

A=360r/R by Hector Zamora

Art in Situ - The Tower of the Winds

Sculpture by Gonzalo Fonseca

The Friendship Route, Mexico, 1968

Periferico Sur s/n, almost on the corner of Zacatepetl, in front of Perisur.

Information: 52120160

A post-industrial womb

Cuauhtemoc Medina

Entering the atmosphere of **a=360r/R** was like undergoing a regression towards the absolute hospitality and neutrality of the mother's womb. However, this return to the comfort of origin was a result of the aesthetics of pure technique and total artificiality. Hector Zamora (1974) installed a membrane made of white elastic material, similar to the material of women's stockings, which covered the whole interior space and the concrete furniture of the tower/sculpture situated in front of Perisur. This tower/sculpture is used as a space for contemporary art projects *in situ*. Few times have I seen an exhibition space as transformed/transfigured as this one. The nylon membrane provoked the illusion that the space had melted under the angelical light which came in through the skylight in the roof, which incidentally resembled an abstract umbilical cord. The softness of the structure, the absence of different elements,

the comfortableness of the space, all evoked the idea of liberating oneself from vertebrate order with all its implications of articulation, language and function. It was almost like letting yourself be swallowed up by an anemone.

Zamora is an architect and his job is to calculate the flexible structures that are used more and more frequently in contemporary *high tech* building. Thanks to his skillful ability, he determined exactly what form the material had to take on in order to cover the entire conical space of the inside of the tower of the winds, to the degree that only two people at a time could enter the space without the material being torn. The title of the piece is actually the algebraic formula that calculated the surface of this volume: $a=360r/R$. Only by means of an impeccably engineered calculation was the staging of this totally biomorphic space possible. This was an environment which was perceived as a nylon algorithm.

To go through the installation you had to take off your shoes. To add to this fictitious freedom was the experience of floating between a series of *flashbacks* of scenes from films. Naturally one thought of futuristic/primitive scenes of comfort from *Barbarella* or *Odisea 2001 en el espacio*, and in the couples making out in the sand in one of the anti-climax scenes from Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*. And to top all this, the memory of the biomorphic aesthetics of

Italian design in the sixties. The “pneumatic” rebellion, which permeated the *groovie* aesthetics from the start of postmodernism.

Recently there has been a rebirth in interest in the pneumatic design and thinking of three decades ago: this ultra-stylised critique on rationalism merely instrumental of modernism and the culture of the cold war, which humanised the commercial object to gratify hedonism in the affluent sectors of society. Profound motives explain that at the beginning of the new millenium, we witnessed the *revival* of this aesthetics of physical, non-conceptual, almost pre-linguistic reconciliation between the ultra-modern and corporality characteristic of the fifties and sixties. The spectacular rise of Brazilian neoconcretism to the contemporary artistic precept is explained in the way artists like - Helio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Sergio Camargo or Mira Schendel - in their sculptures, activities and environments compare an intuitive and erotic subversion to the weakening, protestant and administrative formality of American *hard core* conceptualism and minimalism. It is possible to imagine Zamora’s environment as a large scale development of the tactility and fragility of Lygia Clark’s “related objects” and therapeutic installations, or Lygia Pape’s *O Divisor* (1968) of Lygia Pape, where the Brazilian public travelled through an enormous white canvas full of perforations through which they stuck out their heads activating the piece as a monumental horizontal kinetic sculpture. The likeness of Zamora’s piece with the work of Brazilian artists like Ernesto Neto is evident.

In fact, Zamora may well have surpassed these artists, taking interest in dissolving the sculptural object into an environmental presence. However, this exploration of pneumatic and ergonomic soft interactive structures was also done in the mid fifties in Japan by members of the *Gutai* group like Akira Kanayama and Atsuko Tanaka who used balloons and cloths. For them it was a way to express a vision that materials were also living things, where the old outdated culture of pre-war was obsolete - processes that had no other significance but birthright.

Playful structures like those of Zamora's indicate a moment in which the criticism of functionalism has awoken a great curiosity in alternative visions of hedonistic and anti-authoritarian design. Maybe it is no wonder then that the speculations of architects such as Buckminster Fuller, or the lightness and polyvalence of the hyperbolic paraboloid shell-roofs of the Spanish/Mexican architect, Felix Candela have returned to occupy our imagination. The late capitalism has subjected us to an unprecedented experience of social and cultural volatility. To conceive of spaces where we can behave so freely and playfully is comforting. Pieces like **a=360r/R** are the construction of small paradises of maternal calm. The *revival* of the sixties can be seen, as well as the aspiration to create heterotopias of repose in the middle of the post-industrial chaos.

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Bionic the organic form

If the study of the organic form has been able to work as a principle/idea/start, which generates design by means of a method, then this has been the case in Hector Zamora’s work. Beginning with a crab’s stomach, to be more precise its derma-skeleton, the structure of a fillet of fish, subsequently seems like a pretext, which unchains an extraordinary creative process.

To think of scale, to introduce a change of vision which modifies the scale in an analytical drawing is immediately real in this work, that is not to say “realist”. And the work grows in size, with an explosive strength, going from sculpture to architecture and architecture to mountain ranges. The crab converts itself into an canopy design, the canopy into houses, the houses into housing complexes. The organic form pushes from inside, it grows, invades and takes over space. The models invade the space of this exhibition: they are representations of something, which is much bigger in reality.

This aggressiveness with which the organic form grows into rigid structures in order to finally impose itself, is its right: the right of poetry, like a concrete

necessity of architecture, of the city, of everything. It is fragile poetry, which nevertheless never lets go of realism (5 columns, 7 anchoring places, 3 bedrooms). Finally, it balances and harmonizes that which is unilaterally opposite. In the translation of original language to the language of design, the organic is converted into content and it comes through intact. At the same time the organic form is converted gradually and literally into organic structure.