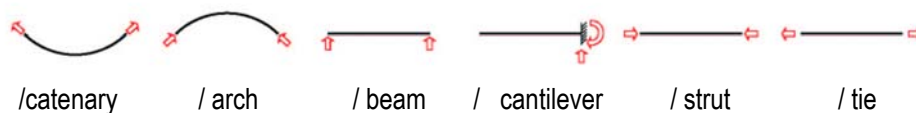
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In 1983-84 I took my first steps in the trade of bridge builder. 21 years later, when going through the footbridges in which I have taken part, I never stop being amazed by the amassed collection. What I'm most surprised about is the variety. Before a quick review of the 21 performances that I have chosen I will make an incursion in order to highlight the thread between them. The first is a certain rigor when it comes to approach the problem. The previous steps in order to face up to it with guaranties of success are: functional analysis, establishment of the crossing point (plan), elevation and slopes, bridge length, support points, structural depth, spans, typologies, information about the environment. With the data the problem of the definition arises. The personal circumstances influences on the decisions: the experience, the people, the knowledge you have or have learnt, the bridges seen and analyzed,... All of this at least has led me to use the rigor and austerity as basic performance guidelines.

I do know that nowadays I put myself out of the expansive wave of the trend when demanding certain rigor and austerity. In the 80s, a band played a song called "Bad Times for Lyric". In comparison to the Bauhausian Minimalism, the Maximalism prevails today; definitely bad times for lyric. The pendulum is at the Baroque. 30 years ago the aesthetic canon was different. I recall J.A. Fdez. Ordóñez claiming the "A bridge-sacking universal machine, which would make fall all fake elements"; now the bridge itself might be a fake element. With the scorn towards poetry, it takes special significance the rhetoric.

I ascribe to Carlos Fdez. Casado a simple idea: "When attacking any construction there immediately turns up the problem of beauty". At the core of all projects there is the debate of translating everything gathered in the prior steps into a beautiful footbridge. To face the constructing a beautiful footbridge a series of concepts are very useful: proportion rules that guide my structural intuition, professional rules of good practise, rules of harmony, of composition, but what is that we compose? The answer is: materials, structural shapes and functional shapes; networks, surfaces, ..., mechanical features, etc.

The aesthetically essential elements are the shape and its relationship with the surroundings. The underlying question is: are all the shapes effective as a structure? The answer is NO. Also has a negative answer the question: given a "good shape", is it valid everywhere? The impact of both answers is substantial: our scope is quite fenced. If we confine ourselves to the flat, linear domain, the most common, of structural shapes, we only work with 6 basic ones:



Another typical feature of the footbridge collection is the use of the composition with the 6 "canonical" structural shapes.

Footbridges are more versatile than bridges. This freedom must be exploited and handled with honesty. To me, a construction is honest when it is made of a non-absurd combination of the 6 basic structural shapes. Within the "non-absurdity" or "honesty" area I usually add clarity and simplicity as well.

The consequences of the set method and decisions up to now are drastic, they set us in a Spartan context; our challenge is still in front of us –building a beautiful footbridge under specific circumstances- but we have restricted ourselves, we have wasted the formal arbitrariness. The adventure lies on fitting the structural shape onto the place; once the travel destination has been decided, the basic shape, its logic, prevails reeling off to the details without accepting forced gestures.

Decisions have an ethical, financial, cultural component. Any footbridge, no matter how low its budget is, can be charming. It's about aesthetic decisions. The aesthetic objective is seducing, moving, bringing an intelligent smile,

a murmur, a bit of a murmur of the wind through the trees. ¡Of course they might be visually stunning! But it is not the requirement nor that what is searched at top speed and, more than once, for multiple reasons, it is vital to avoid it like the plague.

The footbridge's charm lies in finding the magic of the place, in creating the place, in transforming the landscape by previously enriching it, locating it, in building a place where the dimensions, the views, the relationship with the elements are friendly, comfortable and pleasant. I think it is here where beauty lies.

I will finish by briefly mentioning the third leg where the footbridge's aesthetic is based on (shape and environment aside): the quality of proximity elements, the details.

The 21 footbridges

1-2-3. Suspended footbridges over Segre river. La Reula. Bassella. Tragó de Peramola. Lleida. 1984. **4.** Public schools Footbridge in Tortosa. Tarragona. 1988. **5.** Granyanella Footbridge. Lleida. 1993. **6.** Cappont Footbridge in Lleida.. 1997. **7.** Daió's "Palanca" . Queralbs. Girona. 1998. **8.** University of Lleida Footbridge. 2000. **9.** Internal Footbridge to the Mercat de la Flor in Barcelona. 2000. **10.** Railway station of Martorell-Enllaç. Barcelona. 2000 **11.** Monistrol Footbridge. Barcelona.. 2002 **12.** AVE (High-speed train) Station Footbridge in Lleida. 2003. **13.** "Petroli" Bridge in Badalona. Barcelona. 2004. **14.** Footbridge over the River Ges in Torellò. Barcelona. 2004. **15.** Sant Pere Footbridge. Terrassa. Barcelona. 2004. **16.** Footbridge over the railway in Molins de Rei. Barcelona. 2004. **17.** "Les Fontetes" Footbridge in Cerdanyola del Vallès. Barcelona. 2004-5 **18.** Footbridge to the Service area of Castellbisbal. Barcelona. 2004. **19.** Footbridge in a weir. Escatrón-Monastery of Rueda, River Ebre. Zaragoza. 2004. **20.** "Pavilion-bridge" over the River Ebre. Expoagua'97. Zaragoza. 2005. **21.** "Camí de les Aigües" Footbridge, Valldrera-Sarrià. Barcelona. 2005.

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