

hanging containers and the texture of the knots of the textile work on the wall. The "LEVANTIS" end tables consist of walnut wood with anodized aluminum tops with a glossy finish. The tops have a circular opening that allows for light to pass from the base to light the flower containers hanging above them. These containers are manufactured using the traditional woodturning technique on solid walnut wood and house glass containers for the flowers. The textile surface of the scene, "NUDOS DESNUDOS" consists of a diptych containing over 2800 linear feet of pearly nylon rope with over 2500 handmade knots using the age-old technique of macramé. The composition of the work is complemented by various glossy-finished, anodized aluminum fittings and a turned ring made of solid mahogany finished with a white-colored urethane lacquer. (Fig. 4-5)

The sculptural surface "Punto de encuentro" gives way to the convergence of the disciplines of sculpture and textile art. The composition at the center of the work gives it its title and consists of a gathering point made up of glossy, brushed, and polished stainless steel and anodized aluminum surfaces with a mirror finish. The 7-foot by 7-foot textile work measuring consists of a hand-woven surface achieved by applying knotting techniques to white pearly nylon rope. (Fig. 6)

The "MULTIDISCIPLINARY AUDIOVISUAL FURNITURE PIECE" suggests a sculptural scene by combining multiple disciplines such as sculpture, textile art, and furniture. The piece also serves as a room divider within the bedroom. The textile surface functions as an acoustic material to maximize the fidelity of the sound from the monitor coexisting with it in a state of symbiosis. This convergence of age-old textile artisan work with high audiovisual technology constitutes a temporal contrast in terms of the techniques used to make them.

The audiovisual furniture piece consists of various sculptural modules manufactured of wood by traditional woodworking with an automotive urethane finish. The textile surface is handmade with white nylon rope and has 1 mile of rope and over 3,700 knots. It measures 9 feet in width by 7 feet in height and is suspended from the ceiling with stainless steel tension cables. (Fig. 7)

The creation of these works promotes continuous research and experimentation with a great variety of materials and techniques that blend with my personal expression. This triggers a constant regeneration within this multidisciplinary creative direction. The realization of each work represents a challenge that is nurtured by experiences from previous works and the desire to experiment with new techniques and possibilities. Each work represents a journey in time that I set off on as a stowaway before a sea of thousands of feet of rope and finish as captain after a great odyssey through thousands of knots of navigation.

## P

## INSUBORDINACIÓN AL ESPACIO PÚBLICO /

INSUBORDINATION TOWARDS THE PUBLIC SPACE

REVUELO, NOW

Javier Román

-to the volunteers

### INTRODUCTION

The city is filled with unsigned rooftops. There are makeshift and precarious roofs, century-old and sturdy roofs, and they coexist alongside other roofs that have been planned and built according to laws and codes. This broad spectrum is not only typical of our present-day city, but rather also of its physical reality throughout time (past and future).

Although many cities display more of one type of roof than they do another, over the course of their history, all cities display reckonable variants among these: urban renewals, for example, are movements toward the eradication of that which is precarious and makeshift, while the proliferation of informal settlements, as a result of poverty, urban immigration, or for whatever the reason may be, are movements toward the opposite end of the spectrum.

The technocratization of the modern movement culminated in the invention—over the course of the past decades—of so-called "professional" architecture, and thereby created the distinction between structures planned and built according to certain laws and codes, and all the other roofs that give the city its form. But this evolution has never necessarily implied that "professional" architecture has the necessary traits for Architecture (with a capital A) to arise from "the free play of the imagination proposing a system of symbols that does not depend on mere economic and functional necessity."<sup>1</sup>

Although architecture—good, bad, or indifferent—has existed and continues to exist across the spectrum, if we go by the Duchampian definition of the creative act (and what Art, with a capital A, is), we would have to await the user's verdict to know whether, indeed, a structure, signed or not as it may be, becomes Architecture.<sup>2</sup> Within this view, it is the user's complex relationship with the architectural object that would complete Architecture's act of building, the existence of which transcends the definitions, laws, and regulations that have governed it throughout time (and which have never ensured its success). This aspect is obvious, since if Architecture were to depend on a signature, several chapters of its history would have to be thrown into the flames,

from its vernacular expressions, to Europe's anonymous cathedrals, to name a few.

Given that it relies on a process extending beyond its scope, "no one knows when it appears [...], it cannot be foreseen,"<sup>3</sup> academics, critics, and professionals could serve as negotiators between that which has been built and the emergence of Architecture, but none of these sectors is currently taking on this role, since they have generally limited themselves to the confines of "professional" architecture, alien to the processes surrounding the architectural object that make it possible, usable, and meaningful.

### CONTEXT

As a profession defined and regulated by the laws of the state, and as a spatial, material, and physical practice, "professional" architecture is—under this premise—wholly dependent upon political power across the board (from the laws that regulate it, to the micropolitics inherent to its construction). For this reason only—for the inked papers that seek to define it, and for the relationships of power among the people who commission, design, and build it—it is impossible to conceive of architecture without considering the politics and laws that govern (and seek to govern) the territory's reality.

At our time in history, the political power of the state—exerted by its bodies and institutions—not only clearly reveals its limits, but rather those limits are continuously modified by diverse forces. This is not an abstract topic, but rather a very concrete, real, and commonplace matter: it is an issue of limits that fail and are retracted, just as much in a place where an informal settlement is constructed, as in a place where a luxury multilevel structure is built through dubious financial and regulatory schemes<sup>4</sup>.

But the state fails on much more subtle, less object-oriented, and more fractional levels: in every cracked sidewalk, every unlit street at night, every affront to civil order, and every excessive bill for the infrastructure services it provides...and so on and so forth.

The project *Revelo* ("Whirlwind")—winner of the Temporary Space Gallery (GET, for its Spanish acronym) competition held by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP, for its Spanish initials)—is an example of when and how Architecture can appear and exist as a creative act within reality, regardless of how it is defined or interpreted by the law or the limits of its institutions. The reader, of course, may disagree with this argument, but it does not change the fact that this structure, for as light as it may be, has been conceptualized, designed, and constructed—that it has existed in real time and space—and that its enjoyment by the public has been immortalized through the digital image.

### ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

Managed to a great extent by Andrea Bauzá and Marilú Purcell through the ICP, the GET competition sought to create a dialogue between art and architecture by bringing together a group of emerging architects and designers from Puerto Rico, within the physical context of the National Gallery (Former Dominican Convent) located in Old San Juan. The dialogue to be proposed—which was part of the requirements of the call for proposals—had to be shown not only in the conceptual aspects of the proposal, but also in the programmatic and material aspects, given that the site houses one of the most important art collections of Puerto Rico's cultural heritage.

The winning design by Doel Fresse and Vladimir García was chosen from among a total of 17 proposals submitted by around 40 participants. First, a pre-selection was performed, which included a proposal submitted by Carlos Pérez and Carlos García—*Catenary Projections*—requiring the development of scaled mock-ups and final drafts of both projects. Later, on May 7, 2011 the final decision was announced by the panel, which was made up of Darianne Ochoa, ICP director of permanent improvements and built heritage, Ada Tolla, principal of Lo-Tek, and Jerry Van Eyck, former partner of West 8 and now principal of Melk! Studio.

As a starting point for the conceptual approach, we find the immediate context, in the appropriation of a pop culture icon: the *Gayla* delta kites that, along with so many others, are an all but permanent component of the landscape of Fort San Felipe del Morro. From there, the central piece of the project, the canopy comprising 450 kites installed above 8,000 square feet of the National Gallery's interior courtyard. This system of spatial articulation re-engages the fifth façade of the renaissance-style cortile, giving it a new playful atmosphere, and transforming it—along with the other elements of the design—into a sort of playground for children and adults alike. The canopy also brings the sky into play through the contrast of complementary colors, while at the same time its continuous movements convert the wind, its sounds, and the shadows of the pervading light into co-protagonists of the space.

Although the final drafts included a labyrinth of hanging tubular elements in the interior courtyard, as well as a wind tunnel that would have served to mark the entrance to the Gallery and would have connected to a stage area for activities, the constructed project was made up of three main components: the canopy of kites, a projection screen, and several moveable cushions or pillows.

The 450 kites that form part of the central element of the project were modified by hand in order to equip each one with the strings and pendulum counterweights that allowed them to be set into their

corresponding positions and heights. The 15 rows that make up the lightweight structural crosslinking of the canopy consist of 30 kites each, individually tied to two pairs of steel cables per row. The first pair of cables above each row was used to raise them to roof-level, where a wooden support system—which was adapted to the particularities of the site—is held up by the pressure exerted by the very weight of the cables once they have been fastened to the parapet. The second pair of cables under each row secures the kites from the base of the columns of the second-floor arcades.

The same structural system, designed along with the engineer Valentín Beato, also lends support to the second component of the project, a line of vinyl strips forming a fragmented projection screen. The third element—the movable cushions—serves as a way for visitors to view the canopy and the screen, or simply to rest, thereby emphasizing the temporary nature of the project. These were manufactured with reused material salvaged from discarded signs from other activities at the National Gallery.

All the components were modularly designed to facilitate their removal, which furthermore allows them to be reused, since once the exhibition period comes to an end, they will be donated to the students in the Design Department at the Puerto Rico School of Fine Arts, located just one block from the site. Upon uninstalling the canopy, its 450 kites will fly once again at a special event to be held on the esplanade of Fort San Felipe del Morro—a place known to everyone as one that is ideal for flying kites—thus closing the conceptual circle that links the proposal to its immediate context.

The project's importance lies not only in the historical crossroads at which it takes place, but also in the aesthetic experience resulting from its constructive methods and the hands of the volunteers who gave it form.

### A FOUND GENERATION

Revuelo is not only one of the most photographed projects built in recent years, but also—given that construction has been at a standstill since the onset of the Great Recession—the project has served as one of the few that Governor Luis Fortuño has been able to use as a backdrop for press conferences (having held one there just within days of its opening.)<sup>5</sup>

Even with extensive media coverage, the call for proposals for the GET competition was not endorsed by the Puerto Rico Architect and Landscape Architect Association, just as information regarding the dates of its events was not disseminated among its members. Having missed out on any opportunity for media prominence, and having denied its members the opportunity to find out about the competition, the options for participating, and the enjoy-

ment of its events, the institution finally provided a space for the young designers to speak about the project under the heading “work outside of the architectural realm.”<sup>6</sup>

At the center of the dispute (and in addition to the lack of solidarity with the work of two emerging architects) we find the legalistic anachronism of the word “architecture.”<sup>7</sup> Ironically, it is at a time when architects are most needed for the multiple facets of daily life that it is most insisted upon that the profession should be reduced to the mantra “health, safety, and public well-being.” This, upon being claimed by other professions (and in the absence of another discourse), the importance of architecture before the public's eyes is in turn reduced to being a matter of how to anchor a wooden house in the event of a hurricane.

There are multiple ways of arguing against this holdover, especially following architecture's prominent role in the financial crisis and collapse of the housing market, which has not officially been acknowledged by the profession. Within this context, “professional” architecture suffers from a serious public relations problem. Just upon considering the surplus of built housing units, it becomes evident that there is a complication of the complication, since if we essentially have had a serious inability to observe, learn, and reproduce our own territory, it turns out that we have also already overbuilt (on top of something we hardly conceive of or understand well).<sup>8</sup>

The challenge that this represents for architecture, its education, its definition, and its practice is obvious: if it has been practiced in excess, what to do now? For Vanessa Quirk, in her essay on her love for the profession and her defense of so-called “public-interest design,” the question and its answer are both very simple: “So what needs to change? Our conception of what architecture is.”<sup>9</sup>

If we take into consideration that everything that surrounds us in the city is designed—well or poorly—by someone, and if we acknowledge that the scope of those design practices begins with the layout and shape of our cities, to the virtues of their public spaces, their sidewalks, and their urban furniture, and even the quality of their signage, landscape, and graphic design, why insist on an architecture defined exclusively by the presumed protection of health, safety, and public well-being of their buildings?

When other professions such as engineering—to mention just one—claim the same concern, what sense does it make to remain even one more minute under that limited, obtuse, and small-minded legal justification of architecture, when now more than ever it is so necessary and wide-ranging in order to improve the quality of life in our cities? When a multistory building that lies empty and unsold due to eviction is a worse affront to the public's

health, safety, and well-being than any roof that anyone has designed and constructed with their own hands, it becomes evident that “professional” architecture finds itself in an indefensible position.

Although there has always been an army of “architects in training” devoted to seeking out other ways to earn a living, one of the differences between the current situation and other historical times is that economic circumstances have forced even licensed architects to join that search. The question posed by the March editorial in *Architectural Record* regarding whether the new trend toward public-interest design can pay the rent is relevant only to the extent that there is no delay in enacting the changes implied by the article’s own conclusion, that “good design is essential in all civic building and infrastructure—not just in high-end construction. That’s a vital message for the future of the profession. One day, when the recession is officially declared over, the practice of architecture is likely to have changed. [...] But for now, however you practice or connect to the world of design, there are lessons and inspiration in building for social change.”<sup>10</sup>

Simultaneously, collective projects of every nature, such as those urban furniture projects carried out by professionals alongside their groups of students, such as *Thoughtless Monuments* (Andrea Bauzá and Isabel Ramírez), or those developed for *Cinema Paradiso* (Yazmín Crespo and Omayra Rivera), represent only the tip of the iceberg in a series of practices spearheaded by architects whose products have either been discriminatorily ignored or looked at with the condescending eye that only sees these and so many other proposals as works “outside of the architectural realm.”

As one colleague points out, Architecture could also be home to these and other practices that have existed for years without any legal or professional accommodation whatsoever, but which hold the possibility of converting it into a truly environmentally transformative discipline, both on a grand scale as well as in the small details that fill daily life. But for this to occur, there must be a change in attitude in the officialism so that it is capable of welcoming, not the future or forthcoming identities of the profession, but rather the here-and-now of its reality. Of course, in order for that attitude to carry any legal weight before the state and the territory, an inevitable change will be necessary in the law that defines and regulates the practice in Puerto Rico.

Revuelo marks, not a before and after of a reality that will continue on its course even after the already hackneyed declaration of the “death of architecture,” but rather the moment of that intersection, of the hinge on which the profession can either open its doors to the transformation of an ever more decrepit environment or close them in a move towards a nearsighted, limited practice

degraded to the design of the irrelevant high-end fragments of that dying city.

### THE HANDS OF THE VOLUNTEERS

Although in an already well-known quote from his article *The Architecture Meltdown*, Scott Timberg has clearly exposed the state of alienation of the officialism that fortunately less and less architects share,<sup>11</sup> the question as to how “professional” architecture came to be so cut-off from reality has not yet been discussed. But it suffices to read the descriptions that Owen Hatherly provides regarding the “revitalization” projects built prior to the crisis in the United Kingdom to understand that that alienation has not been merely appraising, but also practical, building the way locally and internationally for what he has christened as the “new ruins” of the current landscape.<sup>12</sup>

The architectural value of *Revuelo* is not to be found in the fact that its kite-formed canopy provides shelter from the sun, but rather in the symbolic assessment that the subtleties of its design made possible for all those involved in the project, from its conceptualization to its construction, enjoyment, and eventual remembrance. Key to this was the do-it-yourself spirit that does not limit itself to the heart of *Revuelo*, but rather embraces the heart of an entire generation that has given up on complaining and has instead leaped to action.

It is in this sense that the project has truly been valued. More than the image popularized by the very same social networks that were used for its creation and management, *Revuelo* exists through and as a result of volunteer work, driven in each one of the participants by the desire to materialize the planned image. It is a scale of design and construction on par with many of the trending “public-interest design” projects, and one that encourages a direct, tangible identification of the producer with the object produced.

This represents a clear alternative to the paradigm of “professional” architecture consolidated since the postwar almost exclusively into the architectural object as purpose and sole cause of the (concealed) processes that surround it and render it possible.<sup>13</sup> It is not about the outdated response of the “artistic” architect, the starchitect, or the former prominence of the “Master Architect” either, but rather it is a matter of rethinking the paradigm of the relationship between the observer, architecture, and the worker who produces it.<sup>14</sup> Within this mindset, the designer is not a protagonist, but rather just another piece in the constructive process that will be completed by the observer-user.

With regard to the triangular observer-object-producer relationship, the technocratic work of the “professional” architect would seem to be implicitly placed as a centroid—as an equally alienated

(yet active) articulator of said relationship. Various segments of the film version of *The Society of the Spectacle* (1973)<sup>15</sup> effectively illustrate this alienating relationship by incorporating footage of the urban renewals of the time into the text.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Intern Development Program and the Architecture Registration Examination are more or less contemporary inventions from the latter part of the 1970s, when the invention of postwar “professional” architecture would harbor the seed of the current juncture, since it depended on an economic engine that had broken down before and that at present seems to have broken down beyond all repair.

The closeness between the architectural rendering of *Revuelo* and its own production also exposed its producers to the variable gap that always exists between the construction details on paper and the constructed reality. Nevertheless, the project’s scale and its own materiality made it possible to continuously verify the drawing in relation to the physical space. That direct connection, between the hands and experience, is not found in the inconsistent culture of rendering, nowadays coopted by the campaigns of politicians.

This relationship that *Revuelo* maintains with the sense of touch is not limited to the long hours the volunteers devoted to its construction and installation, but rather it is also part of the symbolic meaning that is given to it by the observer. For this—and especially for children, who in their relationship with kites have been recently initiated to the essential force of the wind—the aura of the project lies in the mystery of the suspension of the kites in the air. What in the esplanade of El Morro is a direct connection with that fluid, in *Revuelo*, is found just beyond hand’s reach, yet within full reach of the eye, causing a fascinating anxiety of seeing something fly on its own and in such a large number.

If it were achievable by these means to verify the connection that exists in every design workshop, in every mock-up, and in the hand of every student who, as they glue on a piece of cardboard, try to imagine what is meant by the volumes and planes they join or send to the CNC router for cutting, the physical reality we live in would probably be quite different.

The wind, usually a mere variable in the aluminum window industry, in *Revuelo*, is the physical force through which Architecture gains life, movement, and light—given that the same air current that flows across the courtyard moves the golden pendulums in waves and the clouds over the open sky, which alters the outlines of the shadows on the floor, endowing the structure’s colors with a variety of hues; while the rain adds the corrosive imprint of the climate on its strings, cables, and textiles.

The invisibility of half of the structural system adds a dash of mystery to the question and unfolds

different possibilities: if the new Architecture is possible without touching the old one, what would be possible if it could in fact be manipulated?

It has been the builders—architects, artists, designers, professors, students, friends, strangers, family members—all the volunteers who made the kites fly in the center of this Architectural event. We would only need an astronomical marker to have effectively arrived back to the essential origin of the profession.

## CONCLUSION

While the call from several “practicing” architects for young architects to return to the material “roots” of construction is opportune, it continues to come from a remoteness that fails to legally support such a return.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it comes somewhat late, since the younger members of the profession seem to have greater mastery not only of the rendering software of the practice, but also the new digital production machinery with which all of us could be leaving a more significant mark on our surroundings.

Those days of an apprentice working under a master architect who was the only one capable of visualizing the architectural object are now a relic of the past. The technological advances forged during the latter part of 20th century and their effects on the practice of the discipline have been transcendental, but the legal definitions and guild-like structures of “professional” architecture nevertheless seem to have remained for the most part unfazed by this shift.

Quite on the contrary, the framework of “professional” architecture might seem to function perfectly both in its ability to overlook the needs of those most discriminated against by the outdated arrangement of its laws and regulations, as well as in its absolute effectiveness in alienating those who are clearly at the top from reality, not to mention from their younger counterparts. None of this should remain this way.

With every passing day, there are more and more voices repeating this news, in Puerto Rico and in the United States: there is something profoundly out of sync between the way in which architecture is defined and the way in which it is practiced. With schools in Puerto Rico and the United States sending more and more architects out into the barren job market of a nonexistent practice,<sup>17</sup> the alternatives for the discipline are clear: change toward the inclusive diversification of the practice, or the permanence of its alienation and narrowness.

Alarming, the current trend would seem to continue favoring the latter over the former, with the recent dispute over the General Corporations Act being a silver platter—in the case of architecture—for the perpetuation of that near-sightedness.

No change will be achieved by commenting on Facebook from a desk. Put your money where your mouth is: move to the city, go out onto the street, stroll through the parks, use public transportation, and get to know other people who are not political insiders. Political insiders come and go. The rest will always be there, and those are the people we are indebted to, since our primary obligation is to Puerto Rico, not to our colleagues—that is what the enabling act, our governing document and code of ethics, states.

Therefore, there is really very little to do to bring the law in line with reality. Even if the process is abandoned in favor of those who insist upon doing so little in the face of such necessity, the laws and regulations would still need to be amended to better reflect that narrow-minded laziness. All that is needed is willingness to do one thing or the other.

In the end, newcomers and veterans alike, we are not really reinventing anything at all. We only seek to do as we were taught: design and transform our reality, piece by piece, whirlwind after whirlwind.

**P**

### THIS WAS THE FUTURE?: HANS HAACKE AND THE LANDSCAPE IN DESTRUCTION

Rafael Jackson-Martin

The route covered by the taxis from Barajas airport to the center of Madrid tends to be an experience so dull for travelers that the elements that make up the city's outskirts often go unnoticed. But if that passenger is the artist Hans Haacke, any sign can become an omen. This explains why, upon passing by the south extension of the Vallecas neighborhood, an extensive area with its urban amenities called his attention—sidewalks, lampposts, and roads—perfectly laid out and finished, and which even boasts fully constructed and operating metro stations. In that supposedly urbanized setting, however, he saw hardly anyone walking around on the sidewalks, and not even one car could be seen going down the roads. There was barely any trace of human activity.

Here and there, Haacke managed to identify housing structures in all possible stages of construction: completed, half-built, or reduced to their shells of reinforced concrete. Any other artist would have limited that episode to a mere anecdote, as simply a sign of the times we happen to live in. But a restless soul like Haacke, whose production has focused on criticizing the art system and the relationships among this system, capital, and artistic institutions, could not let the creative potential of that finding

escape. So, days later, he went back to visit the place on foot to document that ghostlike setting. As he documented it through photographs, he discovered the definitive factor that drove him to undertake this subject matter: the plotted streets carried the names of twentieth-century movements and artists—Eduardo Chillida Street, Expressionism Street, Antonio López Street, Pop Art Street, Minimal Art Street... Without thinking twice, he turned this finding into the core of what would later be a peculiar retrospective exhibit at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid.<sup>1</sup>

Given that it was to be the matrix of his work at the museum, the pieces accompanying the installation expand the scope of its meaning and endow it with a historical quality, since they sink its roots down into the beginnings of practices that have brought about disastrous results suffered by most of the world's current population. I will devote time to one of them later, as I will now focus attention on the one that gives way to the title to the exhibit itself, created as a site-specific project for the Reina Sofía Museum: *Castillos en el aire* (Castles in the Sky).

The materials that make up this part of the exhibit are organized into two rooms. The surface of one of the two side walls in the first room serves as an enormous screen on which a tracking shot parallel to the place is simultaneously projected by several projectors, shot from the inside of a moving car (**Fig. 1**). In these images, one can observe the solitary apartment blocks, one or two pedestrians on the street, and the looming presence of the half-built structures in the background. On the opposing wall, there is a series of photographs on display with details of those neighborhoods, hung out on a line with clothespins as if they were undergoing the final stage of their developing process (**Fig. 2**). On the back wall, a gigantic street map of the south development zone of Vallecas, on which the stages of construction of the properties are identified by colors and hatching, serves as a means for us to spatially frame what awaits us in the next room.

In the second room (**Fig. 3**), several photographs in which the names of the streets are guessed at are combined with authentic works of art from the movements or artists they refer to, thereby establishing an ironic interrelationship in the style of the snapshots: for example, the overwhelming repetition of the Windows on Pop Art Street next to a silkscreen print by Warhol with several razors, the geometric simplicity of the prismatic blocks on Minimal Art Street, etc. That which gives meaning to the title of the project and explicitly reveals what has been gradually foreshadowed to us, is concentrated in the center of the room: dozens of sealed copies of the mortgage for the purchase of each one of the housing units in favor of the various banking entities, all of them scantily dangling from thin threads, seem to hover over the space, and dissolve into it, like castles in the sky.