DRAFTING THE FUTURE
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These pages are a narrative of technology, innovation, sustainability, internationalization, and social commitment.

These pages are an invitation to tour some of Estudio Lamela’s latest activities, a narrative that talks about technology, innovation, sustainability, internationalization and social commitment.

It’s a portrait of important infrastructural projects such as the New Terminal of Schiphol Airport (the Netherlands); the Canalejas Complex, one of the most significant urban development projects undertaken in Madrid in recent times that houses the new Four Seasons, the biggest luxury hotel constructed in the Spanish capital for 50 years; and the avant-garde and revolutionary system of modular construction. Our studio designs sustainable buildings (Astro Tower, Brussels), workspaces that merge pragmatism and conceptual soundness (Discovery Building, Madrid), and residential architecture (Málaga, Madrid) that reinvent the concept of home.

This is all a result of relentless commitment and passion for Architecture by our professional team who incorporate new technological tools (BIM, virtual reality, augmented reality) and who regard and embrace the social aspect and the transcendence of a primordial profession – fundamental values to drafting the future.

Carlos Lamela
Executive President
What are the distinguishing traits of a 21st century sustainable building?
A sustainable building is an epitome of virtues. A nearly zero-energy consumption is imperative as well as completely recyclable materials, a precise study of climate and environment, a façade composition pertinent to its orientation, and a search for the genius loci to create unique architecture that’s suitable to its time and place.

What kind of client values sustainability more?
It’s usually a client who is well-informed of the global environment and who knows the different types of construction that are developed internationally as well as locally. It’s also a client who seeks long-term performance and who expresses a deep sensitivity for the environment.

To what extent do official certifications certify a building’s sustainability?
Currently, nearly zero-energy consumption guidelines derive from the German model Passivhaus. From the competition phase or the preliminary studies of a project up to the submission of documents to acquire a certification, a “certifier” is required to consistently guide all the decisions of the project to achieve the level of certificate that has been agreed on from the start.
What type of workspace do clients seek these days?
Primarily, a space that simplifies synergies between staff and companies. They look for offices that are sustainable and flexible as incorporating environmental and economic aspects into projects reduces operative costs as much as it creates workspaces that are healthy and efficient. Therefore, buildings and spaces with good connections to transportation and other urban services are highly valued. This brings forth important changes, even in corporate headquarters. Location is the quality that makes the difference.

To what extent do the new ways of working determine office design?
Offices are leaving behind the traditional and classic way of seeing the work environment. Flexibility is reflected in spaces: adaptable, open, and collaborative. Now it’s all about spaces that promote and retain talent and that favor synergies, communication, and collaboration. Places identified by space efficiency, natural light, transparency, and clarity.

What conditions does an optimum workspace require?
Flexibility is the main characteristic of a work environment. An optimum one integrates with the staff and identifies with the company, creating company culture. Places with added value qualify the space and promote the creativity and wellbeing of the employees and clients. The objective is creating environments that are different and technological and that facilitate innovation and collaborative work among areas. These spaces are included in flexible and diaphanous areas, which respond to the new company structures, which tend to democratize the work environment.
Madrid has never had a Luxury Hotel equal to Four Seasons before. Its inauguration represents a milestone.

It’s been 50 years since a 5-star Luxury Hotel last opened in Madrid. What does the inauguration of Four Seasons represent?

Madrid has never had a Luxury Hotel equal to Four Seasons before. Its inauguration represents a milestone for tourism and the capital city.

How can seven historical buildings be integrated into one sole project?

This project is unique in that it’s being developed in seven existing buildings of different periods that housed the headquarters of various banks. As a result of the bank mergers, they were physically unified and thus formed one complex which made it possible to carry out one single project carried out by OHL Desarrollos. The biggest challenge lies in developing new construction behind the existing façades while keeping in place the original bays of two of the buildings alongside a multitude of singular elements (stained glass, carpentry) and representative areas (trading room, offices). The new building materializes on the historic façades without depreciation for the old, but rather as an expression of modernity.

How have the original elements of the historical buildings been preserved?

Great effort has been exerted into integrating the hundreds of salvaged elements into the new project – doors, ironwork, stained glass, balustrade, lattices, chimneys, and counters. To do so, it was necessary to catalogue every piece of value as well as subsequent work of specialized artisan workshops. All these pieces are integrated into the renovated spaces where the old and the new coexist.
The new ways of working and how we relate to each other influence the future model of residential architecture.

What does ‘home’ mean these days?
Its current interpretation relates to socio-technological transformations that define our time. Based on our experience however, residential architecture and its market are reluctant to substantial changes.

Does a new residential model exist?
No, but there’s an adaptation to new family forms and the determined uses of areas. Take the kitchen for example – many of them are open and integrated into the living room. Technological innovations, demanding regulations, and comfort also have an impact, but they’re still not enough to deem a genuine change. But it’s undeniable that the new ways of working and how we relate to each other influence the future model of residential architecture.

What is Estudio Lamela contributing to the new trajectory of Madrid?
Perhaps it would be too audacious to speak of a new trajectory, but Estudio Lamela is undoubtedly a key figure in the capital city’s transformation. Good examples would be the residential developments for Aedas Homes in Boadilla and Cañaveral as well as the winning proposal in the competition for Chamartín Station’s renovation held in 2002.

How will the Torre del Río complex transform Málaga city?
The Torre del Río sector is only a part of Málaga’s western seaside expansion scheme, an ambitious development that will regenerate an old, despondent industrial area with an enormous urban potential. Our performance, alongside those of other important architectural firms, supports the creation of a prime residential district that will complement other sectors such as commercial and hospitality developments.
What is the relationship between architecture and interior design?
Interior spaces are formed through architecture. Great interior design lies in the art of creating a tasteful relation between the built exterior and interior, complementing each other. Architecture is often monumental in scale, reaching human level only through its interior environment.

How does the Studio approach interior design?
In Estudio Lamela, we prioritize that our buildings integrate with their surroundings on a grander scale. Equally, we make sure that our design stays consistent down to the minute details. We develop interiors that are linked to our architecture projects, carrying out the overall design to the final stage. We’ve had the pleasure of extending our designs into furniture and furnishings. The circular “WOK” lamp registered by Siemens for example, was designed with Richard Rogers for the T4 of Madrid-Barajas Airport, or the “Unita” furniture series (Imasoto) made specifically for architects. In 2001, we sculpted the main entry to the luxurious Loewe store on Serrano, and in 2009 we designed the Roca exhibition space which focused on experience, integrating an interactive relationship between the users and the products.

What’s the importance of interior design?
The heart of design lies in how it is experienced. Excellent interior design isn’t merely an extension of architecture; it enhances performance and improves life quality experienced within its walls.
What principles must be considered when designing a façade?

First and foremost, it’s important to start its design and development simultaneously with that of the building itself. The façade is the building’s skin, and as such should be directly linked to its program, structure, and necessities. At the start of a project, we at Estudio Lamela prioritize the location of the building and its orientation, always considering the main purpose of the building with regard for its ease of cleaning and maintenance.

Secondly, façades must adhere to the growing demands and requirements of thermal and interior acoustic regulations. Façade systems allow to project buildings with a modern and attractive image with better features and greater durability. Lastly, it is imperative to plan the project to improve on-site execution and shorten deadlines, especially in façade rehabilitation works of buildings constructed during periods with lower regulatory and environmental requirements.

Image is important too, of course – both that of the building in solitary as well of its environmental context. The complexity and grandeur of a façade consist in that it must combine presence, relevance, and function.

How does a building’s façade relate to its interior and surroundings?

In designing a façade, it’s necessary to pay attention to the exterior as much as the interior. I believe we can distinguish up to four levels of development: the city, the building, the user, and the details. All these levels have to be considered and developed. Façades should be in dialogue with their surroundings as much as they should improve the wellbeing of those who use the space.
How will this system impact the construction system of the real estate market? What advantages does it offer?

Modular construction reduces execution times. The advantages it presents are evident when considering execution control, finishes and safety, working inside a factory, unaffected by harsh weather conditions. Additionally, it improves work conditions, material supply, and it expands the staff profile to women and to those with disabilities. It’s a construction process that has a great future. It will need new industries and specialized labor.

What experience does Estudio Lamela have in this construction type?

Estudio Lamela is a pioneer in this system of construction. We’ve designed the very first two industrialized buildings in Spain: the residences of Real Madrid Football Club. Currently, we are embarking on the design of a development of 41 single family townhouses in Madrid, one in Boadilla and one of superior quality.
What is the BIM methodology?
BIM is the acronym for Building Information Modelling. It is a deep change in the way an architect works. The change from manually drafting plans to using CAD software entailed leaving the pencil and paper to drafting lines on a virtual canvas. The arrival of BIM represents a true revolution: we depart from drawing lines to modelling walls, floors, ceilings, windows ... all in 3D. We are moving on to pre-constructing the building and generating the documentation from there.

What advantages does it have over previous architecture programs?
It has so many advantages. The most relevant one is probably the coherence between all the documents generated as they all come from one lone source of information. Additionally, it allows anticipation, and therefore avoidance, of potential conflicts during the construction phase. This way, BIM helps save time and money.

Will this methodology be imposed on architecture?
Definitely. The sum of advantages mentioned, added to the legal obligation to use the BIM methodology in public development projects implies that, within four to six years, all architectural projects will have to follow suit. It has already been imposed on large-scale projects and will eventually be imposed on smaller-scale projects.

The innovation of the BIM methodology consists in intertwining all elements of a project in one single model.
We architects are interpreters of Society. It is our duty to be generous and offer it our knowledge.

An architect does not design buildings in isolation. He’s not only surrounded by society, but forms part of it and interprets it. It is his duty to be generous and to offer it his knowledge. Estudio Lamela understands this in the way it relates with the time in which they live, and so, over the years, have contributed to various projects that seek to create a better society.

Under this philosophy, we have collaborated with the Spanish Association Against Cancer (AECC) in the development of an office building of calming spaces that contribute to good work performance. In cities that are elaborate spaces of coexistence, Estudio Lamela designed, alongside thirteen other architecture firms, the Madrid Diseña collective. The goal was to use urban design to improve the capital city. Our contribution was a canopy-slash-pergola and the Tutto post, elements of multiple use.

The sense of preservation, essential in architecture, took shape a couple of years ago in the design of a hangar to inhabit a collection of historical aircrafts of the Infante de Orleans Foundation.
Why did you open an office in Mexico City?
It was a result of logic. Estudio Lamela was starting to plan its international expansion. It already had an office in China when Banco Santander invited the studio to participate in a very important design competition: a call center in Querétaro City. A project that had to lodge 2,000 staff in a building of 90,000 square meters. Estudio Lamela won the competition and thought, since I was the last director that had been sent from Madrid to work on the project, it made sense that I would open the office in Mexico City. This happened fifteen years ago.

What are the most important projects that you’ve carried out?
There have been many. We’ve built offices, residential projects in Querétaro, Celaya, and Puebla, and we’ve designed the terminal expansion of Tijuana Airport and various control towers. We have a strong presence in the aviation sector and we also work with all types of projects.

What expectations does the Studio have in the Mexican market?
Mexico is a franchise office. We are LAM (Laboratorio de Arquitectura Mexicano) and we are Estudio Lamela. They deliberately carry a phonetic resemblance. I’m the director and founder of LAM and I’m also associated with Estudio Lamela, but when the project is of a certain size, our strategy is to use the Spanish name.

We’re working with Spanish clients like Acciona, and our expectations are quite good. We already have some dozen architects working and we would like to compete with leading Mexican studios. In fact, we are considered one of the most prestigious offices in Mexico City, and we compete with associates (like Francisco Serrano, Enrique Norten or Bernardo Gómez Pimienta) that have a long history in this country.

To us, Mexico is an exceptional place. It’s economically potent, very close to the United States, and has a city of 25 million inhabitants. The goal is to span other projects in the region, such as El Salvador, and to be attentive to the opportunities of the US market.
Schiphol is a hub and its function and potential will increase even more after the UK leaves the EU.

What made you open an office in the Netherlands?
Estudio Lamela is carrying out the project in collaboration with KAAN Architecten, ABT and Ineco, operating as KL AIR. When Estudio Lamela carries out a project in 50% collaboration with another architecture firm, we establish a separate workspace in which all members of both companies can work together as a single team. It’s better for the development of the project as well as for the client. We chose Rotterdam as that’s where the headquarters of our partners is located.

What’s the basis of Schiphol airport’s design?
The design competition’s guidelines persistently mentioned the need to “maintain Schiphol’s DNA”, so that was one of our premises. Our partner Kees Kaan is a valuable professor of Delft university and through him we discovered its essence. Other bases were to enhance the space efficiency by improving the passenger flow and their orientation in an intuitive way, and that the Terminal integrates well with the other buildings surrounding the airport, the second busiest in Europe.

How will the new terminal contribute to Europe’s air traffic?
Schiphol is a hub, and whatever enhances its capacity will benefit the central area of Europe’s transportation. Considering that the UK might leave the EU, which would greatly interfere with the communications between the member states, the connection needs between airports increases even more.
Drafting the future - Estudio Lamela

International Offices

New Airport Schiphol Terminal - Amsterdam