

Exhibition: **FÉLIX CANDELA. THE ARCHITECT & HIS CIRCUMSTANCES (1910-2010)**

Curator: Juan Ignacio del Cueto Ruiz-Funes

Organised by:

Colaboration:



The exhibition that the **IVAM** and the **Sociedad Estatal Conmemoraciones Culturales (SECC)** dedicate to Félix Candela's work exemplifies the assimilation process involved in the dramatic experience of exile and his integration in the complex processes of modernisation and urban development in Latin American countries. His professional experience and his work in both public and private spaces show concordance and a series of achievements that mark one of the privileged moments of the imaginary associated with exile in Latin American architecture.

The exhibition organised by the IVAM and the SECC to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Félix Candela's birth presents a series of photographs taken by famous photographers; plans and drawings; models of his most emblematic buildings; personal objects and a multimedia section that includes two documentaries *Una biografía* and *Aquella primavera creadora...*; fragments of films where works by Candela appear (*Nostradamus*, 1959, *Espiritismo*, 1961, *Sí quiero*, 1965, *Solo para ti*, 1966, *Domingo salvaje*, 1966, *Cuernavaca en primavera*, 1965, *Cruz de amor*, 1969; and several 3D reconstructions of buildings completed with their geographic location and information about the influences that marked Candela and that he generated later.

The catalogue of the exhibition comprises ample documentation of his projects, reproduces the works displayed and contains texts about the figure of Félix Candela and his architecture, by the curator of the exhibition, Juan Ignacio del Cueto Ruiz-Funes, and Luis-Alfonso Basterra, Elisa Lozano, Juan Antonio Tonda Magallón, Inés Sánchez de Madariaga, Henry Vicente and Graciela de Garay.

For the exhibition the IVAM has prepared an Educational Workshop that will provide the student participants with an overview of Félix Candela's architectural proposals. Furthermore, a series of lectures on this architect and his buildings has been scheduled, with the participation of Carmen Jordá, Rafael López Palanca, Inés Sánchez de Madariaga, Juan Ignacio del Cueto Ruiz-Funes, Luis-Alfonso Bastera and Antonio Muñoz Molina.

Félix Candela Outeriño (Madrid 1910 – Raleigh, North Carolina 1997) is one of the most important architects of the 20th century. He made 1,439 projects, of which 896 were actually made, and they occupy a total of one million square metres of architectonic space. International architecture and engineering cannot be understood without taking Candela's contributions into account. His works are located in Mexico, the United States, Spain, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Great Britain and Norway. His commitment to making economic, long-lasting, beautiful works made him the precursor of sustainable architecture. Candela's influence on the work of architects like Norman Foster, Santiago Calatrava and Thomas Herzog is remarkable. He made an outstanding contribution to the development of the reinforced concrete structures known as *cascarones* (shells), breaking away from the previously established limits.

In 1935 he completed his studies at Madrid School of Architecture and the following year was granted a scholarship by the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando to continue his studies in Germany, but at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War he enlisted in the Engineering Corps of the Popular Army.

At the end of the war, he crossed over the border into France and was interned in one of the refugee camps, which he later left for Mexico, where he reached his professional peak and creative fulfilment. When he first arrived there, he was unable to have his degree homologated and he found himself in an ambiguous situation, because although he had permission to work legally he could not put his name on his projects, so many of his works were signed by his colleague and close friend Arturo Sáenz de la Calzada. In 1941 he became a Mexican citizen, and he began to work with other exiles like Arturo Sáenz de la Calzada, Enrique Segarra, Juan Rivaud, Carlos Gaos, Patricio de Azcárate and Manuel Díaz Marta in the company *Vías y Obras*, which erected a lot of buildings in Veracruz, Acapulco, Cuernavaca and Mexico City. At this time he renewed his interest in laminated concrete structures and began to gather all the information he could lay his hands on about this technique, which he started to experiment with. So in the summer of 1949 he built his first *shell*, a funicular or catenary vault.

He fully developed these laminated concrete structures popularly known as *cascarones* that brought him world fame when, together with the brothers Fernando y Raúl Fernández Rangel, he founded the construction company *Cubiertas Ala*. He caused quite a stir in the panorama of industrial architecture with the application of this technology, which became extraordinarily popular in Mexico. These roofs were used for parking lots, petrol stations and in general for any building that required a light, cheap, resistant roof that would not take up too much space. Variants of these parabolic hyperbolic structures were used in churches, because they provided a great deal of open

space for parishioners. The height of the company's success was the Palacio de los Deportes for the Olympic Games in Mexico in 1968.

His activity spread to other countries in Latin America like Guatemala, Venezuela, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Peru. From that time onwards, Candela became a constant referent in specialised magazines. From 1953 he held a chair at the UNAM National School of Architecture and continued his work connected with the Spanish Republic. In fact, in 1949 he was one of the founders of the Ateneo Español in Mexico, one of the major institutions of Republican exiles, and which still exists. In 1961 the Auguste Perret Award that he was granted by the International Union of Architects, or IUA, in London brought about the consecration of architecture made in the dramatic conditions associated to exile.

In the early seventies, in the midst of a personal and professional crisis, Candela accepted the invitation of Illinois University to join the faculty and moved to Chicago, although he kept on travelling as a guest speaker at congresses, seminars and architectonic events in general and continued to work as a professional consultant for architecture studios in different countries, but he stopped building. After the death of Franco, he began to make frequent trips to Spain, where he had returned for the first time in 1969 to attend the inaugural congress of the International Association for Shell and Spatial Structures (IASS).

In 1978 he retired, became a US citizen and moved to New York. His last years were spent in Raleigh, North Carolina. In the text by the curator Del Cueto Ruiz-Funes, he sums up the last decades of Candela's life: in his last twenty years he worked mainly as an associate consultant for several firms. At the end of his days he was commissioned to design what was to be his posthumous work: two reinforced concrete *shells* for the Parque Oceanográfico in Valencia.