

The Bulb

Hector Zamora transforms the interior space of The Tower of the Winds (part of The Friendship Route of '68) into an organic cavity. To be inaugurated Saturday 30 September.

By Enrique Jezik

Can a hostile, cold room like a bunker-temple-refuge style nuclear silo be converted into a sort of ventricular cavern with soft and luminous surfaces? This seems to have been the question that Hector Zamora (Mexico, 1974) tried to respond to with “*a-360r/R*”, his proposal for taking part in *Art in Situ - The Tower of the Winds*, a space for contemporary art dedicated to the presentation of artwork in a specific place.

In reality this tower, made by the Uruguayan artist Gonzalo Fonseca, is a public sculpture which is habitable. This piece forms part of the series of monumental works of art known as *The Friendship Route* initiated by Mathias Goeritz and completed for the opening of the Olympic Games in 1968.

The Tower, which was used for many years as a dwelling place for different activities or as a sombre cinematographic set (we are reminded

of the scene in *Cadena Perpetua (Perpetual Chain)* by Ripstein in which corrupt policemen give a beating to Pedro Arnedariz), was restored in 1997 under the supervision of Fonseca. In response to a proposal made by the architect and curator, Pedro Reyes, Fonseca agreed to have minimal adjustments made to his sculpture so that it could be used as an experimental artistic space. Pedro Reyes began the idea of converting the roomy interior space into a sort of “laboratory” where works of art would be created specifically conceptualised for the site. In this place, artists must “confront the unique conditions of scale, lighting, verticality and form” inherent of the space created by the South-American sculptor.

Since Art in Situ began, more than twenty projects by different artists have taken place inside the large truncated cone. And it seems that the possibilities of this space have not yet come to an end.

A membrane twists the perception of the cone

In the project we are concerned about here, Hector Zamora decided to use his knowledge of mathematics and structural calculus to undertake the transformation of that habitable space in a way that would alter all its connotations. With the intention of producing “a cloth membrane which would adapt perfectly to the formal characteristics of the interior space of the tower”, Zamora worked on scale models until he was certain that the

model would work efficiently. Then he started the construction of the *membrane*, a “large cloth bag which was tensed to create a second skin inside of the tower.”

The curator of Art in Situ commented that “this tri-dimensional model is an example of a surface covering that works by traction. Upon entering the space the public will be “swallowed up” by this body... The experience represents a total transformation of the space. The contours soften, not only to touch but also visually the shadows disappear - it is a space of pure light.”

The artist clarifies that “the space produced by the membrane follows combined forms of double bends and inversed double bends” calculated mathematically (from which the title of the piece stems - the algebraic formula used) to structure with precision a cambered surface of 150 square metres in size. Paradoxically (or not so much so) the rational premises behind the development of this surface are the ones that assure that a new totally organic space is transmitted.

This cambered surface, made with sections of cloth sewn together (using the *over lock* system which preserves the flexibility of the cloth) and then tensed to install it in the place, totally occupies the interior of the Tower -

in the artist's words - "those who do not know the space, will not know it and those who do will find a completely different space from the norm."

In view of such a design, the only thing one can do is to confront the radically transformed space in person. What is interesting is that this confrontation may take us further than just the sensory perception (visual, physical) of the place.

If the historic importance of a certain type of bioarchitecture, a little psychedelic and from the sixties era is inevitable, then the piece opens up the possibility of reflecting upon how complementary is the organic and the rational, the relationship between architecture and textile art, and even the relationship between science and art. A necessary exercise.