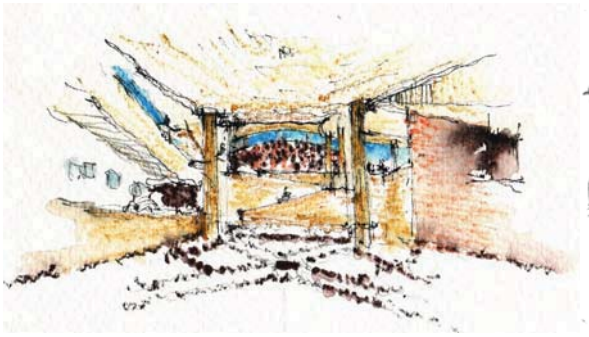
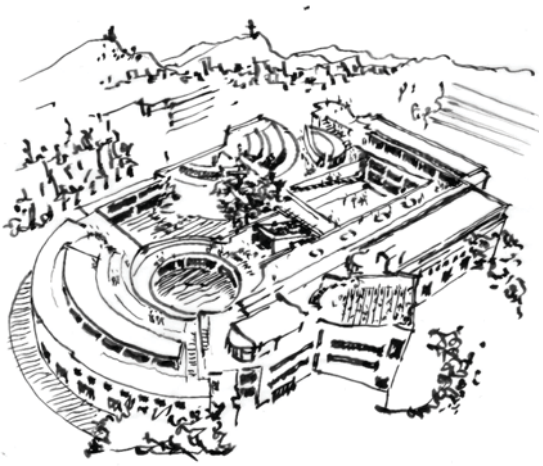
***Place-Making as Poetic World Re-Creation:***
***An Experiential Tale of Rogelio Salmona's Places of Obliqueness and Desire***

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Carlos I. Rueda Plata
School of Architecture
McGill University, Montréal
August 2008

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A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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To Maria and Juan with love,

and, in reciprocity

To Rogelio

***Abstract***

This dissertation explores the work of Colombian architect Rogelio Salmona (1927-2007) from an interpretive angle that privileges the ideas of place and poetic experience, seen as two essential aspects of the architect's métier. The dissertation looks at the experience and making—or generative processes—of Rogelio Salmona's places through the lenses of the poetics of imagination. To this purpose the thesis builds a framework in the parallel activity of poetry writing and reviews the concept of place from a phenomenological perspective.

The case study is a mature urban public work by Rogelio Salmona, the "Humanities Building" on the UNAL campus in Bogotá Colombia (1995-2000). The building is the subject of an experiential narrative that alternates with critical comments and metaphoric connections to the history and traditions of world architecture: particularly those of the 20th Century modern movements. The thesis makes evident too, that Salmona's architecture—that I characterize as modernism 'without prejudices'—transcends the normative restrictions of his predecessor masters. Salmona's 'subversive modernism' shows ethic and poetic intentionality.

The theoretical journey to the building (*theoria*) is followed by a dialogue with the architect on his central exploratory concerns which the Humanities Building reflects. The study concludes that the work of Salmona brings awareness about the possibilities of experiential re-creation as a poetic strategy for architectural invention.

Rogelio Salmona poetically interpreted the historicity of site for the purpose of Place-Making and proposed places that 'speak' of a more than desirable, necessary, man-and-world reciprocity.

***Résumé***

Cette dissertation explore l'œuvre de l'architecte colombien Rogelio Salmona (1927-2007) d'un regard interprétatif qui privilège les idées d'expérience poétique et de lieu, considérés comme deux aspects essentiels du métier d'architecte. La dissertation explore le façonnement et l'expérience des lieux de Salmona sous l'angle de la poétique de l'imaginaire, établissant ainsi des liens entre l'histoire de l'architecture et ses traditions.

Dans ce dessein, la thèse construit un cadre théorique à travers l'activité parallèle à l'architecture qu'est l'écriture poétique et revisite le concept de lieu sous une perspective phénoménologique. L'étude de cas porte sur une œuvre mature de Rogelio Salmona, un bâtiment public et urbain, le pavillon des sciences humaines d'UNAL, à Bogotá, capitale de la Colombie (1995-2000). L'expérience du bâtiment guide un narratif à travers lequel se tissent des commentaires critiques conjecturant sur l'histoire et les traditions de l'architecture, tout particulièrement les « mouvements modernes » du XX siècle. La thèse met par ailleurs en évidence que l'architecture de Salmona—que je qualifie de modernisme « sans préjudice »—transcende les restrictions normatives des maîtres qui l'ont précédé. Le « modernisme subversif » de Salmona se caractérise par ses intentions poétiques et éthiques.

Le voyage théorique (*theoria*) est suivi d'un dialogue avec Rogelio Salmona portant sur ses préoccupations d'exploration desquelles le bâtiment des sciences humaines « parle ». Cette discussion conclut l'étude : Salmona nous fait prendre conscience des possibilités de re-création de l'expérience, celles-ci servant de stratégie d'invention architecturale.

À la manière d'un poète, Rogelio Salmona interprète l'historicité immanente d'un site pour la création architecturale et créé des lieux qui adressent la nécessité d'une réciprocité entre l'humanité et le monde.

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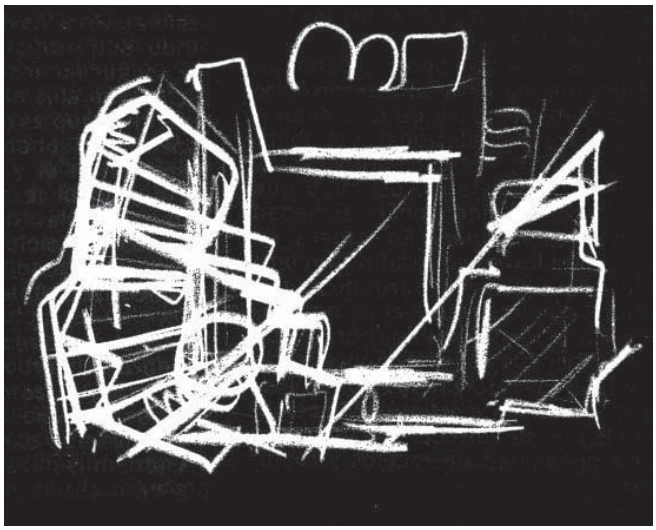
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"My Temple, this man from Megara would say, must move men as they are moved by their beloved."

Paul Valéry, "Eupalinos or the Architect."[1]

[1] Paul Valéry, "Eupalinos or the Architect," *Dialogues,* trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 75.

This dissertation explores the notion of architectural place and its generative processes, focusing on the experience of a building by the Colombian architect Rogelio Salmona (1927-2007). The imaginative, interpretive framework for the study is built on the parallel activity of poetry writing and a conceptual approach to place that relies on a phenomenological approach to architecture. The dissertation privileges the notion of aesthetic experience both as a prime tool for the construction of critical thinking (knowledge) and as one significant objective of the making of built places. Place is considered inextricably bound to experience for the purposes of analysis. The word making in this study refers not strictly to the act of building or construction processes but to the role of the architect in the conception of built places: it refers by analogy to the original definition of the poet as a "maker" in the world.[2] The word experience in turn, broadly refers us to the gathering together of beings, things and events, in a memorable unity or totality at given moments of perception. The totality of the idea of experience amounts to the perception of a "world" and, both poetics and philosophy, refers us to the way of our human "being-in-the-world;" our place-world. [3]

The case study is the graduate studies pavilion of social sciences and humanities at the Universidad Nacional (1995-2000) located in Bogotá Colombia: a mature urban and public work by Salmona which, I believe, synthesizes explorations and central concerns, related to his understanding of the art of place-making.[4] I argue this composition of places of institutional educative function matches poetic experience with ethical intentionality by means of its particular narrative of sheltered, open and transitional places. Rogelio Salmona's essential concerns and explorations that I refer to, regard the

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[2] Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse,* ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard Uiversity Press, 2000) 43.

[3] See, for instance, Marin Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper, 1977) 48n. The Idea of place as the way of our human "being-in-the world," which is central to this study, pervades the philosophical phenomenological tradition, from Martin Heidegger's concept of *Da-sein*, to Maurice Merlau-Ponty's theories on perception and more recent explorations on place, like those of Edward Casey and Jeff Malpas. This path of place interpretation, for the most part, builds the conceptual framework of this thesis that will be further developed. Analogically, in the realm of poetics we have the notion of the poem as a totality of perception that results in the experience of a "world"; see for instance, Paul Valéry, "Remarks on Poetry," *The Art of Poetry,* trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 197.

[4] Rogelio Salmona referred to the building precisely as synthesis of his central concerns and an occasion to concretize many of his creative, ethical and aesthetic explorations. Salmona's testimony on the subject is presented in Chapter VII, 205.

poetic blending, in cultural synthesis, of multiple poetic (experiential) images coming from diverse world-architectural traditions and the idea of site interpretation as reinvention. The problem solving concerns also extend to the contemporary society as a whole, particularly that of the ethical and poetic implications of our factual manmade world (fabricated landscapes). The building in question has been recently given the name of the architect: "Edificio de Postgrados en Ciencias Humanas Rogelio Salmona," in recognition to its specific dwelling attributes and the legacy of Salmona's work as a whole.[5] Throughout the dissertation, however, the Rogelio Salmona's graduate studies pavilion will be referred to as the Humanities building, for practical and metaphorical reasons.[6] The places of the Humanities building are analyzed by their aesthetic experience and generative processes, as well as in connection to the architect's interpretation of relevant elements of their physical historicized geography and the social and cultural reality.

Rogelio Salmona's work shows consistency in the exploration of aspects specific to the notion of place. By means of poetic re-creation and further elaboration on concepts of modern spatiality, the amalgamation of diverse architectural traditions and a historicized idea of urban landscape, these place-related aspects are traduced in the experiential narratives of his compositions. These elements are the focus of this thesis. The pertinence of the surveyed work will be examined in its specific attributes concerning the material configuration, the individual and collective experience of place, and the architect's responsiveness to multifarious elements of a given physical milieu and social reality. Due to the interpretation Salmona gave to the institutional and public nature of the Humanities building, the poetic and ethical content of its proposal and its interaction with the urban context, the architect and the building in question transcend the boundaries of local interest. The *sabana* of Bogotá is the regional context; a rapidly growing modern conurbation of about seven million people, capital district of a developing nation. This

[5] Spanish for "the Rogelio Salmona building in social sciences and humanities." The *in memoriam* naming occurred by means of an official resolution (No 201, 19 Jan 2008) by the Principal of Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Moises Wasserman. Noteworthy, in somewhat Heideggerian terms, the 201 resolution considered the cultural attributes of the building of "cultivation, bestowing and dwelling."

city configures a rich but convoluted physical and social milieu to which the places of the Humanities building, I believe, are poetically and ethically responsive.

Born in Paris, yet Colombian by nationality along with a lifetime of place naturalization, architect Rogelio Salmona was an apprentice for nearly ten years (1949-1957) of the master of modern architecture, Le Corbusier. Salmona was simultaneously educated in social sciences and humanities, mentored by the sociologist of art Pierre Francastel at Université de Paris, Sorbonne. Thereafter, he returned to Bogotá to develop a meaningful professional practice for half a century (1957-2007).[7]

In his lecture on the occasion of the Alvar Aalto Medal Award (2003), Salmona manifested his concern for the "mindless game" characterizing the rapid growth and destruction of the urban landscape of Colombian cities, Bogotá in particular:

> *I have lived in a city which grew from 350.000 inhabitants to over six millions in less than fifty years. In that short period of time, cities in Colombia have been transformed, built and destroyed many times, allowing experimentation which failed elsewhere.*[8]

Salmona also lamented that, in this process of drastic urbanization in Colombia, "history has been fleeting and forgotten, at times even unnecessary. [As he said,] we have preserved little, in spite of having little to preserve."[9] Even though Rogelio Salmona gained local and international recognition [10] his practice remained selective. It was

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[7] For a biographical synthesis on Rogelio Salmona, with critical and interpretive connotations see Cristina Albornoz, "Biografía," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 88. See, as well, Fernando Quiroz, "Time and Ivy," *Mundo: Salmona* 2 (2002): 70.

[8] Rogelio Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly: Permanence and Change in Architecture*, ed. Mikko Heikkinen (Jyväskylä, Finland: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2003) 14.

[9] Rogelio Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," 14.

[10] Some of the honors and awards Salmona received in life are: the Alvar Aalto Medal (Finland, 2003); the Prince Claus Foundation Award (Amsterdam, 1998); an honorific membership of the American Institute of Architects, AIA (Washington, 2006) the "Arquitecto de América" prize by the Federación Panamericana de Asociaciones de Arquitectos (Costa Rica, 1999); The "Taller América" Prize (Sao Paulo, 1995) and six awards in the Bienales de Arquitectura Colombiana. See Cristina Albornoz, "Biografía," 13. See as well, Germán Téllez, *Rogelio Salmona, Obra Completa; 1959/2005* (Bogotá: Escala, 2006) 335. See the biographic profile by Fernando Quiroz, "La Hiedra y el Tiempo," *Mundo* 15-17, 70. In the cited source see, as well, Carlos Niño "Goemetria Sensible" 66-69, 81-82.

reduced in quantity and the type of work as well as limited in terms of location. With the exception of two projects for sites in Spain, a 'nation' for which he had a deep cultural affinity and a direct familial tie, he did not practice outside Colombia. Occupied by Rogelio Salmona, his wife, architect Maria Elvira Madriñan and a handful of technical collaborators,[11] the small studio worked almost exclusively at a local level. Salmona's profound respect for the notion of place and the implications involved in its transformation, allowed for the complex and rich social, cultural and geographic place-interpretation that his architectural practice reveals. His ethical commitment to work only in sites which he knew extensively and closely derives from this recognition.

The aim of this dissertation directly relates to its title: Rogelio Salmona's place-making is a poetic, imaginative activity whose specific function is to originate, in dwellers, a meaningful totality (world) of experience. This is the poetic of the spaces for leeway and experienced desire achieved with specific re-creative strategies. This re-creative activity is grounded to a good extent in memories of meaningful experiences of other places, a blend of architectural traditions and a careful interpretation of the historicized geography of the site and culture to be reshaped in new dwelling places. In its specificity, place-making is also ethically responsive, addressing problems that touch the craft of the architect and society as a whole**.** In the following introductory pages, I expand on key concepts of this compressed argument in separate sections for the sake of clarity.

***Poetry and Architecture***

In our contemporary post-Enlightenment world of increasing specialization, human activities are valued more and more according to efficiency and productivity. Architecture has become in this context mostly instrumental to these prevailing values. For instance I recall Salmona, in reference to Umberto Eco, calling for an ethical commitment of the architect to "humanism" in "today's world so unavoidably ours and

[11] I list Salmona's collaborators during the period (2002-2007) of my field research: the architects Fernando and Edilberto Amado, Catalina Parra, Mauricio Salazar and the administrative officer Yaneth Alarcón. See appendix III for the list of main collaborators from 1991 to present.

given to money and profit."[12] Assigning a poetic dimension to architecture may therefore appear at odds with the now common "technocratic" approach to it.[13] It is increasingly common however to find the term poetic as an adjective attached to the work of contemporary architects in magazine articles and monographic publications; Salmona was no exception.[14] Previous studies have united the disciplines of poetry and architecture in the form of general theoretical treatises as well. Though providing valuable knowledge, by their broad scope, such studies are likely to result in doctrinarian approaches to theory and schematic matching.[15]

This dissertation endorses the architecture-and-poetics correspondent position. It looks at architectural composition as a human activity that is inherently poetic in charge of conceiving the places of human inhabitation, as Heidegger proposed, an art of "building" and "dwelling" in reciprocity with the earth—not merely exploiting it as resource.[16] In sum, throughout this research on the place-making activity of Rogelio Salmona as reflected in the Humanities building, the study aims to clarify that responsive architecture may sustain this poetic character. Martin Heidegger as well tells us that poetry is the origin of all art. Moreover, regarding the art of dwelling through the craft of building, we

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[12] Rogelio Salmona, "Palabras en la Apertura de la Exposición en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 17. In the source, concerning the reference to Umberto Eco see "Textos de Rogelio Salmona, 93.

[13] I use the term technocratic in a literal sense to contrast the holistic commitment to architecture previously mentioned. I address as well the limitations of technocracy, understood as the "government by technicians who are guided solely by the imperatives of their technology. […the] management of society by technical experts." < http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/585413/technocracy>.

[14] See, for instance, Germán Téllez, *Arquitectura y Poética del Lugar* (Bogota: Escala, 1990). Although the title is pertinent and suggestive, "Architecture and the Poetics of Place," the book overlooks the place-and-poetics link subject. The text provides us instead with valuable biographic information and acute critical opinions on both the artist and his work.

[15] This theoretical tendency might be assigned to Josep Muntañola, *Poética y Arquitectura* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1980). Tracing poetics back to its origins for Western civilization in *Aristotle's Poetics,* Muntañola's study makes emphasis on the link between poetics and formal mimesis. In brief, I would argue, it elaborates literally on language as style to finally support typological interpetations of history commonly known as postmodernist neo-historicism. Muntañola pays almost no attention to the notion of experience, essential to, and implied in both artistic modes of making.

[16]. See Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," (extracts) *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory,* ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997) 103. For a pertinent synthetic interpretation of Heidegger's thinking on dwelling, and its relevance to contemporary architectural thinking and practices see A. Pérez-Gómez, introduction, "Dwelling on Heidegger: Architecture as Mimetic Technopoiesies," *History and Theory Graduate Studio McGill School of Architecture 1997-1998*, ed. Alberto Pérez-Gómez (Montreal: MP Photo Limited, 1998).

take from Heidegger's thoughts that "art happens as poetry. Poetry is 'founding' in the triple sense of bestowing, grounding, and beginning. Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history."[17] The distinction Heidegger introduces in his use of the word 'history' beyond "historicist" connotations to a sense of instauration is remarkable. Aristotle appears to be subjacent to Heidegger's thinking on this matter. In his seminal *Poetics,* Aristotle stated that "poetry is more philosophical and of higher value than history for poetry unifies more, whereas history agglomerates."[18] Bruno Snell also refers us to Aristotle's statement, in *Poetics* 9.2, according to the following translation: "[T]he historian relates the events which have happened, the poet those which might happen." Both statements refer to poetics in its unifying character: the Greek word *Katholou* in Aristotle[19] and the setting forth of "truth," in Heidegger.[20] For architecture in the contemporary world, the "truth" to which I refer here implies the celebration of truth's temporal experiential nature or *aletheia*; the festal, the space of freedom and—in place-making—the favoring or production of meaningful events.[21]

### *Poetic World Re-creation and Place-Making*[22]

A double parallel between poetry and place is proposed in this dissertation. In the first parallel I suggest that places and poems have the ability to provide the experience of unity in the totality of a whole or world.[23] Thus poetry-making and place-making, albeit

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[17] See Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993) 202. Concerning the word history Heidegger clarifies that it is not used in a historicist manner but as instauration. The specific reference to architecture in the fragment devoted to discussion of the temple in Paestum deserves special attention; pp.167-71.

[18] See Philip Sidney, *Aristotle on the Art of Fiction,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953) 4, 29. See, as well, Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of The Mind: in Greek Philosophers and Literature* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1982) 90.

[19] Bruno Snell 72n.

[20] Heidegger, "the Origin of the Work of Art" *Basic Writings* 202.

[21] See, for instance, Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 131. Karsten Harries is concurrent in the conclusion of his *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1997). See as well, Pérez-Gómez, "Architecture as Mimetic Technopoiesis."

[22] In Salmona's writings the word re-creation was recurrent: I retake and re-elaborate it. I use the terms re-creation and making (I shall return to these in detail often in the course of the dissertation) as related to terms that Aristotle refers to, as the origins of poetry, such as: *mimesis and* making (*poiesis*). See, for instance Gilbert Murray, preface, *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry,* by Aristotle, trans. Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976 c1920) 5-9.

[23] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* 197-202. Heidegger's elaborations are the basis of this premise that I develop in chapters I and II.

in different media, prefigure analogous totalities of human experience. The second parallel proposed is that place-making by re-creation, in Rogelio Salmona's architectural work, might be perceived and understood through the lenses of poetry making.

The poetic re-shaping of an architectural site into a new place implies an original site being considered as a pre-existing world and a new place presented as world re-creation.[24] I argue in this study that the idea of world re-creation is present in Salmona's process of place composition and merges with an imaginative strategy that looks at the lived (memorable) experience of places, history and traditions of architecture in terms of poetic images that are transformed, metamorphosed and amalgamated in the unity and totality of experience of a new place.

Parallels between Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological view on the poetics of imagination and Paul Valéry's thoughts on poetry and the creative processes particular to poets[25] are central to the poetic framework of this study on Salmona's places. Jorge Luis Borges's ideas on time and history, as well as his input on the essentials of the "craft of verse" fall into place. The "poetic parallels" (Chapter I) will permeate all subsequent sections. The interpretive parallels drawn from poetics in literature to those in architecture do not attempt to propose a direct cause-effect relationship to Salmona's work. The argument of this research is not just to prove a direct influence of certain poets on Salmona, for one does not explain "the flower by the fertilizer."[26] Nor am I suggesting that Rogelio Salmona consciously decided to match the disciplines of poetry-writing and Place-Making. Although Rogelio Salmona proposed in different ways that "memory helps one to find the way of poetry"[27] he was also explicit in not having

[24] For a pertinent critical approach to the idea of site concerning current misinterpretations and its mostly instrumental consideration, see David Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention: Site, Enclosures, Materials* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 78.

[25] For a pertinent biographical synthesis on Bachelard (1884-1962), French Philosopher of science and poetry, see Colette Gaudin, introduction, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie* by Gaston Bachelard (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc.) ix-x. To situate Valéry's thinking and poetry writing in context see, for instance T.S. Eliot, introduction, *The Art of Poetry,* by Paul Valéry, trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) vii-xxiv.

[26] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 74.

[27] Rogelio Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006). 94.

consciously attempted a poetry-writing and architecture matching.[28] In terms of generative processes the argumentation of this research rather focuses on the possibilities of poetic re-creation for place-making. Bachelard and Valéry were certainly brought to the attention in the process of acquiring specific knowledge on Rogelio Salmona's intellectual activity: Salmona cited them in several of his manuscripts and lectures. These authors were however selected for their 'analogical' pertinence to the architect's work.

Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological legacy of a "subversive" humanism of reciprocity between humans and the world, lucidly exposed by Mary McAllester Jones, is worth mentioning at this point.[29] Bachelard proposes that "[the] world is conditioned by man's provocation." However Bachelard's humanism is not unidirectional from man to world: it is "decentered, [and] transcended" by the otherness of an animated world. Bachelard "unfixes" the relationships between subject and objects. Objects as well re-create us; they transform us.[30] In this way, Bachelard subverted the unidirectional, from man to the world, post-enlightenment approach to humanism: a kind of modernity that looks at the earth mostly in terms of resources. In parallel, I argue that Salmona's architecture is of a humanist subversive modernism: a modernism of reciprocity between built place, subjects and milieu.

The architecture of Rogelio Salmona inherited directly from the masters of "European modernism" and shows particular affinity with that of Alvar Aalto.[31] His work nonetheless, I argue, presents an important inflection that frees modernism from the limitations proper to the so-called master modernists and their urge for a rupture with the past in order to identify themselves with a new, supposedly inedited historic style.

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[28] Salmona, in personal interview (Sept. 1st 2006). See Chapter VII 224.

[29] This argument is central to and conclusive of the analysis of Bachelard's work in Mary McAllester Jones, *Gaston Bachelard, Subversive Humanist; Text and Readings* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

[30] See Mary McAllester Jones, *Gaston Bachelard, Subversive Humanist: Texts and Readings* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) 4. The original quotation is in Gaston Bachelard, *L'activité rationaliste de la physique contemporaine* (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1977) 141.

[31] Salmona was apprentice for 9 years (1948-57) to Le Corbusier and his work re-elaborates on the work of Alvar Aalto, L. Kahn and F. Ll. Wright. See for instance, Rogelio Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly: Permanence and Change in Architecture,*" ed. Mikko Heikkinen. (Jyväskylä, Finland: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2003) 21-22.

Salmona's work, I conclude, also overcomes the still prevailing modernist myths or misconceptions concerning the interpretation of advanced techniques as if they had absolute, positive technological value. Although he was critical of the indiscriminate adoption of modernism as a style—particularly in Latin America, his approach must not be confused with that of the stylistic pastiche of a recent neo-historicism generally known as post-modernist architecture of which Salmona was also critical.[32] On this aspect he seems to have assimilated the lessons of Pierre Francastel: "in the relationship between art and technology, we find ourselves at a crossroads leading toward an examination on man's reaction to his environment and toward a detailed study of some of his most diversified functions." [33]

One may bridge from Bachelard's Poetics to Salmona's place-making the understanding of the idea of Imagination. Bachelard defined imagination as the faculty of transforming, distorting, and condensing *experiential* images in the production of new ones into poetic experience.[34] William Curtis' succinct comments on Salmona's Casa de Huéspedes (1980-82) give us a hint of what I find is a deep affinity between Bachelard's *poetics of imagination* and Salmona's creative strategies:

> Commentators on the Casa de Huéspedes referred to a 'distillation of place', but in fact [the house] distilled many other places than just its own place, and achieved a poetic presence through the compression of these memories in a sensuous and tactile form.[35]

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[32] Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* 90-94.
[33] Pierre Francastel, *Art & Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* trans. Randall Cherry. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 128. Francastel's understanding of technology was relative, not to the advanced nature of techniques themselves, but in the purposeful (ethic and aesthetic) use of techniques in relation to their correlated social milieu. The intellectual influence of Francastel on Salmona reappears recurrently in this dissertation.
[34] Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les songes: essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Paris: J. Corti, 1943) 7.
[35] William Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, 3rd ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 649. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia (1980-82), as proposed by Ricardo L. Castro, is a point of inflection in Salmona's architectural practice, seminal to the mature work subject of this research. See Ricardo L. Castro, *Rogelio Salmona* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 1998) 21. To Conclude Part I of thesis I review Casa de Huéspedes as one suited example to discuss Salmona's poetic re-creation processes and relevant precedent to the Humanities building.

Valéry's insights on poetics may also help to interpret Salmona's processes of place-making. Paul Valéry wrote that poetry is an issue of re-creation of experience. He pointed out that poetry has two meanings: it is both a "special emotive state" (poetic experience) and "a making or 'art,' a strange industry whose aim is to re-create the emotion defined by the first meaning of the word." that can be aroused by very different objects and circumstances. In addition, one may say that poetry is 'in place' because, according to Valéry, "Beings, things and events" may originate in us a state of poetic emotionality. He observed that "[we] say of a landscape that is poetic; we say the same of an event in life; we sometimes say it of a person."[36]

Re-creation is an idea that pervades Rogelio Salmona's work. It is sometimes stated explicitly in his attempts to define architectural composition, but it is always implicit in the creative processes and tangible experience in his places. Rogelio Salmona spoke about this intention clearly: "[a]rchitecture is a way of seeing the world and transforming it. It is a cultural fact that proposes and, in certain instances, provokes civilization. It is an intelligent synthesis of experiences and spaces, and of a handful of nostalgia."[37] Salmona would similarly say in personal interview that "the issue is that all architecture is a re-creative act and not 'pure' creation."[38]

Ricardo L. Castro has explored Salmona's work (and words) by connecting these to the concepts of "*syndesis*" and "syncretism" as inherent in the "alchemy" proper to the architect's generative processes. The approach taken by this dissertation, from the perspective of the processes of imaginative re-creation, retains elements of Castro's conclusions on the subject.[39] Inflections and interpretative differences exist between the two approaches. The scope of Castro's research is wider. This study concentrates on one

[36] Valéry, "Remarks on Poetry," *The Art of Poetry* 196-97.
[37] Rogelio Salmona, "An Architectural experience," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America,* eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 164. The text was translated from Spanish by Ricardo L. Castro from Salmona's lecture at the School of Architecture, McGill University, Montreal 28 March, 2000. For comparison with previous similar statements by Salmona see Castro, *Salmona* 10. See Salmona's Spanish original in the Spanish edition of Castro, *Salmona* 10.
[38] My translation, from a personal interview (1 Sept. 2006) see Chapter VI 166. The Spanish transcrips and a digital audio file were consigned to the Rogelio Salmona studio archive.
[39] Castro, "Syncretism, Wonder and Memory in the Work of Rogelio Salmona," *Transculturation* 155-63.

meaningful place-composition by Salmona, the Humanities building. As a point of departure, I quote Ricardo L. Castro on the subject:

> Salmona often points out that one makes architecture based on the things and on the events that have moved us at one time or another. With the storehouse of accumulated emotions the architect is able to function in the future as his manipulation of form is directed to create a new emotion. This dialectical process in which memory and wonder play a significant role is inherent in Salmona's making of architecture; it is also inherent in our experience of it. [40]

***A Word on Place and Experience***

Place is a word common to a variety of contexts, it is often used ubiquitously in relation to ideas of site, location, and bounded spaces dynamically 'perceived' in time. It is a topic of philosophy, psychology, geography, and is central to poetry. Within the context of architecture, it implies concerns with technology, human behavior and 'environment.' It is arguable that the making of place ultimately differentiates the creative practice of architecture from other forms of artistic expression involving aesthetic explorations into the experience of 'time and space' as from industrial design conception.

An ultimate synthetic definition of place would result unavoidably in a negation of its multifarious but 'unitary' structure that encompasses an external world that is subjectively experienced. In understanding the complexity and relevance of place as the ground of human experience, thought and agency (which is to say politics, broadly considered) this dissertation borrows from Jeff Malpas's extensive multi-disciplinary study on place and experience from a philosophical standpoint.[41] Malpas's succinct definition of experience in terms of place is pertinent:

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[40] Castro, *Salmona* 17.

[41] See, particularly, Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: a Philosophical Topography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

> Experience is a matter of grasping multiple elements gathered together as part of a single, complex world [place] of multiple and multifaceted objects, events and persons.[42]

Concerning architecture therefore, place cannot be reduced to the—already complex—idea of site and its interpretation, nor to the still abstract and often misinterpreted concept of historical context.[43] The "spirit of place" as the exceptional condition of *genus loci* beautifully narrated by Laurence Durrell and studied in the context of architecture by C. Norberg-Schulz[44] vanishes in the context of generalized global metropolitan agglomeration.[45] Place is experienced, not only feet on earth (as in 'rooted' buildings) but it is also lived and stored in memory at different speeds and from various 'horizons' of human perspective, as occurs when we inhabit airplanes or automobiles. This dissertation acknowledges the unavoidably experiential characteristic of place and diverts therefore from the idea of a "non-place" situation in the context of technologically advance societies in the contemporary world.[46]

Concerning the experience of built places, architectural ones for instance, the notion of place is related to the subject's dynamic bodily involvement in delimited spaces with different degrees and qualities of material enclosure (limits), configuring locations in

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[42] Malpas 164-65.

[43] This type of approach was common as well in theories on place supporting, for the most part, the postmodernist neo-historicism in architecture. See, for instance, Paolo Portoguesi, "Architecture and Place," *Postmodern* (Rizzoli, 1983) 59-61. See, as well, Muntañola 21, 75. Muntañola's theoretical approach privileges the idea of place as historic and geographic context. With pertinent sources, Muntañola analyses poetics in its normative theoretical origins for Western civilization founded in Aristotle. His study attempts however to become "instrumental" to a "semiotic and rhetoric" of architecture. Too a good extent Muntañola's endeavor alludes to what Pérez-Gómez acutely sees as a reductive "reading" of phenomenology (Heidegger in particular) to support the formalist and stylistic, neo-historicism of postmodernist architecture. See Pérez-Gómez "Architecture as Mimetic Technopoiesis."

[44] See, for instance, Laurence Durrell, *Spirit of Place* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1971). See, as well, Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci* (Milano: Electa, 1979).

[45] The impracticable nature of *Genus Loci* is critical subject of Ignasi De-Sola Morales (1999) "Place Permanence or Production" *Differences* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press) 93-105.

[46] De-Sola Morales 93-105. "Place Permanence or Production" is suggestive in this regard, as it is the anthropological perspective to today's technologically inflected idea of place, by Marc Augé [in] *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,* trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995).

sites that are equally bounded.[47] The experience of built places therefore implies dynamic "pre-positions" of the subjects that inhabit them. In places we found ourselves positioned virtually never statically, for instance, being outside, inside, around and in-between or transient. [48] Place is a dynamic and situational experience of a world or totality in the unity of an event in time which happens in bounded spaces with different degrees of enclosure. Therefore I stress the temporal condition of architecture in this dissertation and the notion of place as a meaningful event that becomes memorable and stirs the making of connections in the architect's imagination, meaning by this, an impulse to re-create. All of these concepts are implicit in the idea of place which I explore in this dissertation, first by building parallels on poetry (Chapter I) then by drawing a specific conceptual framework (Chapter II), in order to visit the Humanities building and after, dialogue with the architect (Chapters III to VII). The experiential tale conveys the perceived-world, analysis and critical interpretation of Salmona's place-making.

***The Humanities Building: an overview***

The Humanities building is a public educational facility located in the metropolitan area of Bogotá Colombia on the campus of Universidad Nacional, bordering the inner city about three kilometers west of Bogotá's impressive eastern hills. The building is a composition of sheltered places, terraces and three courtyards, all articulated around loggias, thresholds and various transitional spaces. It is used as a cultural centre and educational facility for diverse disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Prior to its construction, the terrain allotted to Salmona[49] for the project may likely have appeared unattractive. At ground level, it was occluded on the east from the presence of the hills by a neighboring two-storey building; bounded as well by a chain-link fence to the south against a noisy highway populated by high-rise housing developments; westbound it was limited by a rather hermetic and unfriendly container of labs and classrooms, and open to

[47] I draw on the simple and clear distinction between "site, enclosures [and] materials" that, from the title on, David Leatherbarrow makes in *The Roots of Architectural Invention* as essential elements engaged in the configuration and delimitation of built places

[48] See Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 125-130.

[49] I avoid using the word "site" for the moment due to the multidimensionality and complexity of this concept, which will be progressively exposed in the course of the dissertation.

the circulation paths and green areas of the campus on its north side only. Ultimately the site presented challenging conditions as to its creative interpretation.

The visit to and analysis of the Humanities building in *Part Two* (Chapters III to V) privileges the ideas of lived experience and re-creation. Consequently the narrative is subjective, dynamic and primarily in the first person. The tale becomes situational, "pre-positional" and from first hand experience, attempting thus to reflect sensorial engagement in its depictions. This narrative is subject to elements of the discourse on place previously developed in Chapter II of the text. From the conceptual framework, place is described as prime ground for human experience therefore of human thought and agency. The phenomenological description and interpretation of the building alternate with moments of reflection, critical comments, and imaginative connections arising from a perceptual engagement with it. These moments are stimulated and supported by acquired knowledge that becomes scholarship. The underlying argument in the narrative is that a full sensorial engagement with place prepares us for further Place-Making. Although seemingly circular, I link this argument to an elliptically spiraling figure that represents Place-Making as world re-creation, ascending by virtue of the "metamorphosis" of imagination. The re-creative nature of this narrative-analysis, highlighting the making of imaginative connections, coincides with, and celebrates, what I believe is an important contribution of Salmona's work to the architectural design: the conscious exploration of the possibilities of place re-creation. The central thesis is the idea that memorable, poetic, place-experience fuels the imagination and prepares us, as architects, for eventual new place re-creations.

Emulating Le Corbusier's *Aircraft*,[50] the 'tale' of Chapter III begins with a 'bird's-eye view', flying over the geography of the region to analyze the 'site plan' in broad scale. It looks at the architectural composition of the Humanities building from above, as distant object. The subtext of this initial detached vision is the recognition of the limitations of this type of abstract formalist approach to buildings and also to architectural composition.

[50] Le Corbusier, *Aircraft* (London: Trefoil Publications, 1987 c1935).

Another important subtext of chapter III in turn is that place is inextricably bonded to experience and so it occurs in the stimuli of transportation machines (a somewhat Proustian influenced approach as will be noted), with speed and a modified horizon and human perspective. I would describe the approaching trajectory as an elliptical line that swirls downwards and inwards from the regional geography to the immediate surroundings of the building. The narrative continues on in the context of the university campus, where the building is located. The campus' world is presented in its cultural and architectural hybrid condition. Subsequently some initial reflections on the building's envelope are related and a phenomenological description-analysis of the ritual of entrance to the Humanities building closes the chapter.

The temporal program of the building (promenade) and its plot, which I interpret as a spiral labyrinthine structure, take you from disorientation to orientation towards the magnificent hills of Bogotá. This aspect is central to Chapters IV and V. The text speculates on the amalgamation of strategies coming from the 20th Century masters of modern architecture which I consider to be specific to Rogelio Salmona's explorations on spatiality. This section of the study also attempts to unveil the architect's critical and poetic approach to the urban landscape as well as to imaginative re-creation. The labyrinthine figure representing the narrative trajectory of Chapters IV and V is the reversal of that in chapter III. The analogical figure the Chapters IV and V (a swirling spiraling line) moves one upwards expanding from the inner world of the building back to the geography of the region. The chapter concludes with a synthesis and experiential recollection that goes from geographical interpretation to the labyrinthine inner world, back to the openness of the spaces atop the building to finalize touching on interpretations of the institutional character of the Humanities building. Salmona's suggestive spatiality—I call it of experiential desire and prolonged obliqueness—and the interplay of spatial continuities and discontinuities come through in the experiential description and scholarly reflections.

The conclusive Chapters, VI and VI (*Dialogues with the Architect*) are based on three digitally recorded interviews with Rogelio Salmona: one in September 1 2006 and two in

February 14 and 21, 2007. These interviews were preceded by several visits to the studio archives, meetings and construction-site visits with Salmona, between the years 1992 and 2006. The dialogues followed pertinent readings, some suggested by Salmona himself. The conversations were not based on preconceived questionnaires, something Rogelio Salmona disliked, perhaps due to health issues and his still very active engagement with ongoing projects. The material was digitally recorded, translated by myself, edited and reorganized according to the most relevant subjects treated in this dissertation. The dialogues are graphically illustrated and complemented with relevant scholarship based on the architect's writings and referents. Some material was discarded, and the Spanish transcripts were consigned to the Salmona studio archives. Chapter VI corresponds to the poetic strategies and architectural subjects on which Salmona most specifically worked throughout his professional career. Chapter VII concentrates on the discussion in the Humanities building as case study. In the context of this research the 'dialogues' are of conclusive character.[51]

***Method and Structure of the Study***

There is no foolproof method to discuss artistic production. In light of the complex nature of place and subjectivity of its creative making, I approach the subject from perception to consciousness.[52] First, I perceive the work itself as it communicates through experience and consciously motivates rational reflection. This prime experiential approach would logically be insufficient had we not established a body of knowledge on the subject of research (on place and poetry), the author of the work (Rogelio Salmona) and relevant aspects of the physical and social-cultural milieu (the site within the landscape of Bogotá). I consider this two-pronged approach consequent to the idea of place-making as re-creation, an "art of experience" intended for the production of new aesthetic experience or *Erlebniskunst*.[53] Concerning the notion of aesthetic experience, a

[51] The preamble of *Part Three* gives a more detailed description of the rationale and transformation of the interviews into the conclusive chapters.
[52] See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 c1969) xxi. From the source cited, I borrow Gaston Bachelard's idea of phenomenology as "the onset of the image in an individual consciousness […]" On the subject see, as well, Colette Gaudin, introduction, xviii.
[53] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Sheed & Ward Ltd. (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 60.

distinction must be made: we refer not to the 19th-century romantic notion of genius but to a contemporary one that incorporates self consciousness in artistic production.[54]

Rogelio Salmona's Humanities building is analyzed in terms of experiential images expressed in a narrative way. Images came to mind and connections were made that gave way to speculation supported by scholarship. The memorable visit (experience) of the work by this scholar (*Part Two* of this study) is also a way to celebrate the ideas of re-creation and imaginative blending of which the place-making of Rogelio Salmona speaks. The narrative attempts to present: first, the elements and aspects of place established in the conceptual framework, using the Humanities building and its geographic milieu as the place and ground for the study; second, the specificity and intentionality of the work, based on the methodological processes of phenomenological analysis and conscious reflection.

I marry two methodological sources that, I believe, complement each other in the analysis of the subject: Gaston Bachelard's poetics of imagination and Pierre Francastel's ideas on the sociology of art. Although these two scholars had very different backgrounds (Bachelard coupled poetry and science, and Francastel married society and art), both rooted creative work in the notions of imagination and the imaginary. While, for Bachelard, the work "speaks" and no concern was necessary for the circumstances of its production, [55] for Francastel, the work of art was incomplete if seen detached from social reality. Borrowing from Francastel's approach to the analysis of "objects of plastic thought" I link the themes and problems posed by the architect to the notions of "specificity" and "intentionality", two timeless components artistic production. Francastel reminds us that in art the aesthetic interest of a work is not enough. [56]

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[54] Gadamer 61.
[55] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 74.
[56] Francastel, *Art & Technology* 150. From the source I quote:

> For most critics, a plastic object's intentionality was, unfortunately, confused with specificity. The debate centered on determining the degree of aesthetic interest in any given object and art was confusingly associated with the desire to produce a work mainly for its aesthetic qualities.

Specificity in this case addresses the generative process and aesthetic qualities of this place-composition and the subjective human experience of it, which I link to poetics in the literary realm. It corresponds then to the analysis of experiential images and is derived from the nature of these. In the case of built places conceived by an architect, specificity involves concerns with the history and traditions of architecture, site and landscape, concepts of materiality and spatiality, bodily engagement with place and technological positioning. Intentionality corresponds to placing the author and the work in historical context and further reviewing the projective relation of those works (places) towards problems, referring to architecture, but also extending to the society as a whole. Intentionality therefore addresses problems that are inherent to the development of an era in general and those belonging to the particular social milieu with which the architect interacts. Intentionality corresponds as well to the idea of self-consciousness in artistic production and it necessitates looking at the correlation between the elements configuring the artist's intellectual and experiential background as reflected in the work. Although intentionality and specificity are different concepts, they are not separate entities of artistic work; they merge in art production and complement each other.[57]

***Synthesis of the Dissertation Structure***

The study has three presentational phases. The first phase or *Part One* is divided in chapters I and II, providing a framework for understanding the specificity of place-making as poetic re-creation. These chapters expose the specific theoretical framework on poetics and place that will permeate the narrative and reflections in *Part Two* and give scholarly support to the dialogues with Rogelio Salmona in *Part Three*. The second section of Chapter II illustrates the theoretical explorations on poetics and Place-Making with a relevant work by Rogelio Salmona, the Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres in Cartagena de Indias Colombia (1980-82). This work is also an important precedent to the Humanities building case study. The input of the theoretical framework on the subsequent *Parts Two* and *Three* is both explicit and implicit. It is explicit in that it becomes scholarship that supports the subjective interpretation of the Humanities building (*Part Two*) and the *Dialogues with the Architect* (*Part Three*). The conceptual

[57] Francastel, *Art & Technology* 153.

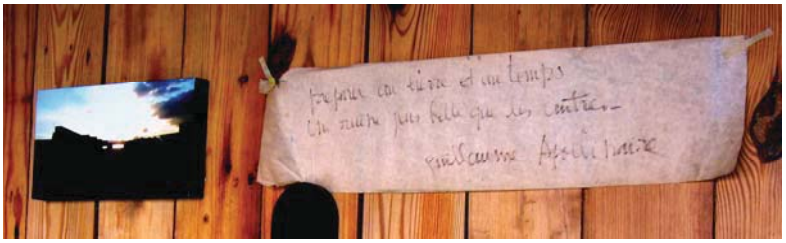
framework remains implicit in that it influences the dynamic pre-positional narrative way and phenomenological descriptions of the Humanities building. *Part two* is divided in three chapters. Chapter III provides the reader with a geographical understanding of the site, historicized and in regional scale. The reference is particular to the *cerros* (the hills) of Bogotá and other relevant geographic features. It continues with a "bird's-eye view" of the campus, the site and roof plan, and the approximation and a walk approaching the Humanities building. Chapters IV and V discover the labyrinthine inner world of the place-composition and peaks with a meaningful encounter with the hills on its roof-terraces. *Part Three* is finally a dialogue with the architect to discuss, illustrate and confront ideas vis-à-vis the notion of place-making, discussing his intellectual references, problems-posed and the building case study. This part also provides specific information on the architect, required to comprehensively understand the work and—what I propose—is the theoretical legacy of Salmona's architecture. *Part Two and Three* are complemented with drawings and design sketches by Rogelio Salmona, other drawings from my travel sketchbook, as well as relevant photographs, images of analytical scaled models and descriptive geometrical representations of the project. The illustrations are located to the left of the textual pages and paginated with a hyphenated L. Partial conclusions are exposed in the different phases of the dissertation, therefore a *Coda,* as short epilogue, is offered in the end to sum up the main arguments and contributions of this thesis.

**Appendixes**

Attached to the dissertation is a set of descriptive geometric representations of the Humanities building (Appendix I), a list of projects by the Rogelio Salmona studio, from 1958 to 2006 (Appendix II), and a list of the main collaborators of his studio, from 1991 to present (Appendix III).

## *Part One*

## *Conceptual Framework: Poetry and Place Re-Creation*



**« *Préparer au lierre et au temps une ruine plus belle que les autres* »**
Guillaume Apollinaire[58]

How often, beside a well, on the old stone covered with the sorrel and ferns, have I murmured the name of distant waters, the name of the buried world? How often has the universe suddenly answered? O my things, how have we talked.

Gaston Bachelard[59]

[58] "To prepare for ivy and passing time a ruin more beautiful than any other." Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters,* trans. Peter Read (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 2004) 81-82.
[59] Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* trans. with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) 23.

## ***Chapter I. Placing Parallels in Poetry***

> The devotees of analysis, of whom I said just now that they are not resigned to being merely the playthings of their talents, are soon aware that the problem of the invention of forms and ideas is one of the most delicate that speculative and practiced intelligence can set itself. Everything in this field of research must be created -and not only the means, the methods, the terms and the notions, but also, and above all, the very object of our curiosity must be defined. A little metaphysics, a little mysticism, and much mythology will for a long time yet, be all we have to take the place of positive knowledge in this kind of question.[60]

One logical query that arises at the outset of this first chapter aims at finding the places where poetry and architecture mirror each other. How do poetry-making and the making of places relate to two basic ways of performing a similar task? In the relationship between poetry and architecture—the latter considered in the task of conceiving meaningful places of human inhabitation—we witness two parallel ways of achieving imaginative functions. The word parallel implies, although analogous, that poetic and architectural creations make use of different material and immaterial technologies. In the literary medium, poetry operates through what one may call the indirect world of language, which is taken to the imaginary realm. Creating habitable places in the form of concrete objects, architecture operates between two dimensions: the world of direct experience or perception and the imaginary realm. Both activities create their own images, are "figurative" and are parallel in this regard, though they must not simply be equated.[61]

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[60] Paul Valéry, preamble, *The Art of Poetry,* trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 7.
[61] See Pierre Francastel, *La figure et le lieu : L'ordre visuel du Quattrocento,* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967) 13.
[26] The idea of the "figurative" in Francastel extends beyond the common distinction with abstract art. All art is figurative (architecture included) in the sense that, through intellectually and technically conditioned "images" (not concepts) it mediates between the individual and the collective and performs a permanent and necessary function in society. Francastel considers the work of art as a concrete "object," deeply

This chapter will be devoted to outlining limited and specific premises coming from reflections on the process of poetry writing, in response to the parallel activity of place-making. My goal throughout the subsequent chapters is to encourage the reader to further associate poetic re-creation to the idea of place-making that I believe was inherent in the generative processes of Salmona's work. The following reflections on poetry draw on a handful of poets and scholars, relevant to Salmona's intellectual musings and affections: authors revealed to me while acquiring knowledge on the architect. With a few exceptions, these premises on poetry were taken from an intimate space; the architect's intellectual "wardrobe."[62] However, to assume that these authors alone dictate Salmona's work would reduce the complexity of his creative methods to deterministic explanation:[63] research on creative work is never conclusive with "positivist thinking" […or] finalist doctrines."[64] I see these sources just as plausible connections; a metaphoric, interpretive framework for the experience of Salmona's places and his place-making strategies.

The mentors of these poetic parallels are: Paul Valéry, a science devotee committed to deciphering the "science-art" of poetry-making which he based primarily on his own creative processes:[65] Gaston Bachelard, a philosopher of science and poetry, a subject of which he modestly declared himself to be a "reader" only; the "sociologist of art" Pierre Francastel, who was Salmona's mentor at the *Sorbonne* in Paris; [66] and no less relevant,

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immersed in—and attached—to the societal, temporal and spatial conditioning of the artist, parallel to other advanced societal acts, objects of civilization and forms of thought such as the scientific and the literary.

[62] I borrowed the "wardrobe" image from Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) 74-75, 678-81.

[63] See, for instance, Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* trans. with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) 72-74.

[64] Francastel, *La figure et le lieu* 27.

[65] See T. S Eliot's introduction to Valéry's *The Art of Poetry* vii-xxiv.

[66] In this regard, see Yves-Alain Bois, foreword, *Art and Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, by Pierre Francastel, trans. Randall Cherry (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 15. Bois' critical comments are pertinent in putting this thinker, relatively unknown to the North American audience, into context. He concludes that "the diversity of Francastel's knowledge and anthropological interests" was mistakenly labeled as "sociology of art." As Bois suggests, Francastel's approach to the analysis of the 'objects' of aesthetic thinking "should provoke architectural historians to be a little more adventurous in their discipline."

Jorge Luis Borges whose ideas on history and temporality he beautifully traduced in essays, fiction and poems. Borges was also a careful, critical reader of Valéry.[67]

***Poetry, Place-World***

To understand the place and poetry connection we must first explore what is meant in this case by poetry and by place. Obviously no definition can encompass the complex meaning of these two words, and this limited framework does not attempt to achieve such an ambitious goal. Place is the main subject of Chapter II, however, for now it is necessary to keep in mind that this study stresses place as a complex, unifying structure that articulates beings, things and events in time and space. Space means inhabitable locations of different scales, degrees of enclosure and diverse material qualities. Place therefore is not separate from human experience: place configures the experience of a "world."[68] The reading of place may be seen as analogous to the reading of a poem that calls us to dwell in an imaginary "world" re-created by language. The words experiencing and dwelling as articulated above may be used interchangeably. Perceiving a "world" is concomitant to the experience of place; on this I subscribe to Heidegger's conception of *Da-sein* as the essentially poetic "being-in-the world" that is unique to humans.[69] Merleau-Ponty's propositions that "the world is the *field* of our experience, and we are nothing but a view of the world" also suggest the idea of a "place-world."[70]

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[67] See, for instance, his biographic synthesis and book reviews on Valéry written for *El Hogar,* in Jorge Luis Borges, *Textos cautivos* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1995) 80, 193, 247.

[68] The understanding of place as "world" in this dissertation is indebted to the phenomenological tradition; see for instance Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: a Philosophical Topography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 15, 174, 189, 196. Malpas' sees place as an unfolding of the world: "…a world given in relation to activity, an objective world grasped from a subjective viewpoint, " […] Malpas' interpretation is in turn inspired by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the "perceived world" (*le monde perçu*). See, for instance, Thomas Baldwin, introduction, *The World of Perception*, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, trans. Oliver Davis (New York: Routledge, 2004) 7-13. Jeff Malpas (47n) also draws on the subtle but important distinction made by H-G. Gadamer between "environment" and world, the latter concept better reflecting the complexity and poetic nature of human existence.

[69] See, for instance, the editor's note by David Farrell Krell in Martin Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger, Basic writings* (New york: Harper, 1977) 48n.

[70] Malpas 36n. Malpas quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962) 406.

Poetic "world" to the poet Paul Valéry means a "sense of a universe", or "complete system of relations" that articulates in sensuous unity what would otherwise be an ordinary fragmentation of "beings, things, events and acts." [71] Salmona's words suggest a parallel understanding when expressing that "architecture is a way of seeing the world and of transforming it. […] "To make architecture [he said,] is to re-create. It is to continue in time what others have in turn re-created."[72] Making architecture, Salmona believed, was a search for accomplishing "man's dream to create his own place or, as Gaston Bachelard would say: "his own niche in the world."[73] Architecture was to Salmona "a re-creative act" of "composition" based to a good extent on the experience of the world. The architect, he said, "composes with water; one composes with light; with clouds, with voids and transparencies […]"[74] Salmona in the following excerpt makes emphasis on the phenomenological dimension of architecture.

> *As we move through built spaces, through architectural spaces, we receive visual, olfactory, auditive, and haptic (tactile) stimuli. They are corners that preserve the emotions and memories of the world.* We live in these memories as the stars do in the firmament, always attracted among them. [75]

Paul Valéry's argument that all the arts essentially strive at re-creating a poetic 'world' is analogous and pertinent to this study on Salmona's places and place-making strategies. In Valéry's writings (essays, fiction and verse) architecture is often a poetic subject and a

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[71] Paul Valéry, "Remarks on Poetry," *The Art of Poetry* 198.
[72] Rogelio Salmona, "An Architectural Experience," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America,* eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 164-65. The text corresponds to Salmona's lecture at the School of Architecture, McGill University, Montreal, 28 March, 2000. Translated from French by Ricardo L. Castro.
[73] Salmona, "An Architectural Experience," *Transculturation* 165.
[74] Rogelio Salmona, in personal interview (Feb. 21 2007), my translation. The Subject is further treated in Chapter VI, 175. The Spanish transcripts and a digital audio file were consigned to the Rogelio Salmona studio archive.
[75] Salmona, "An Architectural Experience" *Transculturation* 165. The reference to Bachelard's "corner" image is remarkable. See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) 136-48. The experiential engagement with place and the understanding of architecture as an event in time (memory), not only in space, are key aspects of Salmona's previous description.

relevant analogy to poetry.[76] For discursive order, I avoid for now both an extensive presentation of Valéry's disciplinary matching and Salmona's ideas. The connections will be apparent, in subsequent sections, when visiting the places of the Humanities building, as they speak.

***The Two Meanings of Poetry: Poetic Experience and "Transsubjectivity"***

Concerning poetry, I continue with Paul Valéry's lucid proposition that poetry has a twofold meaning: poetry is a type of emotion and an "industry" of "re-creation," or making.[77] In the first sense of the word, poetry is a "special emotive state that can be aroused by very differing objects and circumstances." Valéry further illustrates his statement in saying: "We say of a landscape that is poetic; we say the same of an event in life; we sometimes say it of a person."[78] Thus sites or locations, "beings, things and events" are key elements that may arouse in us a state of poetic emotionality. Keeping these elements in mind, these triggers of poetic emotion, will help to clarify the logical encounter of place and poetry: for there is a coincidence between the prime components of poetic experience and the 'elements' constitutive of the structure of place sketched above.

The second meaning of poetry is that of "making", creation or "art, a strange industry whose aim is to re-create the emotion defined by the first meaning of the word."[79] We experience the world poetically and then we want to re-create it. From Valéry's excerpt, we retain that both 'meanings' of poetry are interrelated. Valéry has touched on, in his own terms on the issue of "transsubjectivity" so dear to Bachelard's poetics of imagination, the *impulse* to re-create, the essential to the condition of being poetically embodied—for the most part, when poetic emotions are transfigured by making, it is by writing. "Transsubjectivity" implies the possibility of transiting from experience to action, the almost inevitable impulse to transmit poetic emotion. It addresses the desire

[76] See, for instance, Valéry, "Remarks" *The Art of Poetry* 199-200. See as well, Paul Valéry, "Eupalinos or the Architect," *Dialogues,* trans. William McCausland Stewart (New York: Pantheon, 1956) 65-150.
[77] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 196-98.
[78] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 196.
[79] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 196-197.

to re-create poetic emotion and brings to light the fact that poetic emotion and poetic creation stimulate each other ceaselessly and are thus mutually dependent. Finally Gaston Bachelard stressed the "transsubjectivity" of the poetic image as a faculty, a "power" that ultimately enables poetic creation and grounds it in a "phenomenology of imagination" or study of the phenomena of poetic images. [80] As Bachelard proposed:

> Only phenomenology—that is to say, the onset of the image in an individual consciousness-can help us to restore the subjectivity of images and to measure their fullness, their strength and their transsubjectivity. [81]

***Imagination***

> Imagining is like feeling around
> in a dark lane, or washing
> your eyes with blood[82]

Gaston Bachelard studied poetry in terms of its "images." In poetry he "read" images, as opposed to concepts, thus his phenomenological approach focuses on the fact that "Images are *'lived' 'experienced,'* […]*'re-imagined'* in an act of consciousness which

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[80] On the idea of "transubjectivity," referred to in French as *transsubjectivité,* as well as *communicabilité,* see Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958) 2. For the English version see *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 c1969) xvi. See as well, Colette Gaudin, introduction, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* by Gaston Bachelard (New York: The Bobbs and Marril Company, Inc., 1971) xix. Colette Gaudin however hyphenates the term "trans-subjectivity" inexistent in the English language.

[81] As translated by Jolas, [in] *The Poetics of Space* xxi. The French original follows:

> *Seule la phénoménologie – c'est-à-dire la considération du départ de l'image dans une conscience individuelle – peut nous aider à restituer la subjectivité des images et à mesurer l'ampleur, la force, le sens de la transsubjectivité de l'image. La poétique de l'espace*, 3.

See as well, Gaudin, introduction, xviii. Gaudin in the source cited defines Bachelard's idea of phenomenology in these terms:

> From phenomenology Bachelard retains above all the admonition to return to "*phenomena themselves.*" This requires putting aside naïve believe in the reality of things and approaching consciousness which is always "*intentional*" – always consciousness of something.

Consciousness for Bachelard was "consciousness of the imbrications of subject and object": a reciprocal relationship between man and world, a de-centered or "subversive humanism." On the subject see Mary McAllester Jones, *Gaston Bachelard: Subversive Humanist: Texts and Readings* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) 9.

[82] Maulana Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *The Soul of Rumi,* trans. with an introduction and notes by Coleman Barks (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001) 18.

restores at once their timelessness and their newness."[83] "The poem [he said] is essentially an *aspiration to new images."* [84] Bachelard was concerned with deciphering the complexity of poetic activity—which he presented in terms of "problems of method" instead of attempting a "strict definitive methodology." [85] His attempts to elucidate the enigma of poetry-making are articulated around the notion of imagination. Nevertheless, for Bachelard images transcend the visual and the objective, as they are *experiential* they possess 'material' properties. What he understood by *imagination* was the conscious recapturing of images and their intentional *distortion,* their collision with other images subverting the conventional communicative values that are ingrained in the ordinary use of language. Gaston Bachelard challenged common assumptions on imagination when he pointed out that:

> [i]magination is always considered the faculty of forming images. But it is rather the faculty of *deforming* images offered by perception […] the faculty of *changing* images.[86]

Poetry may indeed be kindled by lived experience or it may originate in remote perceptions or, to paraphrase Valéry, it may come from re-producing "poetic emotions." However, perception is insufficient in the transition from the experienced to poetic making; "If there is not a changing of images, an unexpected union of images, there is no imagination, no *imaginative action*."[87]

***"Material" Imagination***

Bachelard's emphasis on the primacy of the materiality of poetic images over their visual attributes—what he called "material imagination"—is remarkable. He equated material components with sensorial aspects transcending the visual. Poetry therefore may alter the ordering of the visual, as often occurs in dreams; it privileges a sort of "sensual reality."

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[83] Gaudin, introduction xxi.
[84] Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les songes : Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Paris: J. Corti, 1943) 8. See as well, Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* trans. with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) 20.
[85] See Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire,* trans. Alan Ross (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964) 213-15. See, as well, Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination,* 31.
[86] Bachelard, *L'air et les songes* 7-13.
[87] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 19.

Of the poet Novalis, for instance, Bachelard writes that "[he] is a *toucher* who touches the untouchable." For Novalis, images emerge from matter, "they arise, as if from a seed, out of a primitive sensual reality." [88] Hence poetry primarily deals with the sensual; the visual comes afterwards. The visual attribute of a (written) image is an "adjective evoked by the substantive and after the substantive." Images then also have non-visual attributes, material components that express "material imagination." Bachelard illustrates the subject:

> Milk is the first of sedatives. The calm of man thus imbues the contemplated waters with milk. In Eloges, St. John Perse Writes: …*Now these waters are of milk, and all things overflowing in the soft solitudes of the mornings.*[89]

Despite this *dreamlike* subversion of values, for Bachelard, literary images do not arise from the unconscious but from an "intermediate zone" located "on the threshold of consciousness and thought." [90] They belong in the realm of the imaginary. It was in the region of the imaginary that Pierre Francastel placed the work of art (broadly considered) and the societal function of art as "figurative thinking." Instead of playing the social role of communicating acquired representations, figurative art, exemplified "in the *signifying ensembles* of painting sculpture and architecture," allows for the discovery of new ones.[91]

The link I establish here between the language of plastic thought and literary image or image-word is pertinent. The notion of a "figurative object" proposed by Francastel is at the base of figurative thinking. He stressed the term "figurative" in order to reject purely symbolic interpretations of the language of plastic arts: Francastel's notion of the "figurative" is broad: it implies the existence of certain relationships, whether of structure

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[88] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 62-63. The excerpt was selected by Colette Gaudin from Gaston Bachelard, *L'eau et les rêves : Essai sur l'imagination de la matière,* 5th ed. (Paris: José Cort í, 1942) 171-75. In the source cited, Bachelard makes an acute imaginative reading of a relevant fragment of Novalis' poetry around the idea of the material inversions of imagination.

[89] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 60-61. From *L'eau et les rêves* 162-64. Bachelard's citation in turn is in, St. John Perse *Eloges and other poems,* trans. Louise Varese (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1944) 662.

[90] See Mary McAllester Jones, *Gaston Bachelard: Subversive Humanist: Texts and Readings* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) 12.

[91] Francastel, *La figure et le lieu* 26.

or disposition, between the representing system of signs and the represented image. Francastel's conception of a figurative composition or system therefore challenges the usual distinction between figurative and so-called "abstract" art.[92] All art is figurative as it produces its own figures, a result of a process of plastic thought. This implies the existence of 'objects' of a different order, half-way between the conceptual and the real, which Francastel also called the phenomenological. Similarly to Bachelard's argument, the "figurative", for Francastel, arises from a third region: the threshold of the imaginary, provoking a manifestation of thinking and providing a reference point for the artist-creator of the system, and the observer, reader or dweller of her, or his making.[93] Thus Francastel and Bachelard both suggest, for the arts of poetry and architecture, that what is essential to imagination is not only the consideration of the "image" but also, and foremost, its inclusion in the realm of the "imaginary."[94]

***Reverberation: the Resonance of Poetic Images***

The "imaginary radiance" of a poetic image is directly related to its potential for "transsubjectivity." Images must therefore resonate; they must be retained in memory and reverberate in the imaginary if they are to transit from the experienced to the poetically re-created. This condition logically applies to experienced images, whether they come from lived experience—for instance as perceived by a dweller—or are derived from the indirect world of written language, as in the case of a reader. Reverberation is a key word for both Valéry and Bachelard when explaining the "essential emotive state" entailed by poetry; from Valéry I quote:

> We are moved by sunsets, moonlight, forests, and the sea. Great events, critical moments of the affective life, the pains of love, and the evocation of death are so many occasions for or immediate causes of, inner reverberations more or less intense and more or less conscious [95]

[92] Pierre Francastel, *Art and Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, trans. Randall Cherry (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 25-26.
[93] Francastel, *Art and Technology* 60.
[94] Bachelard, *L'air et les songes* 7-13.
[95] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 197.

From the previous passage I want to retain the subtle variations in intensity and degree of consciousness drawn by the poet in what Valéry called "reverberations," but also, the qualitative distinction introduced between "causes" and "occasions." Bachelard in turn borrowed the word "reverberation" from the phenomenologist Eugene Minkowski's "*retentissement,*" an inspired word of sonority essence, thereby drawing on his philosophical elaborations on the subject.[96] Gaston Bachelard suggests that:

> Very often, then, [it] is in the opposite of causality [explanation offered by psychologists], that is, in *reverberation*, which has been so subtly analyzed by Minkowski, that I think we find the real measure of the being of a poetic image.[97]

Reverberation then contrasts causality. In this way he establishes a significant distinction between the way a poetic mentality would deal with the past of an image, as opposed to what he called a psychoanalytic mentality that he equated to the mind of the art critic, or art historian. I quote:

> … the causes cited by psychologists and psychoanalysts can never really explain the wholly unexpected nature of the new image, any more than it can explain the attraction it holds for a mind that is foreign to the process of its creation. The poet does not confer the past of his image upon me, and yet his image immediately takes root on me.[98]

[96] Bachelard makes use of the word "*retentissement*" in the French original, *La poétique de l'Espace* 2.
[97] The term is translated by Maria Jolas as reverberation in Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* xvi.
[98] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 74.

***The Image and its Meaning in Poetic Language***

Colette Gaudin makes acute note that, for Bachelard, when a poetic image (this is, a word image) is retaken and re-created, the poet restores it to newness regardless of its roots in conventions or common places.[99] The image-word (or form) doesn't need to correspond with, or be validated within, established meanings coming from its use and significance in ordinary language. Poetic making allows for transcending what may be called a historicist driven concern with synchronic meaning: the meaning according to historical circumstances. In short, poetic re-creation plays with values and shifts the meanings of word-images respect to their historical context. On this matter Borges' position was explicit and, I observe, merges with Bachelard's and Valéry's, targeting the issue of a generalized contemporary concern with historical and contextual meaning:

> I say that we are burdened, overburdened, by our historical sense. We cannot look into an ancient text as the men of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance or even the eighteenth century did. Now we are worried by circumstances; we want to know exactly what Homer meant when he wrote about the "wine-dark sea.[100]

One may then say that for Borges poetry does not need to convey "historical sense" to speak to, dwell in, and bear with us; poetry is to be felt as something closer, to configure deep experience. It is capable of placing strong experiences—aesthetic ones—in our memories; these which in turn become our own. By the same token poetry may instill within us the will to create anew, to re-create, so to speak. In making reference to poetry I suggest again that the term applies to the two dimensions of the poetic underlined by Valéry: deep emotion (aesthetic experience) and re-creative action (or making).

From Borges one may retain then that, in poetry, more often than not, meaning goes not to the reason but to the imagination. When William Morris' wrote "*two red roses across*

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[99] Gaudin, introduction, *On Poetic Imagination* xix.

[100] Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse,* Ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000) 74-75.

*the moon*" [101] brilliantly illustrated this. This stunning line of Morris's poetic creation, which Borges remarks upon, seems to perfectly suit the idea of a 'web' of image-words, so essential to Bachelards' elaboration on the poetics of imagination. Meaning in Morris's refrain escapes rational explanation, thus remaining elusive. Equally elusive, or, better yet, mobile, are the *images* generated by these few words. And yet, the conventions used by the poet could not be more stable, ordinary or familiar: the rose and the moon. These two words nevertheless reconfigure an entirely new experiential world in the reader's imagination when they are coupled in a poem.

As for the rational explanation of the creative impulse of the poet and the subsequent selection and articulation of images in the very moment of creation, Borges, with some disdain, would propose to leave this causality to the historians.[102] With Similar skepticism Bachelard proposed that the causality of the poet's "syntax of metaphors" [103] offered by, what he called, "psychological" and "psychoanalytical" methods of interpretation is of little use. These "methodologies" he said, serve at best to determine the "personality" and "find measure of the pressures – but above all oppressions – that the poet has been subjected to in the course of his life." However, these explanatory attempts fall short of offering a methodology to analyze images in a type of language that is "above ordinary language." For, as he pointed out, "poetry possesses a felicity of its own, however great the tragedy it may be called upon to illustrate." [104]

In sum, the study of poetry does not give us a clear creative method—Bachelard is particularly emphatic on the subject: "it is after the event, objectively, after the blossoming, that we think we discover the realism and internal logic of the poetic work."[105] For the freedom and capacity to transcend the barriers of historical synchronicity and cultural contexts in language enable the poet to transgress ordinary word-meaning. After transiting from reading (dwelling and experiencing) to writing

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[101] As cited by Borges, [in] *This Craft of Verse,* 85. The original citation is found in William Morris, *"The Defence of Guenevere" and Other Poems* (London: Longmans, Green, 1896) 223-225.
[102] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 75.
[103] Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* 213.
[104] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 73-74.
[105] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 32.

(composing or making), the gift of poetic making is to transcend causality and the habits of use or communication that words have according to ordinary circumstances. Two major attributes of poetry are derived from this subversive condition: the first is that poetry allows for translation; the second, that word and meaning correlate in poetry in such unique a manner that the language it speaks is always original.

***The Language of Poetry; Originality and Translation***

I differentiate these two characteristics of poetry: language originality and endless possibility for translation, for discursive purposes only. Certain timelessness is inherent in the translation of experiential word-images; an independence of the word from its conventional meaning. Thus it implies the existence of an original, ever unique, relationship between a word and its meaning in language. Valéry indeed defined this aspect as identity of "form" and "content." As he stated it, "the movement of your mind, […] when subjected to poetry, goes from the *sound* to the *sense* […]"[106]

The relationship of the originality and translation attributes of poetic language is then infinite and apparently circular because it is a faculty of experiential poetic images meant to be communicable. The same word-image could therefore acquire a new meaning and, potentially, infinite other ones. I take the license to draw a formal analogy. One suited figure would be an elliptic spiral. The fuel of its internal dynamism, the vital impulse of this active seemingly endless process of poetic re-creation would be the power of "transsubjectivity" that follows a poetic experience. On this aspect I draw also on Bachelard's geometric metaphor figuring that "poetic images condense infinite meanings in elliptic associations."[107] The transformation of poetic word-images occurs after its imaginative re-creation (distortion or amalgamation) in an "elliptic" spiraling up manner.

[106] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 209-10.
[107] Bachelard, *On poetic Imagination* 28. Selection by Colette Gaudin from Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les songes* 286-88.

***Poetry is Language in its Origins***

With different words, Valéry, Bachelard and Borges alike, as already seen, argue that poetry takes language to its origins; that poetry makes it original though using conventional words. The poetic re-creation of an experienced world demands an original treatment of the ordinary tool of written language. The following excerpt is a pertinent synthesis:

> […] among these means of producing or reproducing a poetic world, of organizing it as to endure and of amplifying it by conscious work, the most ancient, perhaps the most direct, and certainly the most complex is language. But on account of its abstract nature and its more particularly intellectual-that is, indirect effects, and its practical origins or functions, language sets the artist who is concerned with employing and fashioning it in to poetry a curious and complicated task.[108]

Valéry has pointed out the central paradox of poetic creation, which he finds particularly evident in literature: the poet must use an ordinary tool for extra-ordinary purposes. Therefore, the poet's task is to subvert language—in principle an instrumental-practical means of communication—attempting to transgress the conventions associated to "words" in the already established use of language. The poet plays with "words," conventions that, as Valéry also noted, in addition tend to be fixed by the bulk of written, prosaic, communicative material of ordinary language: words tend to be preserved by what he called modern "typography."[109]

Bachelard is concurrent with Valéry again in proposing that for the poet (maker) and the reader (dweller), the poetic image appears "above ordinary language; the language the poetic image speaks is so new that correlations between past and present can no longer be

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[108] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 200. On the subject, in the cited source he adds that: "The values and meanings of words, their rules of agreement, their pronunciation and spelling are at once our playthings and instruments of torture."

[109] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 200-2001.

usefully considered."[110] One may read the idea of originality in that, poetic images, though often derived from stable already well-known words, are no longer linked to their past; they don't correspond anymore to their conventional or historically established meaning. Pierre-Jean Jouve poetically condensed this idea of originality by stating that "Poetry is a soul inaugurating a form."[111] Gaston Bachelard's insights on the subject are relevant:

> The soul inaugurates. Here it is the supreme power. It is human dignity. Even if the "form" was already well-known, previously discovered, carved from "commonplaces," before the interior poetic light was turned upon it, it was a mere object for the mind. But the soul comes and inaugurates the form, dwells in it, takes pleasure in it. Pierre-Jean Jouve's statement can therefore be taken as clear maxim of a phenomenology of the soul.[112]

From the previous passage I would like to point out that originality in poetry does not necessarily come from re-inventing words as such; not at least in terms of conceiving new unedited words. Rather it often comes from assigning new, "unlimited signifying values" to many times old, archetypal words. Old words articulated into new images produce in us therefore a feeling of "enchantment", a "magic;" what Valéry called a "*marvellous* result." [113] Such is the unity between "sound and sense:" it is the unity between a word and its meaning regardless of the date and historical context or the remote origins of it as archetype which is re-created in new literary form.

Reviewing Bachelard's reflections on the issue of originality as renewal of word meaning Colette Gaudin noted that he appreciated the "relationship [that exists] between archetypes and actual life." As Bachelard proposed: "[a]rchetypal orientations grant

[110] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* 74.
[111] As cited in Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* xviii. The original quote is in, Pierre-Jean Jouve, *En miroir* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1964) 11.
[112] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* xxii.
[113] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 201.

stability to the imagination, which gives them infinite variations in return."[114] This must be acknowledged, in spite of Bachelard's "refusal" to consider poetic images as mere "echoes of experience." In justice to Bachelard I recall his warning that the "syntax of images" of poetic making is much more than mere transliteration of memory and perception. The "image" has a signifying nature, although "a sign is not a reminder, a memory, or an indelible mark of the distant past. To deserve the name *literary image* it must have the merit of originality." A literary image is therefore "*meaning* in the nascent stage; the word, the same old word appears and is given a new meaning."[115]

To illustrate the transit from emotion (experience) to action (making) in the original relationship of perfect identity between "sound and sense," Paul Valéry figured out the dynamic image of a "poetic pendulum." He described his pedagogic tool oscillating from absence to presence between two points in space. Memory within it becomes the substance fuelling thought thus, stimulating the necessary poetic impulse. [116] This could be equivalent to what Bachelard called "transsubjectivity."

***Language comes from the reality of an experienced world***

Jorge Luis Borges concurs with Bachelard and Valéry on the issue concerning the poetic condition of language originality: poetry, he wrote "is bringing back language to its original source."[117] Here Borges stresses that words essentially emanate from the reality of the world as it is experienced by humans, in place. Borrowing from G.K. Chesterton, Borges questioned the dogma of "academicians" and "philologists" —what Valéry calls "modern typography" —who fix the language and the subjects making use of it to rigid meaning; to an abstract sense of the word. Borges reminds us that words in their origins were "felt" according to a deep experience; they "began as magic." Words were felt in the concreteness of place as experienced in the ordinary practices and extraordinary events of human life on earth, I quote:

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[114] Gaudin, introduction, *On Poetic Imagination* xxx.
[115] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 32. From *L'air et les songes* 282-85.
[116] Valéry, "Poetry and Abstract Thought," *The Art of Poetry* 72.
[117] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 80.

> …language is not, as we are led to suppose by the dictionary, the invention of academicians or philologists. Rather, it has been evolved through time, through a long time by peasants, by fishermen, by hunters, by riders. It did not come from the libraries; it came from the fields, from the sea, from rivers, from night, from the dawn. [118]

Borges proposes therefore the identity of "form" and "content"—in Valéry's terms—as an attribute of poetic language; something inherent to the enchantment, the "magic" with which words originated. Therefore by originality of poetic creation, Borges suggests the restoration in newness of the image, perhaps an old archetype, to provide it with new meaning. In this regard I call attention again to the idea of magic in relation to the ancient—although timeless—function of poetry as 'enchantment', on which Valéry put special emphasis: a device whose understanding escapes current 'modern' rational understanding of word meaning.

The a-temporality of forms and meanings: this intrinsic quality of poetic making which allows for endless possible translation, for newness of word-images and their articulation and condensation in the re-creations of the poet, is best exposed in the experience of poetry reading. In Borges's poems one finds a subtle condensed dissertation (theory and philosophy) on the previously mentioned concerns with a-temporality, a subversive look at history and poetry as bounded in the place-world and newness of word-images. A fragment of "*La Dicha*" (The Joy) comes to terms:

> …In the desert I saw the young sphinx,
> which had just been carved.
> No thing is that ancient in the sun.
> Everything happens for the first time but in an eternal way.
> The one who reads my words is inventing them.[119]

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[118] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 81. According to the editors' note Borges refers to the book by G.K. Chesterton, *G.F. Watts* (London: Duckworth, 1904) 91-94.

[119] Jorge Luis Borges, *La Cifra* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1998) 43. My translation; Borges' Spanish original follows:

***The poet-translator***

The issue of poetic translation is relevant to understanding the processes of poetic making as place-making (world re-creation) that will be exposed in the following chapter. Borrowing from Borges I start by making a radical, though, schematic statement: a poet is a translator and a fine translator is a poet too.[120] It counts also for saying that a translation is always, at least partly, a new original work.

The work of the poet and translator Coleman Barks is particularly illustrative on the issue of translation and a-temporality of poetry. Bringing Jelaluddin Rumi's (1207-73) ecstatic poems into modern English in the form of free verse, Barks makes Rumi present for us as he revives a Sufi poet living in the 13th century (common era) Anatolia, the then eastern part of the Persian Empire and current Afghanistan. Some aspects of the Rumi-and-Barks case deserve special attention. The ambiguous nature of Barks' endeavor lies in the inevitability of becoming a poet by recreating the works of a remote master to produce "versions or translations or renderings or *imitations* [which are in turn a] homage to a teacher." Naturally causing the distortion of an original, the feeling and meaning of these versions transcend the limits of circumstantial or historic logic as well as the concerns with synchronic meaning. The new poems of Rumi by Barks—the inverse order of authors also applies—speak of the possibilities not only of poetic translation but also of trans-subjectivity. The poems are reenacted in the present day for readers of the 21st century, beyond cultural and historical boundaries. This fact explains a paradox: a remote "Afghan" poet of "Islam" suddenly becomes one of the most appreciated and widely read poets in the post- September 11th (2001) U.S.A.[121] I conclude this section with an excerpt from "Entrance Door":

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> **…** *En el desierto ví la joven esfinge,*
> *que acaban de labrar.*
> *Nada hay tan antiguo bajo el sol.*
> *Todo sucede por primera vez pero de un modo eterno.*
> *El que lee mis palabras está inventándolas.*

[120] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 57-60.

[121] Coleman Barks, "The Soul of Rumi: A Conversation with Coleman Barks," by Alan Jones, 30 Sep. 2001: e-audio file, <http://www.gracecathedral.org/enrichment/forum/for_20011007.shtml> (20 June 2008).

How lover and beloved touch is familiar and courteous,
but there is a strange impulse in that to create a form
that will dissolve all other shapes.[122]

***Translation as Re-Creation***

Jorge Luis Borges pointed out that verse translations carry the generalized misfortune of, always to some degree, "betraying their matchless originals." A concern with reading the new translated poem in the terms and meaning of its time and language of origins seems to prevent a dwelling in it; Borges warned us of that too, although this has not always been the case. In past times, "worthier" concerns prevailed. For instance: "All throughout the Middle Ages, people thought of translation not in terms of a literal rendering but in terms of something being re-created." [123]

By re-creation as a form of translation Borges meant for example the notion of an "after poem" or *Nachdichtung.* Borges brings up these subtle, yet significant distinctions from the German language, which provides further variations in words like *Umdichtung*: "a poem woven around another." Translation, if seen as a re-creative action, thus superseding the concern with fidelity to an author in her or his original context, implies "a poet's having read a work and then somehow evolving that work from himself, from his own might, from the possibilities hitherto known of his language."[124]

I have attempted to present translation—in the poetic realm in particular and in artistic production in general, place-making in our case—not as the restoration of an "original" in its context, or a mere transfer of intentionality but rather as restoration in newness. Contrary to common assumptions on the term, translation in this case is invention. A translation becomes a new poem, the poem of the poet-translator.

[122] Rūmī, *The Soul of Rumi* 15-16.
[123] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 57-60.
[124] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 72, 74.

***Poetic Transports***

The idea of poetic "transport" refers to the emotion provoked by the maker in a dweller or a poetry reader. The word "transport" also appears well suited when alluding to the task of a poet re-producing poetic experience.[125] By this I am referring to extracting fragments of poetic experience from previous contexts to further re-contextualize them in newness. In the realm of poetics, the re-creative action demands forgetting our "historical sense" of contextual correspondence in favor of attending to the transcending experience of poetry.[126]

The overcoming of a current and prevailing concern with "chronology" and its "circumstances" may open infinite paths to re-creation of the past in an amalgam of eternal present. Finely weaving images and concepts (abstractions) in the form of "intellectual poetry," Borges provided us with pertinent poetic thought. An excerpt of *"Himno"* (1978-1981) illustrates the subject:

> This morning,
> the incredible fragrance of the roses of paradise
> is in the air.
> On the Euphrates bank
> Adam discovers the freshness of water.
> A golden downpour comes from the sky;
> such is the love of Zeus.
> A fish jumps off the sea
> and a man from *Agrigento* will remember
> having been that fish.
> In a cavern that will be named *Altamira*
> a hand with no face
> traces the curve of a bison back.
> The past as a whole comes like a wave

[125] I use the idea of *voyage,* as in Bachelard, *L'air et les songes* 11-13.
[126] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 74.

and those ancient things reoccur
because a woman kissed you[127]

Finally, the idea of "transport" highlights the craft of poets that allows the dwellers of their poems the feeling of a "beginning" based on their image-words, a structuring of the world which temporarily takes them out of themselves, provoking in the imaginary the experience of an alternative reality.[128]

***Immanence of the Imaginary in the Real***

The arguments evolving in this chapter are structured around the two interrelated meanings of poetry: poetic experience (emotion) on the one hand, and making, on the other. Poetic experience is prime substance for the creative processes of imagination and implies the articulation-distortion and re-creation of images. Poetry basically originates in experience, whether it is lived, as coming from perception, or re-imagined thus derived from dwelling in indirect worlds like written language or re-presentations, such as drawings, painting and artistic objects in general. The above exposed poetic remarks, up to now, seem to privilege the art of poetry as an imaginary construct, seemingly detached from reality; a sort of art for the sake of art. But in fact this is not the case for poetry or any form of art. The "imaginary realm" in no way negates a deep relationship to human

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[127] Borges, *La Cifra* 41-42. My translation; Borges' Spanish original follows:

*Esta mañana*
*hay en el aire la increíble fragancia*
*de las rosas del paraíso.*
*En la margen del Eufrates*
*Adán descubre la frescura del agua.*
*Una lluvia de oro cae del cielo;*

*es el amor de Zeus.*
*Salta del mar un pez*
*y un hombre de Agrigento recordará*
*haber sido ese pez.*
*En la caverna cuyo nombre será Altamira*
*una mano sin cara traza la curva*
*de un lomo de bisonte.*
*…Todo el pasado vuelve como una ola*
*y esas antiguas cosas recurren*
*porque una mujer te ha besado.*

[128] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 201.

reality.[129] Francastel stressed artistic production as one permanent function of man in society that must be studied in relation to other prime societal functions such as the speculative and the technical. With regard to poetic making, Bachelard's view coincides in stating the "immanence of the imaginary in the real, the *continuous* passage from the real to the imaginary."[130]

Valéry and Bachelard both focused on the consciousness of poetic making. With Valéry we have poetry as experience and the re-creation of poetic emotions "at will" which must not be confused with "*dream*" or "chance."[131] Along the same thread, Bachelard distinguished the creative state or condition of poetic *"reverie*" from "utopias." Although he assigned qualities of "oneiric experience" to the "poetic object,"[132] he also saw it—borrowing from B. Fondane—as one "*good* conductor of *reality*." Rilke exemplifies the subject in inspiring place-world terms:

> In order to write a single verse, one must see many cities, and men and things; one must get to know animals, and the flight of birds, and the gestures that little flowers make when they open in the morning.[133]

The analysis of the work of art, Francastel tells us, demands a combined approach to its specificity and intentionality: the techniques, media and traditions of each art, and the connections to social reality. The problems posed by the artist are of two kinds: specific to the traditions of each art and intended for society as a whole.[134] These two aspects of the work, I stress, are not separate entities of creative processes; they merge into a single artistic 'function' with ethical and poetic connotations.

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[129] Francastel, *Art and Technology* 19.
[130] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 22. From Bachelard, *L'air et les songes* 7-13.
[131] Valéry, "Remarks," *The Art of Poetry* 201.
[132] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 36. From Bachelard, *L'eau et les rêves* 5-7.
[133] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 22-23. From Bachelard, *L'air et les songes* 7-13.
[134] Francastel, *La figure et le lieu* 19-20.

Borges takes us back to the origins of the discussion developed in this chapter and opens a window onto the main subject of the following in simple terms; I quote: "We go on to poetry; we go on to life. And life is, I am sure, is made of poetry."[135] Borges invites us to look at the world as poetic creation, to see place as an "occasion for poetry" and the making of places as prime poetic activity. A comprehensive notion of Place, as a world which makes up the ground of meaningful human experience, both in individuals and collectives, I suggest, is a key point of encounter between the poetic dimension of life—as Borges puts—it and the act of conceiving buildings and transforming the world, not just the environment.[136] Place-making could be seen then as poetic re-creation of the world into possible better worlds.

***Postscript***

The poetic premises previously discussed will resonate in the next chapter devoted to the idea of place-making, and later, in the visits to the places of the Humanities building and its maker. Poetry is a form of experience and making. It is found in place, that is, in the world; therefore it makes sense to believe that poetry making is mainly an activity of re-creation of a world in a new unity of experience. Imaginative processes imply distortion, transformation, amalgamation and matching of images, which are poetic (experiential) and have material qualities that challenge ordinary or conventional perceptions.

Poetry making is a transport in the sense of bridging images above cultural and historical barriers in a new synthesis that occurs as syntax or a metamorphosis of images. This syntax is nevertheless tied to reality. Thought is inherent and substantial to poems, but it is offered in a subtle manner and perceived with pleasure: a characteristic of poetic lessons.[137] Thus poetry, being fictive, is a revelation of reality above the ordinary. Finally, a new poem is born many times as an "afterpoem" when appropriating, distorting and translating conventional images or another original poem.

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[135] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 3.
[136] Malpas 47n. As noted in the initial part of this chapter, he draws on the subtle but important distinction made by H-G. Gadamer between the ideas of "environment" and world, the latter better reflecting the complexity and poetic nature of human existence on earth.
[137] Valéry, "A Poet's Notebook," *The Art of Poetry* 179 .

Not much I have anticipated however on what counts for the specific moments of poetic creation: the in-between two instances of poetry. I refer to specific strategies of poetry writing: specific elements in the mechanics of poetic making such as metaphors, musical properties of verses, the introduction of movement to poetic images and ultimately the plot or structuring of a poem when it is the case. These issues for now I must leave aside. Certainly in the moments of creation, images are linked and displaced, and "condense" into new infinite possible new meanings. Nevertheless, as Bachelard pointed out, "it is after the event, objectively, after the blossoming, that we think we discover the realism and internal logic of the poetic work."[138]

The elaboration on the poetic making of place will progressively unfold in the following chapters throughout the visit to the places subject to study in this thesis. Up to this point I deliberately avoided a literal matching to architectural language; the making of connections, I expect, will occur progressively in the reader along the subsequent sections.

I conclude this chapter however with an architectural reference: an excerpt from Rogelio Salmona's reflections on his approach to place-making that—in particular empathy with Valéry and Bachelard—also anticipates subsequent discussions. By analogy this illustrates virtually all the aspects already treated in these parallels with poetry writing. I quote:

> *If I want to make a plaza in Bogotá and something moved me in a plaza in Guanajuato, the resonances which that event produces in me, the length of that echo will surely adapt to the circumstance in which I want to make that [new] plaza. After that transport, I stop being local and begin to be universal. For this I will need to possess deep knowledge of what I am, where I come*

[138] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 32. Colette Gaudin's selection from Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* 213.

*from and what I want to be. Our vital space, according to all the dialectics of life; how we grow roots, day by day, in our "corner of the world," according to Gaston Bachelard's term.*[139]

[139] Claudia Arcila, *Triptico Rojo: Conversaciones con Rogelio Salmona* (Bogotá: Taurus, Alfaguara S.A., 2007) 123. My translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *Si yo quiero hacer una plaza en Bogotá y algo me conmovió de una plaza en Guanajuato, las resonancias que ese hecho me produjo, las medidas de ese eco, seguramente se van a adaptar a la circunstancia en la que quiero hacer esa plaza. Luego de ese traspaso, dejo de ser local y comienzo a ser universal. Para eso necesito poseer un profundo conocimiento de lo que soy, de donde vengo y de lo que quiero ser. Nuestro espacio vital, de acuerdo con todas las dialécticas de la vida; cómo nos enraizamos, día a día, en nuestro "rincón del mundo", según el termino de Gaston Bachelard.*

## ***Chapter II. Place, from Experience to Making: Revisiting the Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres in Cartagena de Indias.***

Chapter I highlighted poetry in its twofold but interrelated condition of being one special type of emotion and a form of making. The two facets of poetry are grounded in meaningful lived experiences that then want to be re-created. Valéry's previously exposed analogical figure of a poetic pendulum transiting from experience to making is illustrative in this regard.[140] Poetry consequently would be a deep emotion which is imaginatively re-created in new—at will produced—aesthetic experience. Understood as a structured world or totality of human experience, place embodies one essential form of poetic emotion and configures the vital ground for poetic re-creation.

### *Erlebniskunst: Art of Experience*

The German concept of *Erlebniskunst,* or "art of experience" is useful in introducing the link between the artistic production of poetry and place-making at stake. Rooted in the idea of lived experience (German *Erlebnis*), this concept, briefly mentioned in the introduction, deserves further attention. Hans-Georg Gadamer properly noted that the German word *Erlebniskunst* offers a pair of interconnected meanings. At its origin, *Erlebniskunst* refers to art which comes from experience. The second relevant use of the term *Erlebniskunst* that Gadamer points out is that of an "art that is intended for [the production of] aesthetic experience." [141]

In order to make sense of the close link between aesthetic experience and place we shall look back to Paul Valéry's idea of poetry as the deep experience of a world or totality; the perception of a "sense of a universe" that is essential to understanding the condition of being poetically embodied. As he wrote:

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[140] See Paul Valéry, "Poetry and Abstract Thought," *The Art of Poetry,* trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 72.

[141] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Sheed and Ward Ltd. (New York: Crossroad, 1998-1975) 63. Gadamer refers to George Simmel's ample use of the term, rooting it in the concept of *Erlebnis.*

> [T]he poetic state or emotion seems to me to consist in a dawning perception, a tendency towards perceiving a world, or complete system of relations in which beings, things, events and acts, although they may resemble *each other*, those which fill and form the tangible world—the immediate world from which they are borrowed—stand, however, in an indefinable, but wonderfully accurate sensibility[142]

Valéry's reflections on the essence of being poetically embodied are congruent with the approach to the concept of place, offered by the philosopher Jeff Malpas. Malpas stresses the idea of place-world as an all sensorial totality of experience. Being the essential grounding field of human experience, place is also the ground of memory, thought and human agency. I quote a meaningful synthetic fragment:

> The differentiated and complex unity of place reflects the complex unity of the world itself; it also reflects the complex unity, given focus through a creature's active involvement with respect to particular objects and events, that makes for the possibility of memory, of belief, of thought and of experience—only within place is the unity necessary for subjectivity established. [143]

The visible parallel between Malpas's conceptions and those on poetic emotion previously reviewed start revealing that, place is a prime mirroring region between the realms of poetics and architecture. The creative activities of the poet and the architect—in different media—deal with the human experience of place and perform the function of re-creating it. Place alludes to what J. Malpas called "topography:"[144] a complex but "unitary structure" of multifarious elements which I subsequently touch upon.

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[142] Valéry, "Remarks on Poetry," *The Art of Poetry* 198.
[143] Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: a Philosophical Topography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 174.
[144] The word "topography" as a metaphor pervades Malpas' discourse on place. He argues on the pertinence of his "topographical" method in pages: 40-41.

In the context of this study, place is seen as poetic realization of the unity of human experience. In this sense, the idea of place can be compared to the idea of a world: a complex structure involving temporal dimensions, physical containment (limits, boundaries) beings, things and events that interweave. Place is a world experienced in time through our subjective appropriation of space. Once experienced, place stays with us, it resounds in us. Place is memorable. To conceive and build places (to re-create places) and to consciously appropriate them, we develop and make use of concepts of space and represent place in a seemingly objective manner. Plans, physical models, maps and, more recently, simulation by electronic media, attempt to be "objective" depictions of place.[145] This seemingly obvious aspect is relevant in that, we may read, dwell or navigate among those depictions as we do in the indirect but strong experience of poetry-reading in written language. Therefore the direct experience of place is not the only source of inspiration for place re-creation, but also are place representations.[146] To a different degree projective representation also implies a certain detachment of creative processes from constructive ones. Although an extensive treatment of architectural representation is outside the scope of this research, during the visit to the Humanities building and Salmona (*Part Two* and *Part Three* respectively) I elaborate on aspects dealing with representation in place-making such as the storing and transmission of architectural tradition and relationship between projecting in plans and building on site.

Place in sum is grasped here in the form of tangible worlds or totalities of experience which depend upon physical enclosures that have referential limits. Whether objectively or subjectively considered, place is experienced in time and occurs in space; and, inherent in the idea of place are notions of movement, memory, orientation, thought and agency. Ultimately from the total bodily engagement in place (experience) stems the creativity necessary for place re-creation: place is the ground of its own creation.

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[145] Malpas 55.

[146] See, for instance, Kent Bloomer and Charles W. Moore, *Body, Memory, and Architecture* (London: Yale University Press, 1977) 88.

***Place and the Idea of Aesthetic Experience***

The word experience, with its implicit connection to life, also finds centrality within the poetic realm. Any meaningful experience has the power to remove the subject from the rhythm of everyday life and yet be retained in the whole of "life-consciousness." Although unique and in some ways episodic, an experience is intimately related to the totality of life.[147] Aesthetic experience is a momentary perception of the whole of life that suddenly becomes present. Gadamer's idea that "experience" is represented *par excellence* in the world configured by the work of art is particularly pertinent. I quote:

> The aesthetic experience is not just one kind of experience among others, but represents the essence of experience itself. As the work of art as such is a world for itself, what is experienced aesthetically is, as an experience, removed from all connections with actuality. [148]

Aesthetic experience in consequence implies a momentary removal from the "experiential flow" of quotidian life and further reconstitution in unity with the totality of life. Gadamer accurately noted that George Simmel attributed to "experience" the significance of an "adventure" quite different from a mere life episode.[149]

Poetic emotions reflect a type of experience that differs from ordinary ones precisely because of their sense of totality; they differ because of their detachment from the customary (denaturalization) and the feeling of connection to an orchestrated "*sense of universe.*"[150] One may more accurately say that poetic emotion constitute a true aesthetic experience. In relation to the idea of experience, what illuminates the place and poetry parallel is the analogy between poetic emotions (i.e., that of reading a poem), as experience of a world, and place, as a sensorial, all inclusive structure of a totality of experience that is orchestrated by the architect or maker.

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[147] Gadamer 62. The grasping of experience in this dissertation is substantially indebted to Gadamer's conceptualization of the word.
[148] Gadamer 63.
[149] Gadamer 62.
[150] Valéry, "Remarks" 198.

Fundamental to the ideas of poetic (aesthetic) experience and place, is the sense of unity in the multiplicity of elements that work to create a composition that is lived in given moments of perception. In the experience of place, this sense of unity would be equivalent to the perception of a world that, although made up "of multiple and multifaceted limits, objects, events and persons" is reconstituted in a single totality.[151] The perception of that world of experience anchored in a given place requires the dynamic juxtaposition of all-sensorial images in space. The experience of place is something that, in humans and other advanced forms of animal life, normally happens through the movement of the experiencing subject and the surrounding elements. The experience of place then entails displacement of the experiencing body, within and between places, and the subjective reconstitution of an experiential world. Place as well happens in time. Malpas, for instance, developed this spatiotemporal idea of place— that involves displacement in space and time—based on Georges Poulet's analysis of Marcel Proust's *In Search of lost Time*. Consequently Proust's recovery of time, Malpas argues, is in reality "the establishing of a *place.*" [152]

***Beyond Space: Place as World***

In this study I have emphasized a specific interpretation of the idea of world. It relates to the concreteness of place and parallels the state of poetic emotion originating, for instance, in the dwelling of a poem and the aesthetic experience of totality proper to works of art. In cotemporary thinking, the idea of place as the unfolding of the world has roots in Heidegger's elaboration of the notion of *Dasein* often translated as "human existence." He used the term in the hyphenated manner, *Da-sein,* to suggest "there being." By this, Heidegger meant "the opening to being characteristic of human existence, which is 'there' in the world." [153] As Malpas points out, it is in later periods of

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[151] Malpas 165.

[152] Malpas 162. See his analysis of the Proustian case in pages: 157-74. For a comparison see Georges Poulet, *Proustian Space* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977). In the idea of movement, the "sinuous displacement" in and between places, Poulet identifies one "Proustian" methodology: 73-82. Juxtaposition for Poulet is the complementary method with which Proust achieves his concept of "time spatialized, juxtaposed […]" Poulet subsequently expands on the subject in pages: 85-105.

[153] Martin Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper, 1977) 48n. *Dasein* is a central concept in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquirre and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). See a history of the evolution of the concept of "Being" in Heidegger in David Farrell Krell ed., introduction, *Basic Writings* 3-35.

Heidegger's work that place becomes—in a more direct and less "problematic" manner—the reflection of his search for the type of "being-in-the-world" that is proper to human existence.[154] However, in his earlier (1936) "The Origin of the Work of Art," the idea of human existence as dependent on the concreteness of a "place-world" that manifests in artistic work in the form of world making is already developed.[155]

As a simple demonstration of the importance of place for human existence, Edward Casey challenges a hypothetical reader on the interdependence of place and world, with a simple question: "Can you imagine what it would be like if there were no places in the world? None whatsoever! An utter placeless void!"[156] However elemental in appearance, the question contains key issues of the place discussion. Casey induces us to reflect on space as related to, but different from, the concreteness of place and its bounded nature. Without places, he suggests, there would be no world; at least not one as a ground for human experience and therefore, of thought. We would then have a "void" only, which is closer to the idea of *kenon,* a word the ancient Greeks clearly distinguished from terms such as *chora* and *topos.* On the notion of *kenon,* an analogy might be applicable to the situation of being "lost at the sea," or floating isolated in a dark "space-world." [157] To the current relevance of the ideas of *chora* and *topos* I shall return.

It is remarkable how, in the history of Western thought, particularly with Descartes, we increasingly give credence to the notion of space as an abstract condition of infinite extension.[158] Furthermore, we shift the focus of conceptual understanding of human subjectivity in the world from place to the binomial idea of "time and space."[159] Apart from the "uniform space of Euclides" that detaches space from things or the physical

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[154] Malpas 7-9.
[155] Heidegger, *Basic Writings* 170-71.
[156] Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) ix.
[157] Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: a Philosophical History* (Berkeley & L.A. Calif: University of California Press, 1997) 109.
[158] Casey, *The Fate of Place* 151-61. In the source cited Casey develops the subject in the chapter entitled "Modern Space as Extensive: Descartes."
[159] The recognition of the limitations of the time-space binomial versus the notion of place is central to Casey's historical-philosophical study *The Fate of Place*.

world,[160] as well as from Newton's idea of "absolute" space, in the early work of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty we still have an approach closer to Descartes' reductive time-space conception than to the more complex and inclusive idea of place.[161] Consequent to the historical 'oblivion' of place and its replacement by time-space are the risks of limiting place to location and considering place as a mere backdrop, which in turn reduces its involvement in human thought and action. Implicit in Merleau-Ponty's account on space, however, is an approach to place that gains relevance *vis a vis* "pure" space and attains the notion of "world" in which "form and content are mixed […] as concrete spectacle to the senses." Merleau-Ponty spoke then of the all-sensorial experience of our 'concrete' bounding "world" of our every day human existence. [162]

The ancient Greek words, *chora* and *topos* are much closer to the understanding of place in architecture that I stress than the Cartesian-influenced conception of it, as extension. However distant in time and certainly different from what one may call a contemporary understanding of place, *chora and topos,* do not refer to an objective undifferentiated notion of infinite extension.[163] In Plato's *Timaeus*, *chora,* as Malpas points out, is often translated as "receptacle" and is always presented "in relation to particular things." Thus, *chora* is never removed from the world. *Chora* is essentially situational. In Plato's words, it is necessarily used "for all things that come into being," and it implies containment.[164] *Topos,* in Aristotle's *physics,* is seen mostly as container, and has similar situational character with regard to the tangible limits of a given "body."[165]

Jeff Malpas parallels Casey's ideas concerning the conception of place as an "unfolding of the world" that configures the very ground of experience and provides the basis for

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[160] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, trans. Oliver Davis (New York: Routledge, 2004) 49-56. I refer in the source cited to the lecture, "Exploring the World of Perception: Space."
[161] See Tom Baldwin, introduction to Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception* 17.
[162] Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception* 49-56.
[163] Malpas 26. In the cited source *chora* and *topos* are often referred to as space and place respectively.
[164] Malpas 24. The quotation is originally found in Plato, *Timaeus*, 52b; the translation is of Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1937). Malpas further elaborates on the subject in pages: 23-6.
[165]The notions of containment, limits and the body are essential to the understanding of the concrete, though subjective experience of place. These concepts are treated in extension in Casey, *The Fate of Place*. In the source see "Place as Container: Aristotle's *Physics,*" 50-73. See as well Malpas 24.

human thought. According to his phenomenological approach, place is what enables human agency (conscious action) and engagement with the world. From Malpas we get the idea that the "world" unfolding in place is:

> […] a world given in relation to activity, an objective world grasped from a subjective viewpoint, a world of other persons as well as a world in which we find ourselves, so it is to *this* world, and the place in which it unfolds, that our philosophical explorations must always be addressed and to which they must always return.[166]

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's thinking greatly influences Malpas' conception of place, as world where human thought and experience are necessarily grounded.[167] In this regard Merleau-Ponty postulated that: "there is no inner man, [that] man is in the world and only in the world does he know himself."[168] Human engagement with the world nonetheless requires a certain conscious distancing, in order to convert that world into the object of inquiry.[169] Concluding his philosophical reflection, Malpas emphasizes that place is a world: "the *field* of our experience, and we are nothing but a view of the world."[170]

***Boundaries: Dwelling in the "Place-World"***

Let us now assemble and expand upon the elements of the structure of place that have been mentioned. To begin with, the idea of an "objective" world alludes to the factual existence of a milieu that is physically bounded, a concrete delimitation in infinite extension or space, which only for analytical purposes might be considered independent from the experiencing subject. When place is re-created[171] by means of building, it

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[166] Malpas 196.
[167] See Malpas 5-6,8,36n, 50n, 72, 89, 172, 196. The references to Merlau-Ponty are abundant.
[168] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 1962) xi, 405-07.
[169] Malpas 196. Stressing on the notion consciousness he takes though, significant distance from Merleau-Ponty.
[170] Malpas 406.
[171] I use here the word re-creation not as previously exposed in the context of poetic activity, yet addressing the fact that the landscape of our planet in the so-called 'technological era' is virtually all, the product of human intervention. This recognition that nowadays (2008) is more and more evident, was in 1956 important subject to Pierre Francastel concerning particularly the study of architectural works as "plastic

becomes essentially the object of a definition of limits. Therefore it is important in place-making to define the qualities and degrees of containment in function with human events and daily practices occurring in an already existing world.

In Heidegger's "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" we find a lucid definition of the concept of boundary that traces it back to ancient Greek origins: "[a] boundary is not that at which something stops but as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*." The notion of boundary refers poetically in its origins to the idea of horizon, from Greek "*horismos.*"[172] David Leatherbarrow's allusion to the architectural idea of boundary in the context of religious buildings may also enhance our understanding of the concept: "[a] boundary or edge is where subjects or places that are fundamentally different (gods and men, heavens and earth) approach and reach for one another across an *intermediate* space of orientation and adoration."[173]

***The Folded Nature of Place***

One may justifiably speak of a world made of bounded places that relate to each other, depending on the degree of the definition of their limits. Concerning their bounded nature and interrelation it is plausible to say that places may—and often do—contain places within. This aspect is reaffirmed by Malpas when he points out the "folded" character of place. He described it as folding inwards to places (within) and outwards…"to reveal other places." I find this characteristic of place definitive in understanding the nature of an architectural object as a place-composition and the challenges of its making. Places are therefore located according to the "various orientations and perspectives that are possible even within the bounds of a particular place and that reflect the very open-ness of place

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objects" deeply rooted in society. See Pierre Francastel, *Art and Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, trans. Randall Cherry (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 157-67. Francastel based his elaborations on the in the studies on human geography by Georges Friedmann. See, for instance, Geroges Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950) 19-69.

[172] Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Tehory,* ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997) 105.

[173] See David Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention: Site, Enclosures, Materials* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 36.

as a structure that allows the appearance of things within it."[174] Therefore place has a situational character that is relative to the mobile perspective of its dweller.

***Dwelling Ways***

Although differently articulated, E. Casey also stressed the "folded" nature of "built places." In the ambit of a fabricated world—i.e., an architectural setting—the dweller's perspective is naturally central because "the space of building becomes the space of dwelling."[175] And the existence of a natural world as such today, independent from the human-made one, is almost a hypothetical extreme and a questionable concept considering the impact of human action upon a world that is viewed as resources and the expansion of human inhabitation all over the planet. Reflecting on the actions of the human body in place in the form of behavioral and experiential patterns, Casey identified two basic ways of dwelling. The first considers dwelling as "wandering" or non-residing; this is something that is proper to the actions of transit, of travelling between places. The second considers dwelling in the form of "having residence," or inhabiting in the safety of home. Casey's account analogically linked the essence of these "two ways to dwell" to Greek mythology, representing these two modalities of dwelling in the deities of Hermes and Hestia, respectively enacting the human situations of "wandering" and "residing."[176]

The "Hermetic" and "Hestial" ways of dwelling are non-excluding; on the contrary, they relate to each other in a complex and sometimes exceptionally rich manner which takes

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[174] Malpas 172. See particularly Malpas' elaboration on the concept of 'boundary' as implicated in the broader notion of 'containment' in pages: 169-172.

[175] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 130. The statement is neatly 'Heideggerian' in its consideration of building as belonging to dwelling. For Heidegger, the essence of our human existence is that of 'being-in the-world'. Dwelling, as a concept with regard to building then goes far beyond the mere function of 'lodging' or housing, or containing. Neil Leach, as previously mentioned, provided us with relevant excerpts of Heidegger but, for the entire version of "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" see Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings* 347-63. In the source see as well, "The Origin of the Work of Art" 130-31. Heidegger makes use of architecture in his now classic example of the Greek temple. On the subject see, for instance, the theoretical comments of Michael Cadwell [in] *Strange Details* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 2007).

[176] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 130. Casey in the source elaborates on the subject in pages: 137-144. See as well, Jean Pierre Vernant, "Hestia_Hermes: the Religious Expression of Space and Movement," *Myth and Thought among the Greeks,* trans. Janet Lloyd and Jeff Fort (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT press, 2006, c1965) 157-95. Vernant goes in depth into the connection between the Hermes and Hestia coupled Greek deities and the mythical experience of place (space-and movement) in ancient Greece.

form in certain fragments of urban landscapes and buildings.[177] Concerning the "Hermes and Hestia" interdependence Casey acutely notes that: "Hermes not only superintends dwelling-as-wandering but contributes to dwelling-as-residing by returning travelers safely to Hestial origins."[178] The Hestial and Hermetic reciprocity achieves a desirable balance between the two ways of dwelling to enhance and complement the experience of place as a totality: as the grounding of our human "being-in-the-world."

***Orientation: Subjective, 'Objective' and "Allocentric" Space***

To explore the concept of dwelling, as tied to the body's all sensorial engagement in place, we must look at the idea of orientation in relation to the possibilities of human action in space, a vital aspect to consider within the complex structure of place. The capacity for a creature to develop a sense of orientation depends on the possibility for understanding its inhabited space. J. Malpas identified three different concepts of space that he classified as "subjective," "allocentric" and "objective," all involved in the complex conceptualization process of our inhabitable or existential space.

Subjective (sometimes also named "egocentric") space is the space of a creature's activity, according to its sensorial capacities to act in, and react to, an "environment." Subjective space basically refers to space as perceived or experienced by the subject. The ideas of "allocentric" and "subjective" space, depend on the experiencing creature, yet, the latter is articulated in function of one—or more significant characteristics of the creature's surrounding context or environment. In contrast to the other two, "objective" space is considered independently from any salient environmental feature or subjective capacities of the experiencing creature. Instead it assimilates to the abstract concept of "space" as an indiscriminate, infinite extension to be measured or parceled.[179]

[177] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 142-43.
[178] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 143.
[179] Malpas 52-5.

Malpas remarks that orientation ultimately depends on the capacity and possibility for a creature to understand space in an "allocentric" way: that is, to give an account of a dwelling space but also the connection of this space with elements in its surroundings. Moreover, without being able to grasp the "allocentricity" of a given space (which I relate to the capacity to find referential points) it becomes impossible for a subject to measure, have a sense of scale or to give account of its relationship to the world around and fully reconstitute space objectively.[180] Finally the three notions of spatiality are implicated in the experience, awareness, conceptualization and further conscious re-creation or transformation of a place: they are implicit in the process of place-making.

The concomitance of place with the sense of orientation and the relevance that "allocentric" space has for the grasping of place becomes clearer when noting that the opposite of the ancient Greek "*topos*," a word that roots the notion of place, is "*atopos*," which originally meant "disorientation," "bizarre," or "strange."[181] The consciousness of space experienced in an "allocentric" way is particularly important to the architect's métier, for architectural spaces (places) are tied to locations (sites) and geographies (urban or so-called natural) and related to the increased complexity (in the unity) of the "place-world."

***Place and World***

I believe therefore that to have a sense of "allocentric" space, which is essential to orientation, is vital to the analysis and further re-creation of a site into a new place. David Leatherbarrow showcases the oblivion in which a comprehensive idea of "site" rests nowadays, being frequently ignored by architects in design practices or simply reduced to a dimensional manipulation of what is commonly understood as the "site plan" of a project.[182] In some cases the concept of site is understood as "environment" [183] which is still a limited notion, attaining the complexity of the type of experience

[180] Malpas 55.
[181] Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention* xi.
[182] Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention* 7. I adhere to Leatherbarrow's argument in the cited source, regarding the limitations and detachment of 'site plans' from the multi-dimensional demands of site interpretation; thus, the reductive conception of a site plan in current architectural practices.
[183] Malpas 47n.

(ultimately poetic) that is common to human beings. Malpas is explict in the environment and world distinction and his view is analogous to McDowell's distinction "between creatures that 'live in the world' and those that live merely in 'an environment'." Dowell, according to Malpas, draws in turn on the H.G. Gadamer's previously noted differentiation of environment (*Umwelt*) from world (*Welt*). Animals other than the human species "can respond to the features of their environment but do not live in the world."[184]

In terms of architectural creation, the concept of site is multifarious. It refers to the all-sensorial ground waiting to be re-created. Site also alludes to the historically and culturally imbued articulation unified with the elements of a pre-existing world. David Leatherbarrow, on this subject, advises architectural design practitioners to look at sites "within a potential whole."[185] I see that the phenomenological idea of a "place-world," which is intended to be transformed by further building, is implicit in the expanding—in geographic and temporal dimensions—the holistic interpretation of site, says David Leatherbarrow. Attentive to the fact that design processes for place-making require developing a conscious poetic view of the site as the existing "place-world," Leatherbarrow suggests too that the sites should be "invented."[186] On the same vein I propose that sites are to be re-created.

***Dynamic Pre-positions in Place***

The words "site" and "building" refer to ideas of place. Edward Casey in relation to these words defined a series of "modulations" in the action of dwelling which he derived from the human body in its active engagement with place. He defined three prepositional pairs: "outside and inside," "alongside and around" and "between and with." These correspond with dialectic corporeal actions of the human body in place, and correlate to the two previously mentioned "ways to dwell:" "wandering" and "residing."[187] Moving around, being outside or in-between, allude then to the "Hermetic." They belong to the world of

[184] See Johnn McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994) 116-17.
[185] Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention* 33-41.
[186] Leatherbarrow, *The Roots of Architectural Invention* 8.
[187] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 122-33.

wandering thus, implying displacement. On the contrary, "moving in," putting our selves "alongside" or remaining "with" refer to dwelling as "inhabitation," or the "Hestial."[188] Established in terms of paired pre-positions, these alternations "specify forms of relating to built places before fixed positions, i.e., settled stances are taken up."[189] With them, in free interplay, the experiencing body establishes "zonal places." Nonetheless, this form of experience, bodily positioning and acting, must not be taken as a mechanical function, but more so in a purposeful manner, towards the provision of place as "leeway," which is the place of openness, "play-space."[190] The notion of "leeway" and the previously exposed pre-positions (dynamic, subjective situations in place-as-experienced) will be central to the subsequent visit to the places of the Humanities building: an analysis of experiential approach developed in *Part Two* of this study.

Edward Casey's account is remarkable due to the recognition of the body as "proto-place" in "active agency" in place: this is to say, the body—not in infinite space but—in interplay with a bounded "counter-place." This argument links Casey's emphasis "on the active agency of the human body in issues of emplacement" to Merleau-Ponty, both sharing in many aspects, a common ground.[191] The emphasis on the body as proto-place is beneficially counterbalanced by J. Malpas. Malpas acutely points out that, in the reciprocity of place and subject, place should not be seen as based on subjectivity but the reverse; subjectivity, human agency and thought must be seen as grounded in place.[192]

I conclude this first section on place-related conceptual tools with a meaningful excerpt from Rogelio Salmona. I Bachelard's manner, with evident Heideggerian inflections, Salmona uses the house as a place archetype and cognitive metaphor:

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[188] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 132.
[189] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 122.
[190] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 131. With regard to the idea of *Leeway*, Edward Casey makes explicit reference to Heidegger. Casey argues nonetheless that the role of the body in place was "overlooked by Heidegger." Casey stresses the idea of *leeway* as arising from "bodily modulations of zonal places." On Heidegger's similar notion of "space of openness" see his "The Origin of the Work of Art," [in] *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings* 167-71.
[191] Casey, *Getting Back into Place* 131. See Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* 356.
[192] Malpas 1-18. This idea pervades the entire endeavor of his *Place and Experience.*

> Place is site turned into 'house'. The site preexists, thus what we do in 'dwelling' is to achieve place according to the need, ideas, thoughts and poetics of each person. The 'house' inhabits within oneself, but one takes it to place, thus, transforming the site into a dwelling place, because not every site is a dwelling.[193]

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[193] My translation from Claudia Arcila, *Tríptico Rojo* (Bogotá: Taurus, 2006) 71-72. Previously in the cited source Rogelio Salmona uses the word, 'house' as Bachelard did, to amount for "each and every space really inhabited." And subsequently in the same fragment Salmona used the idea of house as a cognitive metaphor for our embodied memories and experiences. The Spanish original follows:

> *El lugar es el sitio transformado en casa. El sitio preexiste, lo que hacemos al habitar es lograr el lugar de acuerdo con las necesidades, las ideas, los pensamientos o la poesía que tiene cada persona. La casa la lleva uno, pero la está llevando al lugar y está transformando el sitio en un lugar habitable, porque no todo sitio lo es.*

***Place-Making as Poetic Re-Creation: the Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres***

The first section of chapter II was devoted to presenting some basic concepts dealing with the "specificity" of place.[194] The subject was articulated around correlated ideas of place as 'world' and dwelling (poetic experience) as "the" way, for humans, of being-in-the world. The aim was to provide a set of conceptual tools that, in conjunction with the parallels coming from the field of poetry writing (Chapter I) prepare the reader for the subsequent analysis of the art of place-making in the architectural works of Rogelio Salmona.

I begin by recollecting from the previous sections an idea of re-creation which presents a double sense for the purpose of this study. Place-making is re-creation, if we consider that it implies the transformation of a preexisting site that has potential for subjective interpretation and is already a fragment of the totality of the "place-world." Place-making is re-creation as well—as exposed in Chapter I—when resulting from the process of poetic union, condensation or transfiguration of memorable experiential images of other places. Both ideas of place-recreation are interwoven in the architectural work of Rogelio Salmona. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres (Cartagena, Colombia, 1980-1982) will serve us as an illustrative sample. This building is an instauration of his later, mature work, the Humanities building as case study, subject of the visit in *Part Two*.

The following section elaborates on the Casa de Huéspedes, introducing architectural specificity to the arguments on poetic re-creation that were paralleled in the realm of poetics. The main argument is that Rogelio Salmona transferred aesthetic experience to the places of the Casa de Huéspedes in new imaginative (metaphoric) associations, blending poetic images while accomplishing "ethical" functions. I propose that poetic strategies and ethical intentionality merge in place-making into one single architectural function.

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[194] Pierre Francastel, *Art and Technology, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* trans. Randall Cherry (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 150-67. I borrow the term "specificity" in this case to bring awareness on what is specific to the art of place-making concerning its phenomenological apprehension as a form of aesthetic experience.

Concerning the thoughtfulness subjacent in poetic pleasure—the driving force as well of poetic making—Paul Valéry steers us to link literature and architecture. I propose to extrapolate Valéry's world of words to that of existential spaces. I quote: "Thought must be hidden in verse like the nutritive essence in a fruit. One perceives pleasure only, but one receives a substance."[195] The same principle might be applied to buildings and the places they contain. It is only in a segmented way, a posteriori and for analytical purposes that we arrive to dissect works. Gaston Bachelard said that, "It is after the [creative] event, objectively, after the blossoming**,** that we think we discover the realism and internal logic of the poetic work."[196]

In terms of the human activities there taking place, the Casa de Huéspedes is an exclusive hotel for prominent guests of the government of Colombia. It "has its origin in some forgotten ruins on the edge of the Bay of Cartagena:"[197] a modest 18th century military storehouse resting on the deserted and degraded environment of a peninsula that was once the site of the battery of San Juan de Manzanillo. Architect Germán Téllez recycled the small military storehouse that remains predominant, facing the sea, and Salmona composed a markedly horizontal complex of places (4500 M2 of roofed area) made up of multilayered coral stone boxes, closed and open spaces that re-configured the natural surroundings. The new construction recedes with respect to the restored ruin and has now virtually disappeared in its own landscape that in fact was also re-created by Salmona and his wife, architect Maria E. Madriñan. The architect had the opportunity to choose the site of his future project which originally was a rather arid peninsula. The formerly neglected site gave way to an overgrowing, fictive rainforest that is one with the compound of cubic coralline masses. Twenty five years of continuous transformation of this once abandoned, semi-deserted, land-tongue into a re-imagined tropical forest, now

[195] Paul Valéry, "A Poet's Notebook," *The Art of Poetry,* trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 179.
[196] Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*, trans. with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc. 1971) 32.
[197] Germán Téllez, *Rogelio Salmona, Obra Completa; 1959/2005* (Bogotá: Escala, 2006) 335.



**Figure 1. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Aerial view while starting construction, circa 1980.**



**Figure 2. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Aerial view, circa 1995. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**



**Figure 3. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Aerial view, 2007. Photo by the author**

beautifully taken over the buildings are evidence that the site was re-invented and interpreted as "within a potential whole."[198]

The house is a composition of roofed, transitional and open spaces articulated around seven courtyards, totally or partially cloistered. Arriving by land and sea the promenade begins with the transit along a lateral (sidelong) axis from an open platform to the "plaza de armas," and from there, obliquely one traverses a third open space: a gently stepped ceremonial court. In the sequence from place to place one perceives the increasing degree of enclosure and shifting materiality of their containment, from a less defined and drastic edge of gardened vegetal boundaries, to the more strict limit of coral stone masonry overgrown by creeping ivy and bushes. I borrow fragments of Salmona's own synthetic place-description, perceptibly written with dynamic experiential emphasis:

> *Walking across the plaza de armas, second open space, one accesses the compound's welcoming courtyard in a similar way as in Andalusia's cortijos or the Latin American haciendas. Slantingly leaving the vestibule and once the access courtyard has been left behind, the caucho tree cloister—the grand courtyard of the complex, makes presence. The inner promenade narrative begins here*.[199]

Thresholds, loggias, corridors and open spaces of diverse sensorial qualities compose the intricate though unitary architectural topography of the house: 32 levels in total, as Téllez recounted.[200] Wandering through thresholds and roaming around open spaces are occasions for surprising encounters and enchantment:

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[198] I draw on ideas of site interpretation developed by David Leatherbarrow, [in] *The Roots of Architectural Invention: Site, Enclosures, Materials* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 33-41.

[199] Rogelio Salmona, "Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres: Cartagena de Indias, Colombia," *Periferia* 13 (1994): 48-66. My translation, the Spanish original follows:

> *Ya a pie, y atravesando la plaza de armas, Segundo espacio abierto, se accede al conjunto a traves del patio de llegada, de una froma similar a lo que sucede en los cortijos andaluces on en las haciendas latinoamericanas. Tras el vestibulo en recodo y una vez abandonado el patio de llegada, se presenta el claustro del patio del caucho, patio grande del conjunto. Se inicia aquí el relato del recorrido interior.*

[200] Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 309.

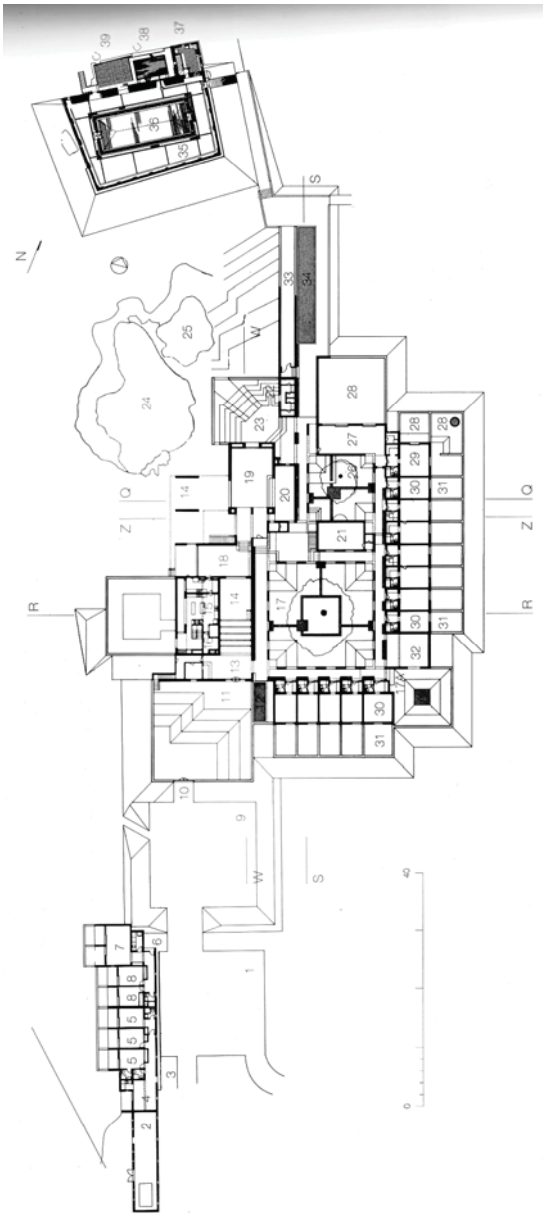


**Figure 5. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. First floor plan.**

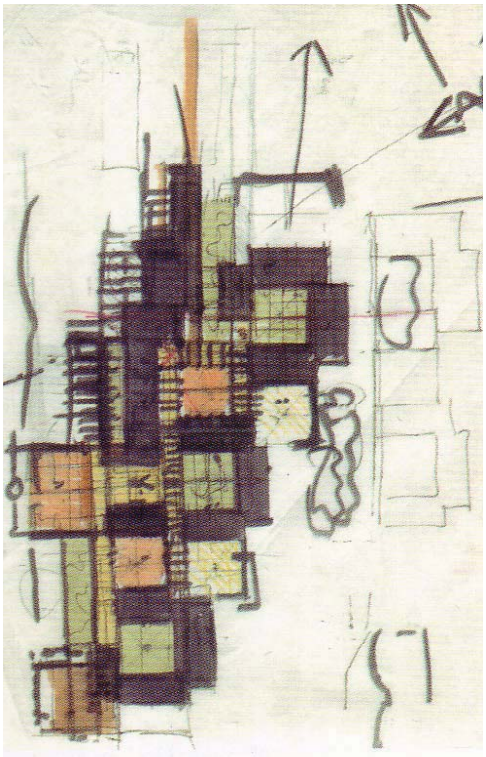


**Figure 4. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Design Sketch by R. Salmona.**



**Figure 6. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro**



**Figure 7. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Entrance courtyard. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro**

> *The different recorridos*[201] *(promenades), in the form of loggias, corridors or cloisters articulate the different dwelling spaces to the three main courtyards: the patio del caucho, that of the roble morado, and of the buganvillas. In this sequence, a series of rhythms in function of space and light are produced.*[202]

From the previous fragment of Salmona's description of his project, I want to underline that what articulates the project in the first place is the experience of the promenade, over more abstract ideas of composition, volumes or "rhythms." The latter are the consequences of the former and not the point of departure of his design process. The experienced promenade is what takes different shapes in relation to particular poetic intentions. Complementarities between the "two ways to dwell" (in E. Casey's terms) are also implicit: between 'stances'[203] which are "Hestial" dwelling places—both, open to the sky and sheltered ones—and the relational "Hermetic" places making the promenade.

That Salmona animates the central architectural theme of the courtyard is also remarkable. I assign to this creative action a phenomenological connotation. Obviously it is not merely an issue of space-naming. It is rather a matter of considering architecture an animated entity and also the giving of identity and character to place. The living creature (i.e, the purple oak) inhabits the built place of the courtyard and presides over it.[204] Hestia (extrapolating from Casey) is in place and we are invited to her domicile. The built place is therefore animated. There is evident recognition of this in the reciprocity between place

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[201] The word *recorridos* is recurrent in Salmona's project descriptions; for this word, as used by Salmona I have found no English equivalent. In principle it refers to the idea of a *promenade*, with its temporal and spatial dimentions but also resounds with mnemonic connotations.

[202] My translation from Salmona, *Periferia* 59. The Spanish original follows:

> *Los distintos recorridos, a modo de galerías, corredores o claustros relacionan los tres patios principales, el patio del caucho, el del roble morado y el de las buganvillas, con las diversas estancias. En esta secuencia se producen una serie de ritmos en función del espacio y de la luz.*

[203] Notably, Salmona employs the poetic, polyvalent Spanish word *estancias.*

[204] I allude to the idea of "The Animateness of the Perceptual World," proposed in David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) 53-36. Abram in the referred subchapter relies extensively on Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) 211-14, 317-22.



**Figure 8. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres.**
**Photo by Ricardo L. Castro**



**Figure 9. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. The Patio del Roble Morado.**
**Photo by Ricardo L. Castro**

and subjects, and humans and their place-world. I stress the idea of reciprocity because it is fundamental to the sort of "subversive humanism" [205] that is no longer unidirectional from humankind to a world considered as just "resources," but to a world seen as a poetic source; a world of mutual dependence on humans for survival and for "dwelling" beyond the current "challenging" consideration of the earth as "mere stock."[206] Through the experience of the work and its material permanence, as well as its poetic transformation and slow dissipation (impermanence), Rogelio Salmona, subtly sends an experiential poetic and ethical message to its dwellers.

On the different levels and on the roof terraces the promenade branches out into multiple possibilities for perambulation, accompanied by the murmur of fleeting waters and the floral scents of the totally re-invented landscape. To those familiar with the contemporary experience of the fortifications of Cartagena de Indias, the colonial wall surrounding the historic city in particular, it is clear that, the reenacted experience of the Casa de Huéspedes rooftop promenade owes at least as much to the memorable event of walking the "fortress city" nearby, as it does to Le Corbusier's modernist concept of the "*promenade architecturale.*" Its defensive purpose left in the past, the wall is with no doubt Cartagena's public place par excellence in every way. It is the place of lovers and other meaningful spontaneous encounters; of massive gathering events, creative unanticipated and orchestrated playful activities; it is a place of leeway promenade. About Salmona's re-created walk atop the roofs of the Casa de Huéspedes Ricardo L. Castro writes: "[it] is a promenade that allows a new appreciation of our own verticality as human beings as above and below acquire a marvelous dimension."[207]

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[205] I believe a pertinent analogy can be made between this subtle but meaningful detail of Salmona's place-making and the "subversive humanism" suggested in Gaston Bachelard's thinking on poetry and science. See, for instance, Mary McAllester Jones, *Gaston Bachelard: Subversive Humanist: Texts and Readings* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) 9. See as well, Colette Gaudin, introduction, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* by Gaston Bachelard (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) xviii. In the cited source Gaudin similarly concludes that Bachelard ultimately advocated for a "*correspondence* between man and the world."

[206] Martin Heidegger "The question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings,* ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper, 1977) 296-99. I borrow from Heidegger's discussion in the source, on the ethical and poetic implications of "modern technology."

[207] Ricardo L. Castro, *Rogelio Salmona* (Bogota: Villegas Editores, 1998) 152.

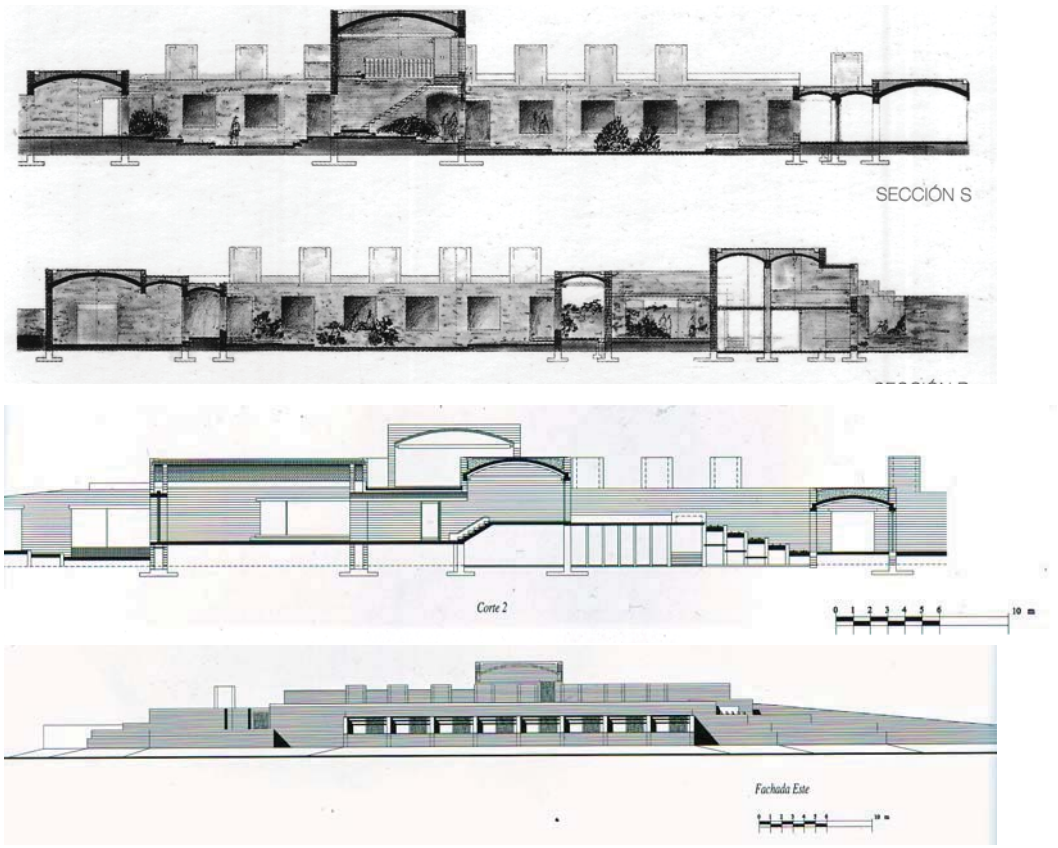



**Figure 10. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Sections and elevations.**



**Figure 11. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Promenades, ramps and thresholds. Photos by Ricardo L. Castro**

Rogelio Salmona concludes his brief phenomenological description of the house:

> *Following the sequence of courtyards, the edging rooms open up to the bay. Pergolas prolong the interior spaces in continuation toward the remote views of the city.* [208]

The Casa de Huéspedes has been the subject of insightful critical comments and experiential descriptions by several relevant scholars, among these are: Castro and Téllez —previously cited—and also K. Frampton, R. Gutierrez and W. Curtis.[209] I will now discuss a subject I consider relevant to the field of architecture, its creative process and criticism: Rogelio Salmona's particular awareness of the past and its poetic use for the processes of architectural invention; of place-making as poetic re-creation. I emphasize Salmona's articulation of the idea of historicity in the way he introduces it to the context of what might be called the new 'traditions' of "modern architecture." The past, be this social or personal is seen as constitutive of our being and becoming. Salmona's work deals poetically with it, amalgamating poetic images or figures—coming from memorable experience of 'past' architectures lived in present time—in the context of today's rule of change. Salmona subverts a linear historicist mentality that would tie these in to synchronic correspondence and chronological periodicity. History and architectural traditions, cultural referents and readings are synthesized[210] and lived experience and memories are fused in association with poetic images and ethical-poetic intentionality.

***"Lesson" in History: or a Sense of It?***

Germán Téllez refers to the work in question as a "lesson of history." I quote: "Perhaps the novelty of the Casa de Huéspedes is simply that everything is rooted in ancient times

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[208] Salmona, *Periferia* 65. My translation, the Spanish original follows:

> *Tras la secuencia de patios, los ultimos salones se vuelcan hacia la bahia. Las pergolas prolongan los espacios interiores con solucion de continuidad hacia las vistas lejanas de la ciudad.*

[209] See, for instance, William Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900,* 3rd ed. (New York: Phaidon, 1996) 648-49. See Kenneth Frampton, "Materia, medida y memoria en la Obra de Rogelio Salmona," trans. Sally Station. *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006). 15-17. See, as well, Ramón Gutierrez, "La persistencia y el cambio. Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres, Cartagena de Indias," *A&V* 48 (1994): 66-69.

[210] Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 229. Téllez acutely identified various referents and possible strategies involved in the generative process of the project, that he calls cultural "distilling" and "intelligent synthesis."

and the only message it may bear for the future is none other than the lesson of history it embodies."[211] Ramón Gutiérrez headed in a similar direction making a very pertinent clarification on the contemporary characteristics of Salmona's work beyond a dialectical exclusion, between tradition and change, and "historicist pastiche." [212] Téllez supports this idea of a "lesson of history" with architectural referents, some coming from his own speculation and personal knowledge on the architect, others more overtly expressed by Salmona himself. Téllez's account on the Casa de Huéspedes is plethoric in referents to buildings and architectural places extracted from the history of architecture. He goes back to the origins of Greek civilization to point out referents for the Casa de Huéspedes, as far back in time and space as the Minoan Palaces of Knossos, Malia and the Mycenaean Tyrins. Some of the most common precedents referred to in this work are in the architectures of: the Spanish *cortijo*, implanted in Latin America in the form of haciendas; the Mudejar, notably Alhambra and the Generalife (or 'garden of the architect'); the ceremonial complexes of pre-Columbian America for the experiential obliqueness and "poetic legacy" of their open spaces;[213] the colonial military architecture of Cartagena de Indias, the walled and fortified city; and also very important, the spatial sequence of thresholds, private and public spaces of the urban fabric of colonial Cartagena.[214]

Salmona has expressed in various lectures and interviews the memorable nature and pertinence for re-creation that the lived experience of places and the (textual) study of history have played in his architectural métier. In an excerpt from "An Architectural Experience" Salmona took a position which attributed high relevance to the ideas of tradition, history and memory for his architectural practice of place re-creation. He made his empathy evident for similar comments on literature made by writer Gabriel García Márquez, connecting them to architecture Salmona said:

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[211] Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 337. Subsequently I argue diverting from Téllez's bold though schematic statement of "a lesson of history" due to its reductive nature and misleading critical interpretation of the work and Salmona's generative process.
[212] Gutierrez, "La persistencia y el Cambio" 66-67.
[213] Rogelio Salmona, interview, by Silvia Arango, *El Espectador, Magazin Dominical,* 15 Sep. 1991: 7.
[214] Salmona, in personal interview (1 Sept. 2006). The Spanish transcripts and a digital audio file were consigned to the Rogelio Salmona studio archives.



**Figure 12. The Castillo de San Felipe de Barajas, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. Photo by Ricardo L Castro.**

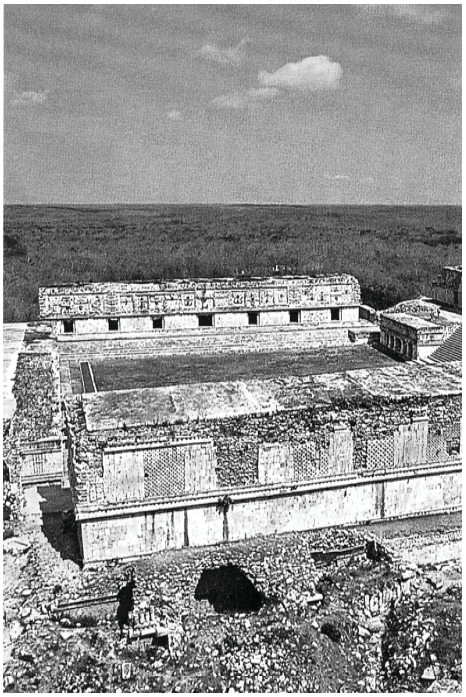


**Figure 13. The "Nunnery Quadrangle", Uxmal. Photo by Ricardo L Castro.**

> *It is convenient to look back before stepping forward. Would it not be a waste to disregard the great works of universal architecture? And being American architects, to disregard the great open pre-Hispanic complexes, the subtlety of colonial architecture, the richness of the crossbreeding or mestizaje, the simplicity of popular architecture, and the innovations and social content of Modern Architecture?*[215]

Multiple elements of the re-creative 'formula' have been identified. Yet, that recovery of the past is neither merely intellectual, nor historicist. For the original referential images transfigured in actuality, in newness; are poetic and experiential. Bachelard pointed out, the poetic act escapes "psychoanalytical" interpretation that simplistically "explains the flower by the fertilizer."[216] Téllez's statement on the "lesson in history" deserves qualification. In the first instance, buildings cannot teach the history of other buildings to a dweller, unfamiliar with the history of architecture that relates by necessity to general history. However, buildings may speak sensuously to us; buildings may provoke a meaningful experience or re-create that of other places. This distinction is beautifully expressed by Salmona. I quote:

> *To make architecture is to remember, to re-create. […] It constitutes a deep cultural act, since it is not possible to recreate the unknown. On the contrary it is wisdom that permits choice and selection, [metaphor] and this is the great moment of creation.* [217]

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[215] Rogelio Salmona, "An Architectural Experience," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America,* eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 165. Translated by Ricardo L. Castro, the text corresponds to Salmona's lecture at the School of Architecture McGill University, 28 March 2000. In the source cited Salmona's text is an appendix to Castro, "Syncretism, Wonder and Memory in the work of Rogelio Salmona" 155-163.
[216] Bachelard, *On poetic Imagination* 74.
[217] Salmona, "An Architectural Experience" 165.

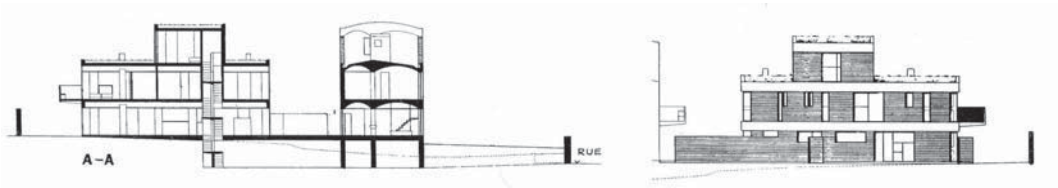



**Figure 14. The Maisons Jaoul. Sections and elevations.**

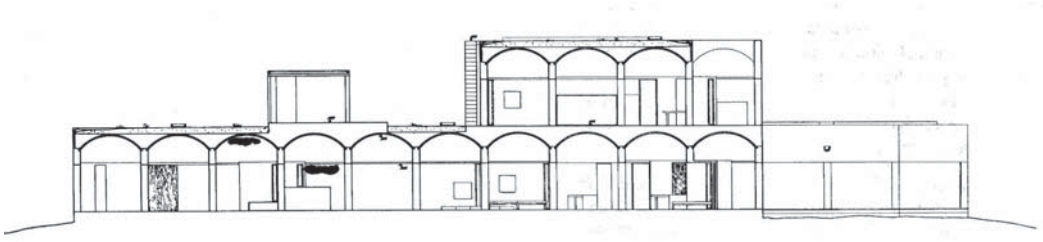


**Figure 15. The Sarabahi house. Elevation.**

Juhani Pallasmaa reminds us that a building is an all sensorial corporeal experience happening as an event in time.[218] Therefore a building, at its best, is poetic experience. History meanwhile might be seen as a textual intellectual construct which, for architecture has been codified in styles, classified in treatises and stored chronologically by historians. History refers to the circumstances of events, requiring synchronic understanding in the context of the social-cultural practices and technological responses of the epoch that gave birth to a particular edifice.

Nothing in *Casa de* Huéspedes has been invented from scratch. As Rogelio Salmona put it, "the issue is that all architecture is a re-creative act and not pure creation."[219] None of its elements of language is a novelty; yet, there's unity in the newness of the work: the work is an ultimate mimesis of itself as Hans-Georg Gadamer notes on the idea of aesthetic experience in the work of art. Moreover, "Gadamer has suggested that the poetic image is also *mimesis* in its original sense, a representation of the [in Gadamer's own image] *star dance of the heavens.*"[220] And Gadamer also provided us with this relevant clarification: [the] "intellectual creations of the past, art and history, are no longer automatically part of the present, but are objects of research and data from which a past can be made present."[221]

Ricardo L. Castro proposes that "Rogelio Salmona's architecture is ultimately about connections." He links this aspect to "the ancient Greek word *syndesis*—which traverses physical and temporal boundaries."[222] As noted from the introduction, this making of connections—as Castro's own critical exploration suggests—applies to both the architect's making and the work, in its openness to possible readings or interpretations. I would emphasize that cultural synthesis in unity is the final outcome of the creative

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[218] This idea traverses the experiential phenomenological approach to architecture of Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses,* (West Sussex: Wiley-Academy, 2005).
[219] Personal interview (Sept 1 2008) my translation, see *Part Three*, "Dialogues with the Architect" 166.
[220] As cited in Alberto Pérez Gómez, *Built Upon Love; Architectural Longing After Ethics and Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2006) 70. For the original reference to Gadamer's idea of Mimesis see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicolas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 14.
[221] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Sheed &Ward Ltd. (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 58.
[222] Castro, "Syncretism, Wonder and Memory" 155.

process, even if the work shows syncretism in its sources and the notion "*syndesis*" may provide us with an understanding of Salmona's way of bonding. Syncretism, Francastel clarified, is not a characteristic of the work, only of the sources of the artist. [223] Similarly to Castro I see the work—Casa de Huéspedes case in point—as a poetic construct which amalgamates experiential images and distorts them to re-create. The work, I would say, is the product of a "syntax of metaphors" as "metamorphosis." I believe Salmona's approach to place-making is close to Bachelard's idea of imagination as transformation, distortion or metamorphosis of experiential images. [224]

The task of poetic re-creation often makes use of metaphors but not exclusively.[225] A scholar on cognitive linguistics, Mary Therese DesCamp, on the nature and recent history of the concept of metaphor, observes that "Metaphorical capacity springs from embodied cognition; human beings perceive the world through senses in combination with cognitive capacities," therefore "metaphor is a matter of thinking, not a matter of language." Metaphors "conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another." The correspondence between metaphorical parts (poetic images) "might be the product rather than the cause of metaphorical association." [226] Pérez Gómez on the subject indicates that:

> Through metaphor we can know nameless distant things via the resemblance to familiar local things. In both the arts and the sciences this leap or "transference" is crucial for knowledge and can be made only by imagination; it is beyond the reach of local identity. Metaphor was the very condition of natural (and mythical) language, and it became

[223] Pierre Francastel, *La figure et le lieu l'ordre visuel du Quattrocento,* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967) 27. See as well, Fancastel, *Art & Technology,* 148.
[224] Bachelard *On poetic Imagination* 74.
[225] I borrow ideas from Bachelard's general conception of the poetics of imagination (already exposed in Chapter I) as "distortion," "amalgamation," "metamorphosis," of experiential images.
[226] See Mary Therese DesCamp, *Metaphor and Ideology* (Boston: Brill, 2007) 21. DesCamp offers a brief history of the recently regained value of metaphor for cognitive purposes and references to relevant literature on the history of metaphor and "conceptual blending."

> the domain of poetry after speech became normalized in science and philosophy."[227]

Concerning the use of stored memories, universal architectures of the past and the knowledge of history in general, I find more appropriate to speak in the case of Salmona of an awareness of past architectures that, even if distant in origins and location, have been identified with pertinence in actuality and seen as pertinent to a present situation. Salmona makes conscious use of architectures that have been stored in memory in the form of poetic images; aesthetic experience that is attempted to be translated, which is, transferred and transformed.[228] In analogous way to the poets we reviewed in Chapter I, though without attempting a strict "methodology"[229] Salmona manifested his intention to re-create experience:

> *Resonance is what one keeps, that which one activates. Resonance always remains. The spaces one produces are in the end corners of the world; and those corners are always mysterious and must be discovered. The greatest pleasure I have happens when people live and receive those resonances of what is there* [in real experience] *by means of the resonances I proposed.*[230]

This creative process finds a parallel in Valéry's reflections on the making of the poet as lived experience that attempts to be re-created or reproduced. When Salmona stated

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[227] Pérez Gómez, *Built Upon Love* 70.

[228] See, for instance, Rogelio Salmona, "La Experiencia es Mía, lo Demás es Dogma*"* (unpublished). *Seminario Abierto El Oficio del Investigador, Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, Bogotá, 19 Nov. 1997. Document consulted in the Rogelio Salmona studio archives.

[229] Even though Salmona read and, on several occasions, quoted authors such as Bachelard and Valéry, according to his testimony, no conscious parallel was ever attempted between poetry-writing and place-making. See his testimony on the subject in Chapter VI 224.

[230] Claudia Arcila, *Triptico Rojo: Conversaciones con Rogelio Salmona* (Bogotá: Taurus, Alfaguara S.A., 2007) 38. My translation, the Spanish original follows:

> *Resonancia es lo que uno guarda, lo que uno activa. La resonancia siempre queda. Finalmente los espacios que uno produce son rincones del mundo, y esos rincones siempre son misteriosos y hay que descubrirlos. El mayor goce que tengo es cuando la genete vive y recibe resonancias de lo que es, a través de las resonancias que les he propuesto.*



**Figure 16. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres.**
**Photo by Ricardo L. Castro**

"memory helps to find the way of poetry," he was not far at all from Valéry.[231] Bachelard emphasized a similar idea of "reverberation" and poetic imagination, however, as distortion: as metaphor, though in the form of "metamorphosis;" and on the "transsubjectivity" of the poetic image. Analogous to Bachelard who warned that poetic imagination goes beyond simply remembering, Salmona stated that "*it is convenient to look back, but one must know that at the right moment the gaze has to be withdrawn. It is a matter of recreation and transformation, not of copying*." [232]

The poet approaches history, subverting it to re-create. Beyond chronological and physical-contextual limits, Borges was 'accused' of a similar poetic subversion of history. He had beforehand declared himself in conflict with our times so overburdened with the linearity of certain historicist approaches. History might be seen then as fictive construction. [233]

Now it's time to speak of the Intentionality and pertinence of these associations of poetic images: of the necessary "immanence of the real in the imaginary." For metaphors do not happen as random associations, nor are they mere products of "artificial paradises". As M. T. DesCamp concluded, beyond language connection "metaphor imposes structure on thinking and allows one to *reason about*, not just to talk about, one thing in terms of another."[234] Metaphoric creation looks for the appropriate association. Borges thoughts appear analogous to this architectural case. He was particularly aware of the idea of pertinence: choosing the "right word" (the right image) and the existence of few essential "patterns" for true metaphors, but infinite variations.[235]

There is a latent concern on Salmona's part on constructing an idea of reality *vis a vis* today's Latin American society and its culture so culturally hybrid: this is based in the

[231] See Rogelio Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 94.
[232] My translation, See Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Salmona: Espacios Abiertos* 93.
[233] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 29-30.
[234] DesCamp, *Metaphor and Ideology* 21.
[235] DesCamp, *Metaphor and Ideology* 29-30.

*mestizo* or *ladino* conditions of Latin America.[236] Salmona was explicit in proposing that architecture is site specific and experience (on which place-making is based) is personal or subjective. Therefore, any attempt to generalize a theory on a Latin American architecture through his work was something he found to be pretentious. He acknowledged however his will to making connections by means of poetically re-creating (amalgamating) what he called an experienced (in buildings) and studied (in texts) history.[237] And those "connections"—that I would call metaphoric—resulted to be appropriate in producing a pertinent "cultural synthesis." The ideas of "cultural synthesis" as related to a "sense of history" are therefore more relevant than the "lesson of history", all on which, Téllez somewhat ambiguously, wrote.[238] I would like to qualify the idea of a "sense on history" instead as historicity:

> [I]n the phenomenological and hermeneutic tradition, from Dilthey and Husserl through Heidegger and Gadamer, [historicity is used] to indicate an essential feature of human existence. People are not merely *in* history; their past, including their social past, figures in their conception of themselves and their future possibilities.[239]

We are brought to the ground of ulterior functions of place-making extending to the society as a whole and the poetic experience of its individuals. As such, with ethical connotations we may address the question opened by W. Curtis when, in a succinct manner he identified in the Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres the estranging distillation of many

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[236] See, for instance, Salmona "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Salmona: Espacios Abiertos* 90, 92, 93.
[237] Salmona in personal interview (Sept. 1 2006) spoke of a walked or lived history: "*historia recorrida.*" See Salmona's testimony on the subject in Chapter VI 171-173. A succinct and appropriate translation of the idea of *recorrido* into English results imprecise. *Recorrido* implies a poetic appropriation of space through momentary lived and also accumulated experience; a walk through and dynamic perception that suggests a temporality that goes beyond the moment of experience into what a memorable moment signifies in one owns life. I find the *recorrido* idea close to Gadamer's previously mentioned appreciations of aesthetic experience.
[238] Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 295-317. See English Summary, 335-37.
[239] Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, second ed. (London: Cambridge University Press) 673.

other places.[240] The building condenses in new places the meaningful aesthetic experience of other pertinent ones that may give an account of its location and situation in time and culture, beyond literal interpretations of the notion of architectural context.

The ethos of the house rests in being a meaningful setting that seduces, subtly fostering events of positive encounter, reflection and collaborative work for illustrious guests of Colombia. Rogelio Salmona understood the limitations of a reductive idea of an architectural program of functions that is proper to instrumental rationality. In the notion of program that the architect articulated, as in any meaningful event—a musical for instance—the tempo of an experiential narrative primed over functionalism, with all the instrumental or mechanistic connotations this word has in current practices of architectural design.

I would place Salmona's response to the particular institutional requirements of this delicate commission in the realm of poetic experience, beyond fixed conventions of efficiency, practicality and other formalities of the use of space. On the subject I quote Salmona's own explanation in a colloquial conversation:

> *[…] some places of the house are communal and the promenade allows for the notion of encounter. From this premise derived the succeeding courtyards and meeting places; places where people familiarize and de-familiarize, because in the end, such is not a permanent dwelling house; it is an institutional building with diverse uses in the different months and days of the year. But, when two persons don't know each other, they are not going to relate just based on 'two armchairs in a room.' Most likely they would get to know each other if they were walking and roaming around the building, and throughout it, discovering also the city. The building itself makes evident*

[240] William Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900, 3rd* ed. (New York: Phaidon) 649. From the source, I quote: "[…] in fact [the house] distilled many other places than just it's own, and achieved a poetic presence through the compression of these memories in a sensuous and tactile form."

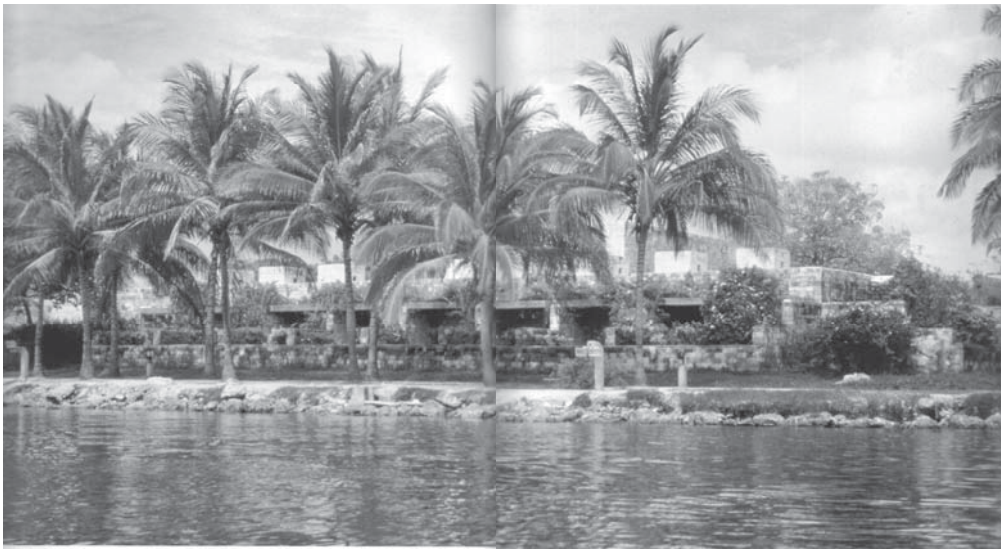


**Figure 17. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres, view from the Cartagena bay. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro**



**Figure 18. Cartagena de Indias. Urban landscape. Drawing by Rogelio Salmona.**

> *what was unknown. For they may not 'see' the city of Cartagena if the architecture does not allow them to have contact with the kind of distant and immediate vision we may have* [in, and] *of buildings.*[241]

Salmona's concerns for a combined ethic-poetic function of place-making might be traced back to early readings of Guillaume Apollinaire's "aesthetic meditations" who—in premonitory way—in an excursus of *The Cubist Painters* foresaw functionalist reductions and formal limitations in the, then novel modernist language of architecture. I quote:

> [N]owadays architecture has been lost to such an extent that the idea of a monument with no useful purpose appears extraordinary, and almost monstrous. […] The utilitarian ambitions of most contemporary architects [1913] explain why architecture has fallen behind the other arts. The architect and the engineer should aim to build sublimely […][242]

From Apollinaire Rogelio Salmona transcribed by hand and posted on a wall above his desk, in the most intimate corner of his studio, an aphorism with a meaningful condensed poetic message; this became for decades the frontispiece of his practice: **« *Préparer au lierre et au temps une ruine plus belle que les autres* ».**

Apollinaire's excerpt was translated to English as follows:

**"To prepare for ivy and passing time a ruin more beautiful than any other."** [243]

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[241] My translation from a personal interview (Sept. 1 2006). The Spanish transcripts and a digital audio file were consigned to the Rogelio Salmona studio archives.

[242] Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters,* trans. Peter Read (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 2004) 81-82.

[243] The French original is in Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les peintres cubistes : Méditations esthétiques* (Genève: P. Cailler, 1950) 82. I took the English translation from Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters* 82.



**Figure 19. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres, circa 1982. Photo by Germán Téllez .**



**Figure 20. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres, exterior detail, circa 1995. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro**

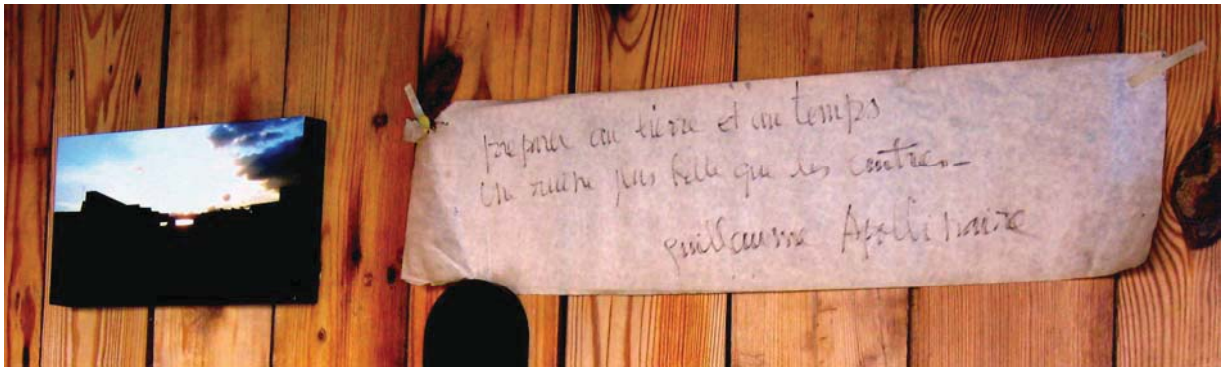
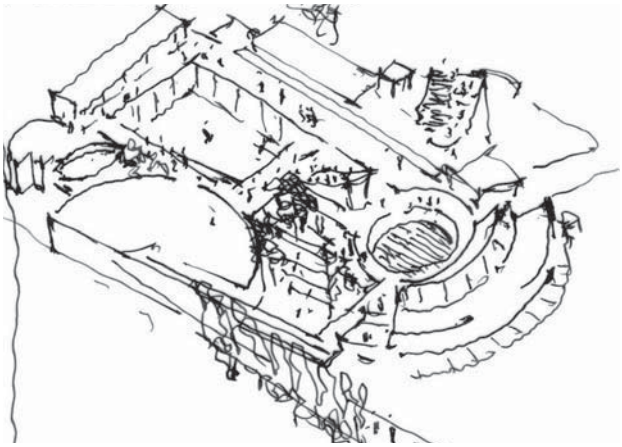



**Figure 21. Apollinaire's aphorism transcribed by Rogelio Salmona. Photo by Valérie Lechêne.**

***Part Two***

## *The Humanities Building, a "Theoria:"* [244]
## *Reporting on the Places of Obliqueness and Desire*



*It is through words that we explain architectural facts, yet I ask myself: which words may arrive to explain the subtlety of architecture, the simultaneous visions that expand the limits of the architectural form, the spaces of silence, the multiple secrets of forms, the infinite transparencies, the mystery of light or the depth of penumbra, the revelation of a landscape, the imbrications of surroundings, remote and immediate…a landscape? Which words may in addition explain the sensations of a walk, the revelation of inner landscapes, the mysteries of being inside and outside, the communion between an interior and an exterior, between geography and history?*

Rogelio Salmona[245]

[244] I use the word *theoria*, as in ancient Greece, connoting a cultural practice that implied a "journey abroad for the sake of learning." See Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 40.

[245] My translation from Rogelio Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 88.

## ***Chapter III. The Regional Dimension: Aircraft Approach to an Architectural Object***

Steeped in a feeling of estrangement, almost a foreigner to my homeland I return to Colombia as a *theoros* venturing on a "private*"* *theoria.*[246] Following a stop in the Caribbean port of Maracaibo the aircraft flies southward over the Andean highland plateau of Cundinamarca and Boyacá, approaching the *sabana* of Bogotá.[247] Looking down from the airplane I see the vast flat highland: a layered mosaic of smooth ochre and gold agricultures, green pasturage and dark open soil. Such agricultural patchwork is framed by neat lines of non-native conifers and eucalyptus that were brought by the Spaniards to literally "dry" the land. These checkered tracings mingle with heaps of colossal lanterns inside spawning plastic greenhouses, which have been lit early for an entire night of flower cultivation.[248]

From the readings that preceded this trip and—even if fragmentarily—from the view above the geography of this region I know that: prior to the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, the now mostly productive landscape of the *sabana* of Bogotá was, for the most part, aquatic and sacred. Colombian historian Germán Arciniegas reminds us that the Bogotá river once flooded the region here and there. On the now considered savannah the pre-Hispanic *Muiscas* were "amphibians," fishing and hunting amidst reeds (which in Spanish we call *juncos*) on ponds and small lagoons, and the area was all and all a swamp.[249] The place was abundant in creeks and small lagoons, and from that geographic condition originated the water related *Muisca* deities *Bachue, Bochica* and

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[246] A *theoros* in ancient Greece was a "pilgrim" who traveled to witness meaningful events learn, report and build a *theoria* that could be "civic" or "Private". Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth* 40.

[247] See, for instance, "Sabana de Bogotá," Encyclopædia Britannica, 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/71495/Sabana-de-Bogota> (21 Aug. 2008).

[248] Visually and experientially disruptive, the proliferating greenhouses of the *Sabana de Bogotá* have a negative climatic environmental impact. See Leonardo Gónima and Jairo Durango Vertel, "Aplicaciones Ambientales de Imágenes Digitales de Satélite" ***GeoTrópico*** 3.1 (2005): 21-30. <http://www.geotropico.org/3_1_Gonima.html> (17 May 2008).

[249] Germán Arciniegas, "El Artificio de la Sabana," *Diario de un Peatón* (Bogotá: Norma, 1998, c1936) 79-81.




**Figure 22. Colombia, location map. Sketch by the author**



**Figure 23. The *sabana* of Bogotá, Sketch by the author**



**Figure 24. "*Inundación en la Sabana"* (Flood in the savannah). Oil on canvas by Gonzalo Ariza, 1960 (152).**

*Tequendama*.[250] This is not to say the savannah today is merely a prosaic place. Its poetic radiance is however very different after 500 years of manual and mechanized landscape modification. Now highly contaminated, the Bogotá river runs above ground and is contained between dams. Only fragments remain of that remote original,[251] but now virtually imaginary—wet spongy land.[252]

Mountains are visible on the port side of the MD-83 fuselage, parallel to our trajectory. As the plane moves further south, the eastern hills of the savannah begin to appear. In the local context we informally know them as *los cerros* (the hills), though in noting their magnitude, I believe we fall short in classification. This chain of raised peaks ranging from 2800 to 3600 meters above sea level configures the impressive east boundary of the highland plateau. Parallel to these mountains runs the continuing urban expansion of Bogotá, a city, nearly a thousand kilometers away from the tropical Caribbean coasts and very high above sea level: as the official slogan promoted it, "Bogotá, 2600 meters closer to the stars." [253] Although still impressive when viewed from above, I note that the silent witnesses—the *Cerros Testigos*[254]—are not the ultimate presence, the definitive limit or

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[250] Alvaro Medina, "Un Símbolo Para Bogotá," *La Imagen de la Ciudad en las Artes y en los Medios,* ed. Beatriz García (Bogotá: Unibiblos, 2000) 351. On the pre-Hispanic Muiscas see José Pérez de Barradas, "Los Muiscas Antes de la Conquista," *The Hispanic American Historical Review,* 34. 3 (1954): 339-341.

[251] The *Sabana* has transformed over time and the idea of an original landscape is relative. In geological terms, however, the highland plateau reached its actual altitude (2600 meters above sea level) only 3 million years ago, in the form of great lagoon and precisely with the formation of the eastern hills. Approximately thirty thousand years ago the valley of the Bogotá River (actual *Sabana*) began to take shape. See CIFA Universidad de los Andes, *Cerros de Bogotá* (Bogota: Villegas Editores) 32-33.

[252] In the *Sabana*, rivers coexisted wit several *humedales* (Spanish for wetlands) which progressively disappear. Recent political actions have recovered and re-created fragments of those remaining environments (thirteen officially recognized) as public spaces of the modern metropolis. See the journalistic note in the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo, archivo* <http://www.eltiempo.com/bogota/2008-03-22/ARTICULO-WEB-NOTA_INTERIOR-4024732.html> (May 10, 2008). A pertinent Web entry for general information on the *humedales* of Bogotá is found in <http://bogowiki.org/humedales.html> (May 10, 2008).

[253] I quote the slogan popularized during the Enrique Peñaloza's majority period (1997-2000), English for "Bogotá 2600 metros más cerca de las estrellas." Bogotá is a national Metropolis of tempered climatic conditions which concentrates over seven million people from a mosaic of hot and humid tropical regions. With poetic lure, the slogan gave national recognition to the geographic specificity of the city and became a proud refrain among their citizens. On the subject, see the *ponencia* 446 to the council of Bogotá <http://concejodebogota.gov.co/concejo/site/artic/20061009/asocfile/20061009145657/ponencia_pa_446_herman_redondo_y_omar_mejia.doc> (20 May. 08)

[254] I borrow terms from the musician Ricardo Gallo's Jazz compositon, *Los Cerros Testigos,* inspired by and devoted to the Bogotá hills (Chonta Records, 2006).

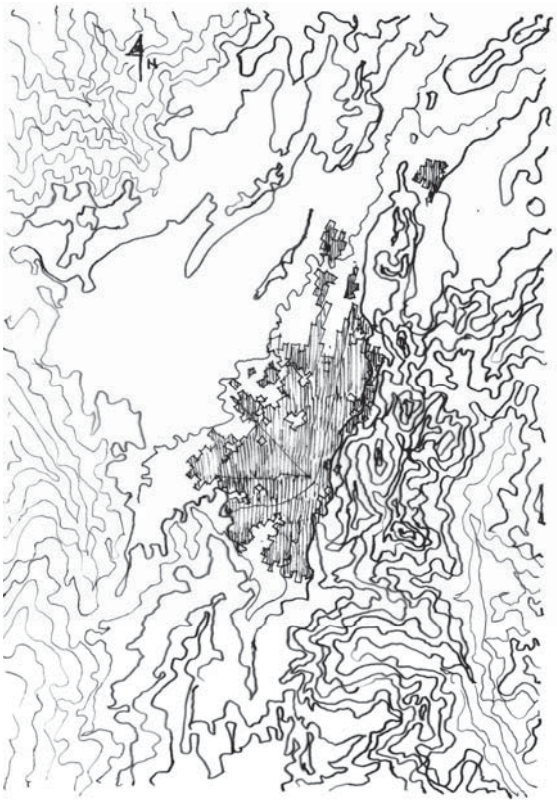


Figure 25. Topograhical Map of the *sabana* of Bogotá. Sketch by the author

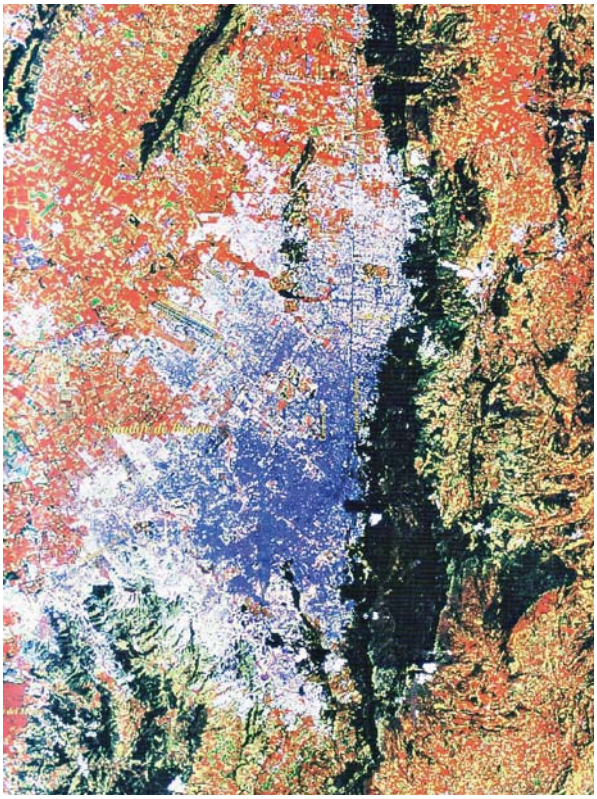


Figure 26. *Sabana* of Bogotá, satellite view.



Figure 27. *Cerros* of Bogotá, with imaginary forestation. Drawing by Rogelio Salmona, circa 1998.

*finis terra* they represent for millions of local dwellers when, from a human body's horizon they perceive the *cerros*, feet on the ground.

East of the bounding hills, the once ritualistic sacred lagoons of the *Muiscas* punctuate and complete the landscape of that bleak plateau territory. [255] Their existence is latent for the "mortals on earth" and a spectacle for the eyes above. These bodies of water are now called a "system" of high-mountain lagoons, in the jargon of current instrumental rationality. So distant is this technical understanding from the mythical mentality that once gave account of this land.[256] This systemic classification comes as a mechanistic or organic analogy: a modern scientific naming of the world. Gigantic water masses made by human artifice materialize nearby the mythical lagoons. From a distance I observe, the *Siecha* group of sacred small *Muisca* lagoons and ponds by the side of the huge dam and reservoir of *Chingaza.* Straining my line of vision, from this aircraft's raised and almost static perspective, the *Guatavita Muisca* ritualistic lagoon is a single, minute mirror, a shining teaspoon beside the reservoir of *Tomine.* It is clear from my distant perspective that in the process of the technological transformation of this landscape, in the constant search for resources, some of the lacustrine geological origin has returned to the *Sabana de Bogotá,* even if, oddly refashioned in dams and artificial reservoirs.

In spite of the speed of our displacement, inside the airplane cabin we dwell somewhat silent among mute TV screens, anaesthetized in the dense artificial atmosphere of air-conditioning and pressurization. The aroma of a fresh cup of coffee on my tray, casually labeled with mountains and the face of *Juan Valdez*,[257] awakens my senses evocatively. It takes one away from the asthenia induced by this ultramodern aircraft's environment. The gathering of space, things and events makes the cabin environment a place that

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[255] See Eduardo Londoño, "Los Muiscas: una reseña histórica con base en las primeras descripciones," Museo del Oro, Banco de la Republica <http://www.banrep.gov.co/museo/esp/boletin/articlos/religim.htm> (10 May 2008).
[256] Londoño, "Los Muiscas"
[257] The Logo symbol of Café de Colombia (*Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia*) was created by Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB advertising agency) in 1981. With the "iconoclast Juan Valdez coffee grower, the mule and the Colombian mountains as background," the symbol represents "100% Colombian Coffee." On the history of this symbol see, Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, "Historia del Logotipo" <http://www.juanvaldez.com/espanol/menu/logo.html> (21 Aug. 2008).



**Figure 28 . The *Guatavita* Lagoon** (site of *Muisca* rituals). **Photo by Aldo Brando.**



**Figure 29. The *Siecha* Lagoons. Photo by Aldo Brando.**

becomes, in turn, particularly memorable.[258] The delicate scent of Colombian coffee brings to memory a Proustian-like scene of place evocation and time displacement.[259] The memorable nature of this moment, one could say, is aberrantly imaginative. I think of this with Gaston Bachelard in mind.[260] This moment in memory is also culturally hybrid. I remember simultaneously the gargantuan *Juan Valdez* cup steaming in Manhattan's Times Square, plastered on the side of a skyscraper. And that image blends with other experiential, older images of many coffee cups (that we call *tintos*) shared in open air on misty early mornings, sitting on a solid clay-baked terrace, overlooking the reflecting waters of the once sacred lagoon of the *Ubaque Muisca* chief.[261]

Downward on this virtual ramp that steadily shifts our horizon, as we plunge into the city spread the urban landscape of Bogotá appears as one limitless territory. It is five o'clock in the afternoon. Ignited by tangent sunbeams, during the short but seemingly infinite moments in which this city becomes the most beautiful, the silhouette of the eastern hills appears as a magnificent succession of crests, *cuchillas* and *hondonadas*. Some of their names and identities I now know by heart, for instance: the sanctuaries of *Guadalupe* and *Monserrate*, to which—since Colonial times—the catholic church gave evangelizing

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[258] I contrast my experiential approach to place with the idea of "non-places", characteristic of our actual condition of "supermodernity" as proposed by Marc Augé in *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London; New York: Verso, 1995). For comparison see Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, [in] " Place: Permanence or Production." *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, c1997) 93-105. Similarly to Ignasi de Solà-Morales I believe in the possibilities of place as event, in the context of contemporary societies. I detach however from de Solà-Morales attaining the dichotomy between place as cultural synonym of permanence vis a vis modern conceptions of space-time and the possibilities of a meaningful experience of place.

[259] See Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 161-168. In the source Malpas elaborates on place, based on Marcel Proust's narrative.

[260] See Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les songes : essai sur l'imagination du mouvement.* (Paris: J. Corti, 1943) 7-13. Bachelard understood imagination not merely as the faculty of forming mental images but as marriage, distortion and blending of images that are of experiential nature.

[261] The lagoon was ceremonial centre of the Ubaque Muisca chief (*Cacique de Ubaque*), accused of idolatry in 1564 by the Real Audiencia (royal audience) of Spain and the Santa Iglesia católica (the catholic church of the vice-kingdom of *Nueva Granada*). See Clara Inés Casilimas Rojas, "Juntas, Borracheras y Obsequias en el Cercado de Ubaque. A Propósito del Proceso Seguido al Cacique de Ubaque por Idólatra." *Boletín Museo del Oro* 49 (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 2001). <http://www.banrep.gov.co/museo/esp/boletin> (19 May. 2008).




**Figure 30.** ***Juan Valdez*** **(Café de Colombia) advertisement façade in Times Square. Photo by the author.**



**Figure 31. The** ***Ubaque*** **Lagoon (site of** ***Muisca*** **rituals). Photo by the author.**



**Figure 32. The** ***Ubaque*** **Lagoon (Areial view). Aerial photo by the IGAC: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi.**

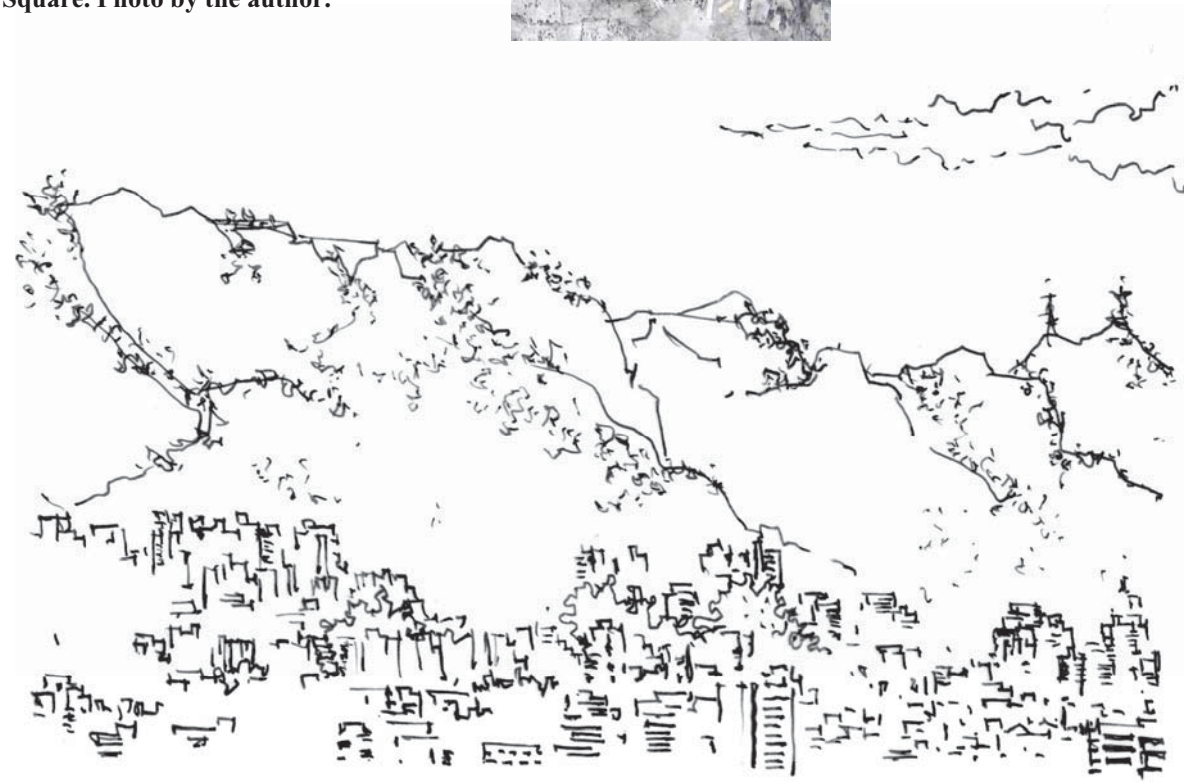


**Figure 33. Bogotá's urban profile. Sketch by the author.**

functions, or *La Teta* and *El Cable*, where in the mid 1950's the main Telecommunication antennas of the city were installed.[262]

The hills' texture is perceived as an atmospheric juxtaposition of low clouds, and purple-green vegetal masses: remnants of native forests, foreign-species reforestation and colossal dark slates. The sloped surface is also made of sandy quarries, eroded cliffs and the climbing city fabric of so-called informal settlements, as well as the many elitist formal invasions by the real estate business. The musical waters of a hundred creeks, *riachuelos* and *quebradas*, are part of a broader experiential picture of this landscape; and the ephemeral flight of myriads of butterflies too, but all these are imperceptible from here. It is the atmospheric drama of a contrasting afternoon. A shifting sky shelters us, while starboard on the distant horizon a *diluvian* downpour floods the lowlands of the *Magdalena* River valley, west of the highland plateau. Patches of landscape radiate a unique luminosity; and down in the midst of the green slopes, a hundred million bricks are metaphorically—and literally——iron in the fire.[263]

Right before reaching the mounts of *Monserrate* and *Guadalupe* the aircraft shifts westward, redirecting its course to one of the *El Dorado* tracks. The *sabana*'s capricious weather pushes our trajectory away from the strong attraction of those colossal purple-green masses, in a manner that one could call erotic. We drift away from the hills as we approach the runway east-west, in an unusual way, in order to dodge the electrical storm. The sediments on the young slopes bear the traces of a human history that dates back to

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[262] On the names and basic formal characteristics of the *Cerros de Bogotá* see Jorge Arias de Greiff, "Los Cerros de Bogotá y Su Nomenclatura" in *Conversaciones con Bogota 1945-2005* (Bogota: Sello Editorial Lonja de Propiedad Raíz, 2005). pp. 84-90. See as well the comprehensive document on the hills of Bogotá (declared cultural and environmental heritage of the city and the nation) elaborated by the CAR, and Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá D.C., "Los Cerros Orientales de Bogotá: Patrimonio Cultural y Ambiental del Distrito Capital, La Región y el País," (Bogotá: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2006). <http://www.secretariadeambiente.gov.co/sda/libreria/pdf/PMA_alcaldia.pdf> (19 May. 2008).

[263] Brick gives characteristic materiality to Bogotá. From before "modernization" to the contemporary vertiginous expansion and re-densification of the city, brickwork traditions have built the place. On the subject see Sergio Trujillo Jaramillo, "Architecture in Colombia and the Sense of Place," *Aquitectura en Colombia y el Sentido de lugar: Ultimos 25 Años,* by Sociedad Colombiana de Arquitectos (Bogotá: SCA, 2004) 37-50. See as well CEAM, and Alejandro Cárdenas, "El ladrillo y la arquitectura Bogotana," *Proa* 353 (1986): 11-55. Relevant to the Colombian architectural context is, as well, Anne Berty, *Architectures colombiennes* (Paris: Éditions du Moniteur, 1981).

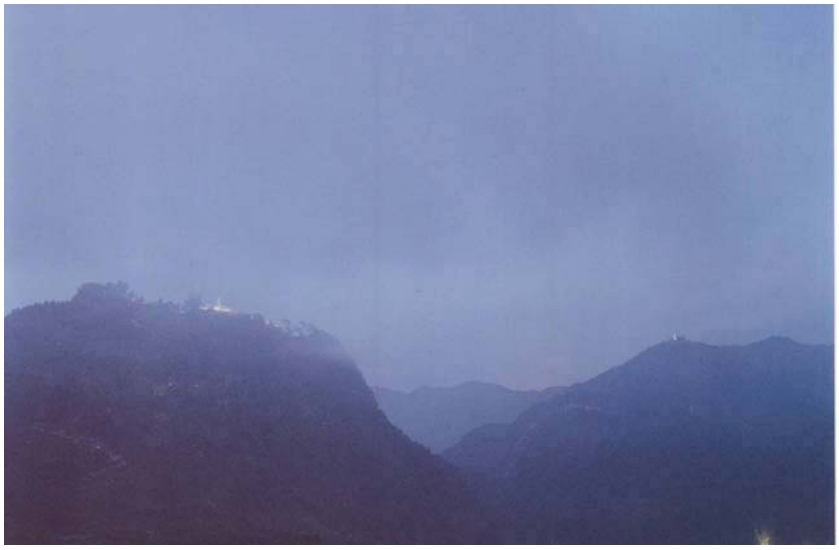


**Figure 34. The *cerros* of *Guadalupe* and *Monserrate*. Bogotá. Photo by Cristóbal Von Rothkirch.**

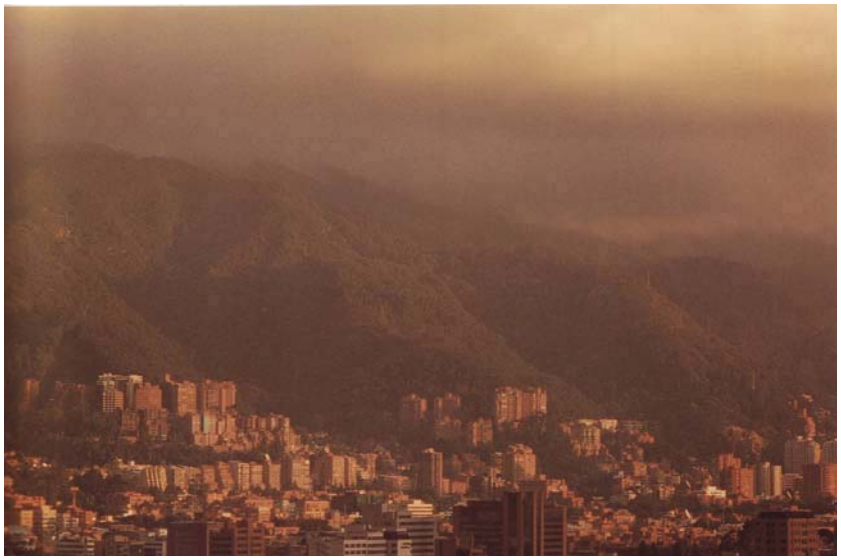


**Figure 35. Bogotá. Photo by Cristóbal Von Rothkirch.**

times before the city's colonial foundation. The history of this human interaction with the hills is now latent in some parts and traceable in others. A palimpsest of images is coming to mind in this brief lapse. With discomfort I look back at the elusive mountains. In my imaginary I return to an early 16th century foundation (August 6, 1538) conceived within the framework of the *Leyes de Indias*.[264] A nascent village finds protection from the elements in the *cerros*; then, a colonial town exploits the hill's living resources; the *ciudad republicana* of the 19th century, ceaselessly grows turning living mountains into quarries; [265] The Spanish scientist José Celestino Mutis with its illustrated botanic expedition is visited by Alexandre Von Humboldt (1801).[266] Millions of eyes in worship or contemplation gaze two crowned *cerros,* and myriads of pilgrims pay promises to the virgin of *Guadalupe* and el *Señor de Monserrate* while many other non believers walk up and down the infinite steps of *Monserrate* hill just for sport.

***Site Plan from a "Bird's-eye-View": Hovering Over an Architectural "Object"***

As the plane turns, fortunate moments occur. The MD-83 is now flying over the *"ciudad blanca,"* literally, "the white city": the early 20th century modernist-inspired campus of the Universidad Nacional.[267] On the ground the buildings are disposed on a green surface marked by curvilinear asphalt rings and intersecting concrete and brick paved axes. Conceived in 1935 as a generous gardened field for the freestanding arrangement of somewhat hygienically detached white volumes—a "city in the park" of "scientific urbanism"—the *"ciudad blanca"* is now jammed with volumes, almost to the point of collision, as in Piranesi's Roman depictions. Thousands of dwellers walk on the various clearly marked axial paths, like ants in file. An abundance of finer threads connect buildings and major formal axes often creating nodes. The spontaneously developed

[264] Juan Manzano Manzano, *Historia de las Recopilaciones de Indias* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1991).
[265] CIFA,128-42.
[266] CIFA 157-61. On Mutis see Real Jardín Botánico Madrid, *Mutis y la Real Expedición Botanica del Nuevo Reyno de Granada* (Barcelona: Lunwerg/Villegas Editores, 1992). On Mutis' field research on the Guadalupe and Monserrate hills see Ernesto Guhl, *Los Paramos Circundantes de la Sabana de Bogotá* (Bogotá: Jardín Botánico José Celestino Mutis, 1982).
[267]The "white city" was conceived and designed by the - then recently arrived in Colombia, German immigrants, Professor Fritz Karsen (pedagogic expert, 1885-1951) and the architect Leopoldo Rother (Breslau, 1884- Bogotá, 1978). See Luz Amorocho*, Universidad Nacional de Colombia Planta Física 1867 – 1982* (Bogotá: Proa Ediciones, 1982) 99.

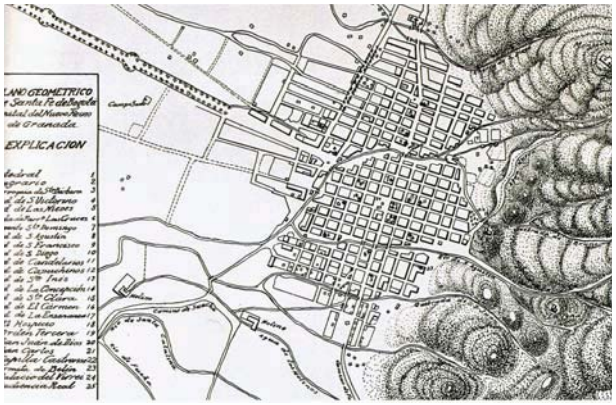



**Figure 36. "*Plano geométrico de Santafé de Bogotá, capital del Nuevo Reino de Granada.*" Plan of Santafé de Bogotá, Capital of the New Kingdom of Granada. Vicente Talledo y Rivera, 1801.**



**Figure 37. "*Dia de mercado en la Plaza Mayor de Bogotá.*" Market day in the Plaza Mayor of Bogotá. Oil on canvas by J. Santos Figueroa, 1781.**



**Figure 38. "*Boquerón del Río san Francisco.*" The San Francisco river (19th C.), depicting the deforested *Guadalupe* and *Monserrate* hills in the background Oil on canvas by Ramón Torres Méndez.**

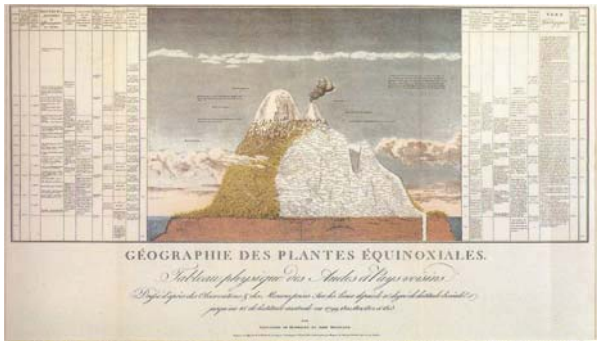



**Figure 39. « *Géographie des plants equinoxiales* » Engraving by Alexandre von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland (1799-1803), published in 1805.**

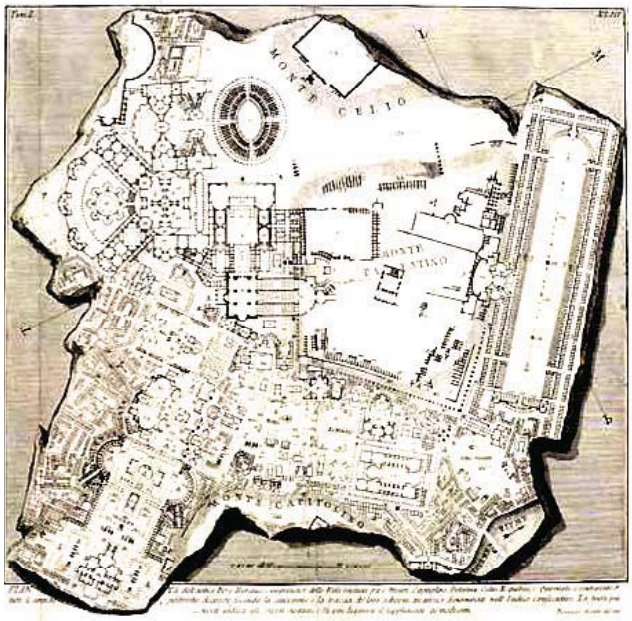



**Figure 40. "*Pianta dell' antico Foro Romano.*" Plan of the ancient Roman Forum) Etching by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1756.**

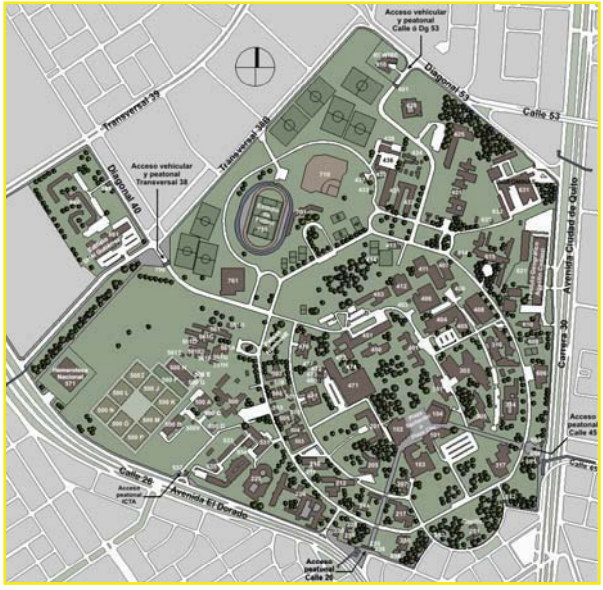



**Figure 41. The "c*iudad blanca*" ("the white city"). Urban Layout.**

delicate paths (that in Castilian we almost musically call *senderos*) are noticeable from here only by means of the dynamic human alignment they convoke. From a "bird's-eye view" the *"ciudad blanca"* is little more than a roof plan. Only shifting cloud shadows weaving land and buildings, along with the microscopic motion of beings, are challenging this rather static roof plan perception.

I then notice that some of the white prismatic buildings of the campus are peculiarly covered by traditional baked-clay tiles, despite their apparent modernist fashion. Their summits however are framed by prominent parapets. Behind those, a reddish patina hides.[268] Other roofs are planes of grey undulated asbestos sheets and granulated waterproofing material: these are less attractive to the eye and not as successful when it comes to bearing with the natural elements performing a poetic, ennobling weathering.

***The Humanities Building: Site Plan***

As I Peek through my small oval window, the subject of my *theoria* shows up though, the experiential world of places of the Humanities building is from here, an object-like miniature. This elevated view is privileged and unique yet distant and disengaged. It is a visual instant that requires a pause in time. The eyes zoom in, focused on its spatial scope. The building is a rather complex and seemingly bizarre composition of basic geometric volumes articulated around three contained open spaces. In contrast with the other buildings on campus, this composite makes no differentiation between ground and roof. This artificial (architectural) topography is more than a building in the conventional sense. Its multiple horizontal, vertical and oblique bounding planes are a uniform light-ochre terracotta envelope, contributing to this topographical perception. On the numerous surfaces of that artifice of articulated geometries, the random motions of human life appear. Minute figures gather and ambulate on the stratified terraces of the baked-clay layered topography, spotted by sporadic sunrays—peeking through the clouds of an ever shifting sky.

[268] This duality between an exterior modernist style and the still traditional construction techniques and general shape of building roofs and structures, an architecture of "transition" towards modernism that characterized most of the initial buildings of the "white city" is properly noted by Silvia Arango, [in] *Historia de La Arquitectura en Colombia* (Bogotá: Centro Editorial y Facultad de Artes, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1989) 191.

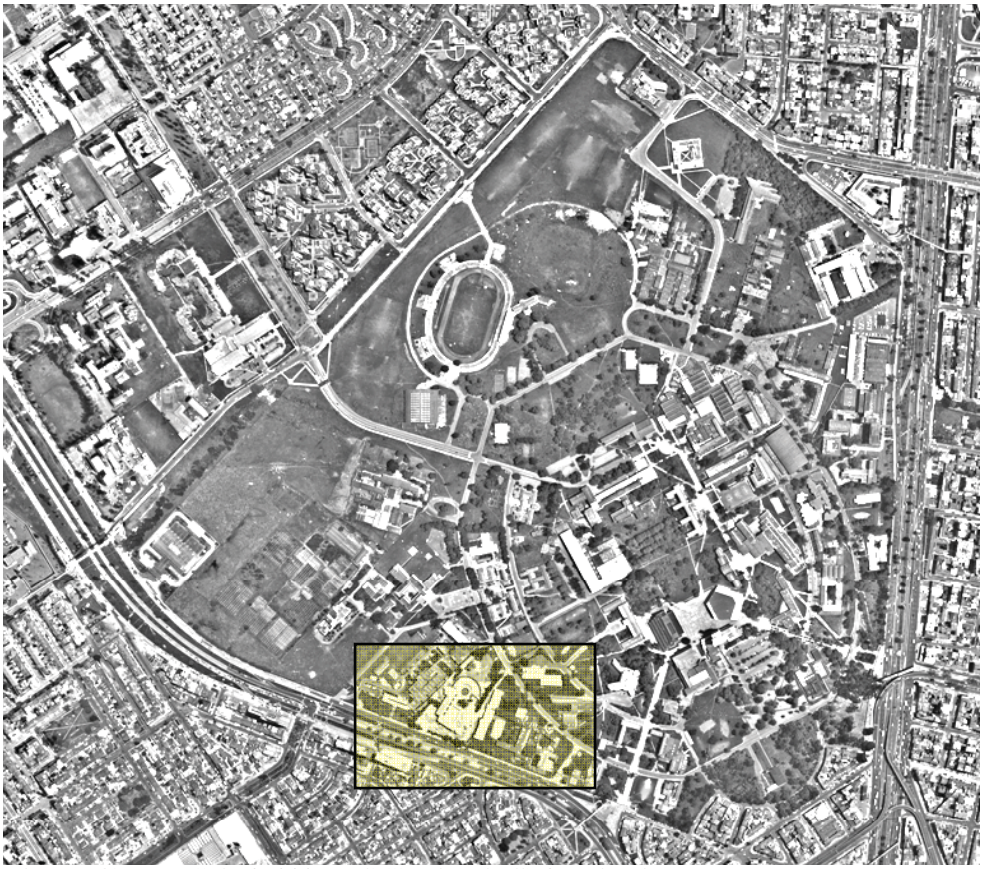


**Figure 42. The "*ciudad blanca*" ("white city") framing in yellow washout the Humanities building and immediate surroundings. Aerial photo by the IGAC: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi.**



**Figure 43. The Humanities building and immediate surroundings. Satellite photo by Google Earth.**

I distinguish three rooms from here that are contained (like water in a vessel) yet still open to the sky. Linking land and sky vertically, they connect with us up here. Those rooms, for which the celestial dome is the ultimate limit, are bridging the earthly and the ethereal. They invite the unpredictability of events proper to the celestial realm to take part in the daily practices of mortals down on earth. [269] Given the concentric grouping of the masses that confine the three open rooms, it is plausible that this triad of places exposed to the elements is essential to those that are surrounding and covered. It is logical not to consider them "voids" for they define vivid humane existential spaces within, but their specific experiential attributes are too distant from here to be fully perceived.[270]

Now I look more intently at the configuration of those three open rooms that anchor the building's composition of volumes. Two of these have elemental forms: one is a rectangle, the other a circle. These two courts are the innermost rooms within the overall built mass. The nature of the circular is aquatic. It radiates an intense blue, and mirrors the sky. The circle—unlike the other open boxes—is not peopled. Having just witnessed the neighboring geography of sacred highland ponds and little lagoons, for that sky-reflecting circle one may imagine an "image" of "water":[271] In the building's inner landscape, the blue shiny disc alludes to the aquatic punctuation of sacred spoon-ponds of the natural, once mythically experienced *Muisca* world of this highland plateau.

Tangent to the overall composition, the third open room looks unfamiliar to an eye so used to Platonic solids. It is like a corrugated-cardboard box, opened from above, whose

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[269] I draw on Heidegger's "The origin of the Work of Art" referring to the earth, as the place, ground of our essentially poetic being in the world, not according to the instrumental notion of a "mass of matter" or the positivist idea of "planet." See *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings,* trans. Max Niemeyer, Vittorio Klostermann and Verlag Gunther, ed., David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper, 1977) 143-188. I found support for this interpretation on parallel ideas in Michael Cadwell, *Strange* Details (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 2007) 6-7.

[270] I stress the essential difference between concretely bound spaces (experiential places) and the idea of "void", see Edward Casey, "Avoiding the Void: Primeval Patterns," *The fate of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 3-23.
See, for instance, Ocatvio Paz, *In/Mediaciones* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, S.A., 1990) 7-23. Paz is a relevant source for an extrapolation to architecture, particularly when he discussed the aesthetics of simple objects of containment (*artesania*), their meaning and use;

[271] In this analogy I resort to Bachelard's way of distinguishing poetic images. See Gaston Bachelard *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie* (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) 60-63.



**Figure 44. The Humanities building bird's-eye view.**
**Satellite photo by Google Earth.**

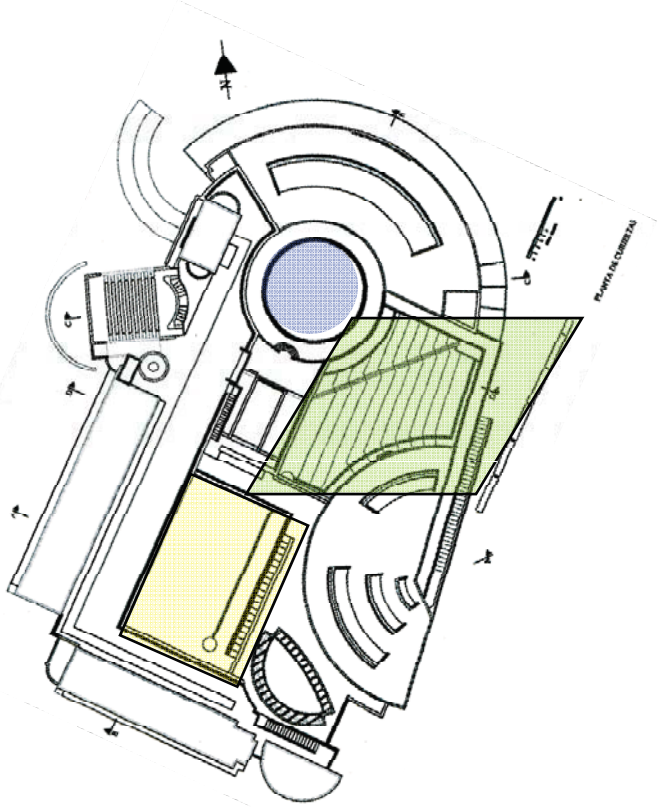


**Figure 45. The Humanities building, roof plan.**
**Diagram by the author, showing the three courtyards articulating the composition.**

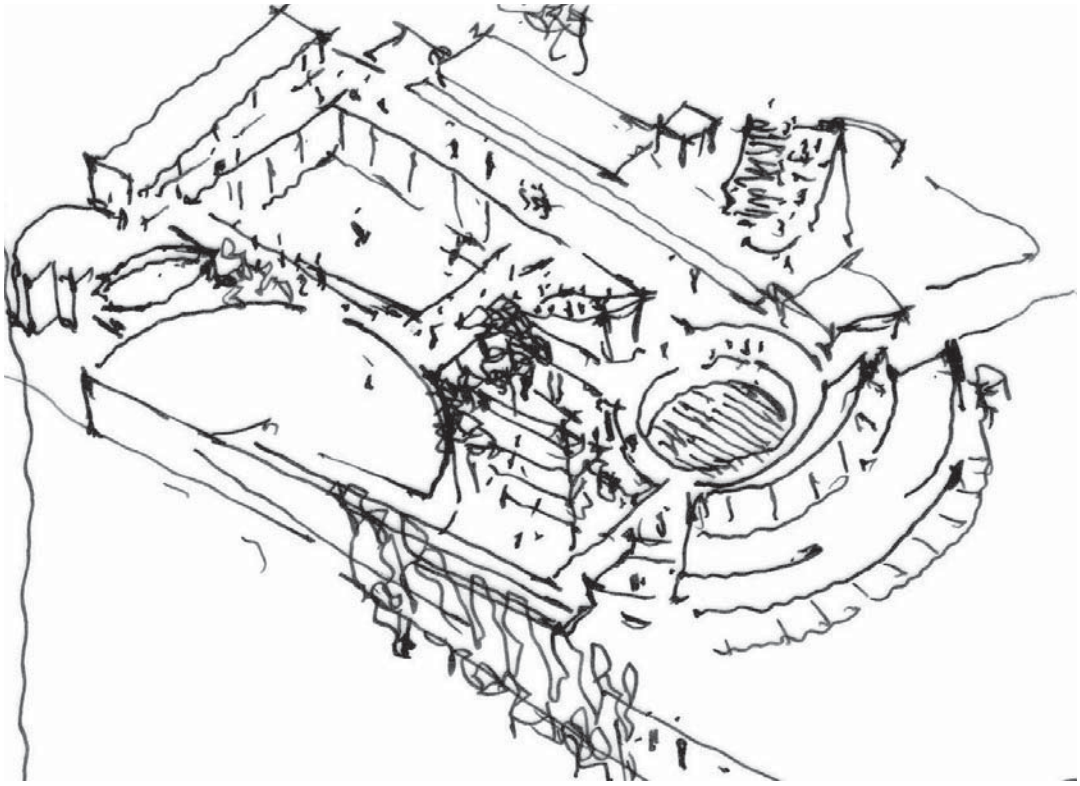


**Figure 46. The Humanities building in bird's-eye view from the east.**
**Sketch by the author.**

bland flexible boundaries were deformed due to the influx of neighboring volumes pushing in and stretching out. Furthermore, the axis or suggested direction of the tense stretching is paralleled by a barely visible, shiny thin blue line. Its orientation is dictated by two old trees that come into sight as no more than two green dots. This lateral awkward-looking open space almost touches the other two formally more elemental ones. In doing so, it correlates with them in ways that, from this long distance and at first glance, are hard to fully understand. This third open box touches the edge of the entire composite object. And attached to the hollowed mass, like a chameleon tongue, a path obliquely projects outside. Lines and dots made of old trees, along with spontaneous pathways, all of which surely precede the recent construction, harmonize with the composition of volumes and open spaces. The emplacement and formal nature of the architectural object in question is clearly related to new dwelling practices on site, responding as well to patterns of inhabitation, forms and traces of its surroundings. My disengaged vision from above, however, is too abstract to elaborate on further.

As the silent, west-bound aircraft gently descends one may associate some aspects of profile and disposition of forms in the building to orientation and formal connections to vicinity. A curved volume opens up with precision to the northeast quadrant under one's nose looking southwest, larboard of the aircraft. This 'unglazed doughnut-piece' radiates towards the impressive mountainous group we have just passed by. With detachment I observe this in an elongated lapse of perception—from the air. When looked from a distance and with disengagement (like in photographs) architecture is subject to "focused vision" that tends to blind the essential dimension of lived experience. [272]

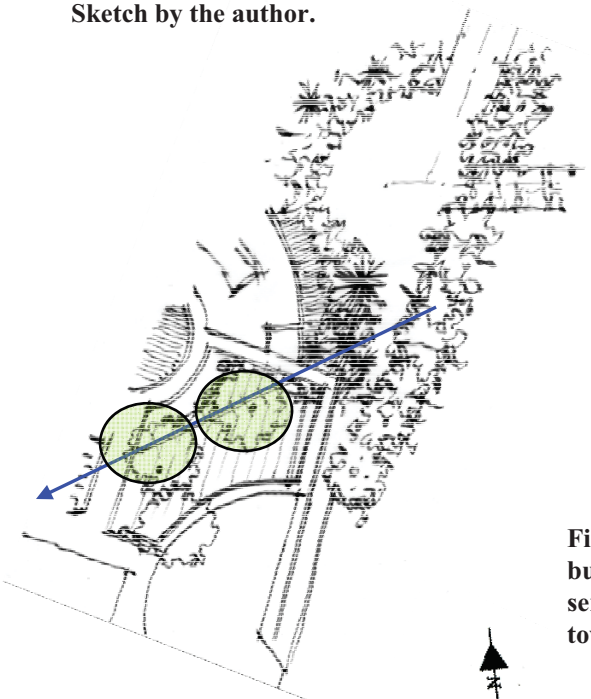
At the south westernmost edge of the Humanities building, two straight volumes partially enclose the prismatic rectangular open room. The two wings arranged in an L-shaped manner evoke a fragment of an ancient cloister, or a pre-Hispanic Mayan quadrangle. [273]

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[272] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (West Sussex: Wiley-Academy, 2005) 10-13.

[273] Rogelio Salmona gave account on various occasions of the imaginative re-creation (amalgamation) of memorable *lived* images of cloistered architecture, as distant as pre-Hispanic quadrangles and Cistercian cloisters . See, for instance, *Rogelio Salmona,* "El Encuentro de Dos Mundos," ("The Encounter of Two Worlds") lecture manuscript, *Conferencia de arquitectura en la Universidad de los Andes,* Bogotá: 6 April 1992. See, as well, "Temas tratados por Rogelio Salmona en visita realizada al Archivo General de la

**Figure 47. Fragment of the Humanities building's composition showing the lateral, "entrance court" and the approximation path. Sketch by the author.**



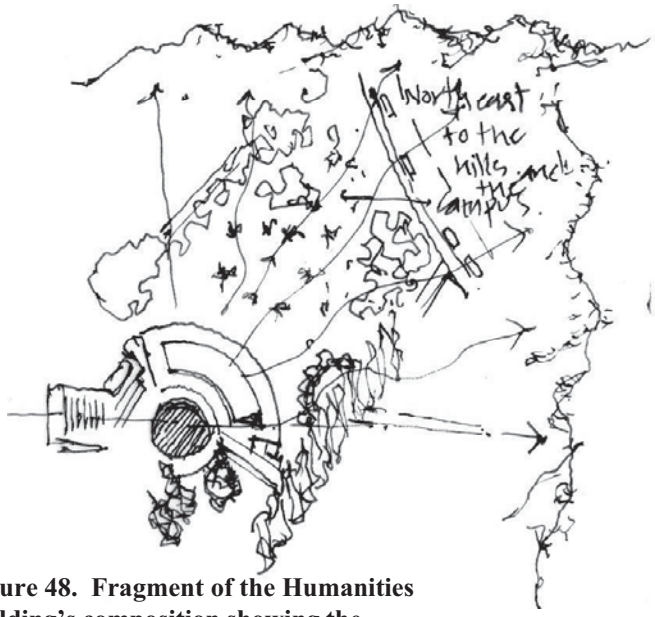



**Figure 48. Fragment of the Humanities building's composition showing the semicircular volume radiating northeast towards the hills. Sketch by the author.**

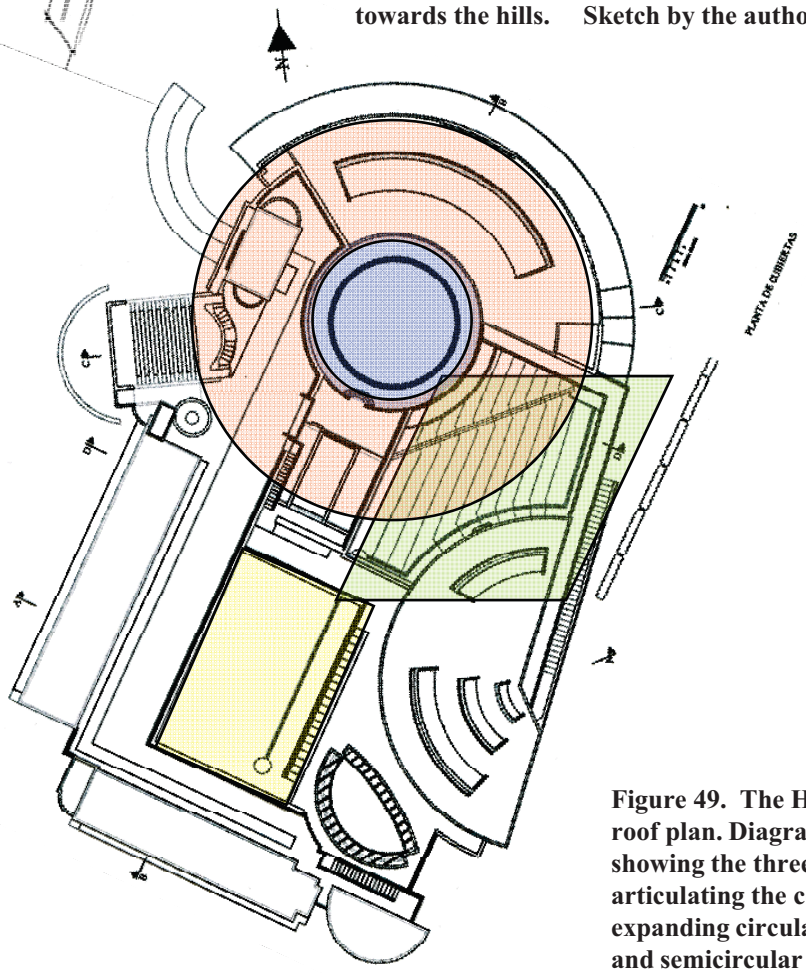


**Figure 49. The Humanities building, roof plan. Diagram by the author showing the three courtyards articulating the composition and the expanding circularity of the blue court and semicircular volume..**

Although subtly detached from each other, the two orthogonal solids configure a neat corner southwest of the composition, set against some rather complicated boundaries: the machinist flux of *El Dorado* highway backed up at that point by an intimidating high-rise 'monument' to real estate speculation and the anodyne ICA pavilion, inside the campus. Even if muffled from the pressurized cabin, one can almost hear the incessant noisy rush of the highway and imagine the potential negative impact of these massive and repelling volumes.

A prominent element stands angled to our trajectory between the radiant and the cloistered fragments of the composition. It is a square volume which, compass in hand, one notes has been exactly oriented eastward toward the hills, the paramount limit of the city. The sloped territory of an open-air theatre perches on the highest point of the complex. Unlike the flat blue disc, this open space is densely inhabited by 'little people' and with sensitive logic bends to offer its dwellers the spectacle of the eastern landscape.

The array of volumes towards the southeast is complex. Volumes of hybrid geometry made of round and straight angular shapes, collide producing a serrated profile. This is the part of the composition that bounds the construction eastward of the rectangular prismatic courtyard. It faces downtown Bogotá and the colonial foundational site, both under the guard of the magnanimous grey green mountains of *Guadalupe* and *Monserrate*.

At first glance of the "site plan" of the Humanities building, one may think it looks imprisoned or at least constrained in its parcel of land between the two neighboring pavilions. These two straight almost parallel volumes—as bars—strongly define the limit to potential expansion toward the urban and natural geographic features of the surroundings. The formally hybrid and fractured composite mass leaves fissures and allows displacements that speak to us of a struggle; a liberating intention.

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Nación*,"* Manuscript of a speech, Bogotá: 18 April 1997 (Files consulted in the Rogelio salmona studio archive). On the subject see, as well, the critical comments of Germán Téllez, [in]"La Historia en la Obra de Rogelio Salmona," *Rogelio Salmona, Obra Completa 1959/2005* (Bogotá: Escala, 1991) 147-160.

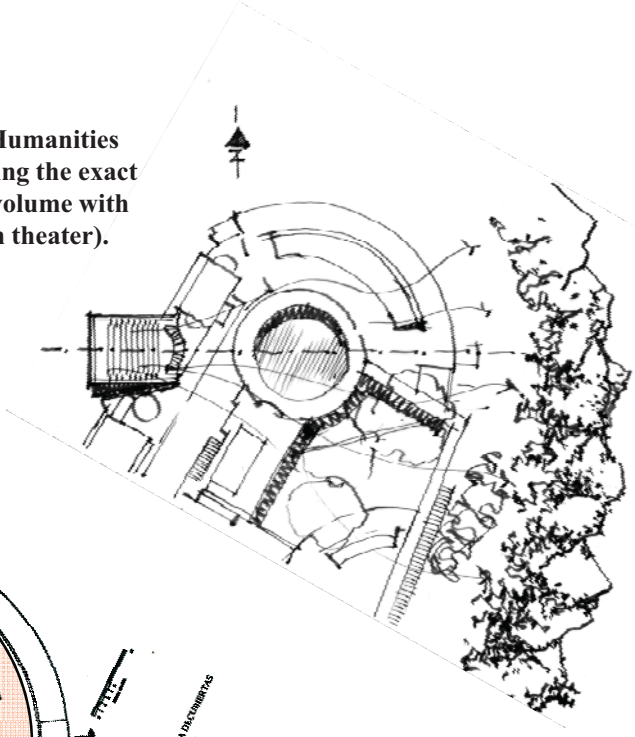


**Figure 50. Fragment of the Humanities building's composition marking the exact east orientation of the cubic volume with stepped rooftop terrace (open theater). Sketch by the author.**

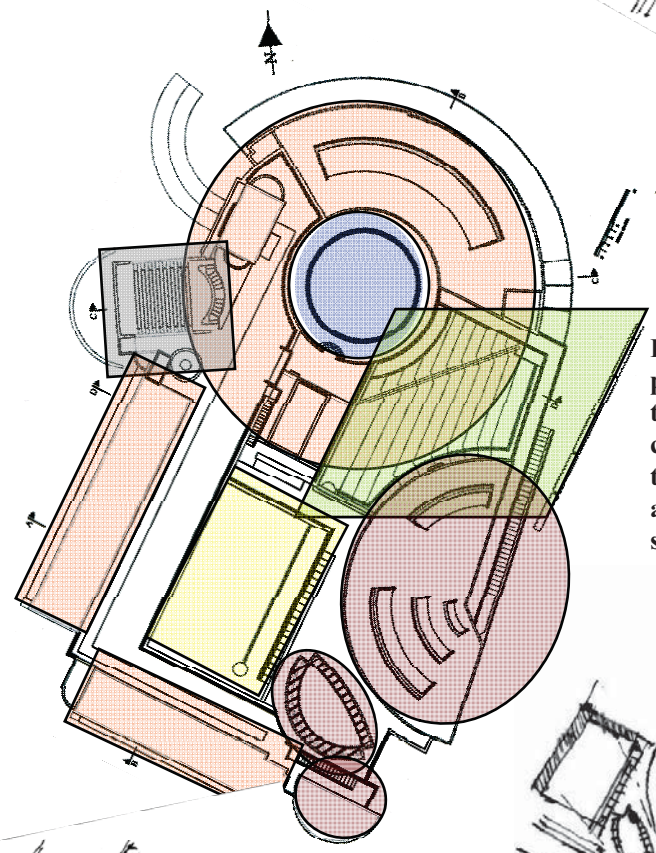


**Figure 51. The Humanities building, roof plan. Diagram by the author showing the three courtyards articulating the composition, the expanding circularity of the blue court and semicircular volume, and the composition of obtuse-angular, semicircular volumes to the southeast.**

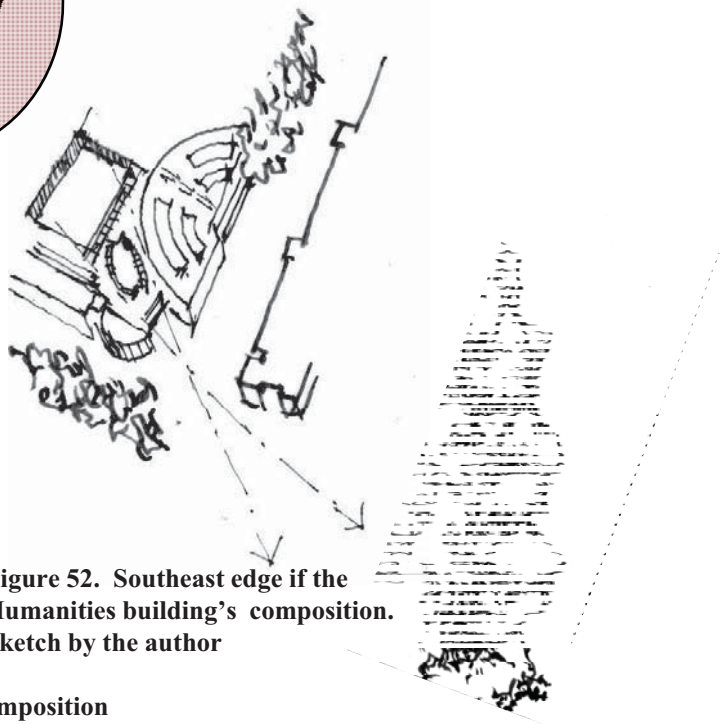


**Figure 52. Southeast edge if the Humanities building's composition. Sketch by the author**

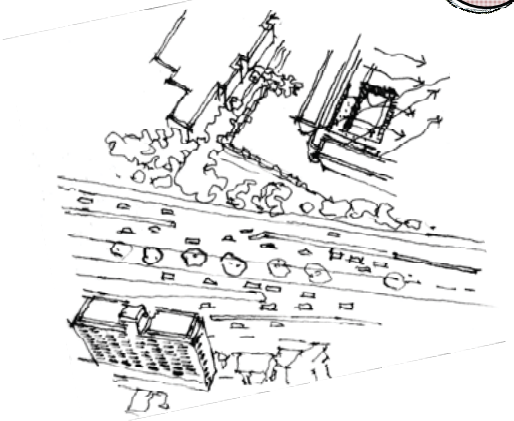


**Figure 53. Fragment of the Humanities building's composition showing the southwest edge in relation to the *El Dorado* highway. Sketch by the author.**

To the distant eye, the object product of this composition may look bizarre or unpleasing. Classical concepts of compositional beauty such as invisible regulating lines and proportioned golden sections mastered by the epic modernists[274]—so typical of the Western civilization stylistic tradition—most surely do not apply to the design process and architectural qualities of this composition. It is plausible that its qualities instead rely more on the idea of aesthetic experience[275] beyond the conventional aesthetic concepts of formal proportion, order and beauty that were still ingrained in many of the so-called modernist master architects of the early 20th century heroic period. I refer, in the Salmona case, to architecture intrinsically connected to the realm of subjective and collective experience, rather than one that privileges "objective" or abstract aesthetic attributes.

Over this brief passage, under my ever observant eye—and inevitably, my imagination too—I have noted some relevant features of a historicized geography and other still sketchy features of the building subject to this initial inquisitive viewing. It is suggestive that we confront the making of "sensitive geometry"[276] whose rationale and creative impulses cannot be grasped by this distant, purely visual first glance. We are speaking of topographies of material and spatial qualities that make up the all-sensorial images one may perceive in the places of this seemingly abstract composition. When immersed in the building, other closer approaches and analytical strategies will be required to experientially and rationally apprehend it with a full sensorial experience of the places within. The job also demands the further reading of cultural meanings and the

[274] See Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture.* Trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1986 c1931). 69-83. On that vein see, for instance, Geoffrey Baker, *Le Corbusier, an Analysis of Form* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1996).

[275] See, for instance, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1998). 59-63. I refer to Gadamer's elaborations on the notion of aesthetic experience as something lived, established in memory and forming a unity of a significant whole and not merely a fleeting, detached event. As noted by Gadamer, for Husserl experience entails consciousness, an act of intentionality.

[276] See "Geometria Sensible" *Mundo: Salmona* 2 (2000): 66-69, 81-82. "Sensible Geometry" (as translated in the English Summary of the source cited) is the title given by Colombian scholar Carlos Niño to an article on the work of Salmona when awarded the Prince Clauss Foundation Prize (Holland, 1998).

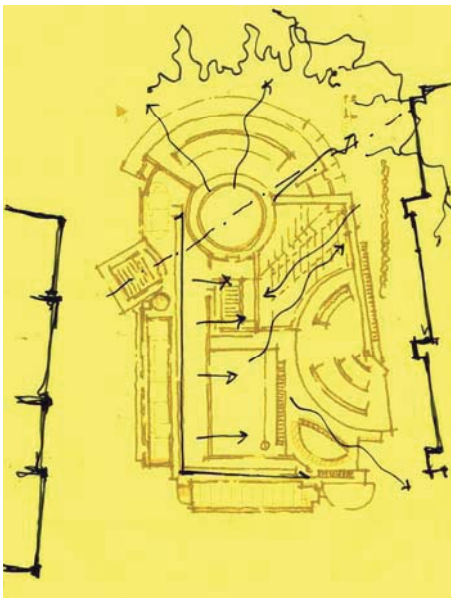


**Figure 54. The Humanities building, roof plan. Sketch by the author.**

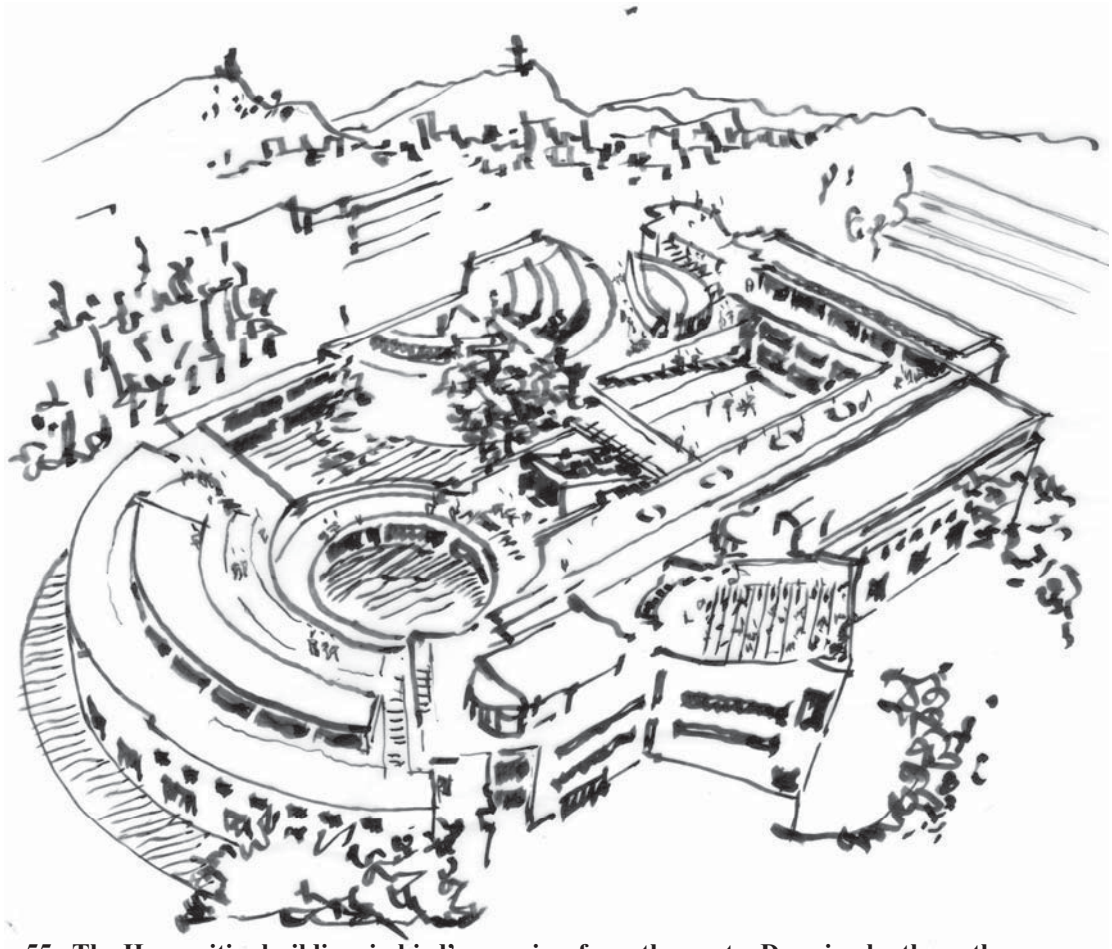


**Figure 55. The Humanities building in bird's-eye view from the west. Drawing by the author.**

imaginative strategies behind Salmona's decision-making processes.[277] An allusion to Le Corbusier comes to mind, who, after moments of infatuation with the "bird's-eye view," expressed his desire to disembark from the aircraft and shift his experiential horizon, from the air, he was "able to observe and to understand but not to love" so, "down [we] must go."[278]

***Place Experience: Highway Horizon***

A stretched ritual of steady descent gets to an end as the jet bounces and touches land. The aircraft roars strenuously while we feel the inertia of passing, in a matter of a few seconds, from four hundred kilometers an hour to an almost pedestrian pace. And as the plane makes a U turn I am able to trace the fleeting though remarkable moment in which the mountains reappear, magnificent, backing up an urban silhouette of comparatively minuscule skyscrapers. The serrated horizon remains high and impressive, though many kilometers away from the mountainous limit.

As if coming from a primitive megaphone—so anachronistic to this super-modern aircraft—the Captain's voice disrupts a moment of regained calm to make a customary announcement with barely intelligible words. He welcomes us to the city of Bogotá, located at an altitude of 2640 meters above sea level and then remarks "we have accomplished the itinerary with precision, arriving at 5:10 in the afternoon. The temperature at the airport is presently 15 Celsius." In the early afternoon sometimes it goes slightly above 20 but it drops at night, ranging between 0 and 8 Celsius, all year round. The weather report the captain gives us is, as is the norm for the region, ambiguous: "variable sky with probability of rain." This doesn't come to me as a surprise. In Bogotá the climate is benevolent to the human body but the weather is unpredictable. The spectacular electric-storm, still visible a few minutes ago at the

[277] Aside from its literal physical geographic connotations, the term topography refers in this case to the multilayered dimension of place-experience—memory, orientation, cultural practices and movement through spaces—and place-making, in this specific case. To a good extent I borrow this "topographic" approach to place complexity in unity from Jeff Malpas, *Place and experience* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 163.

[278] David Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002) 15. Leatherbarrow in turn elaborates on Le Corbusier, *Aircraft* (London: Trefoil Publications, 1987 c1935) 12-13.

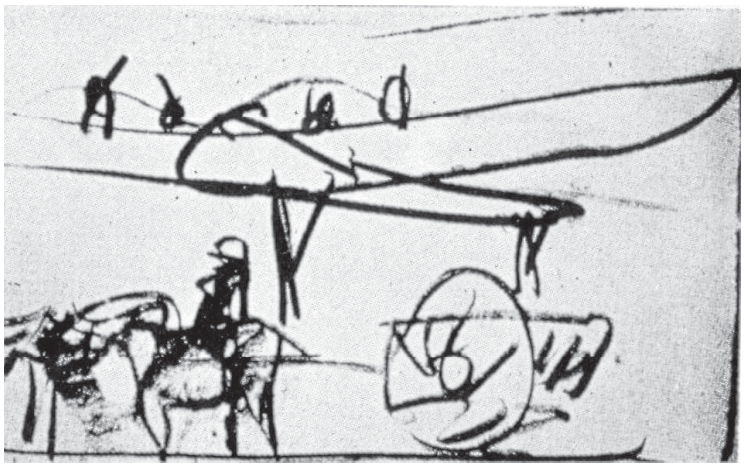


**Figure 56. "From the Mule to the Airplane." Sketch by Le Corbusier, made in Bogotá during his first visit to the city in 1947.**

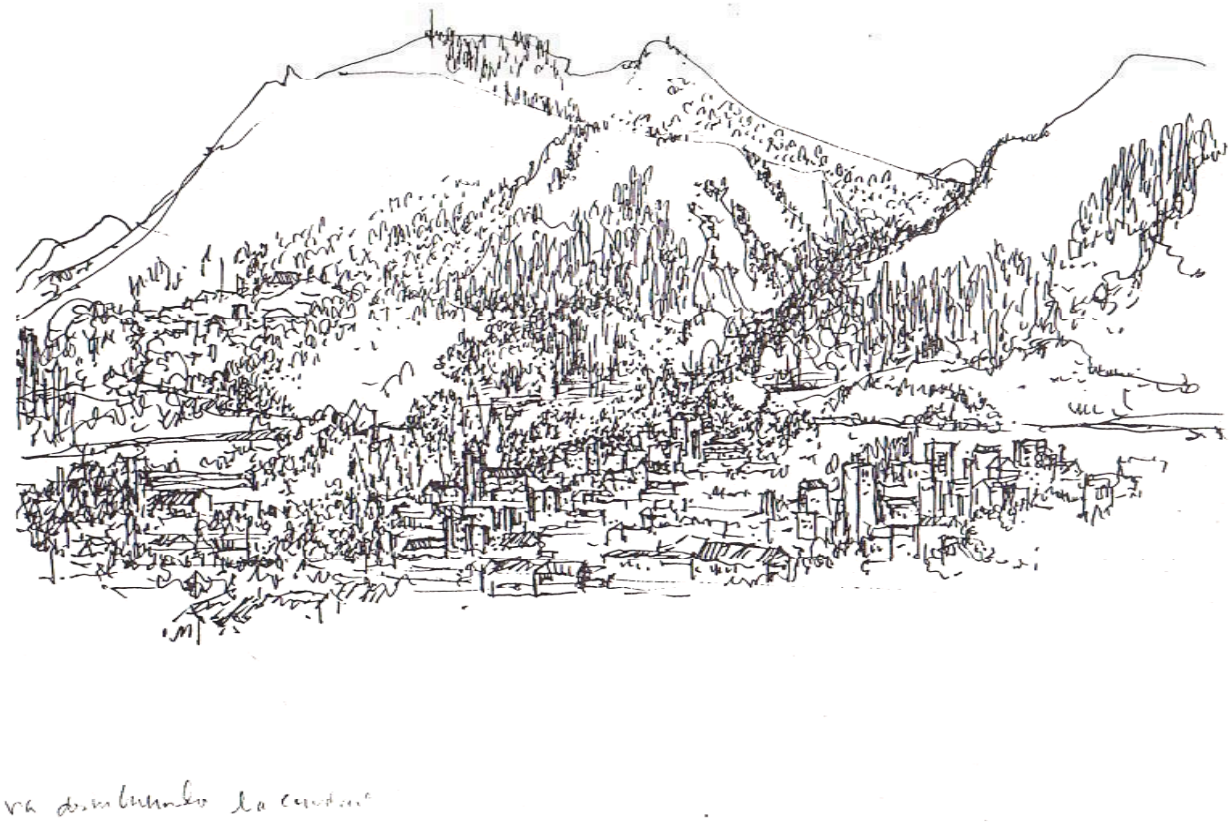


**Figure 57. Bogotá. Imaginary landscape by Rogelio Salmona with reconfigured urban and natural features forestation. Drawing, circa 1998.**

western cliffs—that bound the high-plateau against the humid and hot lowlands of the *Magdalena* river valley—is in the meantime dissipating.

Following the submission of report to the Colombian policing authorities (DAS) and the meticulous scrutiny of luggage, I find myself on the road, with a new horizon, only some centimeters above ground. We move now at a great speed on the monumental, carefully landscaped *Avenida El Dorado*. Alongside this hybrid of highway and boulevard, on the gardened surface, sit freestanding numerous trans-national corporate buildings, "world class" hotels, and some of the most significant administrative institutions of the nation.[279] With their imposing presence and their shining logos, these cubic volumes speak to us rapidly moving onlookers like new *horoi*[280] in the global polis, paying tribute to market-economy. This is a fragment of modernist utopia, built in Latin America with enthusiasm and qualities unmatched by most of the central, developed nations of the western world. And it looks like perfect "*VI*" road too, if we recall Le Corbusier's dictums of territorial ordering and his anti-urban imagination.[281] The "*VI*" allusion for this case is literal, given Le Corbusier's prime role in developing the studies that first attempted to "regulate" the exponential growth of Bogotá in the mid-twentieth century.[282]

Rolling southeast on the city's artery the car follows at times an ondulating path. We descend, only to climb again. When we reach the summit of the several flat arches bridging highway-exchanges, the hills become particularly present. They are veiled in a gaseous tissue and animated by angled sunbeams. The vegetal surface under an iridescent

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[279] The *Avenida El Dorado* was conceived as a vital axis for decentralizing the institutional core of the city and the nation right after the violent riot of El Bogotazo (April 9 1948). The new "scientific" urbanism of isolated buildings and vast gardened areas all along the El Dorado highway was highly influenced by Le Corbusier's ideas and his actual regulatory plan for Bogotá on which the young Salmona, as draftsman, participated (1949-52). See (appendix I to this dissertation) 8-16. On Le Corbusier's influence in Colombian urbanism see Hernando Vargas Caicedo, ed., *Le Corbusier en Colombia* (Bogotá: Cementos Boyacá, 1987). On *El Bogotazo* see Herbert Braun, *The Assassination of Gaitán* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

[280] I draw a parallel to the Greek *horoi*, boundary markers or inscriptions cubic stone (sometimes called mortgage stones) characteristic in the ancient Athenian society, whose function extended to encumber the land or building on which they were located. See Moses Finlay, *Studies in Land and Credit in Ancient Athens, 500-200 B.C.* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1952).

[281] See, for instance, Le Corbusier, *Concerning Town Planning* (London: Architectural Press, 1947).

[282] Vargas Caicedo, ed., *Le Corbusier en Colombia* 54-59.



**Figure 58. The *El Dorado* Highway, Bogotá. Sketch by the author.**

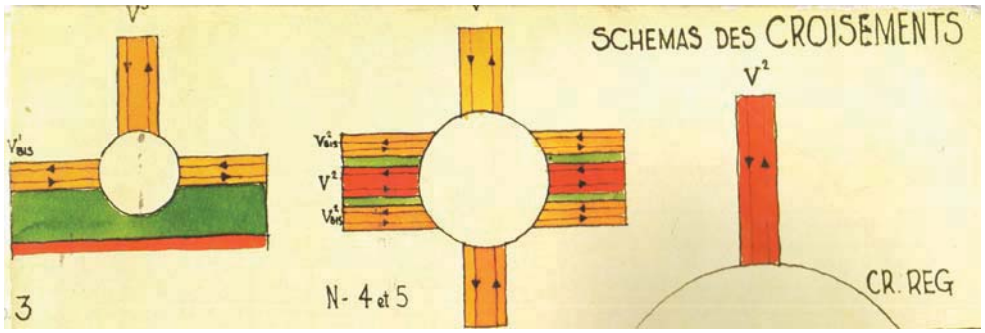



**Figure 59. Highway intersections Schemes. Drawings by Le Corbusier for the Plan of Bogotá, 1950.**

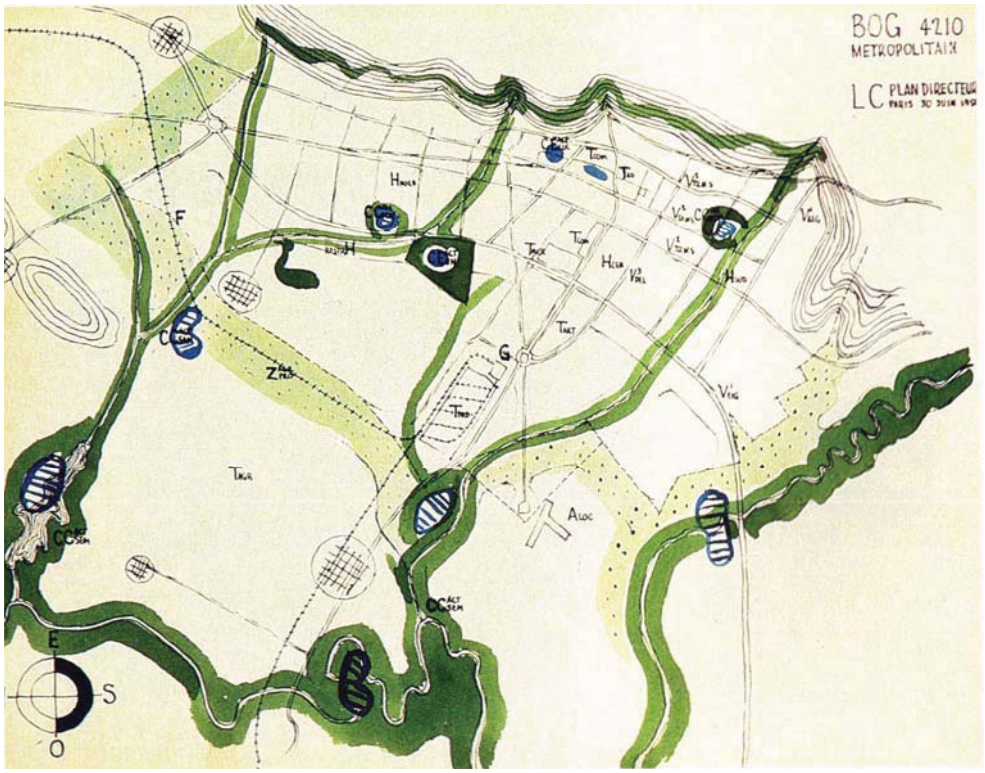



**Figure 60. The Regulator Plan of Bogotá; system of linear parks and roads. Drawing by Le Corbusier, 1950.**

fog plunges us into a reddish atmosphere. Paradoxically, the closer we come to downtown and the hills, the more unnoticed the raised peaks become. The hills start to disappear behind the elevating and shifting profiles of city forms. The ample Highway of alternating strips of asphalt and greenery turns slightly eastward and suddenly narrows. We begin to traverse the inner city. My eyes rapidly pass over a wall of high-rise prisms on our right, and I gaze ahead toward a discordant series of detached low-rise buildings.

Sitting behind rusty chain link fences the Humanities building comes into sight again as one among the many disconnected objects on the ground of the "white city" campus of UNAL. The southwest corner of the building is in view from this ground perspective, speeding on the *Avenida El Dorado.* The constantly shifting images-time of the two ochre brick volumes radiate a particular amber luminosity. I think of a cinematic experience with Bergson's aesthetic theory of "duration" that Gilles Deleuze's "movement-image" re-elaborates on.[283] At great speed, the surface of the two wings is perceived, massive and rhythmic. Playing inversely with our sense of gravity, the rhythms of their openings appear to transgress the constructive logic of its thick materiality of brick masonry. They consist of wide span openings at ground level and small deep square punctuations at the second level. A convex brick skin fills the ample openings of the ground level. The solid convexity causes the brick semi-circles to appear recessed, restoring solidity and giving depth and chiaroscuro. The horizontal profile of the apparently identical wings is emphasized by a continuous and receded strip window above that runs parallel to the flat roof. These surfaces by and large are composed in a discrete harmonious, yet conventional manner. The vertical alignments seem to be conceived for certain edifying formality, as intended for a frontal view. It is worthy noting that in its highway context there is no such frontal perception, but a continuous shifting of sunlight contrasts on the different rhythmically arranged surfaces. One is barely able to observe this frontal formality given the dynamic automobile perspective. As if sliced by a knife, the masses of the two wings never meet to configure a corner. They articulate each other by means of a third solid: a 'kneecap' hollowed only at its edge with the inner court, allowing sun

[283] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjan (Minneapolis, MN.: The University of Minnesota Press, 2001). 1-8. On the subject see, Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjan (New York: Zone Books).

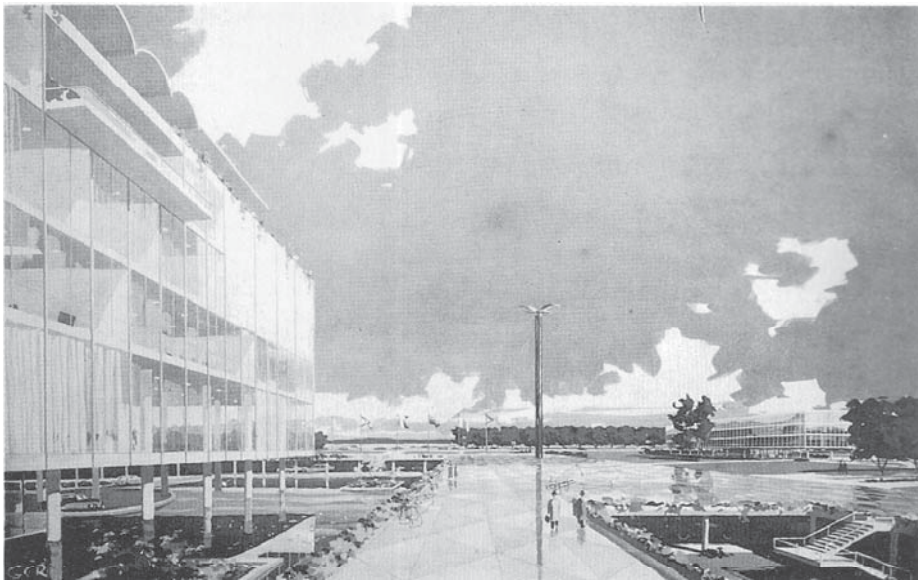


**Figure 61. Perspective views of the project for the CAN (National Administrative Centre of Colombia) alongside the *El Dorado* Highway, Bogotá. Drawings by the OPRB (office for the regulator plan of Bogotá) circa 1950.**



**Figure 62. The Humanities building. Perspective view of the southwest edge from the *El Dorado* Highway. Sketch by the author.**

setting light shafts to leak in. But no human activity, no life is projected outside the boundaries and behind the fence. And no penetration is possible from the highway, a harassing location for outdoor habitation. Neglected, the 'green' area in-between the chain link fence and the building has a ruinous air.

As the brief though subjectively prolonged instants in which the taxi passes by the building's façades end, I turn, looking backwards to a group of solids that shape the east edge of the Humanities building complex volumes. These are a hybrid of round and angular, rather sculptural shapes. They make up a broken and, as we move, ever changing profile or architectural topography. These blind solids animate the roadside with a plethora of smooth curves and sharp edges angled at diverse degrees. Various bridges and towers connect the mixture of shapes. I observe that the fragments which compose the southeast border contrast—almost clashing—with the rather archetypical adjacent volumes and façades. Perhaps this formal hybridism is due to modulations between human actions happening inside and the surroundings. This formalist play may well respond to the inner experience of the building in connection to the site and the treatment of this edge as a back. But the hermetic nature of its exterior and the angles of vision, only from the outside, prevent one from arriving at any conclusion in this regard. [284]

***Threshold and Platea: Entering the "White City"***

Seconds after that highway glance at the Humanities building's exterior, the car—racing a soft curve that reorients one to the hills—crosses the scene of a welcoming open-air *platea.*[285] This animated space is back staged by a threshold conceived in impeccable "Cubist" Style. It is designed with white "Purist" architectonic elements: slender cylindrical posts, a wide-span concrete beam supporting a thin slab and two guard booths of elemental geometry, side by side. All of these elements are plastered and

[284] Leatherbarrow *Uncommon Ground* 83-96. The discussion on the notion of façade and its treatment as front and back with regard to the interior-exterior relationship of buildings is particularly illustrative.
[285] In the origin of the word place, Latin *Platea* means: "a broad way in a city [...] an open space in a house, an area, court-yard." See Charlton T. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary: Freund's Latin Dictionary,* rev. ed. enlarged and partly rewritten (Oxford: Orford at the Clarendon Press, 1980) 1385.

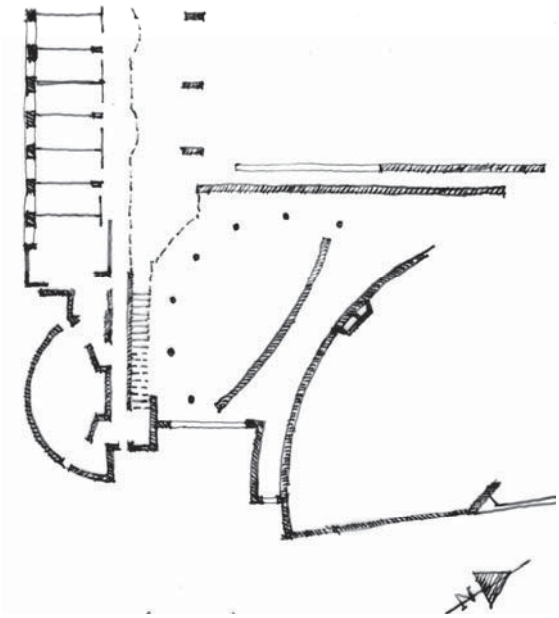


**Figure 63. The Humanities building.**
**Layout of the southeast edge.**
**Drawing by the author.**



**Figure 64. The Humanities Building.**
**Perspective view of the southeast edge.**
**Sketch by the author.**

whitewashed.[286] The rather cold milkiness of this structure is superimposed with colorful graffiti. And these inscriptions superimpose on many layers of the endlessly whitewashed, crackling surfaces.

I ask the driver to drop me off and realize that to enter the *"ciudad blanca"* one must climb and cross the highway on a footbridge: a late modern, already worn out, structure crowded with pedestrians. Carrying two pieces of nomadic equipage—a recorder and other mnemonic electronic devices in a handbag; laptop, clothes and other practical belongings in a backpack—I am making my way in the multitude. The experience is worth the effort and partial discomfort, for the urban vista from this level is magnificent. The human body is raised only some five meters above the asphalt of the highway, according to my rough mental calculations. The slightly elevated visual horizon is exceptional. To the east, the hills are ignited behind the city center. The sun—when looking at the highway on my left—is setting down at the western edge of this geologic table. Layers of trees intermingle with buildings, northbound, where a concave group of mountains define the horizon.

I step down the bridge, facing the modernist portal to the "white city" campus. The original "Purist" style and the rationalist ideals of this threshold to the once "white city" is juxtaposed to the colorful atmosphere made up by the ephemeral tents of itinerant vendors of all kinds of small goods and services, artisans and audacious performers, accompanied by a constant stream of pedestrians. There is more than visual pleasure to this significant moment. The total place-experience is a mixture of de-familiarization of the body when climbing and descending, sensorial blending of aromas, unique luminosity

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[286] The structure was conceived by architect Leopoldo Rother between 1939 and 1940 and has been declared national monument (*Bien de Interés Cultural de Carácter Nacional*) by the Colombian ministry of culture. "Cubist",origins, Le Corbusier's "Purism," and forms and ideas of the Bauhaus are widely acknowledged by Colombian scholars in the field .See Amorocho*, Universidad Nacional* 99. See as well: <http://www.facartes.unal.edu.co/portal/unidades/imagenes/2006/70_anos_web/index.html> (19 May. 2008).



**Figure 65. View from the "white city" entrance footbridge on *El Dorado* Highway, heading east to downtown Bogotá, with the hills as background.**
**Sketch by the author.**

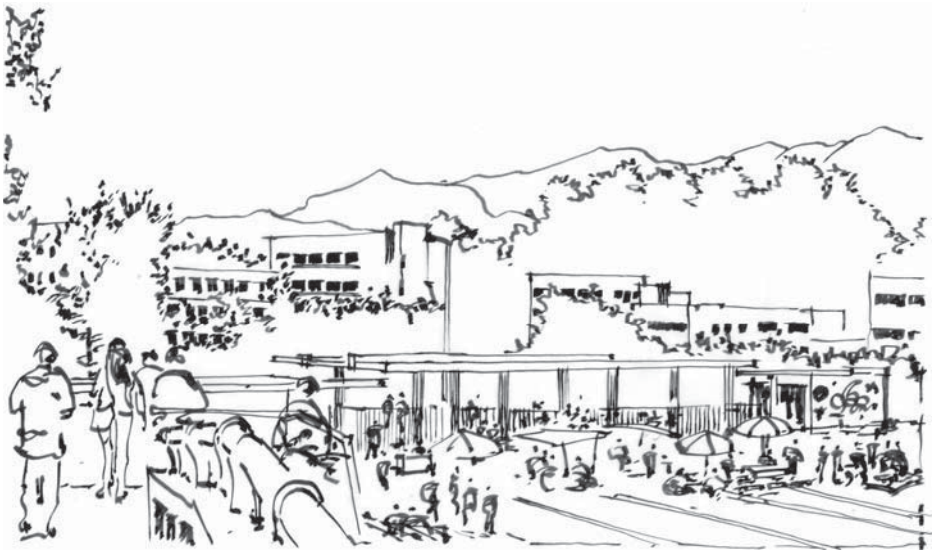


**Figure 66. View from the "white city" entrance footbridge on *El Dorado* Highway, heading north to Leopoldo Rother's modernist portal, with the hills as background.**
**Sketch by the author.**

and some strange pleasure derived from touching these modern-ruinous surfaces on which the use and abuse of millions of dwellers have left patent and latent sediments.

In a moment, a palimpsest of place-related ideas and figures fill my imagination: I think of place, the subject of this narrative and study, now being experienced at a human-scale, out of the speed of transportation machines and without electronic devices or prostheses. I think too of place as space for human existence, not static but lived in motion, "hodo-logically" experienced. "Hodological space (from the Greek *hodos*, meaning "way") […] is the space of possible movement."[287] Transiently in this same place, at the threshold of the campus coexist an 'aboriginal' Kogi dweller and a local "Cyborg citizen," as well as many other unclassifiable individuals making multitude.[288] This situation makes me aware too of my current nomadic situation.

In this late afternoon of a city of ever-spring ambiance, one is sensitive to the slightest thermal change. While a moving patch of shadow brings sudden cold, the intense sun radiance may become unbearable. Popular melodies blend with the scent of freshly pressed oranges, mechanical noise, voices, and the aroma of herbal infusions. Bending down, I wander between old Marxist texts—and pirated DVDs of the latest blockbusters arranged on a floor surface made of flat brick lines and brushed concrete panes. A woman with a rather indiscrete sign on her T-shirt and a cellular phone in her hand offers me incredibly affordable "minutes" to anywhere in the world. I understand to be her job so I take the chance to use her service and profit from an unanticipated long distance call home, to report and describe glimpses of this vivid world, remote in space but live in time. Place exits as meaningful human experience, subjective and collective, beyond the formal considerations of a supposed contradiction between ideas of anthropological place

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[287] Ricardo L. Castro "Sounding the Path: Dwelling and Dreaming," *Chora three.* Ed. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Stephen Parcell (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999) 103-24. Castro elaborates on the spatiality of the mythical world of the Kogi 'aboriginals' inhabiting the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. Castro's ideas on "hodological" space are based on German Psychologist Kurt Lewin. See Kurt Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1936) 41-58.

[288] I refer to the actual presence of traditional Kogi people in the crowd of this modern metropolis. On the Kogi see Reichel-Dolmatoff, "The Great Mother and the Kogi Universe: A Concise Overview," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 13.1 (1987): 75n.I. As to the "Cyborg" citizen, the idea refers to the current city dweller 'dis-placing' in the stimuli of electronic "prostheses," such as hands-free cell phones and MP3 players. See William Mitchell, "Cyborg Civics," *The Harvard Architecture Review* 10 (1998): 165-75.

and the so-called no-place of today's mega-conglomerations like Bogotá. I find this place to be a perfect laboratory for Mexican cultural critic Néstor García Canclini's explorations on contemporary cultures in a hybrid situation.[289]

The limits of the plaza—opened after the footbridge and before the portal—are not entirely architectural, at least in a strict material sense. The human alignment of vendors their things and ephemeral architectures create one side; improvised shops and restaurants compose the other. Framed by the architectonic threshold (or portal), the guarded entrance fence configures the front or scene. The highway with its tail of speed and energetic discharge is the back. The human river flooding the otherwise flat emptiness of the open *platea* is as vital as aqueducts were to Roman cities. On the threshold of entering the university campus, the flow of the crowd is dammed and divided into two lateral, narrow streams controlled by armed custodians. To cross I have to register each one of my electronic devices, even their serial numbers. The public space of the most public of all Colombian universities is not so free in fact. It is filled with a rarefied air of repression, belligerency and insecurity.[290]

As the taxi driver navigates the city by following his mental or cognitive map,[291] I attempt to find the best way through the campus, longing to experience the Humanities building at its best under the already dimming daylight. So I am about to take a shortcut and skip the monumental pedestrian axis to gain some time. But in doing so, a rather small architectural artifact, somewhat distant on my right, grabs my attention. I alter my route to catch a closer glimpse of that building. The aerodynamic metaphor of this building is subtle but clear, with two slightly curved and displaced concrete shells

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[289]Néstor García Canclini *Hybrid cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity,* trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[290] It is well known in the context of Colombian politics and public 'security' that the campus of Universidad Nacional has been historically, and is recurrently the scene of clashes between public forces and protesting students; and has many times been taken totally or partially by political militias of the extreme left, which the government considers terrorists. Writing these pages, a brief internet entry in <Unimedios (the news agency of Universidad Nacional) gave reference to this patent situation. See <http://www.agenciadenoticias.unal.edu.co/articulos/universidad/universidad_20061012_consecuencias_disturbios.html>

[291]The conceptualization of place from experience to the making of mental or cognitive maps is properly noted by Jeff Malpas, [in] *Place and Experience: a Philosophical Topography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 48.

hovering atop. This image brings to mind Le Corbusier's poetic imagination; his creative habit of making machinist analogies when theorizing—to say, writing doctrines—and designing.[292] But earthy, nonetheless, is its brick and mortar skin. One feels here a delightful estrangement of "material imagination."[293] Although the form of this building appears to have stemmed from metaphors of the industrial design of high-tech objects of the time (1945), the materiality remains modest and mostly traditional. The building, I recall, was declared a modern monument of the nation. It was conceived by Architect Leopoldo Rother between 1945 and 1948. An immigrant though naturalized Colombian Rother (Breslau, 1884- Bogotá, 1978) was a pioneer and master figure of modernism in Colombia and long time professor at UNAL. On this same campus, Rother taught Rogelio Salmona during his interrupted academic training at the then almost nascent modernist-oriented faculty of architecture. [294] Unfortunately, at this time of day the interior of the aircraft-inspired building is no longer accessible. Yet, as I peek behind a screen made of delicate vertical concrete blinds, I can see an all white, industrial-looking lofty space, presided by a lateral, meandering hybrid of stair and ramp that leads to an upper level. The second floor recedes with generosity to offer its visitors a welcoming double height. I am also able to observe that the building houses drawings and architectural objects as miniature simulations and multiple representations. Once a light-industrial facility, this structure performs today as a museum of architecture. Inside this building, the museum perhaps resides itself as a scaled model, an altered pseudo-objective representation.

Walking north along the pedestrian axis, I take some distance from the building to enjoy it from a different perspective. From this new position I perceive—and reconstruct from my mental map—that this point, marked by the strong presence of the small but

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[292] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture,* trans. Frederick Etchells c1931 (New York : Dover Publications, Inc., 1986) 84-148. I refer to the sections: "Eyes Which do not See," I -"Liners," II - "Airplanes," III – "Automobiles."

[293] See Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie.* trans. with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) 59-63. Bachelard proposed that, in poetry, "material imagination" alters the experienced order of the visual.

[294] In personal interview (14 Feb. 2007) Salmona acknowledged the relevance of Leopoldo Rother's early modernist works on the "white city" and the "immense responsibility and commitment" of reshaping the site of the Humanities building. On the subject see Chapter VII 215. The Spanish transcriptions of the interview and a digital audio file were consigned to the Rogelio Salmona studio archive.




**Figure 67. The Leopoldo Rother architecture museum. Interior.**
**Photo by the author.**



**Figure 68. The Leopoldo Rother architecture museum. Interior.**
**Sketch by the author.**

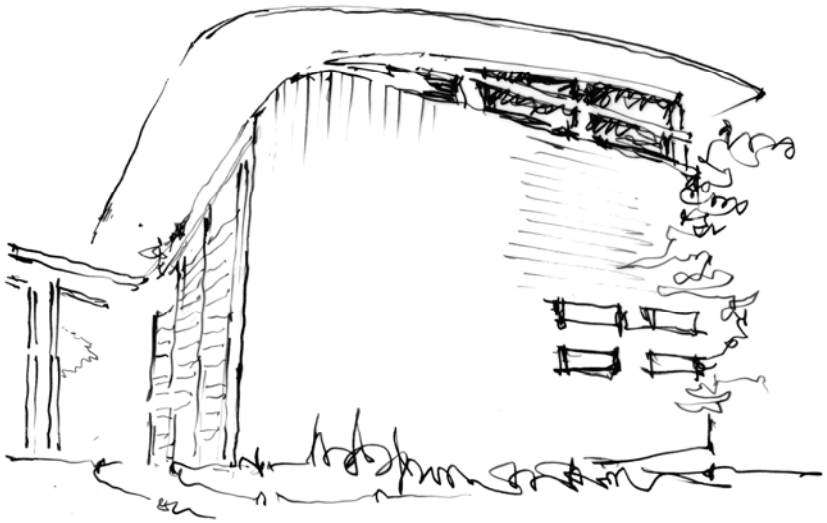


**Figure 69. The Leopoldo Rother architecture museum. Exterior perspective.**
**Sketch by the author.**

monumental (to say memorable) museum, is a perfect experiential hinge for an everyday itinerary. Such a quotidian itinerary to reach it would take us from the *Ciudad Blanca*'s east gate and main entrance, on *Ciudad de Quito* avenue, continuing throughout the east-west pedestrian axis and then arriving in the core of the campus at the vivid *plaza Che*. We could walk alongside the *plaza* under its only roofed gallery until we reach the other axis at its northern tip. This is located nearby the node where I am: positioned at the spinning point of this "hinge" in an angular perspective looking at the museum and at the side of the so-called *jardín de Freud* ("Freud's garden") whose marihuana scents and other perfumes of 'artificial paradises' one smells from here. Thus, if I trace a straight line west in space, I align with the thin path that, from the air I noted, finally arrives at the Salmona Humanities building. But, enough of this "imaginary-experiential" reconstruction! I must get on route to reach the sunset atop the Humanities.

I walk on the improvised trail. To my right is a brickwork surface of folding and angular faces. The entirety of this rather horizontal building spreads over the land as if its nucleus had exploded. Thereafter I cross the open surface of a parking lot with its asphalt vapors still smoldering under the late afternoon sunlight. For a moment one experiences the simultaneous company of two diverging built settings: the "organicist"—Alvar Aalto inspired—brick skin on one side, and a whitewashed, flat wall on the other. Walking along the narrow sidewalk that runs in line with the white wall to my right, I can participate in the classroom activities through horizontal strip windows composed of sequential rusted metal frames. And I am just one of the many passing by in both directions, so I play the game of sidestepping opposite walkers. The pristine Bauhaus building at Dessau, isolated on green carpet, impeccable and frozen in time, comes to mind.[295] And how, here and now, one of its many pale reflections is not weathering well: it decays helped by the life within and around, with the informality of true human needs and practices. The ideal image that guided the conception of the "white city" is juxtaposed to the vivid, complex and messy reality of the place as it stands today.

[295] See William Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900,* third ed. (New York: Phaidon, 1996) 194-97.

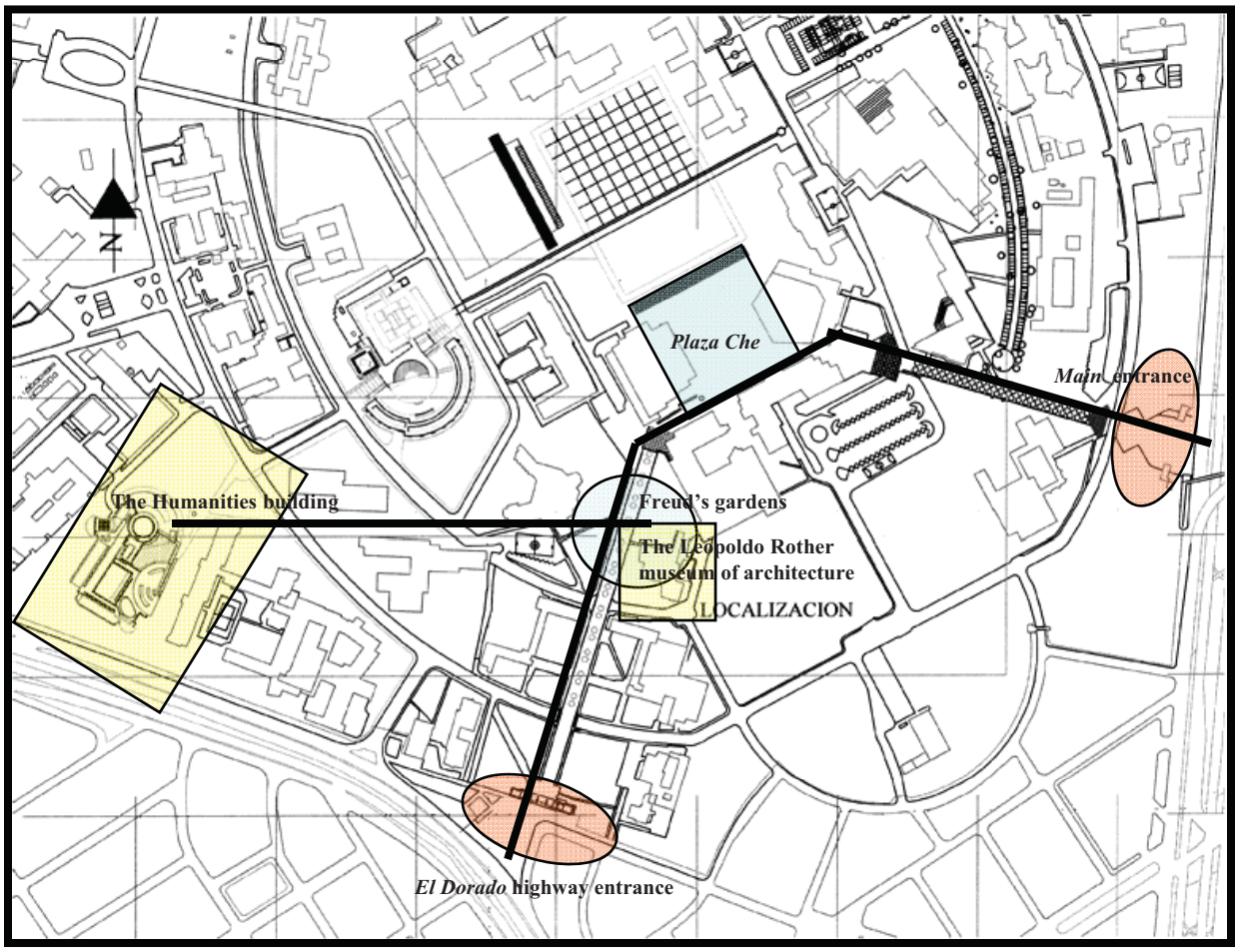



**Figure 70. Mapping of the access paths to the Humanities building from the white city entrances. as a reconstruction of a "cognitive map," the drawing is based on the site plan of Rogelio Salmona's project, modified by the author.**

Crossing the road in a continuous straight line, I reach the thin path that will bring us to the Humanities building. I am still outside the limits of the building's allotted parcel of land.[296] A towering, living wall made of dark pines stands almost perpendicular to my trajectory, to a great degree blocking my sight of the building. The building's visual presence remains barely suggested, though it is latent behind those trees as expectation. Only a tangent sunbeam filters through a delicate fissure in the massive vibrating wall, intense and just aligned to the path. The light shaft weaves the land as amber, velum-paper strip glued to the rough surface of the grey path. The shaft is then both, limit and new beginning at the end of the path. The somewhat loose prefabricated concrete slabs of this fine pathway tilt and softly bounce as rain water saturates the soil-bed beneath. I draw nearer to the Humanities building. This pedestrian walkway seems to have developed spontaneously over time to give more direct access to the neighboring building on my left. Rogelio Salmona appears to have been sensitive to this path's active use, its textural and other perceptual qualities. By the geometric configuration perceived from above and experienced in situ, I argue Salmona took advantage of, and was responsive to the particular sensuous obliqueness of this simple path and its potential for producing expectation as one approaches the site. [297]

### *Limen*[298]

Intensified by extreme contrast, the vertical opening in the massive dark green wall reveals two different curved brick surfaces, among flowers, creepers and bushes. One of these surfaces is the skin, or façade of a part of the building, the other is a texture on the ground. Hence, the first façade offered to the visitor is not planar but convex and is approached not frontally but laterally. Positioned at the threshold formed by the pines, the

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[296] I stress the difference between the strictly limited plot of land assigned for a building and the comprehensive notion of site, encompassing expanding 'rings' of interpretation that go beyond a reductive physical notion of context or surrounding into a historicized, culturally inflected and even poetic, holistic interpretation. See David Leatherbarrow "Sites Within a Potential Whole," *The Roots of Architectural Invention: Site, Enclosures, Materials* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 7-8, .

[297] Further analysis of Salmona's site interpretation sketches confirmed this perception. The subject is detailed in *Part Three*, Chapter VII.

[298] Latin for threshold, doorstep, lintel. I address *limen* in the sense of a continuing unfolding of places, threshold after threshold, and the constant situation of dwelling transiently between places. The word refers us to the notion of limit as a point of appearance: "the point at which one passes into (or emerges from) something" […] "the threshold [or] verge (of some condition, action, etc)." See Oxford University Press, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press,1982) 1031.



**Figure 71. Approximation path to the Humanities building. Sketch by the author.**



**Figure 72. Approaching the Humanities building: tree wall, welcoming *platea* entrance courtyard and pathways. Layout, sketch by the author.**

semicircular wall is tangent to one's sight and shimmers at its edge. Conventionally arranged with rhythms of square openings, the façade is nonetheless elusive to a fixed and frontal type of perception by virtue of its curved shape, radial nature and, for the most part, due to one's obliqueness in regard to it.[299] The round, planar expansion on the floor receives and then redirects naturally, like the flux of cascading water that merges with the path, towards the building. I notice that, to another converging pathway, the half round expansion on the floor is a convenient stop on an otherwise too long and straight approximation. It is noticeable that the other pathway is not frontal and axial to the round wall ('main' façade) but lateral to it. This half-moon *platea* suggests a pause, to take a first aware look at the building, an event which I stress, happens at an angle.

The space within this half-round nodal platform is infused with the scent of jasmine, bounded by vegetal matter with a hovering perfume and punctuated of yellow and white. This immediate boundary is not made of strict, inert limits but of living, sensuous ones. It is a boundary of perfumes and fleeting colours; the elusive convex brick-made enclosure in the background, animated by the sun, radiates at its edge. The gathering of these material and temporal elements in the approximation ritual suggest a conscious understanding of place as a dynamic totality of perception; as complete sensorial engagement of one's body while moving in space.[300] I shift course to continue on the reptile tongue shaped path I gazed from the air, which will take us inside the first court. The path gently slopes, and, walking down I sense a highly textured and breathing floor surface, made of thick, hollow, baked-clay pieces of industrial fabrication. The circular holes in these square pieces are filled with concrete, and amply spaced joints allow for delicate lines of grass to weave a living green grid. One begins to perceive how subtly but progressively we, the incoming dwellers, are sunk a-deep into the land.

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[299] I think again upon the peculiarity of facing obliquely a rhythmic façade proposed by Rogelio Salmona which, invested with certain formality would normally suggest a frontal approach. For a pertinent analysis on the idea of façade—as treated by the Austrian architect Adolf Loos (1870 - 1933) see Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* 83-96.

[300] In reference to Proust's narrative of place as unfolding in "spatiotemporal […] co-presence" see Malpas, *Place and Experience* 161-63. I refer again to the idea of Hodologic space. See Castro, "Sounding the Path" 26.



**Figure 73. The Humanities building: convex façade, approached laterally. Sketch by the author.**

The atmosphere grows more sombre and mysterious the further down I walk. The massive semi-circular facade, with its rhythmically pierced double skin, merges with the path, as does a cascading canal that follows it. I find myself literally surrounded by, on one side, tall dark pines—pre-existing on the site—on whose soil creeps newly planted ivy; on the other side, a re-created jungle enlivened by the sound of falling water. It is a hybrid between a native Andean forest proper to our humid highlands and tall sedges of the Nile valley  indiscriminately welcomed to the garden: papyruses mix with local Palaeozoic ferns—locally called *palmas bobas*—and also regional *siete cueros* of intense violet flowers.  The soil is carpeted with lichen and creeping bracken, a whole ambient undergrowth. More than a re-presentation of moments of the local flora, the place is the product of an intentional poetic blending or re-creation.  This new beginning, between enclosures of living materiality, is followed by a series of other architectural thresholds. I stress that the natural threshold is also architectural. Multiplied frames and spaces in-between define the spatial qualities of this first courtyard. And more thresholds, from here, one may anticipate. The situation is best presented as perspective explosion: the path branches off and that shift is led by an inversion in the slope of the floor, now beginning to incline, with equally changing textured graphemes. It is an experience of progressive revelation but also of continuous expectation.

Passing by the liminal forest, a cantilevered roofed footbridge soars above us, acutely aslant to our current trajectory, marking the end of the approximation path. In *a tour de force* the hovering brick passageway makes a cantilevered square turn. It welcomes you to the entrance court just ahead.  I stop momentarily under the bridge, in a portal framed by four massive supporting posts made of light-ochre brickwork. The four posts subtly twist to form an angle that guides the new turn. This angularity reorients one's body's procession across the court. The path is pronounced by a simple but delicate textural change in the stepped surface, stretching the entire length of the courtyard. The steps run parallel to the thresholds at the beginning and the end of the courtyard transit. The sensorial demarcation of the path is subtle but indicative: the same hollowed brick blocks are filled with grass, making the surface outside the human transit a soft, vivid green texture. The whole stepped surface is slightly sloped, and the risers made of round-edged



**Figure 74. The Humanities building: " liminal forest" and first built threshold. Photographs by Ricardo L. Castro**



**Figure 75. The Humanities building: in the threshold of the entrance courtyard. Sketch by the author.**

brick jambs make it smooth like the flow of water. The jambs are enriched with various textural folds that interact with the light, making the steps particularly low with respect to modern, functionalist ergonomic standards; thus, when obliquely traversing the space of this twisted and stretched square court, one's body is gently de-familiarized. It is remarkable that the oblique direction of the whole human procession throughout the court has been articulated on the preexistence of two ancient trees, and a thread of murmuring water accompanies the path virtually in line with these preexisting trees. On their way out of the building, people flow like a stream with ease down the slightly inclined topography. Meanwhile the experience is of continuous expectation and delay for those of us entering, climbing laterally, in gentle and rhythmic manner.

Two circular walls like bellies, side by side on the diagonal axis, compress the space of the court. They are convex to each other and mutually displaced. Their configuration pushes the human flow in the intended oblique direction, in (and) out of the courtyard. At the extremes of these bellies, the two openings are arrowheads marking entrance and departure. Halfway through the soft and rhythmic stepping up to the entrance portico, I notice another significant feature of the place: the first built threshold I had just passed is configured by a peripheral gallery above that opens further activities to the court while bridging transient dwellers between the two circular masses.

Salmona integrated three trees into this courtyard, traces of the original site. I had previously observed that two of the courtyard trees align with the direction of the entry. The first barely touches the ample path. The third stands discretely nearby the round, hermetic solid on my right, clearing the way of one's sight on a raised loggia or passage that is transitorily inhabited. There, relaxed dwellers recline in diverse manners on the edge of a hovering brick parapet. The second tree is an intentional obstruction that forces the procession to veer around and hides a barely distinguishable door: a hinged simply framed fragment of a wider glass pane. It is noteworthy to say that the entrance opening could have been simply displaced to any of the other modules of the ample portico-façade. Gradually, when forced to encircle the tree, the incoming person is faced with the silhouette of the dark wall of pines mirrored on the surface of the glass. In this way, the

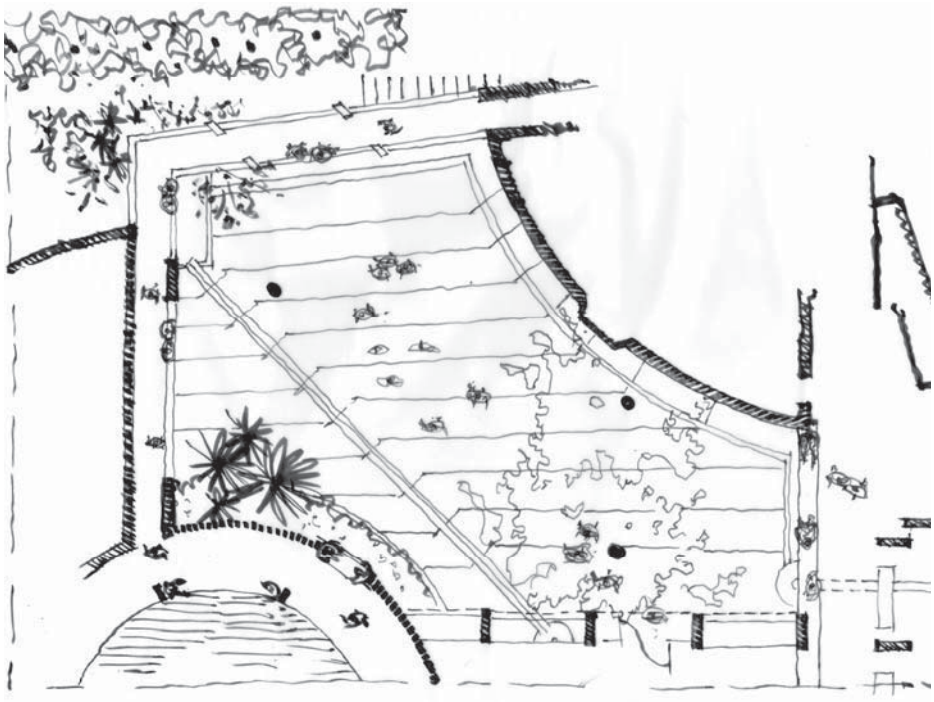


**Figure 76. The Humanities building: entrance courtyard. Layout, sketch by the author.**



**Figure 77. The Humanities building: view of entrance courtyard from the elevated, peripheral passageway. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro**

rising green wall, the first limit at the edge of the land parcel, is invited to participate in the form of a reflection as a second boundary.

As I go around the corpulent tree-trunk— its breathing bark still wet from rain—a cobalt vibration on the concrete ceiling behind a square opening calls my attention. That window punctuates one of the curved boundaries of the court, in this case a filigree texture of rounded bricks whose chiaroscuro effect is lightened by a blue translucency that comes from within. Notably, the window is deep enough to be inhabited, and is by two people who read in its in-between space. The animation brought by the interplay of natural forces and human activity on the warm architectonic matter of this courtyard reverberates in me, all my senses engaged, though "unfocused", for, as Juhani Pallasmaa reminds us, "the very essence of the lived experience is moulded by hapticity and peripheral unfocused vision."[301] The radiance of this open-air precinct is memorable, made up of fluid threads and multilayered vegetal textures, of warm ochre horizontals, verticals, sinuous and oblique planes, accompanying the entrancing path.

Following these significant moments of perception, I begin to dig more consciously into the nature and purpose of this first open place in the Humanities building. I find it ritualistic: an animated ceremonial setting for the different rites of entrance, and departure. It is arguable that this transitional open place compresses multiple experiential images that come from the exterior or surrounding context. These elements were brought from various physical and temporal dimensions. Traces of the site and its immediate context speak of previous land occupations and transformations that were strategically incorporated to make architectural boundaries and interact with the landscape behind, like the tree wall and the punctual re-composition of the three existing trees within the court. The re-creation of a high-mountain Andean forest that hybridizes with non-native flora to produce a new unique inner though outdoor architectural landscape, also brings moments of the experience of the local geographic milieu to this architectural place. These elements are nonetheless not just represented; they are newly imagined and transfigured.

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[301] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The eyes of the skin, Architecture and the Senses* (West Sussex: Wiley-Academy, 2005) 10.

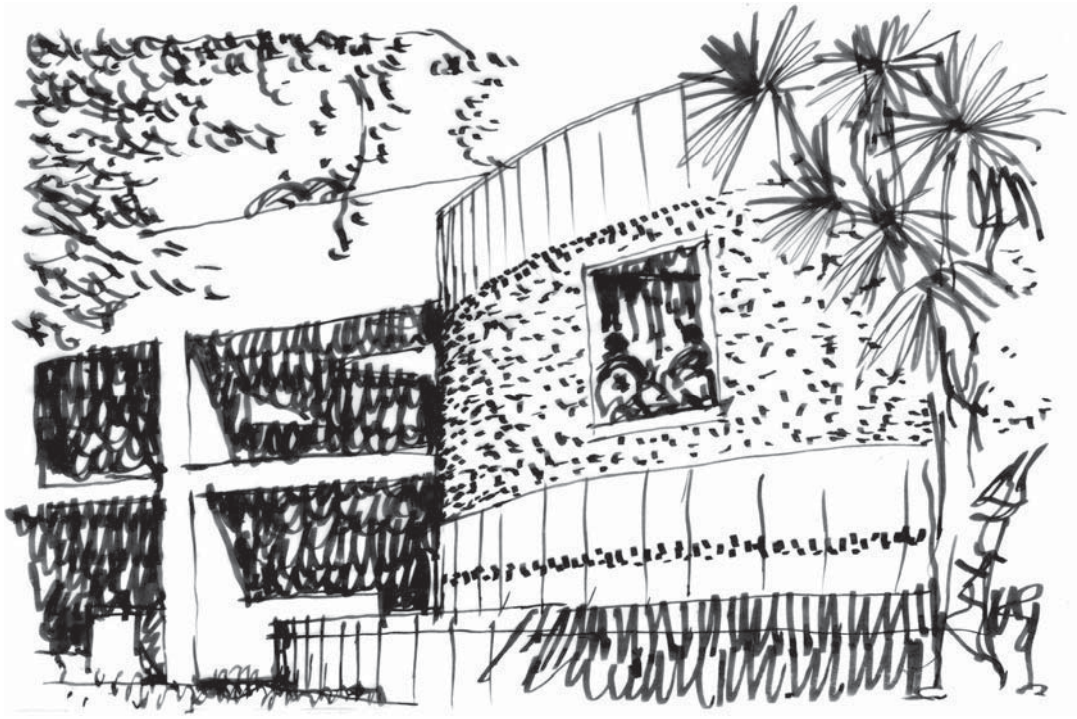


**Figure 78. The Humanities building: obliquely traversing the entrance court. Sketch by the author.**

I would define Rogelio Salmona's approach to the making of this open place as a poetic appropriation of a historicized geography. He "married" particular elements coming from the local, the regional and the remote through in intentional association or metaphoric amalgamation.[302] No less important is that the ritualistic court foreshadows key elements of the building's spatiality, hinting at its complex and rich interior. Obliqueness, constant delay and subtle discoveries, continuities and discontinuities: the court is a place that can be accessed and experienced by people from multiple levels and dynamic angles simultaneously. This implies that the global form is never revealed to the dweller, all at once, in concluded experience. Dwellers enjoying the same court from above, below, and from various other places around bring awareness of the discontinuity of one's experience. In their joy of the different perspectives of experience that this setting offers, the others around provoke my desire to explore, making me aware of the incompleteness of my experience too. In this regard, the ceremonial entrance courtyard is a place of preparation for the adventure of an inner world, and one may conclude, this same entry place must (and will) be rediscovered differently, time and time again, in the architectural promenade through other places of the Humanities building.

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[302] See Bachelard, *L'air et les songes* 7-13. The idea of an amalgam of experiential images—that Salmona remarked when attempting to explain his re-creative processes (in *Part Three* of this study)—resembles Gaston Bachelard's conception of imagination in poetic making, that he stated as the faculty of changing, deforming and blending or marrying images offered by perception.

## ***Chapter IV. An Inner World, Places of Obliqueness and Desire***

### *In the Antechamber*

In the threshold of the entry portico, the marriage between the reticular structure of large spans and its brick materiality produce perceptual estrangement. Suddenly, the solid masonry of vertical buttresses turns horizontal and the brickwork stretches above one's head, altering the usual—and logical—compressive gravitational perception of this construction technique. Between the buttresses spans a magnified "sun breaker" (evoking Le Corbusier's *brise-soleil*) which, wrapped in brick, traverses the portico and defines a lower scale niche to the entrance. Within the major grid, the *brise-soleil* defines a more domestic frame that makes one sense the building's materiality on entering and casts weaved shadows throughout the inner space. The brick walls and low ceiling vibrate with the soft, bouncing luminosity reflecting off the clay tiled floor.

Gaston Bachelard's insights on poetic imagination identified transgressions in the use of language—what he called "material imagination"—privileging a "sensual reality" in which, for instance, the visual order, as perceived, is altered. Images, he said, have material attributes: "the components through which material imagination will be manifested."[303] Language, which in prosaic terms is a set of conventions for logical and communicational purposes, can produce enchanting and estranging emotions by means of an unusual or imaginative distortion of the same well known words. This comes as an analogy to Salmona's subversion of the logical tectonic expression of the structure of the portico producing a wondrous perceptual effect; a material *tour de force* that visibly extends to other parts of the building. The brick slabs animated by reflected light, alter our conventional perception of form and material. Alluding to this perceived material inversion, an Excerpt from St. John Perse comes to mind: "…now these calm waters are of milk, and all things overflowing in the solitudes of the morning." [304]

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[303]See Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* trans. with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) 60.

[304] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 61. The original quote is in St. John Perse, *Eloges and Other Poems,* trans. Louise Varese (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1944) 62. Bachelard stressed the materiality of the poetic image over its visual character and form. He equates material components to

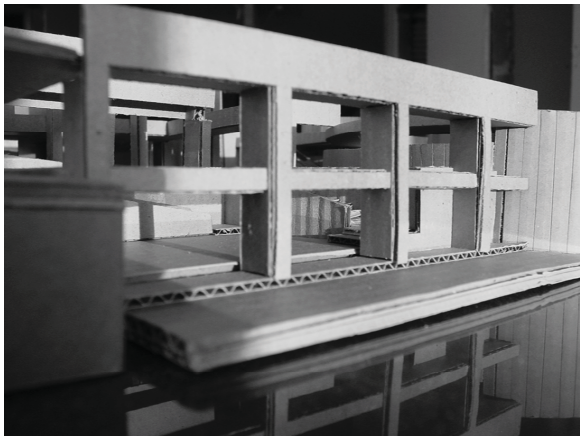


**Figure 79. The Humanities building: entrance portico. Analytical model by the author.**

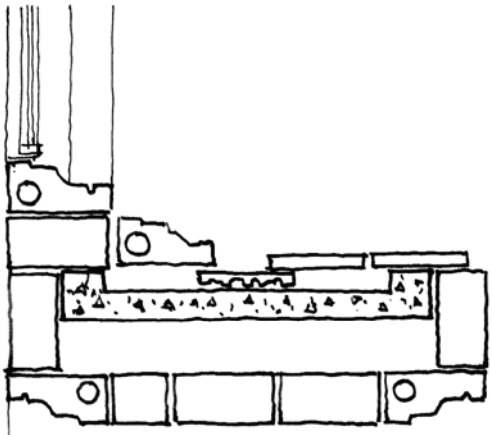


**Figure 80. The Humanities building: brick-wrapped *brise-soleil*. Detail, drawing by the author.**

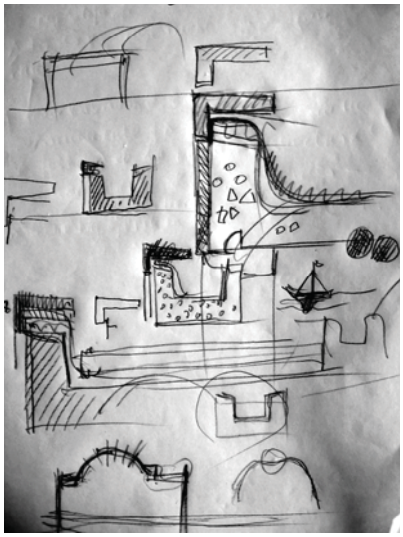


**Figure 81. Brick-wrapping detail. Sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

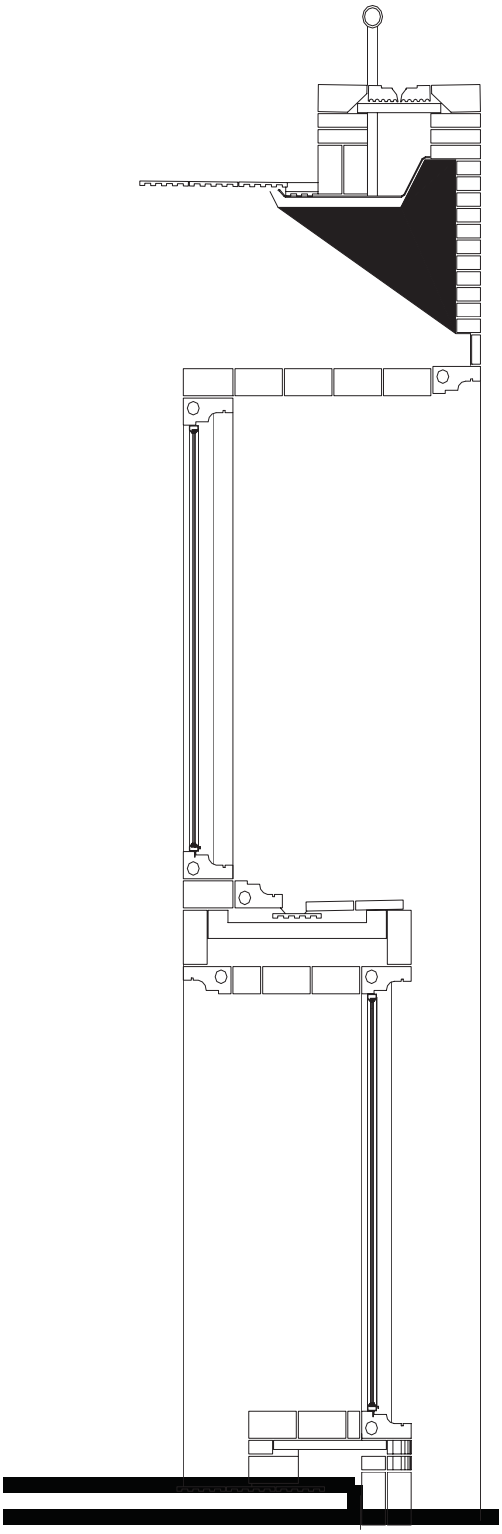


**Figure 82. The Humanities building: wall section of the entrance portico. Drawing by the Rogelio Salmona studio.**

***An Inner World***

Once inside the first sheltered space there are no clear boundaries, and entranced I anticipate the next architectural event. Seemingly infinite interior spaces stem from this first room. Surrounding the antechamber (and one's own flesh) is a dense forest of brick buttresses and other angular and round posts meshed together that join with suspended footbridges, spirals, and various diagonals, ramps and stairs, emphasizing the continuous ascending sense of the spatial composition. Curved curtains, made of translucent clay fabric, reflect and diffuse the strong shafts of sunlight that lick the structure in different amber and cobalt tones; here, the air materializes becoming almost touchable. Having arrived through a subtle oblique ascending procession in the open courtyard, inside the antechamber one is surprised by the higher vertical tension. This tension arises from the spatial and material configuration as well as the situation of this first inner space. The degree of containment of its boundaries is enough to make the antechamber feel like a distinct room. However, a high horizontal opening—differently configured on three sides of the antechamber spatial box—opens it, bringing to the incoming dweller's awareness of many other built places around: these are transitional ones, open-air courts and roofed rooms that surround us, above and in sequences, extending beyond immediate ones.

A discrete short stair descends to a dark underworld, like an entryway to an ancient tomb; the steps, humble in size and of modest presence, lead one to the parking level.[305] The protagonists of the room are two other gentle stairways: one meanders and the other folds, and both are situated alongside two of the edges of the room. One must climb to leave the entry space and reach the raised level which approaches that subsequent world of inciting spaces. Thus, inside the antechamber the trajectory is divided again, and one must choose between two different spatial and temporal experiences to reach the next node, which is a meeting point of the diverging stepped paths. I opt for the two-flight

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sensorial aspects extending beyond the visual: warmth for instance. "Material imagination" privileges a sort of "sensual reality." The subject is further developed in *On Poetic Imagination* 59-63.

[305] It is noteworthy that the parking spaces were adapted in function of the compositional complexity of the building (both, in plan and section) and, as a result of its topographic diversity, unlike prevailing design approaches to large buildings in which the efficiency of the parking level(s) often dictates vertically the functional resolution of other inhabitable spaces above. See Appendix I for illustration.



**Figure 83. The Humanities building: interior of the antechamber. Photo by Enrique Guzmán.**

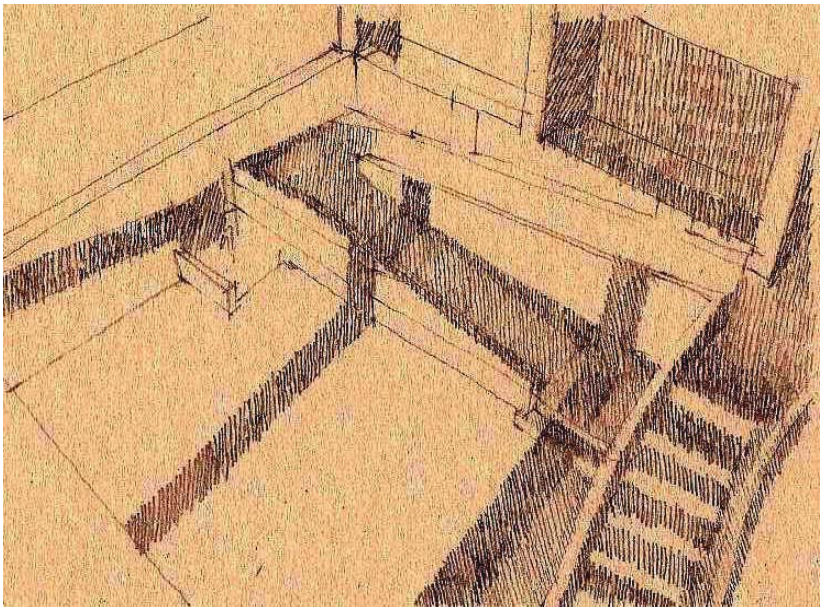


**Figure 84. The Humanities building: the antechamber from above. Drawing by the author.**

stairway lateral to my entrance position. While climbing, I find the steps long and particularly low, and my body has to adjust to these new dimensions. Halfway to the middle landing, I face a wide strip-opening, traversing the room from side to side. In the peopled loggia that lies behind the wide opening, the amber, cloudy sky shows above. Once having reached the stair landing, the immediacy of the brick wall blocks the momentary vision of an iridescent fleeting sky.

I turn and, suddenly, from this angular view point, I have a sense of totality: something that fuses in my imagination this living experience with memories of Giovanni B. Piranesi's "Prisons."[306] However I could not explain this association of images in mere stylistic terms. One does not find here Piranesi's massive rough stone pilasters, nor the pointed arches and enormous wood trusses, neither the re-creative "mysterious machines" made of pulleys, wheels and old scaffolding. Salmona's inner place is certainly not what Baudelaire called Piranesi's "dream of stone: powerful hewn stone."[307] The architectural language of the elements making this place is different, coming, for the most part, from what are now classic conventions of 20th century modern architecture: columns, flat ceilings, slender flying ramps, stairs and bridges all made of exposed light-ochre concrete, unadorned rectangular warm brick pillars and round, soft walls of brickwork filigree. Stylistic considerations aside, Salmona's spatiotemporal theme of perspective complexity and vertical tension alludes to Piranesi's spatiality and essential compositional elements: spirals, bridges, stairs, diagonal planes, and sublime mysterious luminosity in lofty enclosures giving the impression of limitless space. I infer that the memorable essence of this perceptual moment lies in Salmona's similarly achieved sense of perspective explosion or angular multiplicity, the particular luminosity and dense atmosphere, and the sense of infinite depth and momentary lack of orientation which feels paradoxically imprisoning. Marguerite Yourcenar's insights into the "world" of

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[306] The reference is to the famous etchings, "*Invenzioni Capriciose di Carceri,"* better known as the *Carceri,* fisrt published in 1745, re-edited in 1761 by the same Piranesi (Venice 1720, Rome 1778) and believed to be conceived around 1742 during a period of illness and strong fever. For illustrations of the plates see Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, The Prisons* (New York: Dover, 1973). On the life of Piranesi see Jacques-Guillaume Legrand, « Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de J.-B. Piranèse, » *Piranèse : Les prisons* (Paris: L'insulaire, 1999) 91-152.

[307] As cited in Marguerite Yourcenar, *The Dark Brain of Piranesi and Other Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar. Straus. Giroux, 1984) 111.

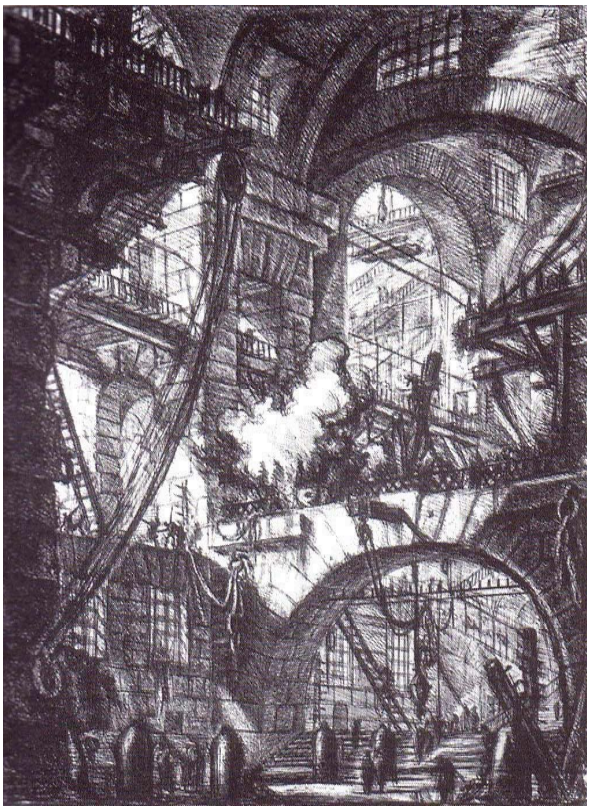


**Figure 85. The *Carceri*: Plate VI, second state. Etching by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1761 (51).**

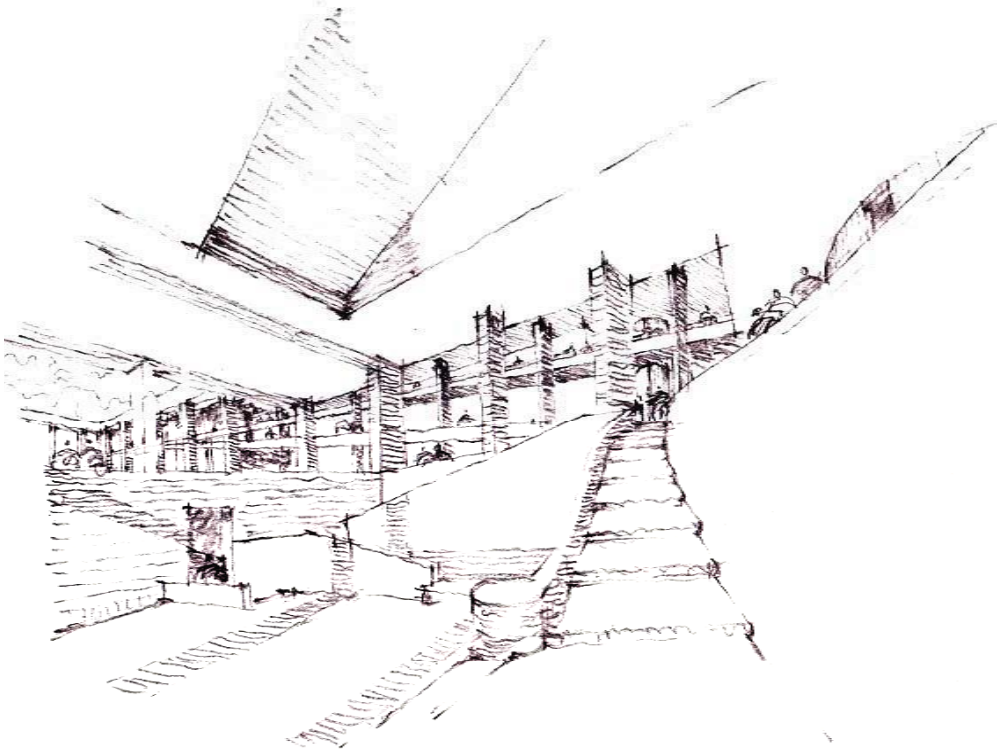


**Figure 86. The Humanities building: interior of the antechamber. Drawing by the author.** **106-L**

Piranesi's *Carceri* are pertinent if one looks more intently at this initial perceptual analogy. The "world" of Piranesi, she tells us, is one of "Cunningly complicated perspectives" [of] "intensity [and] strangeness."[308] Furthermore, as it happens in this inner place by Salmona, Piranesi's is a "world" also experienced in obliqueness, difficult to reconstruct mentally in its layout, a world of sequential continuity but also perceived discontinuities, I quote:

> The impossibility of discerning any overall plan adds another element to the discomfort inspired by the *Prisons*: we almost never have the impression of being in the main axis of the structure, but only on a vectorial branch; the preference of the Baroque for diagonal perspectives inevitably gives us the feeling we exist in an asymmetrical universe. But this world without a center is at the same time infinitely expansible. […] This world closed over itself is mathematically infinite.[309]

I would like to retain from Yourcenar's meaningful excerpt particularly the idea of "diagonal perspectives" (obliqueness) as derived from the "Baroque" and, in this case, the lack of a center (orientation), the expansible character of the space and a sense of incompleteness (*eros*) or unfulfilled desire. Another relevant aspect noted by M. Yourcenar that may serve to establish possible connections to the re-creative strategies of Salmona comes from the fact that Piranesi, without prejudice, subverted conventional architectural language for the purpose of invention. The authentic and fantastic world of Piranesis's *Carceri* comes from the poetic re-creation of multiple conventions of equally diverse architectural languages; from Yourcenar I quote:

> Contrary to all expectation, this disturbing architecture is discovered, upon study, to be formed by very concrete elements which Piranesi elsewhere reintroduces into his

[308] Yourcenar 104.
[309] Yourcenar 114.



**Figure 87. The Humanities building: nodal vestibular area. Analytical model by the author .**

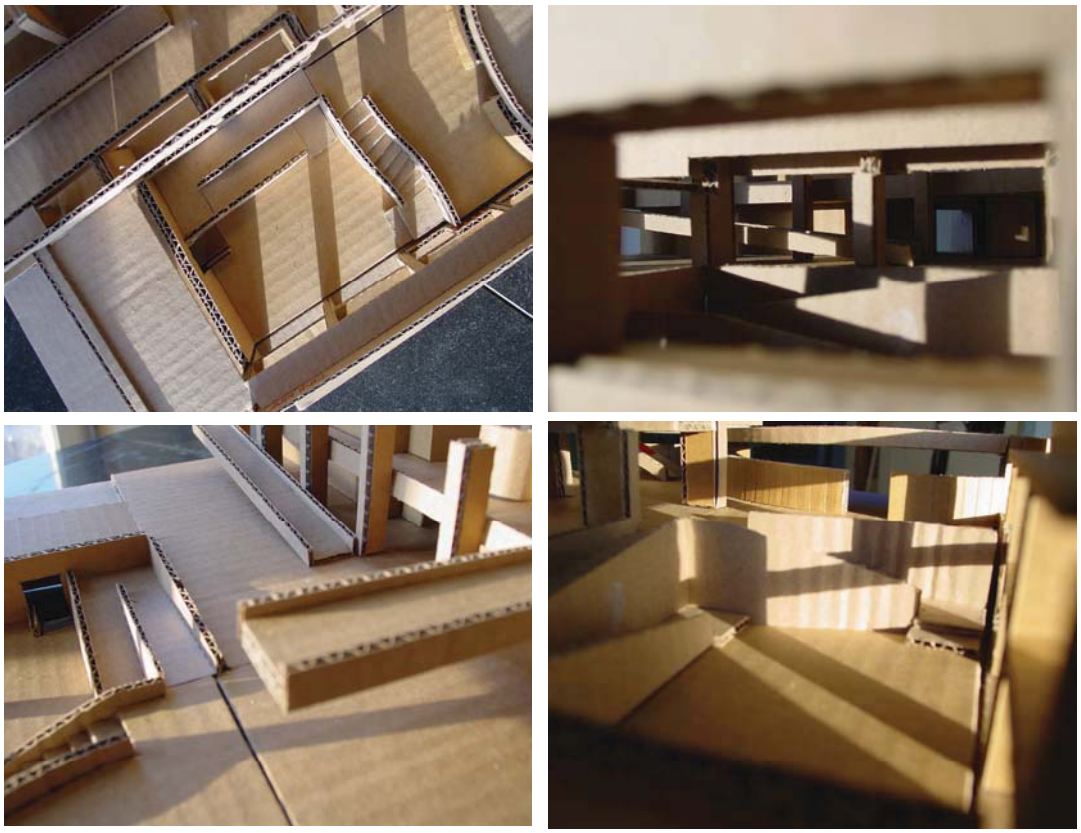


**Figure 88. The Humanities building: nodal vestibular area. Studies on light, thresholds and transparencies on circulation areas. Photographs from an analytical model by the author**

> work under apparently more real but actually no less visionary aspects.[310]

Manfredo Tafuri called Piranesi "the wicked architect," defining the Carceri's author's work a "criticism of language in itself." Tafuri's *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, as noted by Marco Frascari, already identified the "historicity of Einstein's Avant-Garde" linking Piranesi to the early-to mid 20th century modernist movements, centered on the exploration of space-time flux.[311] One could argue that Salmona, an apprentice of Le Corbusier and fellow of Francastel at the time of his *Art and technology*—a book based on the study of these Avant-Garde movements—was culturally affected by this legacy. Piranesi's "powerful hewn stone world" (as Baudelaire described it) is petrified and "violent" […] "as if struck by the rays of a black sun."[312] Salmona's inner world is clay-baked, petreous too, though warm and ochre, conceived to be traversed by amber sunrays. Borrowing from Gaston Bachelard, one could refer this distortion to a "metamorphosis" of a poetic image; as he suggested:

> […] metaphors are naturally linked to metamorphoses, and in the realm of imagination the metamorphosis of a being is already an adjustment to the imagined environment. The importance in poetry of the myth of metamorphoses and of animal fables will seem less surprising. [313]

The Piranesi-Salmona analogy in addition occurs between direct and indirect forms of experience, though equally vivid ones. Whether Salmona 'dwelled'—as Victor Hugo, Baudelaire or Yourcenar did at some point—in Piranesi's *Carceri d'invenzione* to then re-create some key experiential aspects of their complex spatiality and mysterious aura in a new place, is a question whose certainty is beyond this experiential journey and any detailed rational analysis of the imaginative making of this building. Creative activity is

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[310] Yourcenar 114.
[311] See Marco Frascari, "The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Book Review," *JAE* 42. 4 (1989): 39-41. Frascari writes in reference to Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970's,* trans. Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1987.
[312] Yourcenar 104.
[313] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 34.

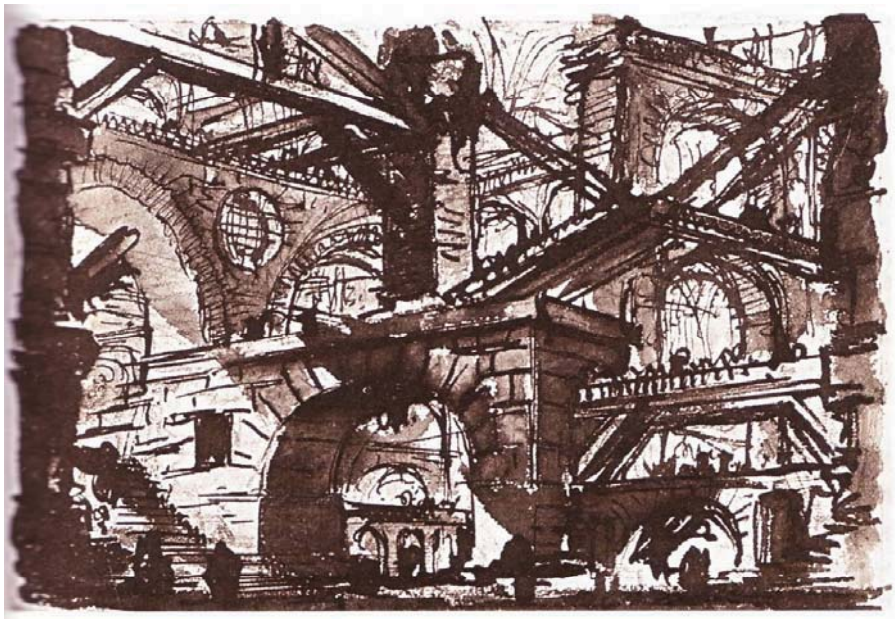


**Figure 89. The *Carceri*: preparatory drawing for plate VII. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1742.**

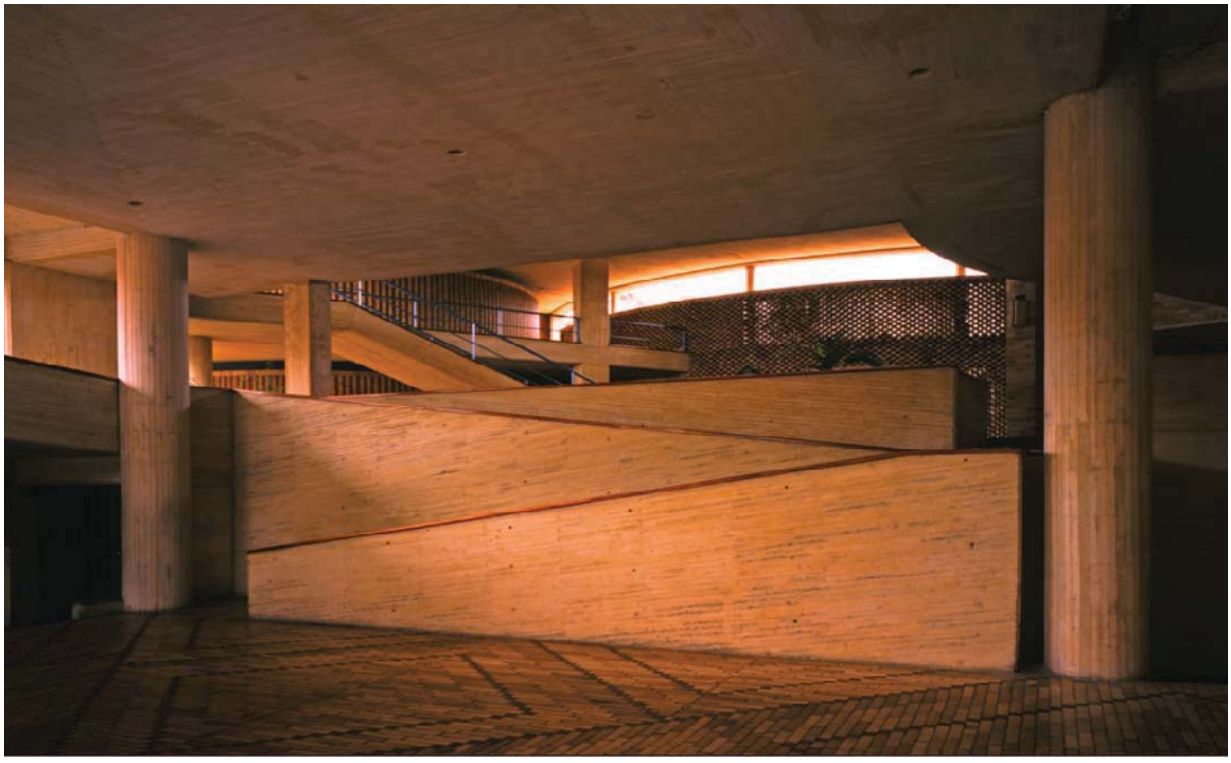


**Figure 90. The Humanities building: nodal vestibular area. Photo by Francisco de Valdenebro.**

closer to a perfect crime than to a rationally explainable method. The logic in the work found by the critic or scholar comes "after the blossoming." Jules Laforgue wrote, for instance, in "*Moralités légendaires*:" […] method, method, what do you want of me? Don't you know that I have eaten of the fruit of the unconscious?"[314]

It is not the attempt however to present creative activity as mere unconscious geniality, but to suggest that consciousness exists in the general and specific problems-posed or "intentionality" of the architect, more than in the same moments of creation.[315] Such intentionality is addressed to both, the social context to which the work is directed and the specific art of place-making, with its traditions. To this I shall return; however, it is convenient to bring up at this point that Salmona for years after his return to Colombia taught on the history of architecture a course in the "history of the built form" and was particularly interested in the Baroque period.[316] It is also certain that he spoke overtly about re-creation, stating on several occasions that when "composing" dwelling places it would be obtuse and absurd to disregard the long history of achievements of the many architectural traditions and the history of architecture.[317]

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[314] Bachelard *On Poetic Imagination* 31. The original quotation comes from Jules Laforgue, *Oeuvres completes, vol. III* (Paris : Mercure de France, 1917) 24.

[315] Pierre Francastel, *Art & Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* trans. Randall Cherry. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 151-67.

[316] Rogelio Salmona taught the courses "*Historia de las Formas Construidas*" (history of the built form) at Universidad de los Andes (1958-1962) and "*Historia de la Arquitectura*" (history of architecture) at Universidad Nacional (1958-1965). I owe this academic reference to the archival research of architect and scholar Cristina Albornoz's "Rogelio Salmona, un Arquitecto Frente a la Historia," (master thesis in the history of architecture, in preparation, at Universidad Nacional de Colombia). Albornoz' research is articulated around the influence that the study of history had on the work of Salmona. The approach to architectural history as the 'lived experience' of meaningful places and buildings of "universal architecture" is no less relevant to the Salmona case. Salmona was explicit on the subject. See, for instance, Chapter VII 223. See, as well, Germán Téllez, *Rogelio Salmona: Obra Completa 1959/2005* (Bogotá: Escala, 1991) 32-33,49-55. Salmona's serious and persistent interest in the study of history might be traced back to his period of studies in Paris (1948-1958), trained first in modern art history with Jean Cassou at the *Musée du Louvre* and then in the sociology of art program at *La Sorbonne* (*L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes*) where he became titular student in 1953. See Cristina Albornoz, "Biografía," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 13.

[317] References to memory as to the history and traditions of architecture are recurrent in Rogelio Salmona's texts, from his seminal essay about the *Emilio Cifuentes* competition 1959 to the "An Architectural Experience" lecture (2000) at McGill University and the "Buttterfly and Elephant" lecture at the Finnish Academy (2003). On the subject see, Rogelio Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 84-95.

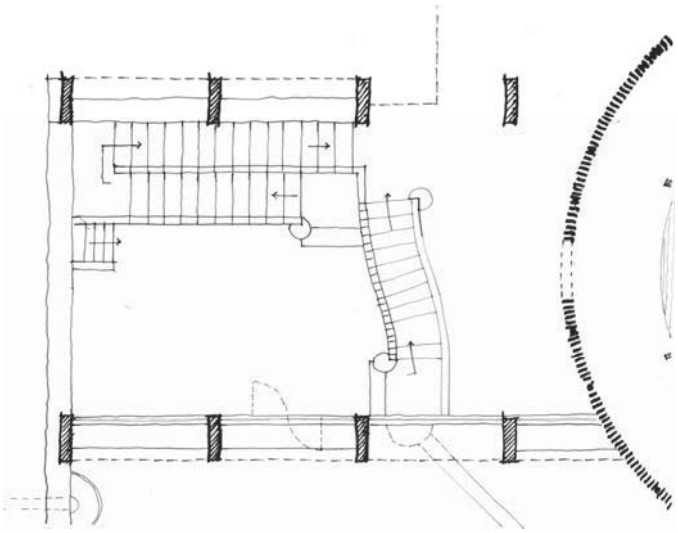


**Figure 91. The Humanities building: the antechamber. Layout, sketch by the author.**

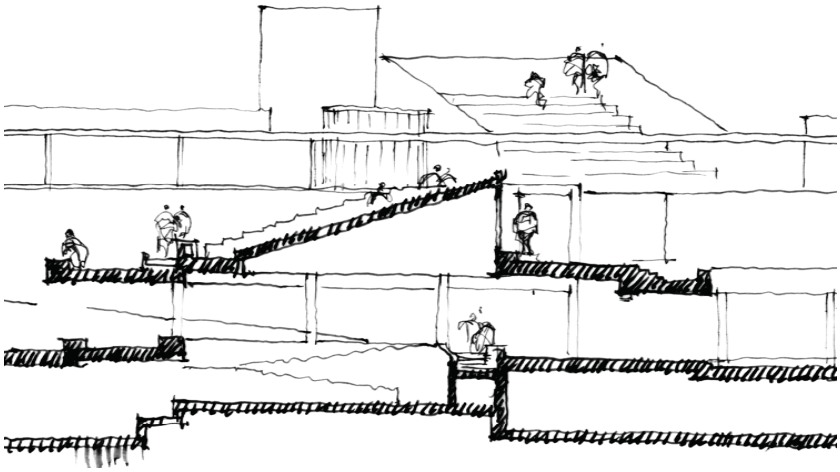


**Figure 92. The Humanities building: the antechamber. Longitudinal section, sketch by the author.**

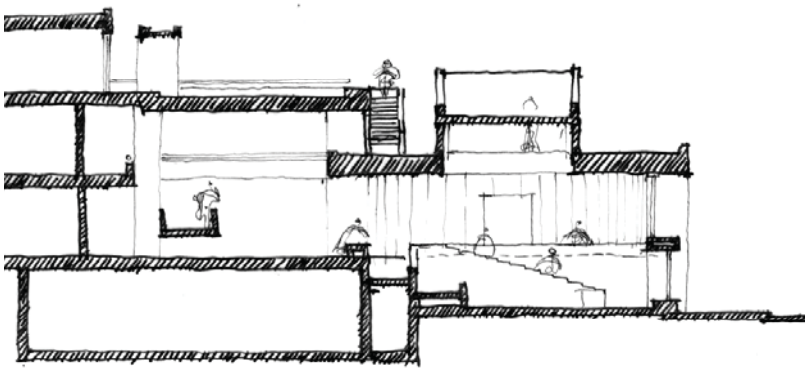


**Figure 93. The Humanities building: the antechamber. Transversal section, sketch by the author.**

The antechamber's flat ceiling partially plies at an angle, once more calling our attention towards the sky, this time in the opposite direction. Curiously enough, people are also passing by that high window opened with the ply above the roof level, set against the sky. After reaching a mid-raised level, I realize that I perceived the walk on the stretched-out folding flights of steps, being a simple and short event, as one pleasing prolonged journey. I make note of the unconventional dimensions of, and relationship between steps and raisers. These unusual dimensions brought awareness of my corporeal movements engaging the body differently with the architectural elements. As for the other stair whose sinuous shape meets at this same point, I am pleased to observe that this meanders on, making the transient dweller follow it as if a partner in a dance. I recall Paul Valéry's simple but powerful parallel, that prose is walking and poetry dancing.[318]

From a nearby place in the "White City," I perceive the "resonance" of a building—virtually a 'site precedent—which appears to have been a source of new partial re-creation: Leopoldo Rother's museum of architecture (that on the way I just visited) with its lofty vestibule is also articulated by a lateral and sinuous, hybrid, stepped-ramp that induces a gentle entry ritual into meandering obliqueness. Even though Rother's museum is not visible from here, the building is literally in a straight line from the end of the shortcut to the Humanities building. One may then establish an empathy and correspondence between this antechamber and Rother's vestibule, a resonance of the best of Colombian modernist tradition in Salmona's building. [319]

The baroque-like fluid complexity and spatial richness of this nodal point of the Humanities building also alludes to the peculiarly sensuous, baroque-inspired contributions to the world of modern architecture made by the "heroic" Brazilians from the 1930's to mid 1960's. With its forest of columns, lofty space and lateral, meandering ramp, the experiential image of the Pampulha Casino entry space (1942) comes to

[318] See Paul Valéry, "Remarks on Poetry," *The Art of Poetry,* trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 206-7.
[319] This analogy is of my own critical reflection. Even though, as previously noted, Rogelio Salmona mentioned the tremendous responsibility involved in the making of the Humanities building due the relevance of its architectural precedents. Rother's architecture is explicitly mentioned. On the subject see Chapter VII 215.



**Figure 94. The Leopoldo Rother architecture museum. Antechamber interior. Photo by the author.**

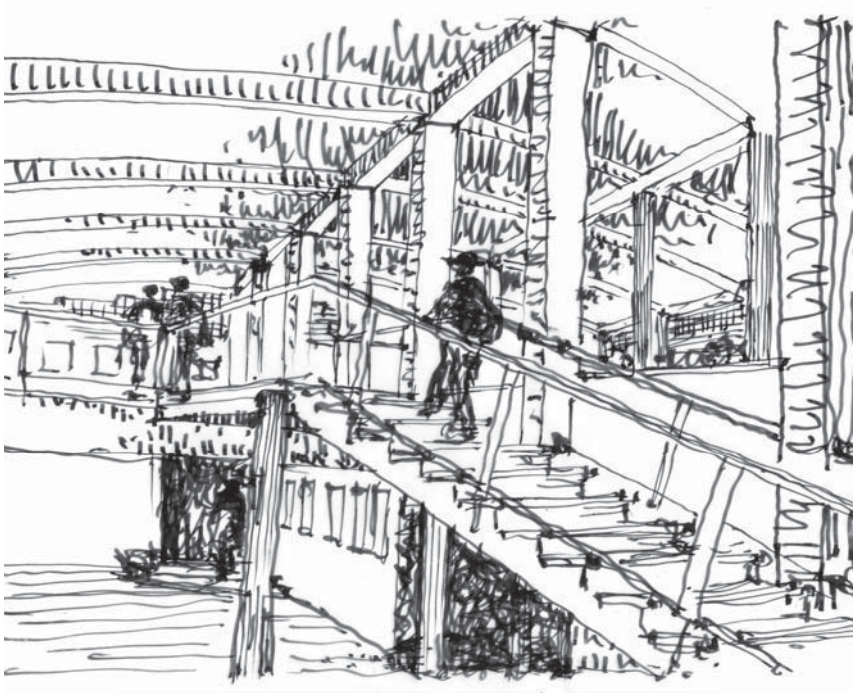


**Figure 95. The Leopoldo Rother architecture museum. Antechamber interior. Sketch by the author.**

mind.[320] It is noteworthy that the Pampulha Casino, and the regional movement it belonged to, has been traced back to its local roots in the neighboring city of Ouro Preto, famous precisely for its particular 18th century Baroque art and architecture.[321] It is particular too that the world-wide success of the Brazilians (boosted by the 1943 *Brazil Builds* New York MOMA exhibit and publication)[322] was felt in Bogotá as a close model to follow, in part for its site, cultural and formal specificity, but also due to its technological achievements.[323] The baroque nature of Salmona's vestibular node relies on a fluid spatiality of sequential continuity similar to Rother's and the Brazilian examples. In the Salmona case, nonetheless, this spatial sequence or continuity alternates with complex and directionally disparate gaps or discontinuities. The baroque in the Pampulha building resides as well in its reflecting looking-glass panes, polish marble walls and round stainless steel columns that enhance the limitless sense of its boundaries. But those luxurious effects are neither present in Salmona's Humanities building nor in Rother's museum. Rother's example is of an austere, white-washed materiality while Salmona's is humble, in relying on the economy of brick, probably the most democratic material and technique available in the region of Bogotá. I stress however that the baroque experiential quality of Salmona's places has to do with the peculiar manner of mastering the brick masonry and concrete techniques. The opaque materiality of brick and concrete acquires marvelous dimensions through effects and sensations of translucency, luminous refraction, warmth, and textural "haptic" qualities. The finely textured articulation of those two light-ochre materials which were carefully studied by Salmona and technically developed with his collaborators to interact with the particularly high luminosity of the *Sabana*, makes evident that, in true technological creation the whole is more than the sum of the parts.[324]

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[320] Concerning the "whole new school" of modernism in Brazil, the Pamulha complex in Belo Horizonte , and the Casino in particular see, Zilah Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built:* (New York: Spon Press) 75-81.
[321] See, for insance Philip L. Goodwin, *Brazil builds: Architecture New and Old, 1652-1942* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1943) 48-58. See as well, Ferreira Gullar, "From Aleijadinho to Niemeyer," *Art & Architecture in Brazil: From Aleijadinho to Niemeyer,* ed. José Renato Santos Pereira (Minas Gerais: Embratur, 1984) 5-8. See, as well Quezado Deckker 75-81, .
[322] Goodwin 75-81.
[323] See Silvia Arango, *Historia de la Arquitectura en Colombia* (Bogotá: Centro Editorial y Facultad de Artes, 1989) 219.
[324]Ray Kursweil, *The age of Sprirtual Machines* (New York: Penguin Group, 1999) 16.



**Figure 96. The Pampulha Casino, Belorizonte, Brazil. Architect Oscar Niemeyer, 1942. Vestibule.**

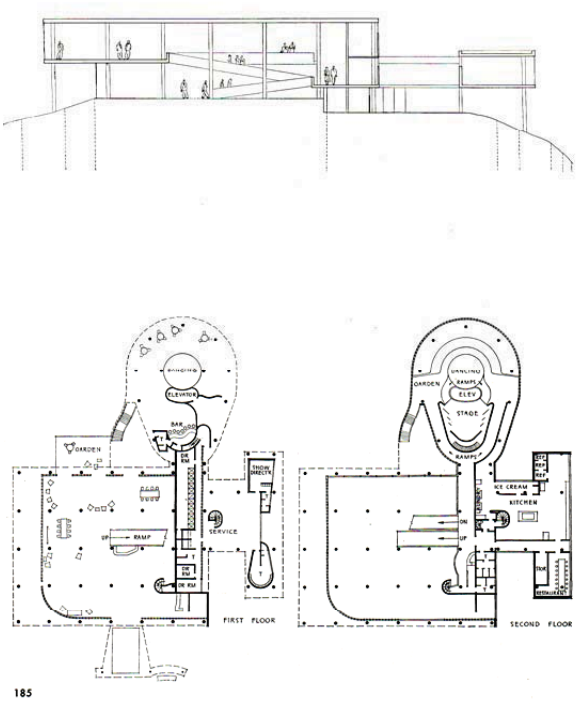



**Figure 97. The Pampulha Casino, Belorizonte, Brazil. Architect Oscar Niemeyer, 1942. Plans and section.**

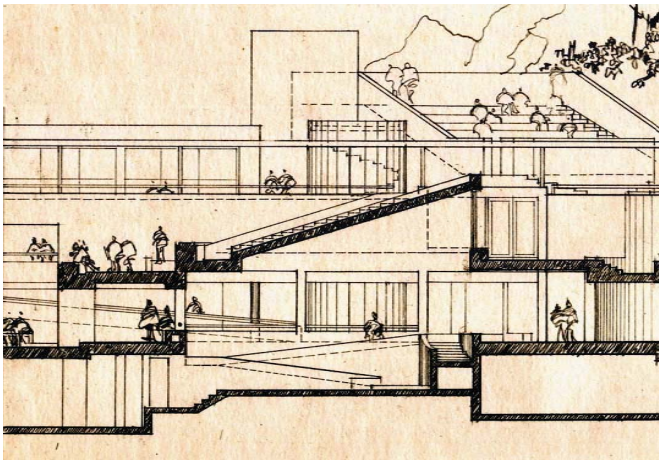


**Figure 98. The Humanities building: the antechamber. Longitudinal section, drawing by the author.**



**Figure 99. The Humanities building: antechamber interior. Photo by the author.**

Engineer Francisco de Valdenebro was instrumental to the development of this unique light-ochre concrete, made with the aggregates and natural color of regional sands also used in the fabrication of the local amber brick it matches with.[325] Rogelio Salmona on the subject said:

> *I had been searching a material, an identity; a more precise relationship between the different materials. To discover the ochre of this concrete allowed me a closer relationship with the color of the brick, improving the luminous effect.*[326]

The popular and locally inexpensive brick was finely crafted in the skilful hands of the still numerous local masons. The architectural experimentation of Rogelio Salmona is technically modest, or traditional in principle, although it results technologically high, or refined. Ray Kurszweil wrote that, from its origins in Greek *techne,* technology always "implies a transcendence of the materials used to comprise it." He reminded us that for instance "when wood, varnishes, and strings are assembled in just the right way, the result is wondrous: a violin, a piano." [327] The mastery of techniques, the ethos and poetic intentionality (*techne*) of this achievement came from Salmona, who benefited from the responsive 'technical' experimentation of de Valdenebro. Salmona said that:

> *The ochre color sieves the penumbra; the 'eye' then roams the different spaces and discovers luminous zones and*

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[325] The particular light–ochre concrete Salmona worked with in the Humanities building (and for the last decade of his architectural practice) steadily exploring its techno-aesthetic expressive possibilities, was developed thanks to the technical support and experimentation of the engineer F. de Valdenebro. The first project to make use of it was the environmental urban renewal of the Avenida Jimenez in Bogotá (1996-2000). The aesthetic and economic premises to develop it—comprising the use natural regional materials and a low overall cost—were set mutually between Salmona and de Valdenebro. See, Francisco de Valdenebro, "El Concreto Claro en la Obra de Rogelio Salmona," lecture and slide show in the conference: Signos y Designios del Diseño: Diseño en Escenarios de Convivencia, Bogotá, 11, 12, 13 Sep. 2006. On the subject, see as well, Francisco de Valdenebro, "La Biblioteca y el Parque Virgilio Barco: Los Buenos Resultados." *Noticreto* 63 (2002): 52-57.

[326] My translation from Rogelio Salmona's testimony, as cited by de Valdenebro, "El Concreto Claro en la Obra de Rogelio Salmona."

[327] Ray Kursweil 16.



**Figure 100. The Humanities building: light-ochre concrete details. Photographs by Francisco de Valdenebro.**



**Figure 101. The Humanities building: interior. Photo by Enrique Guzmán.**

> *penumbras, all in one same chromatic gradation of ochre tonalities.*[328]

Resonances of lived images of analogous lineage though coming from different origins in history and geography, may be assigned to the antechamber's making as perceived in its experience. They help one to put in place these inaugural moments of the inner world of the Humanities building. I address in sum, the antechamber's particular spatiality and material imagination which I would call at once modern and baroque in its experiential nature. A question now arises as to how can a building be at once modern and baroque? And how can modernity embrace places so distant and diverse in geographical and historical origin, and so many forms into one articulated new creation? On the possibilities of modernism for amalgamating traditions, this relevant quote:

> Under the slogan, FOR A NEW ART, FOR A NEW REALITY, the most ancient superstitions have exhumed, the most primitives rites re-enacted: the rummage for generative forces has set African demon-masks in the temple of the Muses and introduced the fables of Zen and Hasidism into the dialogue of philosophy. Through such dislocations of time and geography the first truly universal tradition has come to light, with world history as its past and requiring a world stage on which to flourish.[329]

In the conclusion of this interpretive section I owe to present some premises concerning the connection I made to the baroque experience proposed by Salmona, as perceived in these welcoming places of the Humanities building. They come from various origins. Ricardo Castro, for instance, understands the baroque in the work of Rogelio Salmona as one universal theme that is trans-disciplinary. He sees the baroque beyond the usual connotation as the "style of a period" in the history of Western architecture towards a condition –or spiritual gesture. Castro's critical approach extrapolates from the Cuban

[328] My translation from Rogelio Salmona, as cited by de Valdenebro, "El Concreto Claro en la Obra de Rogelio Salmona."
[329] Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959) 9.

writer Alejo "Carpentier's baroque language and "world view," and the syncretism particular to the Latin American cultures. Carpentier wrote:

> Our world is baroque in its architecture—this needs no demonstration—in the convolution and the complexity of its nature and vegetation, in the polychromic character of everything that surrounds us, in the telluric pulse of the phenomena to which we are still subjected. [330]

Parallels with the architecture of the Baroque period in the Western civilization can also be made concerning luminosity, materiality temporality of poetic images and the idea of obliqueness. As Pérez-Gómez points out, in Borrromini's architecture there is awareness "of light as a presence" and "the possibility of the erotic at the moment of fulfillment […] the moment is what matters." Moreover, Borromini offered material presence with freedom of interpretation. The idea of architectural program in the Baroque was temporal, not functional; it was theatrical, ritual-based. Caramuel's architecture of the oblique, in his *Tratado de Arquitectura Recta y Oblicua,* develops the idea of eccentricity and centrality as simultaneous occurrences or situations. Obliquity implied perspective distortion while centrality, perfection.[331] Finally, as Pérez-Gómez also makes note, the experiential images produced in Baroque architecture, for instance by Guarini, Neumann, the same Borromini and Fischer involved "the temporality of human experience."[332] Christian Norberg-Schulz's in turn reads the architecture of the Baroque as "meaningful totality formed by dynamism and spatial richness." The Baroque building, he points out, is composed by "interacting spatial elements which are modeled according to inner and outer forces [… and] *space* does not surround architecture but is created by it." [333]

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[330] Alejo Carpentier, "Lo Barroco y lo Real Maravilloso," *Obras Completas,* vol. 13 (Mexico, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores) 188. Cited in Ricardo L. Castro, *Rogelio Salmona: a Tribute* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2008) 24.

[331] Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "Origins of Modern Architecture," course lecture in the history and theory of architecture at the School of Architecture of McGill University. Montreal, 4 Jan. 2007.

[332] Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Poetics* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 2006) 85.

[333] Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Meaning in Western Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980) 149-50. Norberg-Schulz makes reference in turn to Giulio Carlo Argan, *The Europe of the Capitals, 1600-1700* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co. ,1964) 106.

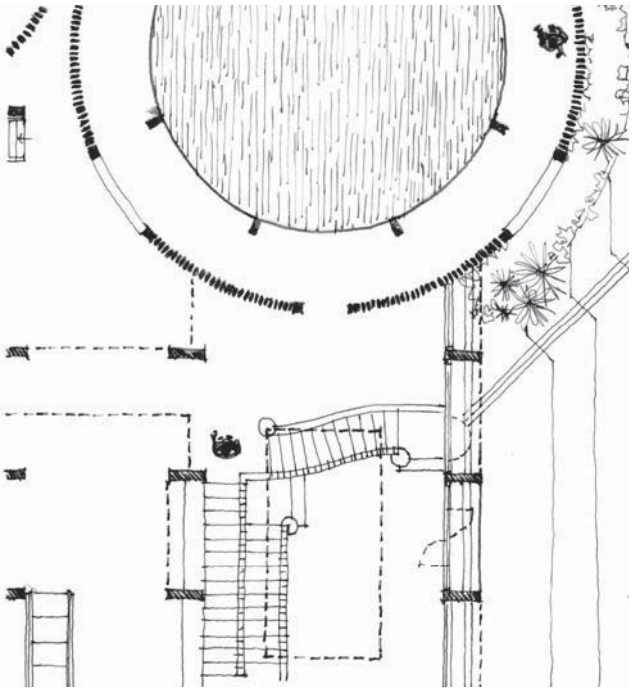


**Figure 102. The Humanities building: transit from the antechamber to the round, "moon mirror" courtyard. Layout, sketch by the author.**



**Figure 103. The Humanities building: transit to the round, "moon mirror" courtyard . Photo by the author.**

***The Moon-Mirror Court: "La Luna del Espejo"*** [334]

Raised mid-height on the edge of antechamber, I situate myself in a spatial corner, which subtlety bounds this place and creates a node and link to other places for the continuing experience of the building. At this point, various opportunities for perambulation and further ascension are at the dwellers' disposal. It is significant that, in this node, one is situated not frontal or axial but rather tangentially displaced with respect to the entrance of a round enclosure made up of refined brickwork; a filigree animated in such a way that, it attracts you towards it with its strong luminous and textural stimuli. The surface of the vast, round brick-wall is porous and translucent. It reveals its inner concrete skeleton and an intense, aquatic-blue luminosity penetrates it from behind. Peripherally, I see two punctured openings in the wall leaking a vibrating blue cobalt substance which stains patches of the bordering floor. The blue light emanating from the hollowed surface of the vast drum suggests the presence of the circular court behind: the same blue shiny dot I saw minutes ago from the airplane on 'site plan' merely as a geometric element within an abstract composition. Closer up the centrifugal walk inside the brick-drum provokes delightful tension, while inducing various reflections.

The moving body experiences tension, as the warm vertical enclosure of perfect concavity is counterbalanced by a moonlike, liquid disk above which, through the big oculus, an otherwise totally contained space, escapes to unreachable limits. Circulating around the sheltered corridor, I am drawn, centrifugally, towards the textured edge of the round enclosure, handmade of brickwork filigree. But the cobalt light emanating from the water disk in the middle knows no clear boundary. It has washed the hard, baked-clay floor, entirely flooding the corridor with materialized luminosity. One remains removed from the round, trembling surface: the blue mirror replicates the infinite variability of moving celestial figures. Salmona often referred to the unique qualities of the highland savannah as this iterative rain and shine place of "beautiful ever shifting skies," [335] and

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[334] Jorge Luis Borges, "El Aleph," *Narraciones* (Bogotá: Editorial Oveja Negra, 1983) 127-45.
The subtitle and the argument concluding the following section makes an allusion to Borges' literary constructions in "El Aleph."

[335] My translation, see Rogelio Salmona, interview (19 Dec. 1999) "Arquitectura Para la Memoria," by Ricardo Posada Barbosa, *El Malpensante* Jan. 2000: 50.

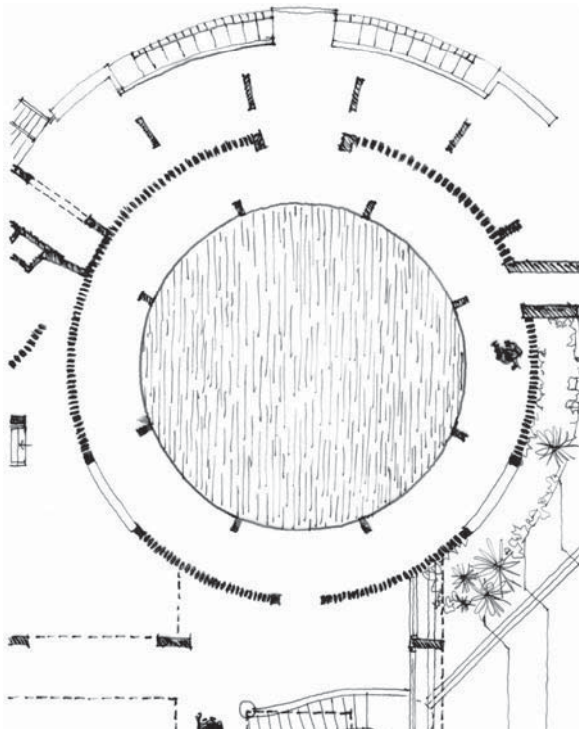


**Figure 104. The Humanities building: the "moon mirror" courtyard. Sketch by the author.**

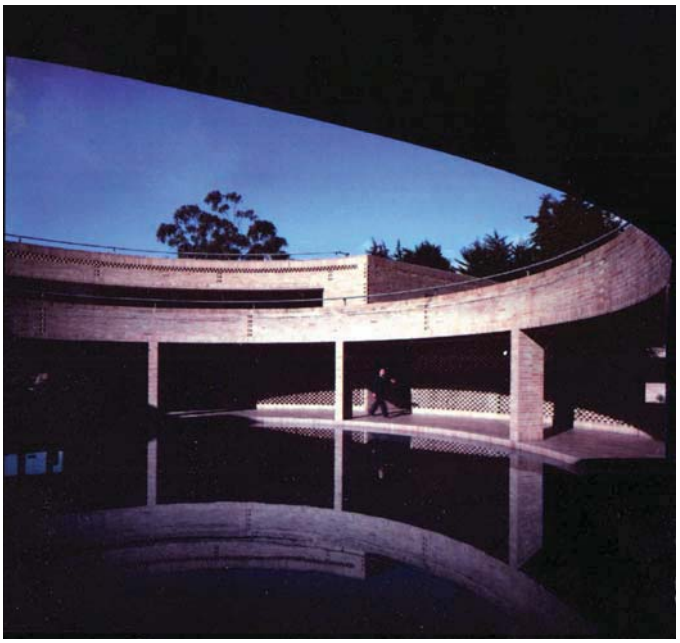


**Figure 105. The Humanities building: the "moon mirror" courtyard. Photo by Enrique Guzmán**

the historicity of this regional landscape in relation to water, a material that in the process of place-making, was to him, poetic and alive:

> *I am interested* [in water] *because* […] *it accompanies you when entering or leaving a precinct, it is a reflection, it is a becoming, it is permanent, it comes from the sky* […] *In addition, by means of water you see the sky. When we renewed the Avenida Jiménez we kept in mind that the Muiscas, in Chibcha language called the Rio San Francisco, Vichacá, which means "the shine of the water in the dark."* [336]

The doubling of the sky on the mirror-centered space appears to correspond to Salmona's intention of landscape celebration. I recall the spoon-like sacred lagoons of the historicized *Muisca* geography and imagine the original, aquatic, sky-mirroring marshes and wetlands that this highland plateau once was. Moving around the circular place, I notice another quality in its shape and texture. The moon-shaped water surface that mirrors the skies suggests a "reaching for the moon," a looking towards the inaccessible. The contained space absorbs the presence of the sky above and reflects it below, yet both are unreachable realities. We look up to the moving celestial dome through the oculus, and down on its distorted reflection in the water. What this water-mirror drives one's attention to is, nevertheless, just a *vision*: it is fleeting and inaccessible by nature.

The theme of the mirror, related to those of circularity and labyrinthine enclosures, or more generally, the altering of conventional notions of space and temporality, is central to Borges' literary constructs. Borges' appropriation and re-imagining of these subjects central to key writers in the history of world literature is properly noted by scholars of literature.[337] Salmona's re-creations of mirrors and labyrinthine places, may parallel

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[336] My translation, see Rogelio Salmona, "Un Obrero del Cosmos," interview, by Carlos Gustavo Alvarez, *El Tiempo* 10 June 2003, Sec. Libros: 6. The development of the *Avenida Jiménez* (1995-2000) urban renewal project temporally overlapped with that of the Humanities building; see See Germán Téllez, *Rogelio Salmona: Obra Completa 1959/2005* (Bogotá: Escala, 2006) 501-517.

[337] See for instance Jorge Iván Parra Londoño, *Hablemos de literatura* (Bogotá: Fondo de Publicaciones del Gimnasio Moderno, 2002) 162-64.

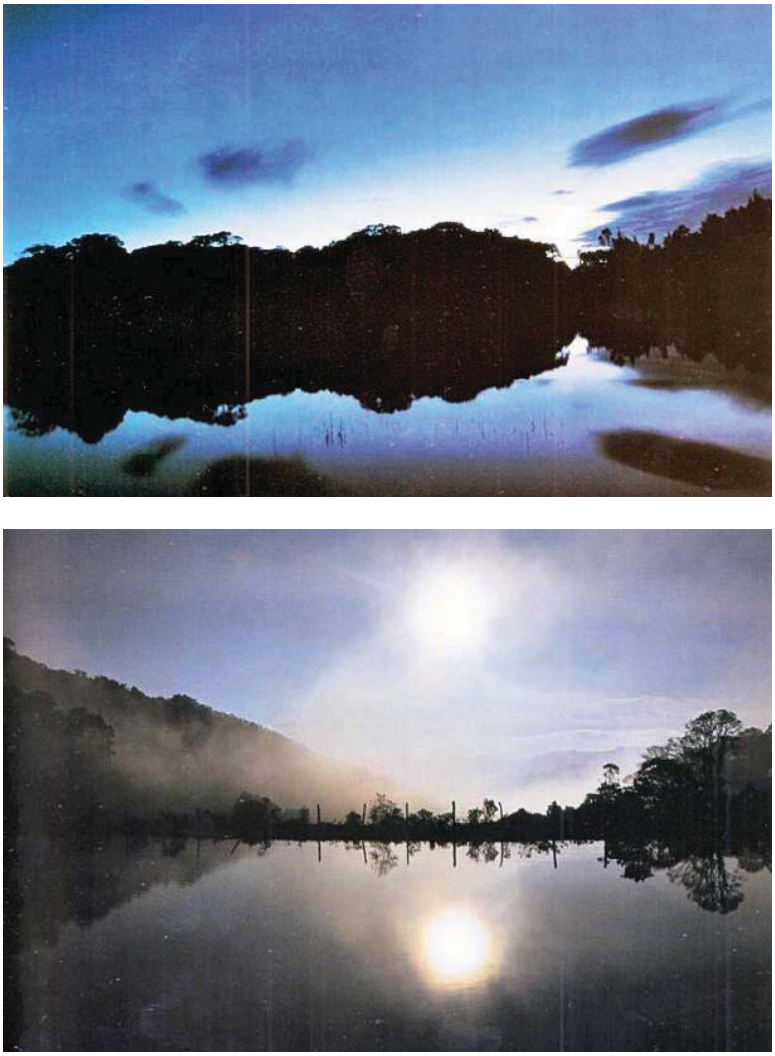


**Figure 106. Ponds on the *cerros* of Bogotá.**
**Photographs by Cristóbal Von Rothkirch.**

Borges' literary recreations. In his short story "*El Aleph*", for instance, Borges makes the analogy between a fictional (magic) visualization device, the Aleph, and its name, corresponding to the first letter of the alphabet "in sacred language." Peculiarly, Borges tells us that the Aleph (sign) resembles the shape of a man who points both to the sky and the earth, indicating that the world above is the map and the lower one is the mirror.[338] So he wrote about the Aleph as "*la luna del espejo*:" an interpretive translation would be that the Aleph is the round mirror—literally the moon—on which the whole world is reflected: the entire cosmic space […] "from every angle." [339] Roaming around the 'Humanities' building, in this circular sky-mirroring courtyard, that literary metaphor might well find its place.

***The Reading Room: Re-creating "The Tradition of the New"*[340]**

> "The famous 'modern break with tradition' has lasted long enough to have produced its own tradition." [341]

***Spatiotemporal Sequence***

Desire for discovery and a sense of wonder pervades my body as I cross through an opening that punctuates the curved enclosure of brickwork filigree. We enter the space at midlevel, accompanied by the soft opaque sound of our own steps on a reddish wood floor. A generous radial room, like a stretched out accordion, begins to unveil its perceptual attributes. Sunbeams spill in from behind, through a long horizontal slit above. The narrow window is created by the differing heights of the rather intimate low ceiling slab of the round corridor, outside, and the loftier flat roof of this reading room. The sunlight bounces from the reddish floor to the ochre surfaces of both the brick masonry and the warm, sand-colored concrete. The bounding surfaces are spotted with gold patches and the luminosity of the space manifests with such intensity that it assumes an enveloping, immersive presence.

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[338] Borges, "El Aleph," *Narraciones* 143-44.
[339] Borges, "El Aleph," *Narraciones* 140.
[340] I borrow these pertinent terms from the book title of the modern art critic Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).
[341] Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* 9.

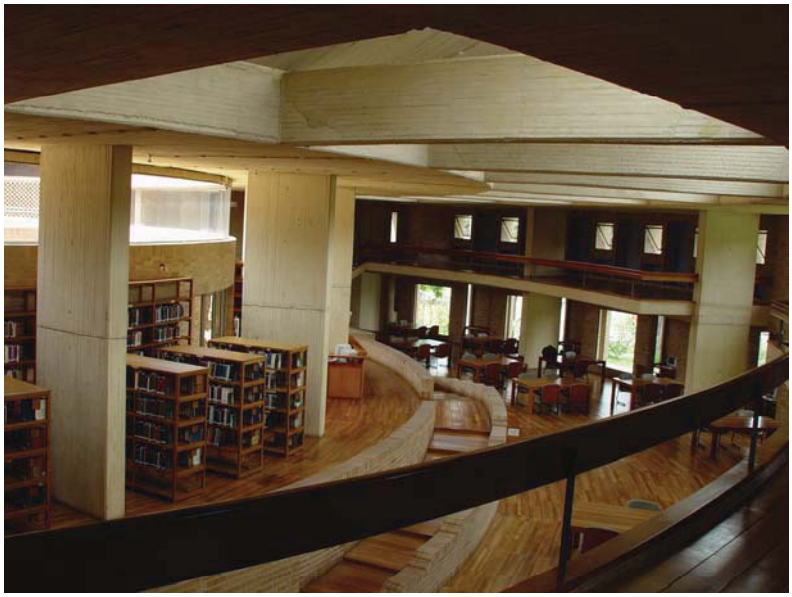


**Figure 107. The Humanities building: the reading room. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**



**Figure 108. The Humanities building: the reading room. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

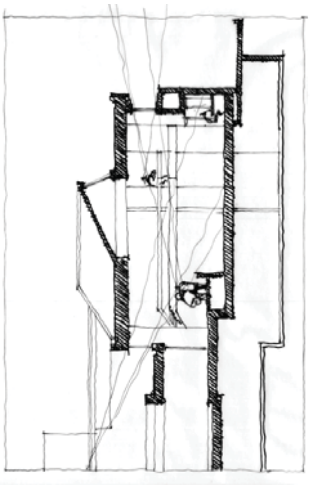
A long mezzanine is suspended in the back of the room. It seems to have gently descended to appear less imposing and recedes before a warm luminous gap crowned by a crease on the flat roof slab where the ceiling folds up to refract the variable daylight. The fold also reveals a strip of iridescent sky behind a fan of reinforced concrete struts. I perceive that the spatial gap, with no apparent function, is the central theme of the program of this place. It also recalls the temporal nature of architecture as a meaningful event or aesthetic experience, rather than efficient organizational diagrams of more or less functional rooms. Rogelio Salmona once wrote that "architecture is lived, dwelled; [that] visual and tactile sensations and scents are perceived when one moves in architectural space."[342] So he stressed that if it does not "transfigure its spiritual content" into "revelation" or brings forth a "presence," only a "technical-functional" reason would be left for it. [343] Both the mezzanine and the spatial gap run parallel to the radiant, semicircular shape of the room. The mezzanine is interrupted in the middle, by the room's entry axis, calling attention to a window opening frontally to incoming eyes, slightly high in my visual horizon. This markedly horizontal window frames and celebrates an exterior landscape: the firmament is clear above an atmospheric mesh of clouds descending on the silhouette of the dark conifers on edge of the building's land parcel. The horizontal strip-window neatly differs from the rest of the openings, which are square and rhythmically displayed above and below the mezzanine strata. The square windows are occupied by readers and form "corners" or niches of domestic character.

From this central axis, on a balcony, we are invited to perform a soft ritual of self recognition of our corporeal movements, descending either way on a pair of sinuous, stepped ramps. The body is again gently de-familiarized by the same peculiar relationship of long and low steps. Driven by the light-reflecting angular ply of the ochre roof and the influx of the fan of struts above—which seem to move with us while walking—on the lower level, along the curved space, one discovers an ample circular opening pierced on a freestanding brickwork plane. The round hole in the masonry—

[342] My translation, see, Rogelio Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona" *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 94.
[343] My translation, see, Rogelio Salmona, "palabras en la apertura de la exposición en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* 10.







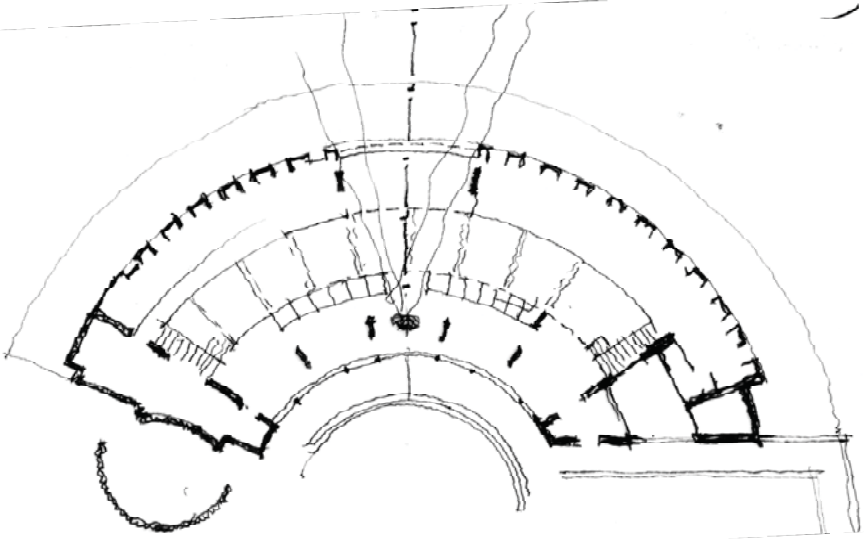


**Figure 109. The Humanities building: the reading room. Plan, transversal section and framed views. Sketches by the author.**

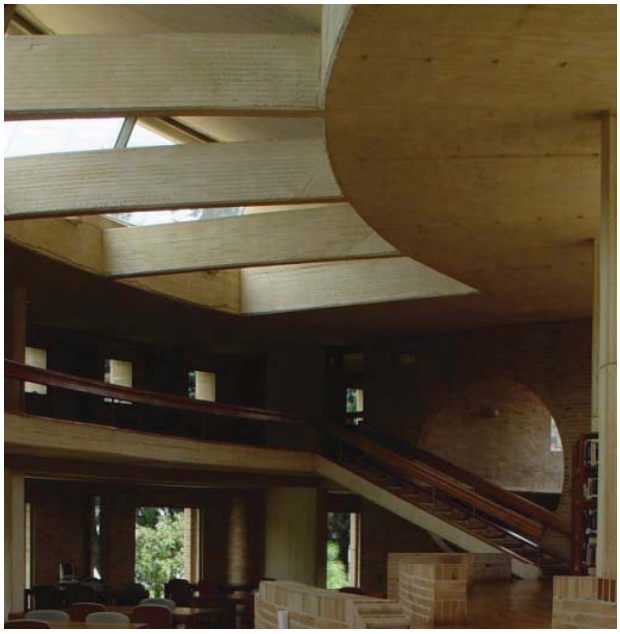


**Figure 110. The Humanities building: the reading room. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

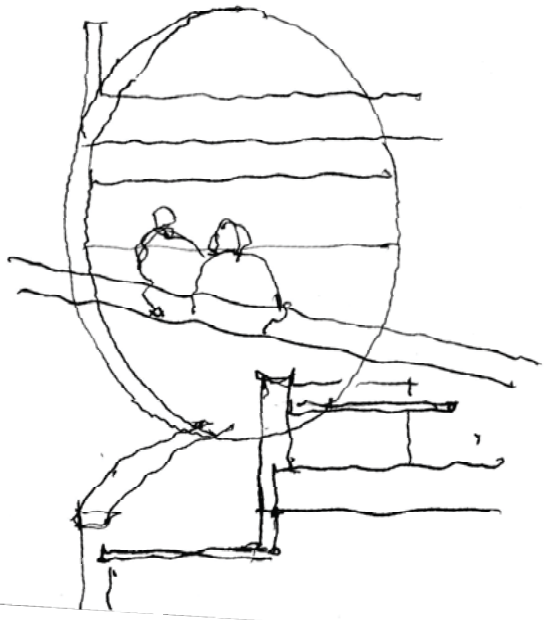


**Figure 111. The Humanities building: "moongate". Sketch by the author.**

open to the spatial 'void' of the room—is right behind the diagonal bar formed by a flight of steps that lead to the mezzanine. The circular threshold, which is also symmetrically emplaced at the other end of the room, recalls a "moongate," the poetic boundary between rooms and gardens traditional in the Chinese gardens of Suzhou. [344] The round opening relates the inner space of the main reading room to other auxiliary spaces side by side. In this case, though, the threshold is not made to be trespassed. The meaningful experience of this hollowed boundary occurs not when traversing it frontally from one space to another, which, in fact is not possible, but by what one could call an erotic situating of the body while transiting the soft yet spasmodic, oblique, stepped path, alongside the open circle, bridging the gap between two different levels of the main room. The opening makes present and visually enjoyable the other space in an oblique, lateral and dynamic manner, even though it is ready at hand. Visually through the threshold, the experience of one space is enriched by the presence of the other.

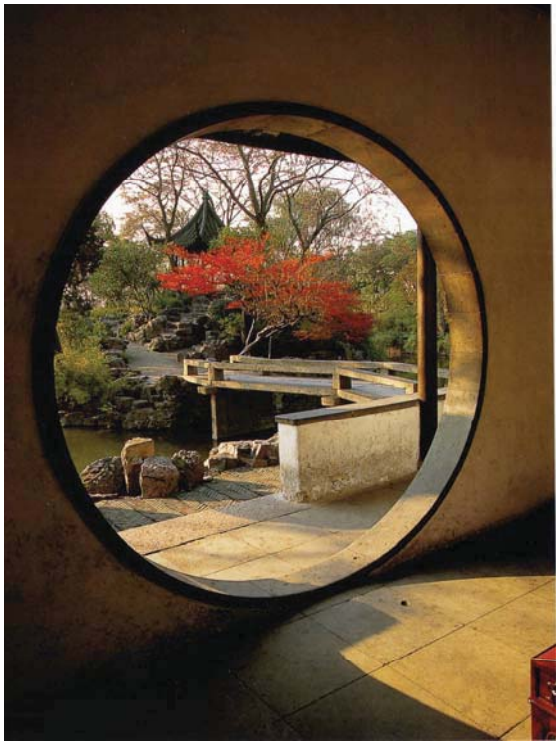
I recall peculiarly that one approaches the reading room head-on, along a central axis of perspective, to be astonished by the landscape, framed before our eyes. Yet, a more errant, oblique appropriation of the space is only possible subsequently, assumed in a dynamic interplay between diverse floor levels, masses of various textural qualities, radial elements and thresholds, and the juxtaposition of curvilinear and planar surfaces.

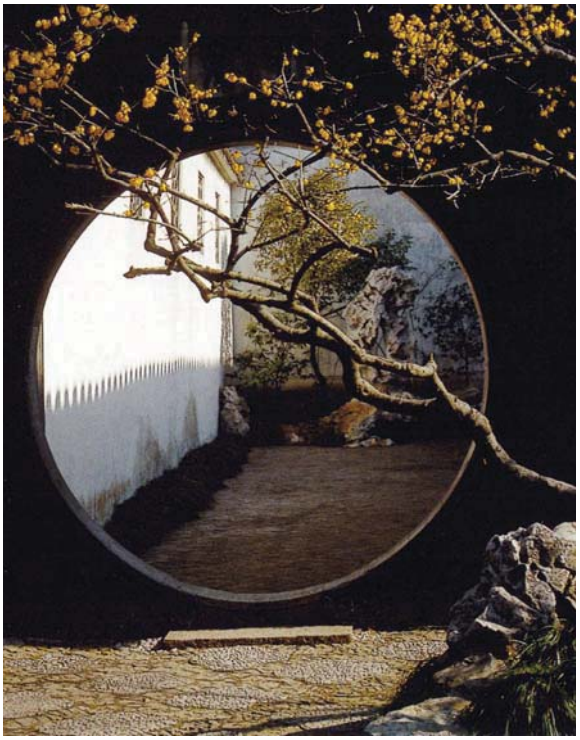
***Rogelio Salmona and "The Tradition of the New"***

> *Intelligent and difficult in architecture is to be contemporary, to know how to keep the link with the past, and be modern.* Rogelio Salmona [345]

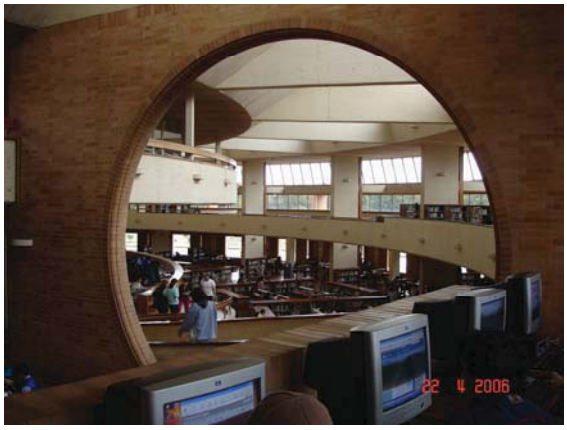
Sitting in a niche by a window, at a corner desk, I make a stop in my journey through the places of the Humanities building, using this pause to introduce a parenthesis of criticism. My purpose is to look at some implications of the idea of architectural tradition as, I note, was consistently taken into account by Salmona in his process of place-making. Although

[344] See, for instance, Jianxing Chen, *Gardens of Suzhou* (Beijing: Chinese Travel Press, 2006) 78, 79, 91.
[345] See Rogelio Salmona, "Poeta del Espacio," interview by Carlos Muricio Vega, *Credencial* 48 Nov. 1990: 14. My translation from the Spanish original: "Lo inteligente y lo difícil en la arquitectura es ser actual y saber mantener ese vínculo con el pasado, y ser moderno."





**Figures 112 & 113. "Moongate" thresholds in the gardens of *Suzhou:* the "Humble Administrator's Garden" and the "Master-of-Nets-Garden" respectively. Photos by Chen, Jianxing.**






**Figures 114 & 115. "Moongate" thresholds in the Virgilio Barco library.
Photographs by Francisco de Valdenebro.**



**Figure 116. "Moongate" threshold in the reading room of the Humanities building.
Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

the idea of remaking and transforming tradition is fundamental to the entire work of Salmona, and the Humanities building as a whole, I use this reading room as a good excuse or suited example to discuss the subject.

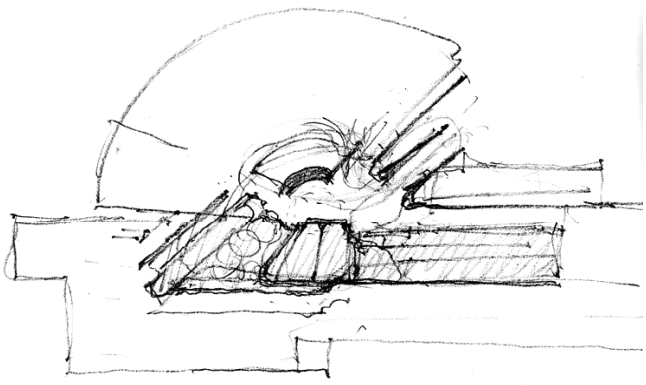
An observer familiar with the history of 20th century modern architecture is likely to find resonances from Alvar Aalto and Louis Kahn's work, in the reading room in question, based, either in the lived experience or the review of architectural drawings and photographs. G. Téllez refers precisely to these two architects as precedents for the cases of the main reading rooms of both the Humanities and the Virgilio Barco Library. Both of these Salmona projects, whose design and construction processes overlapped, reflect similar and consistent explorations of a type of experiential spatiality.[346] To Téllez, Aalto's Mount Angel Library in Oregon USA is an "analogic precedent" to the Salmona reading rooms. The idea of "analogic precedent" is, understandably, used by Téllez with prudence to prevent his falling on deterministic explanations of the complexity of generative processes. Téllez is also aware of the banality of previous polemics on and misunderstandings of the work of Salmona, particularly involving Colombian colleagues who superficially accused the architect of "copying" F. Ll. Wright in his early project (1964) for the tower of the Colombian society of architects S.C.A [347]

There is evidence to support the idea that Aalto's Mount Angel Library's resemblance to Salmona's reading rooms is "analogical," and not just in the sense of a poetic parallel coming from the critic, but as an intentional poetic re-creation by the architect. Aalto's influence permeates the whole composition of open and enclosed spaces in Salmona's public work for cultural centers. Salmona's interest in Aalto's vast complexes—comprising open and enclosed spaces for public use—was particular; he overtly acknowledged Aaltos's important influx in his professional career that is reflected in his place-compositions.[348] A monographic publication of Aalto's architecture, for instance, circulated on the drafting tables of the architect (in 2006) years after the completion of

[346] Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 561.
[347] Téllez, *Salmona:Obra* 141.
[348] See, for instance, Rogelio Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly: Permanence and Change in Architecture*, ed. Mikko Heikkinen (Jyväskylä, Finland: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2003) 21.



**Figure 117. Mount Angel library, Oregon USA. Alvar Aalto, architect. Photo by Morley Baer.**



Croquis para la primera concepción del plan, planta.

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**Figure 118. Rovaniemi cultural centre. Sketch by Alvar Aalto.**

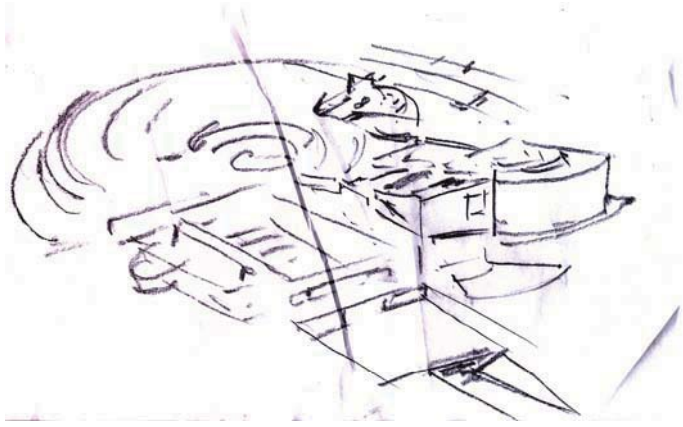


**Figure 119. Biblioteca Virgilio Barco, Bogotá. Sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

the Humanities and the V. Barco Library. The book on Aalto was a document of study and, I would say, a poetic device for transfiguration of a now traditional legacy. Aalto appears to be more than latent in Salmona's consistent explorations on a similar theme in later projects (ongoing during 2007) for cultural centers in Manizales and Medellin, Colombia. The images of Aalto's work that I bring to illustrate the following discussion were consulted by this author directly in Salmona's studio from that 'open book' resting on the drafting tables.[349] Téllez targeted those pertinent referents of Salmona (in Aalto) though, he then moved on to subjective judgments and personal opinions, commentary, which, irrelevant in the end, reflected favorably on the Colombian examples:

> However, the Salmona design is vastly better than that of the Finnish master [A. Aalto]; being more advanced structurally and having curved facades more graceful and functional than the harsh, jagged, broken facets of the Aalto design. A case of a design that goes far beyond an "influence."[350]

Beneath Téllez's critical opinion of the historical precedents to Salmona (the reading spaces in question and Salmona's work as a whole) one may find the latent issue concerning Salmona's acknowledgement and particular treatment of the notion of architectural tradition. The subject of tradition was nonetheless neither explicit nor developed by Téllez. I provide then a brief conceptual introduction prior to going into the specifics of Alvar Aalto and Louis Kahn's previous achievements transformed by Salmona in the making of these reading rooms.

[349] I refer to Karl Fleig, *Aalvar Aalto: Obras 1963-1970,* trans. Lucy Nussbaun, Clare Nelson and Graham Thompson (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1974).
[350] Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 603.

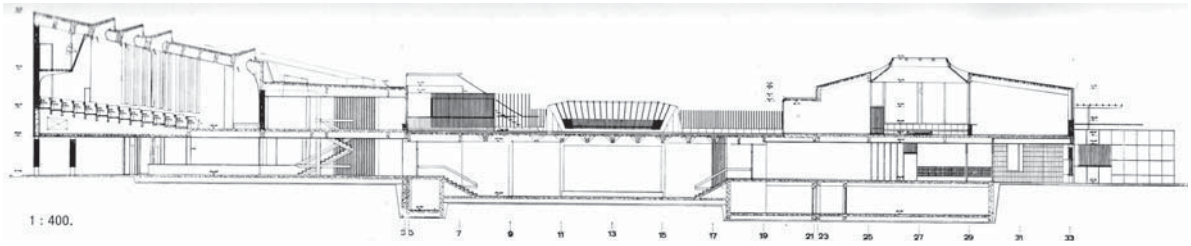



**Figure 120. Cultural centre in Wolfsburg, Germany (1959-63), Alvar Aalto architect: transversal section.**

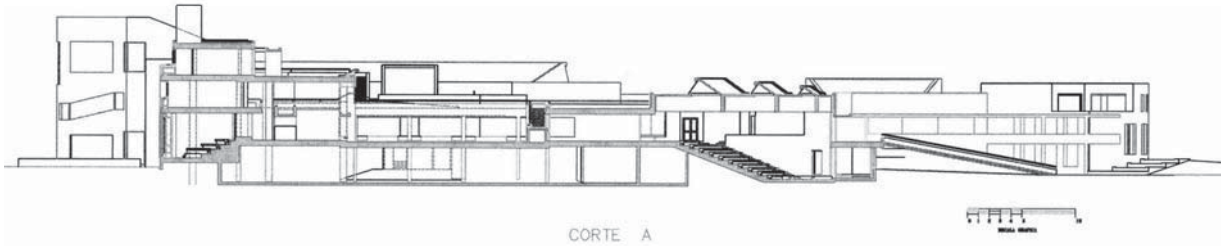



**Figure 121. The Humanities building: transversal section. Drawing by the Rogelio Salmona studio.**

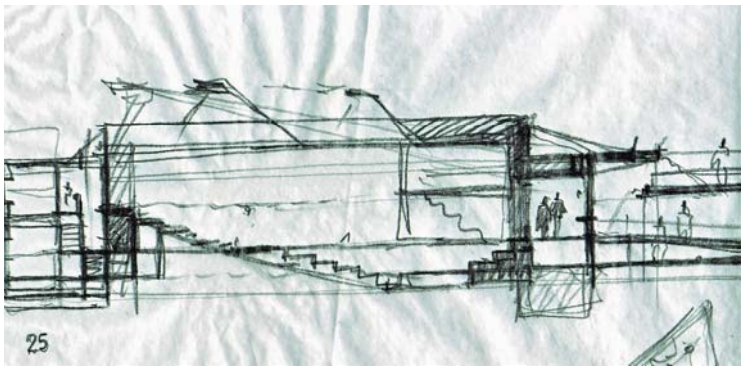



**Figure 122. Design sketch (section) by Rogelio Salmona for the Centro Cultural Moravia, Medellín, Colombia (circa) 2005.**

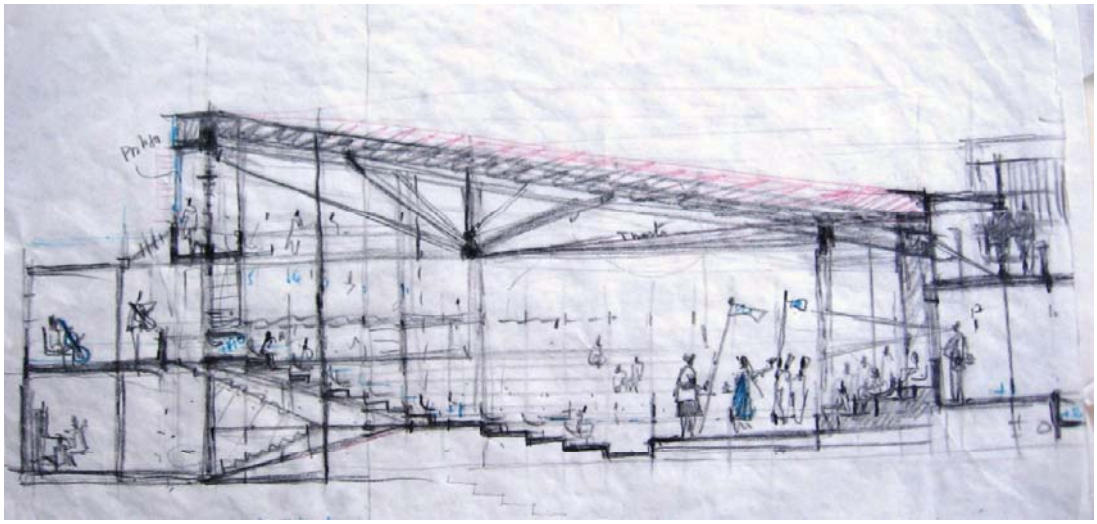


**Figure 123. Design sketch (section) by Rogelio Salmona for the Centro Cultural Moravia, Medellín, Colombia (circa) 2005.**

***Briefs on Architectural Tradition***

"… What we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how."

Wordsworth[351]

W.A. Eden on the subject is helpful for its particular clarity and simplicity. Eden calls attention to the nature of tradition in architecture starting from the meaning of the word that links it, essentially, to "an act or process" that involves at least two people and implies "transmission;" therefore, it comprises a giver, a receiver and something passed on, like knowledge or manners.[352] From one of its basic definitions, tradition is "the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation," or simply "the fact of being passed on this way."[353] In its etymology, the word comes from the "Latin *traditionem* (nominative *traditio*) a handing over, delivery."[354] It is peculiar nonetheless that the word treason shares origins with tradition from its Latin root *traditionem*, in fact influenced by the verb *trair* (betray) to the "old French *traison.*"[355]

For further review of the Salmona case, it is pertinent to retain from Eden's analysis that this transmission process requires preparation of the receiver as to the understanding of a common language. One thinks then of the oral, the written, and even the representational language of drawings and images. Transmission is in language and therefore may result in incomplete assimilation, "for the tendency is always for an idea to lose something in transmission."[356] By the same token, transmission may lead to error. However, as Eden suggests, and it is logical to infer too, incompleteness does not necessarily mean error. These two aspects may, and I argue would normally differ, for instance, in the contemporary world, where there is an inherent tension between the hypothetical, complete assimilation of tradition and the rapid, almost explosive, current process of historical change—the change of the "circumstances."

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[351] As cited in the title page of William Arthur Eden, *The Process of Architectural Tradition,* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1942).
[352] Eden 2.
[353] *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd ed., revised (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983): 1869.
[354] *The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology,* 1st ed., Robert, K. Barnhart, ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1998): 825.
[355] *The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology* 830.
[356] Eden 9.

At this point a distinction should be made between the idea of "historicism [that] refers us to the set of circumstances (economic, political, cultural) whose complex interactions allow us to account for a given event, while historicity involves the specific temporality of the event and its aftermath," [357] this is, the historical link between events, (in this case architectural) facts and their outcome. The issue, properly noted by Eden, is that there is room for change in processes of creation, based on the use traditional elements, as the discovery of novel relations does not invalidate those already known.[358] Eden concludes that tradition, as the process of transmission of an "idea of architecture", a theory or knowledge, is something that should transcend the notion of style into a "composition," or a relation of parts of a building that, apart from aspects of function, "satisfies the human mind and spirit."[359] The "idea of architecture" that Eden proposes remained vague, though, he made it explicit. A holistic attempt to define architecture was beyond the reach of his essay.

An excerpt of Salmona's testimony, inquired in colloquial dialogue with this author, sheds light on his ideas of history, tradition and memory in the context of place-making:

> [H]*istory obviously is what humankind and time have been accumulating. Tradition is what has been formed in history. One finally continues to a certain degree: continues, enriches, and transforms tradition. In my case the knowledge of history has been important. And also the promenade through history, because it is not only written history but walked, lived history.*[360]

In that same conversation Salmona subsequently clarified that, by "lived history" he meant the experience, in present time, of meaningful buildings and landscapes he

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[357] Slavoj Zizek, "Pychoanalysis and Post-Marxism: The Case of Alain Badiou," The South Atlantic Quarterly (spring 1998): <http://www.lacan.com/zizek-badiou.htm> (12 June 2008). .
[358] Eden 10.
[359] Eden 9. Eden brings awareness of this with simple examples coming from music, like the relation between notes called the octave and its possibilities for re-elaboration and variation.
[360] Personal interview (1 Sept. 2006). The subject is further treated in Chapter VII, 171-73.

consciously looked at with contemporary eyes as relevant to further "re-creation." To be noted too, Salmona valued the study of the built and written (documented) historical legacy in the context of its times and circumstances.[361]

***Re-Creation and Imagination: Transformation and Image Blending***

I want to focus in the Salmona case on the possibility of a partial (selective) transmission of given elements of tradition, their new adaptation to the specifics of site and culture and their further poetic amalgamation by means of the processes of imagination. Salmona's words come to the point:

> *I don't believe in the absolute creator. For I believe that, guided by the ethics of my practice, I am recreating what others have created. I mean that, architecture is permanent recreation.* […] *I transfigure acquired knowledge to the actual needs of the social context to which I belong.* [362]

I propose then to situate history and tradition, in a graphic analogy, along horizontal and vertical axes. The horizontal implies the understanding of historical events and their constructs in their temporal context. The vertical is accumulated tradition, which might be related as well to the poetic license of compressing past into present.

Salmona had one eventual direct contact with Aalto (while working at Le Corbusier's 35 *rue des Sevres'* atelier) and visited just some of his works, nonetheless, Aalto's work was felt empathetically[363] and the subject of a conscious review and analysis based on both, drawings and texts. One could say that Aalto's most evident resembling works were dwelled indirectly through representations—the Mt St. Angel library (noted by Téllez)

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[361] See Chapter VII 173.

[362] My translation, from Rogelio Salmona, "Un Obrero del Cosmos," interview, by Carlos Gustavo Alvarez, *El Tiempo* 10 June 2003, Sec. Libros: 1.

[363] Rogelio Salmona's testimony, in personal interview of February 21, 2007 manifested his empathy as to the analogous cultural condition of – what one could call – periphery and resistance, despite the distant contexts of Finland and Colombia. As well he referred logically to brick and the idea of material unity or cohesiveness of Aalto's work. A digital audio file and original Spanish transcripts are available for consultation in the Rogelio Salmona Studio archives. See, as well, Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly* 21-22. In the reference, for instance, Salmona openly and gratefully acknowledged his most influential architects, "particularly Alvar Aalto," [in the context of] "the history of Western architecture."

and the Rovaniemi library [364]for the reading rooms in question. There is no evidence of Salmona's lived experience of Louis Kahn's projects whose elements of resemblance are most noticeable.[365] Therefore one may argue that in the case of the reading rooms, we refer to a form of indirect experience—like with the Yourcenar's visit to Piranesi's *Carceri*—that is completed by the power of imagination. As Bloomer and Moore put it, precisely in reference to Piranesi's *Carceri,* "the imagination can even perceive places were the feet cannot reach."[366] Eden called the "miracle of imagination" the "action of forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses," enabling the transmission of an architectural idea.[367] With Bachelard in mind, I would stress, imagination has the capacity of transforming and transporting the experience indirectly awakened, for example, by a book or a drawing. I refer then to carefully read, measured and most important, experienced architectural drawings and images: representations that open up worlds for potential re-creation. By analogy, this process is close to the indirect experience of poetry reading. About the book Borges, for instance, told us similarly that

> […]is a set of dead symbols. And then the right reader comes along, and the words—or rather the poetry behind the words, for the words themselves are mere symbols—spring to life and we have a resurrection of the word.[368]

Borges though reminded us of direct experience as a substance: "poetry is not alien—poetry is […] lurking round the corner." So, in the world we live 'drinking in' poetry."[369]

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[364] The analogy between the preliminary sketches of the Virgilio Barco Library and *Rovaniemi* is noticeable. Reproductions of Aalto's Rovaniemi sketches and Aalto postcards sent from Finland by friends, pinned on the walls of Salmona's studio, speak of the memorable nature Aalto's buildings had to Salmona.
[365] I refer for instance to the Exeter Library circular thresholds, or Kahn's monumental project in Dakka, India. Téllez identified the round openings as an "echo of Louis Kahn" who, in turn seems to have re-created them from traditional Chinese architecture. The similiarity of the previously mentioned gardens of *Suzhou* and its 'resonance' perhaps in Kahn and then in Salmona is noteworthy. On the subject, see Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 389. Salmona visited Kahn's works in Philadelphia (not Exeter) while teaching history of architecture, during a course abroad with the Universidad de los Andes (early 1960's). The subject is treated by Téllez in a manuscript (unpublished) for the history of the Universidad de los Andes.
[366] Kent Bloomer and Charles W. Moore, *Body, Memory, and architecture* (London: Yale University Press, 1977) 88.
[367] Eden 12-13.
[368] Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse,* ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press) 4.
[369] Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 1-3.

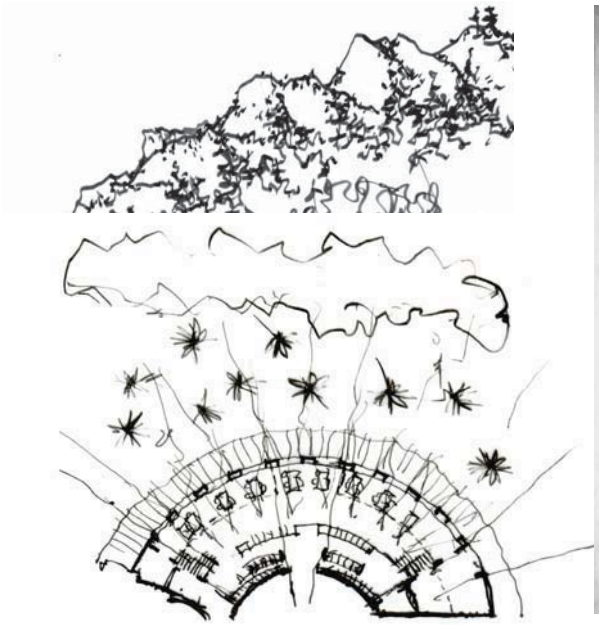


Figure 124. The Humanities building: the reading room. Interior-exterior relationship, sketch by the author.



Figure 125. The Exeter library, Louis Kahn, architect: central space. Photo by the author.

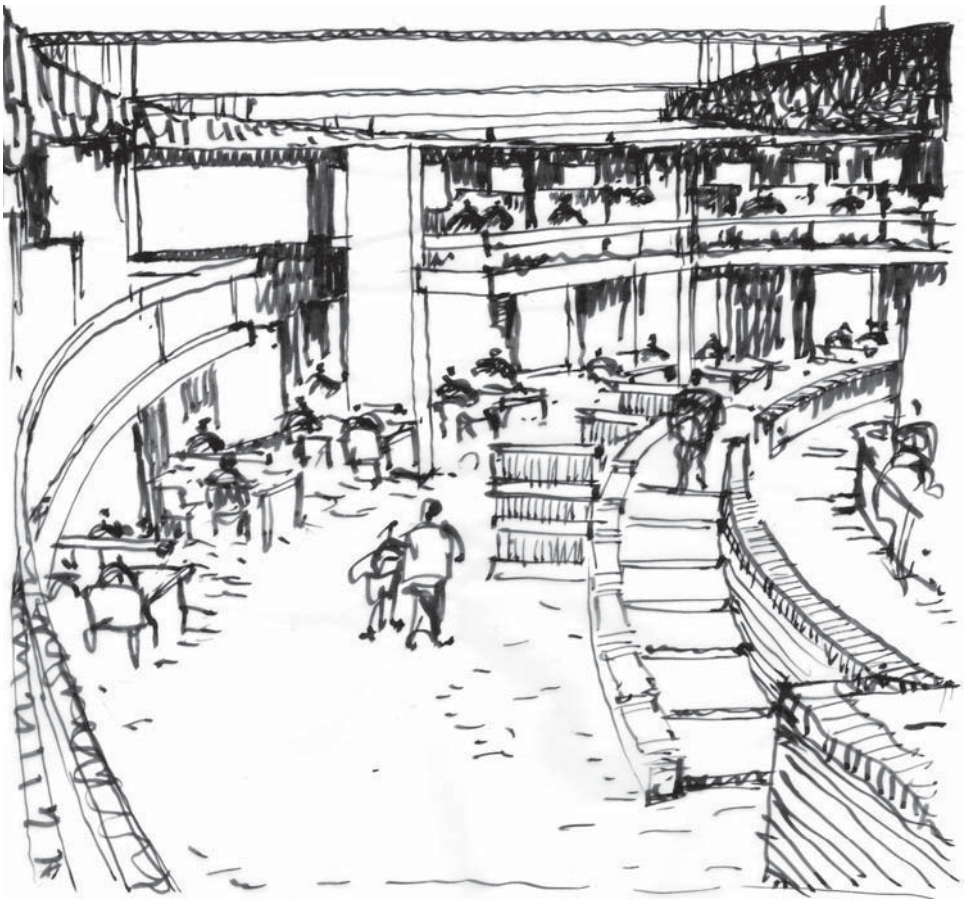


Figure 126. The Humanities building: the reading room interior. Sketch by the author.

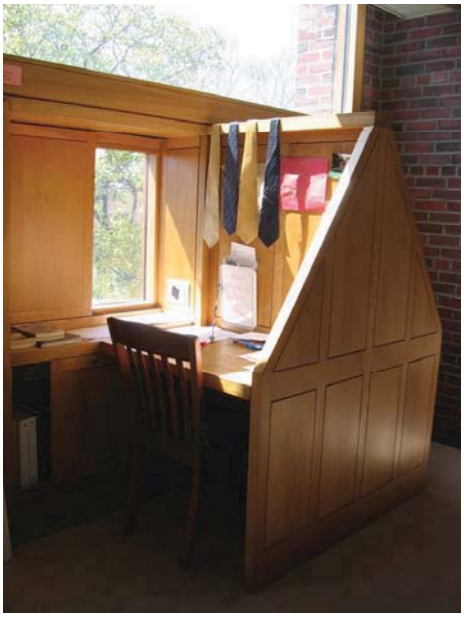
Back to the Humanities building, some relevant aspects to consider in reviewing the generative processes of the semi-circular reading room are: first, it originates in a look at previous achievements attaining the resolution of similar creative themes; second, there is partial transmission of an experience; and third, but no less important, a blending and or distortion of images occurs that is, I argue, site specific in terms of culture and technology, ethical, and poetically intentional. In the reading room Salmona responded to Aalto's Mt St. Angel Library with a similar formal approach and spatial configuration however, with a different material imagination, arrangement of cultural practices within the inner space and relation of the reader to the exterior space.

The exterior or bounding skin responds to site specific conditions with regards to the inner reader. Readers are directed outside, pushed towards controlled exterior views, enjoying the favorable conditions of an outdoor place gardened by the architect that acts as a buffer towards the university campus. This occurs in Salmona's reading room and similarly in Kahn's Exeter Library. The form and location of the room within the composition owes as much to its precedents as to the specific geographic, even astronomic, orientation to the northeast and southeast quadrants. This way the inner spaces are receptive to equinox and solstice light, capturing shafts of "*luz rasante*" (tangent sunlight)—on this aspect Salmona was explicit. [370] The fabrication of niches and corners by the windows, to cradle the readers and protect them from direct sun exposure, and the celebration of the book next to a meaningful inner space, constitute other analogies to Kahn's Exeter Library. In Aalto's example the readers inhabit the interior semicircular luminous void and the books are arranged in the outermost part of the radial layout. Book stacks in Salmona's reading room occupy the inner space, situated closer to the luminous, lofty, spatial gap with no readers in between.

The "material imagination" that makes up the space of the Salmona room is "distorted" —in Bachelard terms—with regard to its precedents.[371] The Mount Saint Angel interior is polished, painted plaster; in Kahn's Exeter Library, dark brick and rather cold, gray

[370] Personal interview (21 Feb. 2007). See Chapter VII 214.
[371] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 7-13, 59-63.







**Figures 127& 128 . The Exeter library, Louis Kahn, architect: reader's niches". Photo by the author.**

**Figure 129. The Humanities building: model of a wall section of the reading room. Photo by the author.**

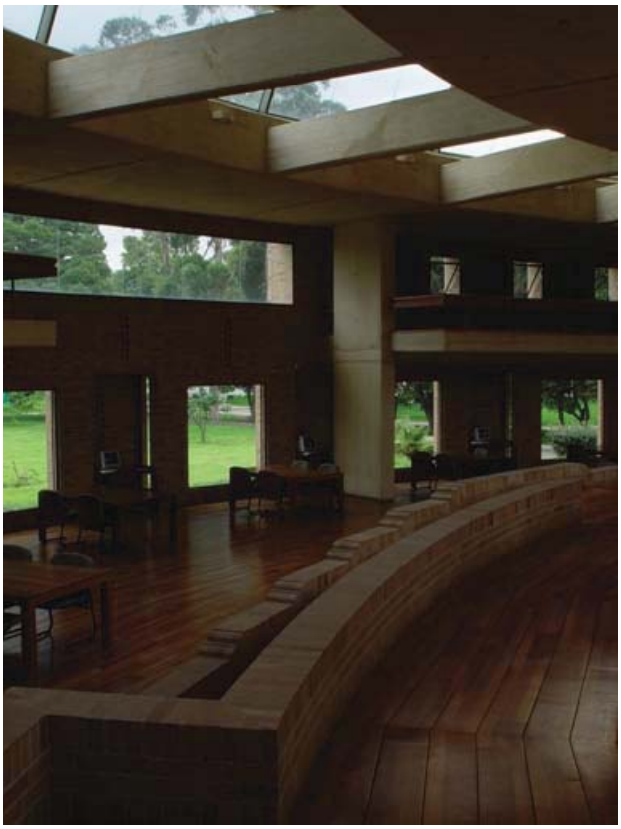


**Figure 130. The Humanities building: the reading room. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**



**Figure 131. Mount Angel library, Oregon USA. Alvar Aalto, architect. Photo by Morley Baer.**

concrete go hand in hand. The Humanities reading room is integrated with the rest of the composition, bounded by a unique, light-ocher, concrete product of particular experimentation with local sands to match the equally warm brick work, all consciously developed to capture and enhance the luminosity of the ever spring-like—at times rather chill—Bogotá's highland plateau.

One could say that if the references are "analogical" to Salmona's new composition, these parallels happen, not in a random manner but in a conscious, intentional and poetical imaginative re-creation and adaptation of elements coming from the modern tradition. This re-creation is a metaphoric blend of previous experiences into a new one. Salmona, departing from Aalto's precedent, suppressed the supportive columnar system all along the curvilinear luminous void.[372] That point of comparison is relevant as it refers us to a process of re-elaboration on spatial problems or themes of exploration, central to, and inherited from, the mainstream of 20th century modernism, particularly that of the progressive emphasis on horizontality and the "flow of space." Leatherbarrow makes note of the persistent evolution of a generalized, modernist concern for reducing vertical elements as much as technically possible—the "Building [of a plan of] Levels"—in order to remove any upright visual and-or structural obstruction.[373] In Salmona, however, this particular intention is relative to the spatiality proposed for this room and should not be generalized for the entirety of his work. Yet, this aspect also connects Salmona's solution of this reading room—and the very similar subsequent one conceived for the Virgilio Barco library—with the process of transformation and evolution of a problem specific to the 'new' architectural tradition of modern architecture: that of producing 'open' or 'free' space for subjective dynamic experience. This aspect transcends the boundaries of the local and establishes a dialogue with architects like Le Corbusier (logical mentor), but also A. Loos, F. Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, R. Neutra and, of course, with Aalto. In the unusual central and axial way one accesses the reading room, there is a point to be made. Open spaces and the spaces of transition of Humanities are consistently approached in an oblique, lateral or tangential manner. Salmona related this condition of

[372] Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 61-62.
[373] See, for instance, David Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002) 25-38.

obliqueness in the ambulation of place to a delightful quality of the architecture of the pre-Hispanic America. Salmona's reference to his experience of the Pachamac temple is particularly relevant. [374] Perhaps it is more than a haphazard event that, exceptionally, we approach the reading room in a strict frontal and centrally axial way. This condition perhaps signifies the nature of this room as it is inspired by the mainstream axis of western architecture: a room re-created from the modernist "tradition of the new."

In this part of the composition, I argue, Salmona appears to have transformed some 'originals', appropriating them in a doubly meaningful sense of the word. The new reading room is appropriate, as it borrows selectively from relevant elements of the modern tradition to take new property of them in a distant and different history, geography and circumstances. The new reading room is also appropriate in that, Salmona made it suitable to the particularities of that different geographic, social and cultural context producing specific ethical and poetic solutions.

***Reorientation; Towards a Meaningful Exterior***

Leaving the reading room towards the nodal antechamber zone again requires perambulating in the bluish atmosphere of the dense aquatic drum. The intimacy of the rite of departure resides in the circularity and scale of containment, focusing one's attention on the sky oculus replicated by the mirroring water disk in the middle. A contrasting amber radiance comes from the outside of the drum through the translucent round wall. I exit the drum and start surrounding the filigreed wall westward, following the yellow cast upon the translucent textured brick surface by those very intense sunrays, now almost horizontal. Close enough to the wall I feel inclined to touch its soft undulating surface made of a myriad of elemental brick modules (jambs) with smoothed round edges. Made of these curved figured jambs and alternating baked-clay ochre masses with space gaps (voids), the brickwork adds softness to the already sinuous, ample form. The bricks allow interaction between the different luminous qualities coming from both sides; their round edges thus gradate the action of natural light on the warm

[374] Rogelio Salmona, "La Experiencia es Mía, lo Demás es Dogma," 10-11. On the subject see the excerpts of Salmona's testimony cited in Chapter VII, 208. See as well Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* 89.

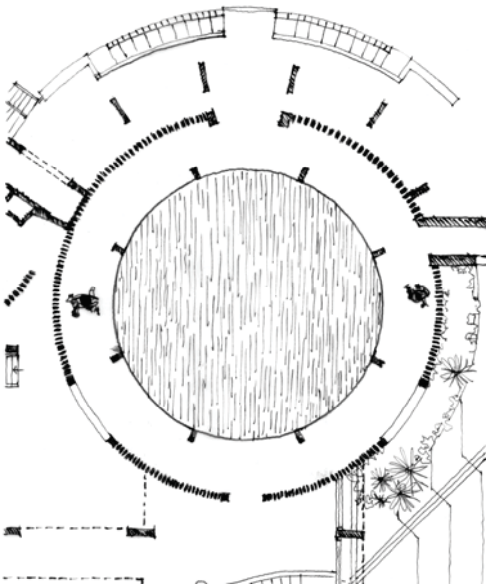


**Figure 132. The Humanities building: the "moon mirror" courtyard, layout. Sketch by the author.**

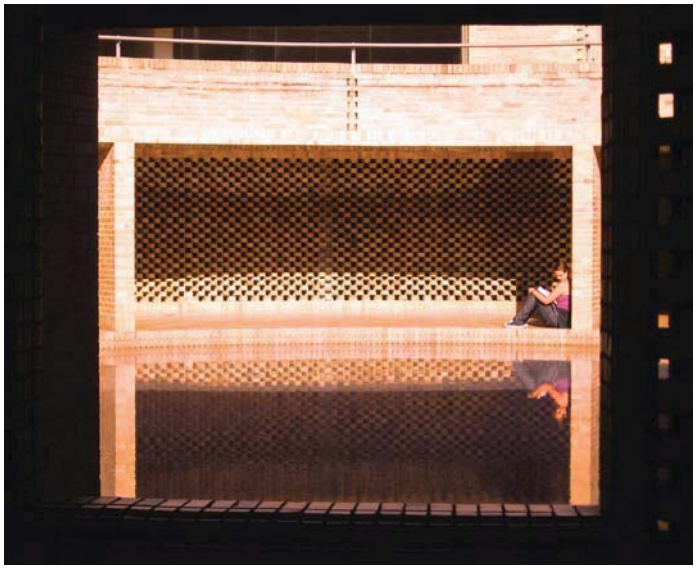


**Figure 133. The Humanities building: threshold to the "moon mirror" courtyard with "jalousie." Photo by the author.**

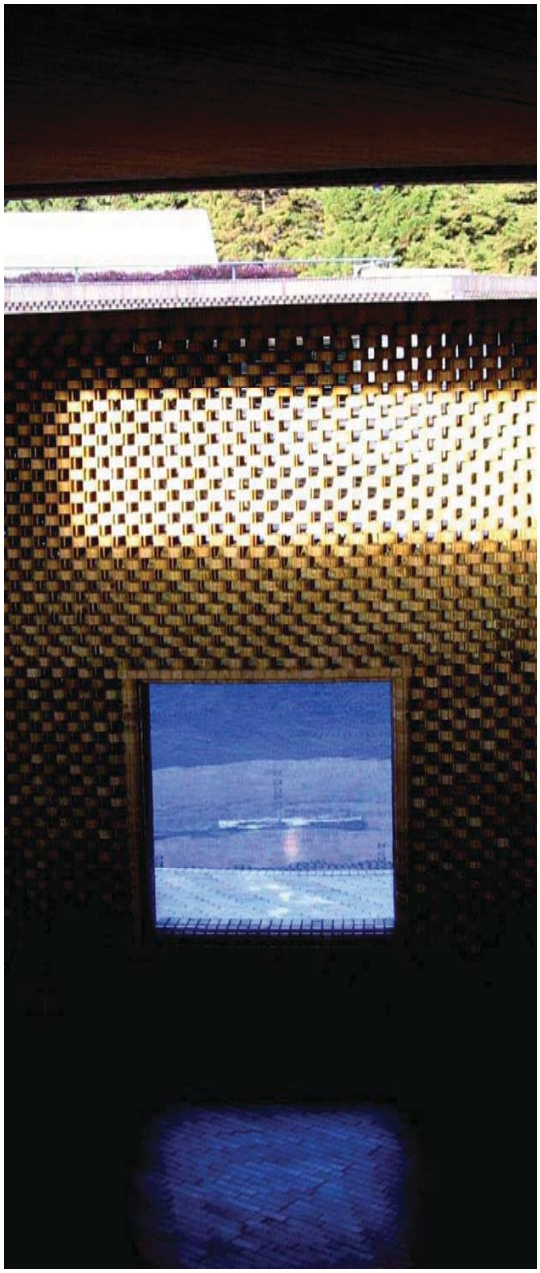


**Figure 134. The Humanities building: "jalousie." Photo by the author.**

light baked-clay surface, producing an enchanting effect. The concepts of inside and out are made ambivalent by the wall, in this particular perceptual moment.

The brick velum that makes the circular boundary radiates a mysterious and enchanting aura animated by playful sunbeams and water-reflections. It is a smooth filigree, baroque-like for its plastic tension and sensual qualities while reminiscent of the arabesque. A vivid experiential image of the "Mashrabiyyah" woodwork screens (arabic مَشْرَبِيَّةْ )[375] resonates in the Humanities building, incorporated in a contemporary manner, in a new place (geography and culture), with a shifted technology. This element of a distant tradition is re-created into a new poetic image and transformed in newness. The image Salmona brings and distorts is not a random association. It can be related to the cultural influence of Moorish architecture in America that, being more than latent, was already brought forth in the Hispanic colonization process. Salmona referred to this architectural element as "Muchharaby," being of "feminine character" […] "a wall that that allows one to see shadows only." Subtly he referred it to its erotic connotation and alluded to its meaning form the French *Jalousie.*[376] This amalgamation refers to Salmona's outspoken concern for making places which are the product of re-created experiences that are not chosen at random but so as to deliberately form a conscious cultural synthesis.[377] Another brick drum is contrapuntal to the round wall of brickwork filigree. This one is not translucent though its surface is fluted. The sun-setting rays which the building invites, through a west facing glass pane, freely penetrate its inner world, igniting and animating the built matter. The convex fluting of the second curved enclosure provides an enriching contrast to its surface. The fluting is inverted or negative regarding the classical patterns and was built using the same jambs that make the drummed Mashrabiyyah. The porous walls alternate with massive brick thresholds—many times directly open to the natural elements—as with plainly framed, glass panes. The use of thin glass panes to seal

[375] See for instance Saleh Lamei, *Light Screens: the Arabian turned woodwork (Mashrabiyyah) and stucco coloured Glass Windows in Egypt* (Cairo: Ministry of Culture, 1996). See as well Visual Education, Inc., *Art and Architecture of Cairo: the Ottoman Period, 1625-1850,* visual material + guide (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Visual Education, 1977).
[376] My translation, see Claudia Arcila, *Triptico Rojo: Conversaciones con Rogelio Salmona* (Bogotá: Taurus, Alfaguara S.A., 2007) 98.
[377] Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 122-23. See, as well, Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly" *Elephant and Butterfly* 21-22. See Salmona's testimony in Chapter VI, 167-71.

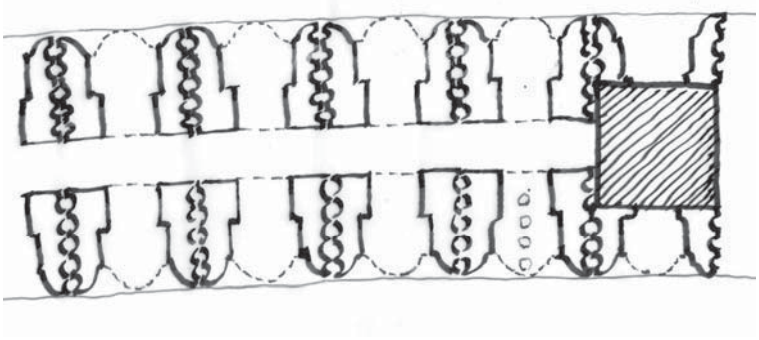


**Figure 135. The Humanities building: "jalousie" detail in plan. Sketch by the author.**



**Figure 136. Jambs.**
**Photo by the author.**



**Figure 137. The Humanities building: the "moon mirror" courtyard with "jalousie" enclosure.**
**Photo by the author.**

some openings, partially and selectively, is a sign of a subtle thermal modulation of the *sabana's* "wonderful" ever spring climate of itinerant high solar radiance.[378]

The materially animated, geometric composition of these spaces, one perceives acknowledges the primacy of human experience in the creation of built place as our existential space in the world. Hence one identifies specific architectural qualities expressed in relation to temporality. There is here a feeling of delay and therefore the seduction of subtle further discovery, and a successive penetration of thresholds inciting to resolve the riddle of multiple discontinuities in the experience throughout the promenade in this place-composition. In the experience of theses places, one makes sense, the prime objective of architectural invention (a re-creation in Salmona's terms) is not abstract volumetric arrangement, formalist speculation, or mere functional purposes. Understanding architecture primordially as an event in time Salmona wrote that:

> *It is a task of architecture, to propose spaces that allow time to pass.* […] *for that reason architecture is, as well, memory, for it establishes an intimate relationship between the subject, the space and its time. Any modulation in space is as well, in the same instant, a modulation in time.*[379]

The fostering of meaningful events and the progressive discovery and enjoyment of the narrative of the building appears to be the creative intention that leads to the wondering effect of this setting on its dwellers. I recall the architect's words:

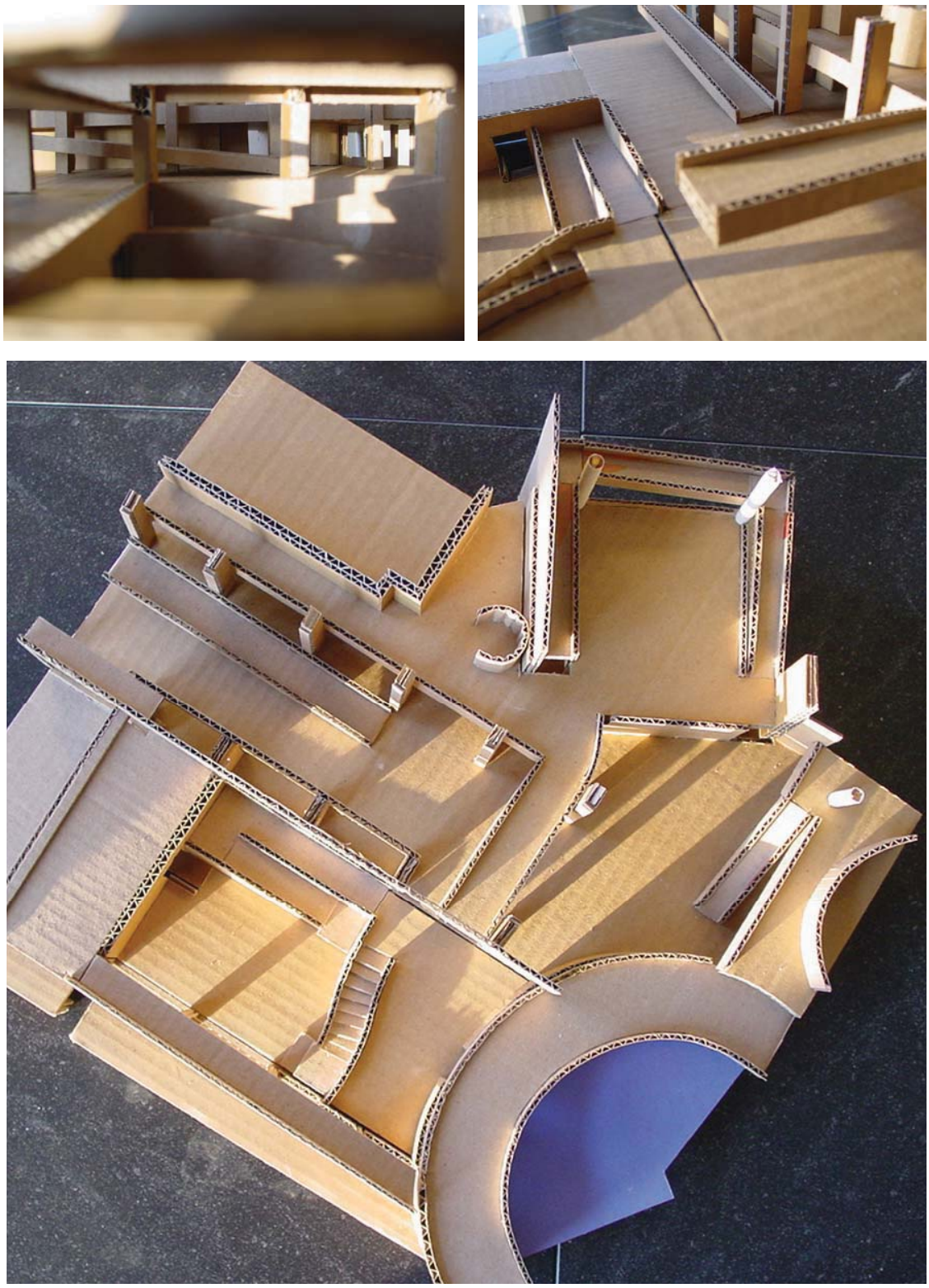
> *Among many uncertainties, I am sure, architecture must make time manifest through its appreciable qualities; rhythm movement, silence, variation, surprises; but also*

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[378] See Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 138. Salmona in the cited source makes a brief though sensitive description of the qualities specific to the *Sabana* weather and geography. See as well Rogelio Salmona, interview, *Arquitectura Para la Memoria*, by Ricardo Posada Barbosa, *El Malpensante* 19 Dec. 1999, Jan. 2000: 50.

[379] Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 152-53. My translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *Le corresponde a la arquitectura proponer espacios que permitan al tiempo transcurrir.* […] *Por eso la arquitectura también es memoria. Toda modulación del espacio es también, en el mismo instante una modulación en el tiempo.*



**Figures 138, 139 & 140. The vestibular nodal area of the Humanities building. Analytical model and photographs by the author.**

*through time's own virtues: events, nostalgia promises, utopias and memories.*[380]

Bordering the warm radiance of the curves and virtually touching the reflection of the sunset—latent in the inner spaces although, still from here, imaginary, quasi blinded, I begin to climb a straight flight of stairs, again in the direction of rays of light traversing this inner world that from the antechamber I have seen before, but is newly presented to me due to my shifting experience of it. Looking west through a wide opening, the joy of the landscape is incomplete; the horizon is blocked by a disrupting building that looks more like a shipping container. Facing the window in a funneled cul-de-sac, I try to instinctually find a way out, turning in the opposite direction and following the smooth wall, alongside the void at the edge of the mezzanine. A forest of brick buttresses, concrete posts, bridges and ramps—visible yet inaccessible beyond the mezzanine's gap—surround me, in exploding, dynamic perspectives. As I walk, I note that the round filigreed wall ends before reaching the ceiling and leaves to a meager concrete skeleton, the job of supporting the roof. Through the sinuous long horizontal gap a landscape shows up and one is amazed by the effect of a "borrowed view."[381] The silhouette of the wall of conifers is the first limit; the second is the higher, serrated profile of the eastern hills which unexpectedly appear for the first time to the inner dweller, wrapped in amber atmosphere; a reddened firmament becomes the ultimate, radiant limit.

The mezzanine and the half drummed rooms, resting isolated at one edge of the lofty space, were carefully disposed to accomplish poetic functions. They provoke multifarious events of active corporeal engagement with, and sensorial desire of, the visually present but inaccessible spaces that composed this nodal place. The semi-cylindrical room and its slicing mezzanine were though out as seductive devices for the exploration and

[380] Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly* 21.
[381] See Ricardo L. Castro, "Syncretism, Wonder and Memory in the Work of Rogelio Salmona." *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America.* eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 155, 159.

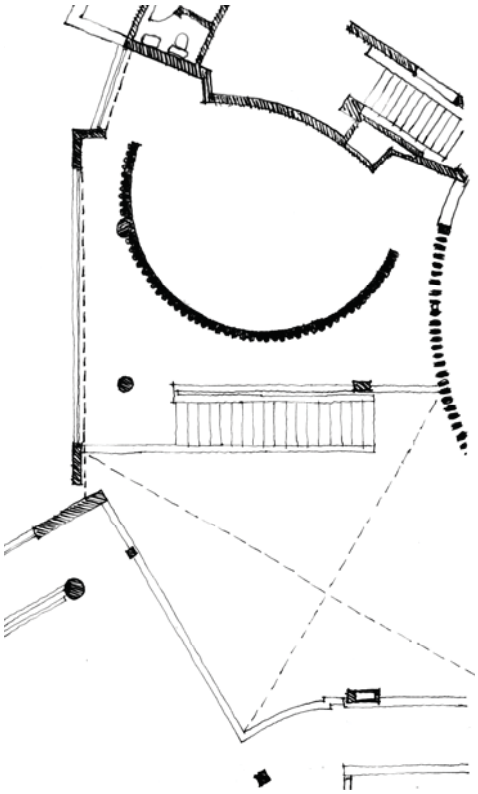


**Figure 141. The Humanities building: the mezzanine, the spatial gap and the fluted drum. Layout, sketch by the author.**



**Figure 142. The Humanities building: the mezzanine, the spatial gap and the fluted drum. Photo by the author.**

enjoyment of an inner world,[382] on multiple levels, from various angles. The mezzanine allows one, as well, to begin to discover a significant exterior landscape. These seemingly abstract composition elements, a half-cylinder and an intersecting plane, while augmenting the sensations of joy and 'erring' of the inner spaces, also begin to provide a sense of orientation to the certainly complex labyrinthine perceptions of disorientation which characterized the inaugural events—or temporal apprehension—of the building in its complex sequence of places.[383] Climbing the stairs to the mezzanine is one way, among others, of beginning the progressive and successive disclosure of the magnificent local geography, at different scales and in different dimensions: the selective re-presentation of an urban geography that remains visually occluded at ground level by the buildings surrounding the site. [384]

While walking eastward on the mezzanine, the combined effect of the two almost colliding, convex walls leads one's body to an edge in which, laterally, an intimate particularly low and narrow opening puts oneself outside on a terrace. This open-air space roofs the corridor surrounding the circular water disk which, looking down at this moment is a mirror reflecting a shifting sky. The round hollowed terraced is an open room only partially contained. It is gradated again through a sequence of limits that were carefully established, and modulated to bring circumambiency above an architecturally limited high horizon. The massive, dark-green, pine wall defines a natural first plane with the hills as background. As one navigates around the hollowed circle, it becomes

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**382** Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: a Philosophical Topography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 15, 174, 189, 196. In Malpas' phenomenological approach, place is an unfolding of the world: "…a world given in relation to activity, an objective world grasped from a subjective viewpoint…" Malpas' interpretation is in turn inspired by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the perceived world (*le monde perçu*). See for instance Thomas Baldwin, introduction, *The World of Perception*, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, trans. Oliver Davis (New York: Routledge, 2004) 7-13. Malpas draws as well on the subtle but important distinction made by H-G. Gadamer between "environment" and world, the latter concept better reflecting the complexity and poetic nature of the human existence.

383 See Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 119-20. Salmona's testimony in the referred source concerning his experience in the cities of the Magreb is relevant in this regard.

384 See Salmona, "Palabras en la Apertura de la Exposición en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* 10. The word dimension has ethical, poetic connotations: temporal as it implies notions of memory and history, and physical as to the geographic and spatial implications. Salmona referred to this aspect holistically as the "revelation" of "*entornos*" (surroundings). The *entorno* subject is further treated in Chapter VI, 187.

clear that some sloped fragments of the reading room roof act as parapets occluding parts of the surrounding landscape thus blocking sight of some neighboring structures, very probably those considered undesirable or uninteresting. The sloping curved parapet display geometric patterns that resemble pre-Columbian artistic motifs. Though the tonal differentiation of the ornamental forms is subtle, some noticeable indentations on the joints between the baked-clay tiles emphasize the graphic motif.[385]

The ring is wide enough to be more than just a corridor and is inhabited in diverse manners: a couple interlaces in imaginative ways at an edge; others engage in more academic dialogues—transcendental discussions perhaps are taking place. To favor those informal enactments, the bordering low-parapets and handrails perform too, as comfortable benches. I notice that the round hole with the unreachable water one storey down balances the centrifugal tension of this place with the landscape in its contour. The view westward is restricted by a set of escalating volumes and other terraces. So, after feeling the *pulse* of this open place, I continue climbing, this time just a few steps but still in open-air, to find a window in front of my view that from bottom to top opens the sloped clerestory from, and to, the antechamber below. It is the end of another ceremonial ascension, although a short and intimate one. Gazing down through the glass surface, I rediscover the antechamber and realize that I am back at the beginning, revisiting the inaugural experience of the building from the elevated perspective of this roof terrace. Estranging is this angle of vision, as a soul which, removed from its body, overlooks itself engaged in quotidian earthly events. Somehow I look at myself engaged in the rite of entrance that occurred just moments ago.

By means of this angular look from above, I discover other compositional spatial and volumetric characteristics. I note that in the conception of the antechamber, Rogelio Salmona most likely re-elaborated on the spatial design strategy of the *Raumplan* conceived by Austrian Architect Adolf Loos (1870 1933 ). The constant *obliqueness* and endless options for perambulation, the spawning of meandering steps, mezzanines and bridges all allow for roaming around the inner space of the antechamber and its

[385] See the "Ornament is no Crime" and "Rooftop Parapets" sections in Chapters VI and VII, respectively.

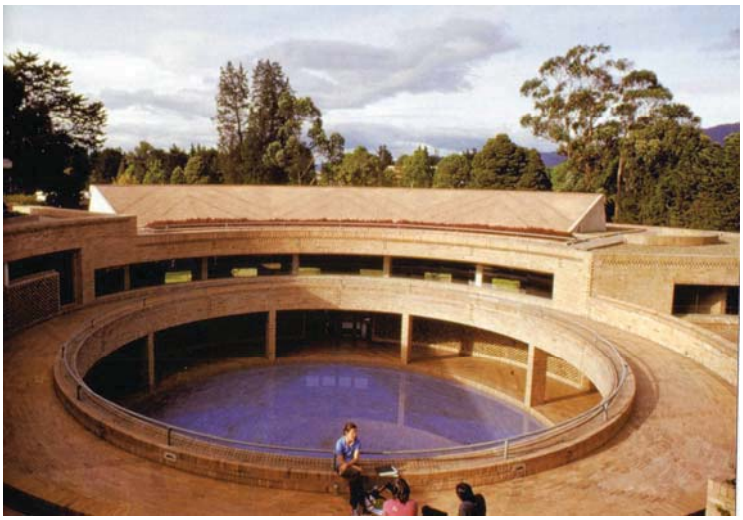


**Figure 143. The Humanities building: rooftop terrace above the "moon mirror" courtyard.**
**Photo by Germán Téllez.**



**Figure 144. The Humanities building: rooftop terrace above the reading room.**
**Photo by Alejandro Tamayo.**

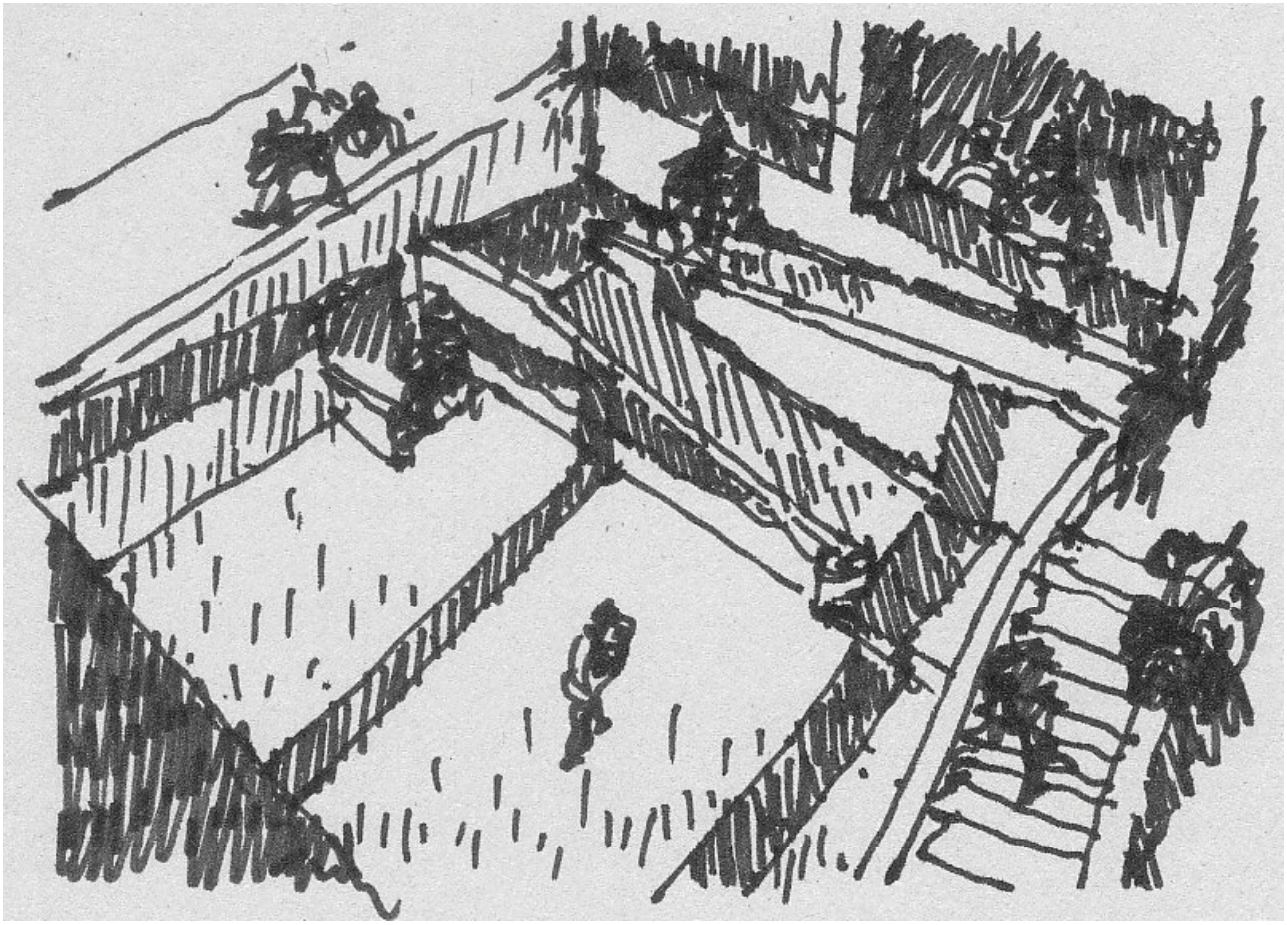


**Figure 145. The vestibule from above. Sketch by the author.**

surrounding spaces in various active ways as in Loos' *Raumplan* conceptions. Observing from above the antechamber nodal zone, in all its multiple possibilities for corporeal engagement in space, different levels and dynamic situations, makes one thing of the multileveled, interlocked, habitable boxes of Loos' houses.[386] The "Loosian" experience is not only re-created but also intensified and subverted. [387] This is possible due to the various thresholds opening on three sides of the horizontal, middle portion of the enclosure, and the lofty ascending and surrounding sequence of platforms, ramps, bridges and stairs, which allow people to participate in this nodal space and the numerous other events, from neighboring transitional spaces to sequentially ascending ones. The ply on the flat roof, from where, outdoors, I had the chance to spy on the events happening down in that place—and so to reflect upon its features—makes this subjective experience memorable. This memorable place, in its meaningful temporal and all sensorial dimensions, inspires me—an architect too, in formation—the will to re-create it in the making of another place. Rogelio Salmona's legacy and the emphasis he made on the possibilities of experiential transmission recalls Bachelard, praising Valéry's words: "the true poet is the one who inspires."[388]

The re-creative strategies of Salmona aimed, in this case, towards provoking the experience of a "spatial flow" and the subjective awareness of corporeal movement through space. These concerns are arguably in continuity with the early 20th century modernist's explorations after the Cubism (Le Corbusier's *Apres le cubisme*) rooted in, Bergson's idea of image motion and the phenomenologist H. Minkowski.[389] Salmona inherited these spatial concerns of modern architecture during his "formative period" in Paris at *La Sorbonne,* from Francastel's elaborations on *Art and Technology,* and of

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[386] On *Loos's Raumplan* see, for instance, the essay compilation by Max Risselada and Beatriz Colomina eds. *Raumplan Versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, 1919-1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988).
[387] See Pierre Francastel, *Art & Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* 204-06. Curiously enough Francastel situates Loos' houses in the origins of the "Organic" style that Salmona would re-elaborate and profess after his return to Colombia, precisely via Bruno Zevi's *Apprendre à voir l'architecture*, with whom Francastel discusses in the cited source. See, Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as space: how to look at architecture,* Joseph A. Barry ed., trans. Milton Gendel (New York : Horizon Press, 1974). Salmona however subverted Loos' prejudices against ornament. Francastel in the reference, not surprisingly, criticizes Loos's "crusade against ornamentation" as a product of his "Calvinist mentality."
[388] Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination* 22.
[389] Francastel, *Art & Technology* 211-17.

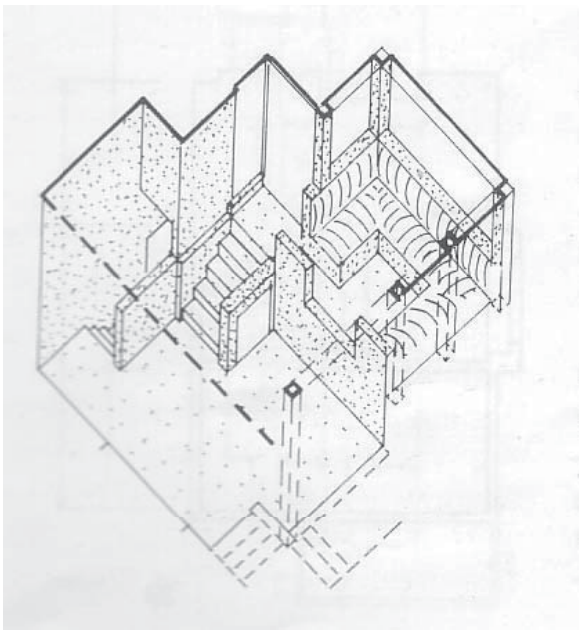


**Figure 146. Adolf Loos: *Raumplan*.**




**Figures 147. Adolf Loos: brochure.**
**Scanned by the author in the Rogelio Salmona studio.**

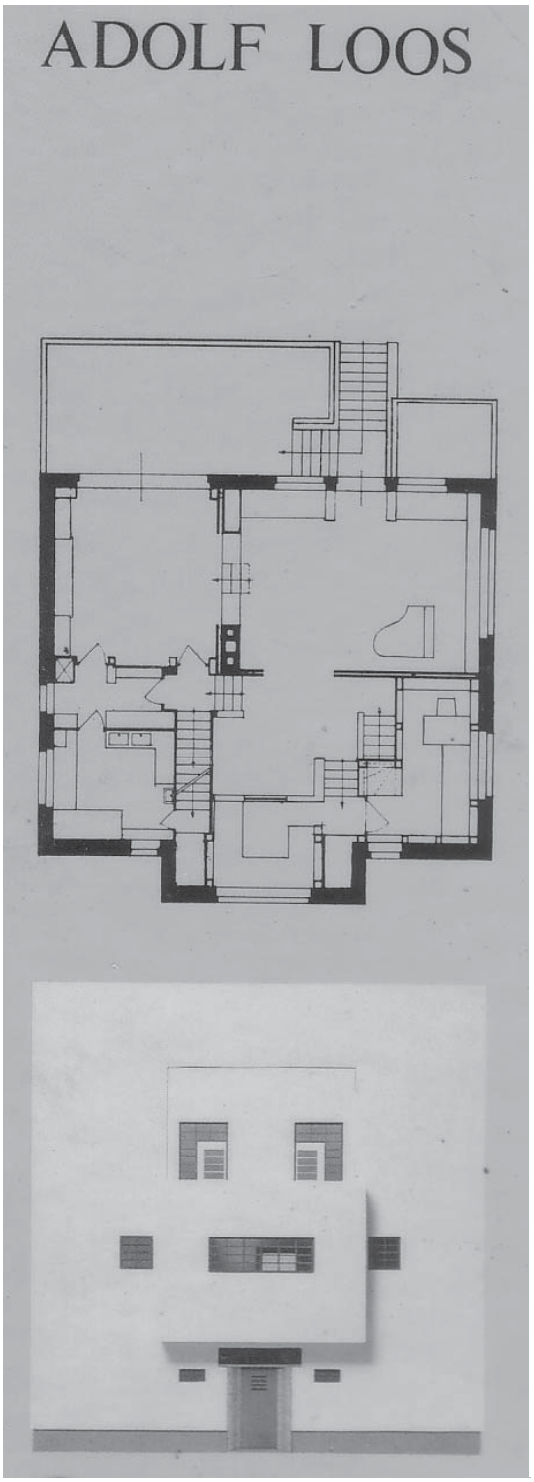



**Figure 148. The Moller house, Adolf Loos Architect.**
**Book cover (fragment).**

course, working for Le Corbusier's *Atelier* at 35 *rue des Sèvres.* In this regard, and as noted before in the case of the reading room, Salmona may properly be seen as continuing the modern tradition. However, the particular setting of these concerns in cultural landscape or context, the specific approach to the materiality and the use of history and memory with no prejudice, in metaphoric amalgamations of experiential images resulted in a building distant from the far more restricted modernist agenda in terms of visions on history, cultural specificity, functional efficiency and program of functions. I continue wandering in, around and between the places of this building in search of other reflections.

Leaving the roof-terrace behind through another door, of reduced height and humble overall dimensions, I begin to re-discover the Humanities interior. A bridge located just a few steps down the entrance passes across the nodal vestibular spaces towards a square tower whose hollowed core is bounded by overlooking peripheral spiraling ramps. That new destination is reached, again, not frontally but tangent to the twisted tower. While on the bridge, spanning a lofty double-height space, that rich world that was already anticipated tangentially from the ground level of the vestibule reappears: a place of people in motion amidst luminous shafts on the textured round surface pillars, stairs and ramps. Behind the space-gap, the mezzanine is anchored to the fluted brick drum and rests isolated on one's right. Peripherally, the antechamber comes into view again, this time at an angle down below. And frontal to the half-cylinder mezzanine, on my left, the double-height is prolonged in the form of a tall and stretched loggia hosting a very long ramp that ascends in parallel to a cloistered court, rhythmically framed by brick buttresses. Walking on this bridge, virtually none of these beings and events, things, rich surfaces and limits in motion (the place that surrounds me) is in reach, but all these things are vividly present and resonate in me. I would say then that this place, in all its composing elements as events in time, configures an erotic experience. I would locate this place, as experienced, in the realm of *eros*, configuring multiple events of sensorial pleasure, of continuing desire. *Eros*, in Plato, "is the capacity to enter into relationships



**Figure 149. The Humanities building: bridge, stairs, space-gap, round enclosures and brickwork filigree. Photo by the author.**

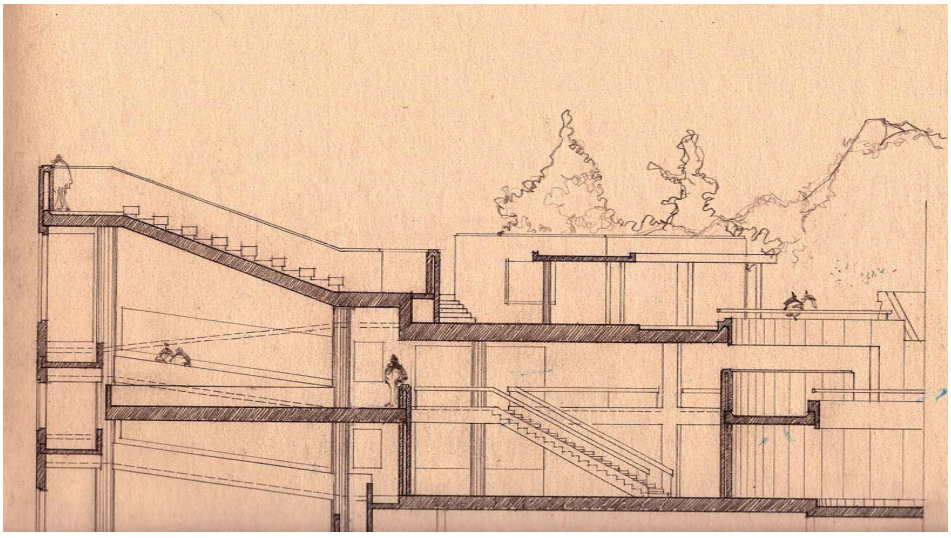


**Figure 150. The Humanities building: transversal section (fragment). Drawing by the author.**

with objects." Plato reminded us that "[t]o love is to love something" […] however, "what is loved is something lacked." [390]

***Spiraling up Around a Cubic 'void'***

Passed the bridge, in the threshold of a square tower, another cluster of possible paths is created. Once more, the promenade splits into multiple courses; the sort of ambivalence that suits the continuous, seemingly endless 'erring' (*errancia*) among the places of the Humanities building. Instead of drifting around, I walk directly onto open ground, in central stage, formed in the empty core of the square tower. I find the place stunningly luminous, due to the reflection of the late-afternoon sunrays that reverberate in the air after impacting the sloping, warm-ochre concrete ceiling. The central square space of a theatrical essence is now the locus of a gathering event. Enveloped by ramps, a noisy group of people spiral up and down, overlooking some ephemeral stalls and other mobile objects which animate and complete the joyful experience: these things, amongst which we inhabit an otherwise empty space, are making the place at this moment. Drawn forward by the stimuli of both the inclined plane and the luring tangent light, I begin to climb rhythmically and without effort. But, half way from a higher but uncertain destination, while surrounding the central *platea*, the shimmering light on the concrete ignited so close to my eyes grabs all my attention. The traces on the hardening concrete left by a wooden framework, carefully handcrafted, are enhanced by the luminous influx.

Looking down at a slant, one realizes that, the complex composition of spaces is explosive rather than just sequential. The places that compose this rich nodal fragment of the Humanities building unfold from here. The flying ramps are ever present even when one is not focused on them. My peripheral vision is always soaking in spatial variations: spawning bridges and platforms as well as refined tactile brick enclosures wrapping in parts various architectural skeletons. All of these together make up the inhabitable structure of one rich inner world experience. These elements don't just pile up; they are composed, juxtaposed and imbricate in specific geometric dispositions to respond to

[390] Plato, *Symposium,* trans. A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989) 199b, 200b.

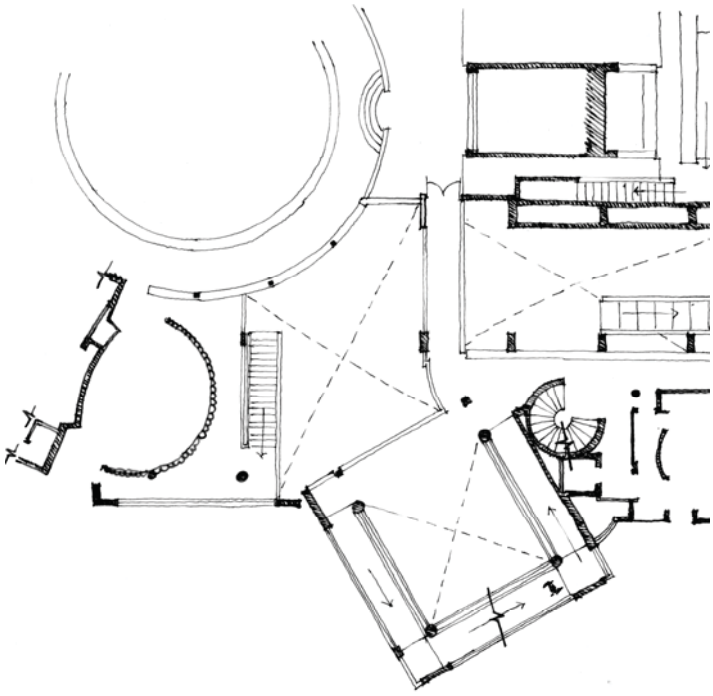


**Figure 151. The Humanities building: mezzanines, ramps, bridges, stairs and space-gaps around the cubic space. Layout, sketch by the author.**

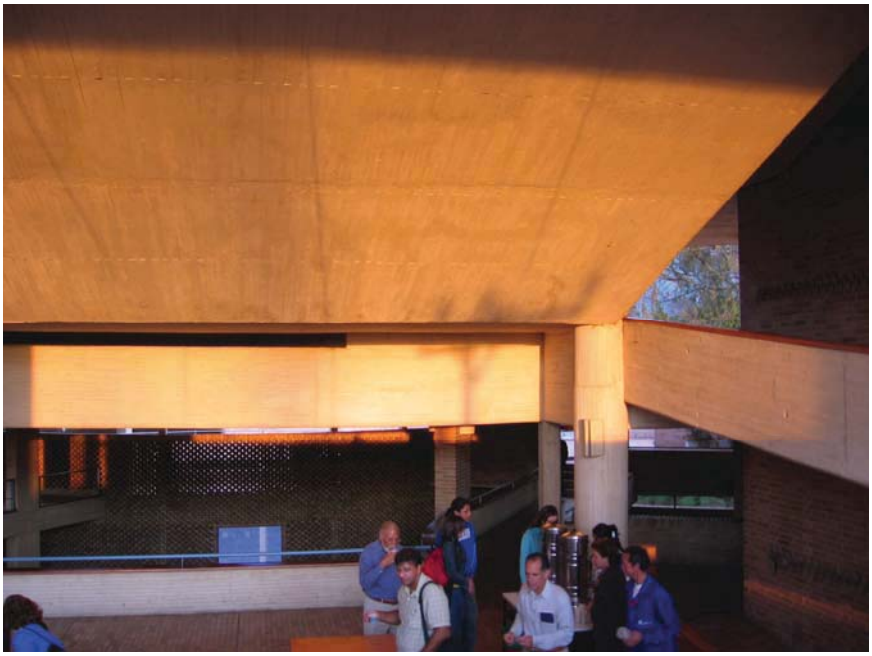


**Figure 152. The Humanities building: on the ramp, around the cubic space. Photo by the author.**

specific relationships between the experiencing subjects and the interior spaces. These architectural elements and the spaces they configure and contain might be seen as "allocentric:" articulated modulations with regard to an exterior world.[391]

I perceive the material boundaries and "immaterial" devices playing in the making of these built places as one concerted assemble of *techne* and *poiesis*.[392] This is suggestive of the architect's mastering of techniques and a particular consciousness of our all-sensorial bodily engagement in place, but also intentionality in the modulation of subjective experience: a narrative of continuous expectation and sudden discoveries, a play on orientation and modulation with an external milieu, and a delightful (erotic) suspense made of continuities and discontinuities. Certainly, the ideas of *techne* and *poiesis* were familiar to Salmona's understanding of the essence of place-making.[393]

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[391] I use the concept from as in Malpas, *Place and Experience* 53-54.

[392] The word *techne* is generally translated as "art", "craft" or "skill". It remits to pre-Homeric Greece as the skill of the master builder –woodworker (*tekton*) to assemble: to "connect" and "divide." See Maria Karvouni "*Demas*: The Human Body as a Tectonic Construct," *Chora three,* eds. Alberto Pérez Gómez and Stephen Parcell (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999) 105-08.
In Plato *techne* is a "crucial word" that already involves technical but also "nontechnical" wisdom and evidences an ethical component. This is the main argument of David Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Techne,* (University Park, Pa: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996). Aristotle stressed that the value of *techne* was relative to its use (intentionality) thus, not absolute, but ideally good and useful at once (*chraomai*). See Roochnik 31.

[393] Salmona in personal interview (Feb. 21 2007) made reference to *Techne and Poiseis* as essential concepts in architecture: *poiesis* as 'making,',*techne* as know-how. He based on readings of Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics.* See Aristotle. *Nichomachean Ethics.* Trans. W.D. Ross. Available online at <http://classics.mit.edu//Aristotle/nicomachaen.html> 21 aug. 2008.
Salmona spoke too of the meaning of *techne*, not only as a skill or an art (the "know-how" of "making" – the architect's kwnoledge in this case) but fundamentally as "awareness of the intentionality" thus suggesting ethical and poetical connotations. Technology as "logos", resolves the difference between *techne* and *poiesis,* for in technology both are fused; see Rogelio Salmona, "La Experiencia es Mía, lo Demás es Dogma," Seminario Abierto El Oficio del Investigador, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, 19 Nov. 1997 (Manuscript unpublished consulted in the Rogelio Salmona studio archive). Roochnik appears consequentially to Salmona's interpretation, I quote: "Aristotle talks about a form of practical knowledge which is architectonic" […] "Aristotle describes the highest good as the object of *Politike* which is *Architektonike* in the sense of giving orders; a form of practical ordering *techne*." See Roochnik, 278. The *techne- poiesis* subject is further treated in Chapter VI 191-97. A Contemporary definition of *techne* that similarly involves the idea of consciousness of the use of techniques is in M. Foucault, "Space Knowledge and Power," *Rethinking Architecture: a Reader in Cultural Theory.* ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997) 348-369. See as well Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines* (New York: Penguin Group, 1999) 15-16. Rooting the concept to the word *techne,* Kursweil stresses technology as intended to produce a magical effect, regardless of the complexity, or simplicity of the techniques implied in its production. Kurswail addresses too the material and immaterial nature of technology; Salmona's interpretation might be seen in parallel. I shall return to this subject, in the conversations with Salmona, Chapter VI 191-97.

## ***Chapter V. Astounded by the Hills***

When the spiraling, upward walk to the rooftop comes to an end, the mountains give an astonishing first impression. Reaching the stratified complex of garden terraces of the building, one perceives the *cerros* in extra-ordinary immediacy and grandeur. Given the precise leveling of the arrival platform, and the eastward rotation of the volume you exit in an exact east orientation. The elevated, broken horizon of the monumental eastern hills has been brought to one's close experience, giving the outgoing dweller sudden territorial and existential sense of orientation. The mountains are inescapable, provoking a strong poetic emotion. It is the culminating event of our rite of ascendance. For the duration of a few, seemingly infinite instants, around six in the afternoon, the *cerros orientales* of Bogotá appear in the shimmering, atmospheric, reddened purple of a burgeoning twilight.

The silhouette of the hills in the background stands out behind the line of trees that, due to the distance and angle, is high and massive enough to occlude the flat tar roofing of the neighboring structures as well as some features of the urban landscape that perhaps Salmona considered undesirable. Blocked by the first plane of trees remain eroded foothill patches with their sandpits and quarries, and the progressive invasion at the bottom of the slopes by slums and overly dense constructions by real estate speculators. In various published interviews and in other short texts, Salmona was recurrently very critical of the insensitive modification, deterioration and ultimately the destruction of the most significant features of the Andean landscape that gives identity to the city making it unique, more enjoyable and also livable. Salmona's reference to the meaningful geography of the *cerros* was particularly consistent.[394]

I draw a parallel between Rogelio Salmona's strategy of "borrowed scenery"[395] and the idea of the elimination of the "middle-ground" that Le Corbusier achieved, for instance,

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[394] See for instance Rogelio Salmona, interview (19 Dec. 1999), "Arquitectura Para la Memoria," by Ricardo Posada Barbosa, *El Malpensante* (Jan. 2000): 50. See as well Rogelio Salmona, Luis Kopec and Francisco de Valdenebro, introduction, *Estudios y Diseños Para el Eje Ambiental de la Avenida Jiménez*, report submitted to IDU, Bogotá, 1997. The subject is further developed in Chapter VI 189-90.

[395] See Ricardo L. Castro, "Syncretism, Wonder and Memory in the Work of Rogelio Salmona," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America,* eds. Felipe Hernández, Mark Millington and Ian Borden (Ámsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 159. I draw on Castro's analogy with the Japanese

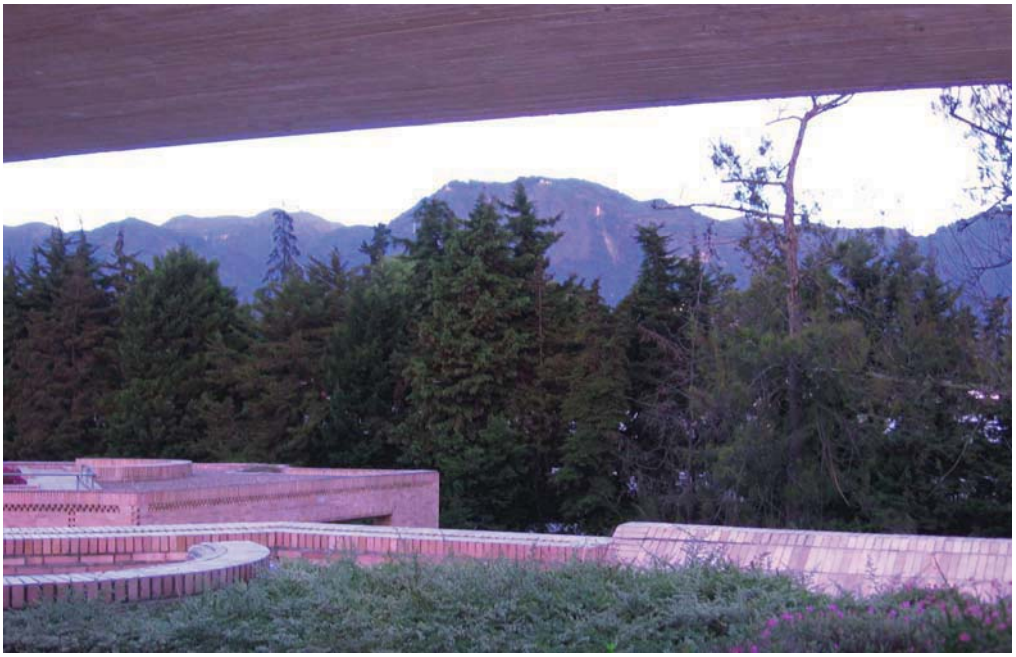


**Figure 153. The Humanities building: on the rooftop terrace.**
**Photo by the author.**

in the Unité d'habitation in Marseille.[396] Salmona selectively brings forth elements of the surroundings to the dweller's experience, capturing and framing the landscape of the *cerros*, while, as Leatherbarrow writes, Le Corbusier celebrated an open elevated horizon, articulated to the viewer by means of high parapets that occlude a, most likely, undesirable urban landscape in the "middle ground." Precedents of a similar strategy of promenade culmination facing the firmament and framing specific features in the surrounding landscape are also found in Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye with parapets and a sculptural program atop, in the Duval factory or in La Tourette monastery. However, of the former Marseille example, Salmona's own testimony offers a different appreciation.[397] That Salmona' elaborates on his master after almost a decade of apprenticeship with him in Paris, should not come as a surprise.

Louis Kahn's terrace atop the Exeter Library also presents a selective occlusion of the "middle ground" and a celebration of the sky vault—the *firmamento*, Salmona used to say—as the ultimate limit. The resonance of Kahn's legacy has been noted already on more than one occasion. Perhaps most relevant is that Kahn was akin to Salmona in his belief that the "universal architectures" of the past supersede the segmented identity of the architectural language of modernism. Louis Kahn achieved this universality based on the Kunst's theory and ideas of order inherited from the Beaux-Arts tradition via his master Paul Cret. Salmona, I believe, would reach for universality, through a phenomenological approach to universal architectures of the past making these subject to poetic re-creation in a process of amalgamation, not random, obviously, but based on a particular cultural synthesis. Both architects however decanted universal architectures differently, [398] althoguh both did it through the filter of the Modern tradition.

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notion of *Shakkei,* or "borrowed scenery." In the source cited Castro further elaborates on the treatment of landscape in the work of Salmona.

[396] See, for instance, David Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* (Cambridge Mass: The MIT Press) 17-18.

[397] I go back to this subject, in conversation with Salmona in Chapter VII 220-222.

[398] On Kahn's roots in the Beaux Arts tradiotins see, for instance, Alexandra Tyng, *Beginnings: Louis I. Kahn's Philosophy of Architecture* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984) 6-21. For a meaningful synthesis of Rogelio Salmona's own understanding of his position within, and intentions toward tradition see his "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly." *Elephant and Butterfly: Permanence and Change in Architecture,*" ed. Mikko Heikkinen (Jyväskylä, Finland: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2003) 13-24.



**Figure 154. The Duval Factory, Saint Di*é*, France, Le Corbusier, architect. Rooftop terrace with framing devices. Photo by J. Baltanás.**

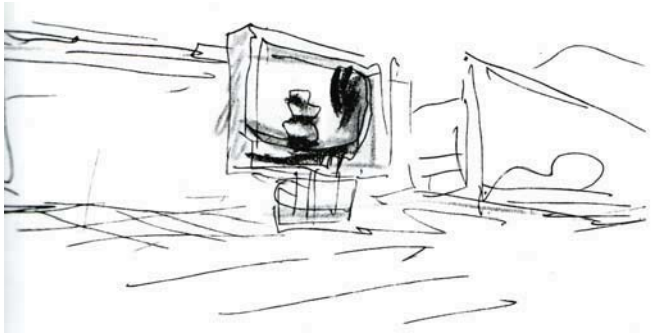


**Figure 155 . The Duval Factory. Rooftop terrace with framing devices. Sketch by Le Corbusier.**



**Figure 156 . The *Unité d'habitation,* Marseille, France. Le Corbusier, architect. Rooftop terrace with framing devices. Photo by J. Baltanás.**



**Figure 157 . The Exeter Library, USA. Louis Kahn, architect. Rooftop terrace with framing devices. Photo by the author.**



**Figure 158 . The Villa Savoye, Poissy, France, Le Corbusier, architect. Rooftop terrace with framing devices. Photo by the author.**

Salmona's awareness of certain themes and problems within the traditions of architecture often extend beyond a specific work, architect, or even historical period. I refer to general problems posed by the architect, leading to exploratory themes which from this experiential journey one may identify: the denunciation of profit oriented, banal, uncritical modification of the meaningful urban landscape we inhabit; and, as creative contestation, the poetic incorporation of a historicized notion of landscape and geography and the consideration of the specificities of a given society in his place-making métier. This general societal concern marries to an architecturally specific one: the conscious, continual exploration of our dynamic, subjective experience of space through the amalgamation of design strategies, exploring particular inflections of a contemporary concern with an architectural spatiality of "flux" that attempts to be at once site specific and a significant cultural construct.

The occlusion of the in-between urban landscape or the "middle-ground" in the Humanities building, unlike the Marseille and Exeter examples, is not in effect all along the peripheral walk. One instead experiences the varied topography made of diverse layers of terraces, 'natural' landscape and urban topographies that, are at times, juxtaposed or selectively offered according to specific situations. Salmona was aware of historicity and experience as components of a holistic idea of landscape. From this he derived a perceptually dynamic proposition of it in conjunction of ideas of *ambulatio* and "edification." He voiced his various influences and interests in this regard. [399]

Following the strong first impression of landscape totality—where the hills are immediately in front and apparently free of human intervention—the promenade continues southward displaying an experiential image of urban disorder. One sees the palimpsest of mute architectural objects making up Bogotá's inner-city panorama. The *cerros* of *Guadalupe* and *Monserrate* are however in sight, remaining in the scene as background; an impressive and memorable one. This two mountains mark the colonial foundational site with *La Candelaria*, the historical city core on their foothills. They are

[399] See Claudia Arcila, *Triptico Rojo: Conversaciones con Rogelio Salmona* (Bogotá: Taurus, Alfaguara S.A., 2007) 168-73.

icons and a current setting to the city's significant ritual of pilgrimage. Even though the historic centre of the city is hidden by a myriad of inner city rooftops in between it is remembered due to an ingrained orientation in the local dwellers' cognitive maps, triggered by the magna image of *Guadalupe and Monserrate.*

The walk alongside the rooftop terraces of the L-shaped wings—above the half-cloistered courtyard—is framed and partly sheltered by a concrete pergola which accomplishes mainly aesthetic-experiential and sculptural functions. The shed is a stretched, flat, slab cantilevered on slender, rectangular supporting columns. Rather fragile in appearance, this structure does little to protect against the elements, rain or shine, but instead acts as a dynamic framing device and gives a sense of rhythm and human scale to the walk.[400] As a dock floating on the immensity of the sea, though inverted and ashore, the pergola gives limits and puts into human scale the otherwise immeasurable panorama; it gives existential dimension to, and orients the promenade towards the savannah's east-bound hills. The overall eastward direction of the stratified volumes and roofed terraces and the vertical boundaries escalating towards the southwestern quadrants of the building, in addition, direct the dwellers towards the enchanting profiled. Salmona put forth the meaningful mountains, landmarks of inner city Bogotá. I experience a wondrous de-familiarizing sensation when estranged, I confront the beauty of the hills, that virtually elsewhere remain oblivious due to general countless numbing urban interventions and the whirlwind of our quotidian life.

As one moves alongside the frames of the pergola, parallel to the *cerros*, the mountains are duplicated. The hills are mirrored on the glass wall of an elongated L-shaped volume that the pergola accompanies, limiting the roof terrace on the southwest part of the building. Some of the sliding glass wall panels are partly open, and the people working and holding meetings are virtually dwelling in the open air by the hills. Appealing to the properties of glass panes is no novelty after more than a century of modernist

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[400] Germán Téllez, *Rogelio Salmona: Obra Completa 1959/2005* (Bogotá: Escala, 2006) 542.
Téllez critically observe the functional limitations of this structure to shelter and protect from the elements. I emphasize instead on those other less mechanistic (poetic experiential), logically no less pertinent architectural 'functions'.

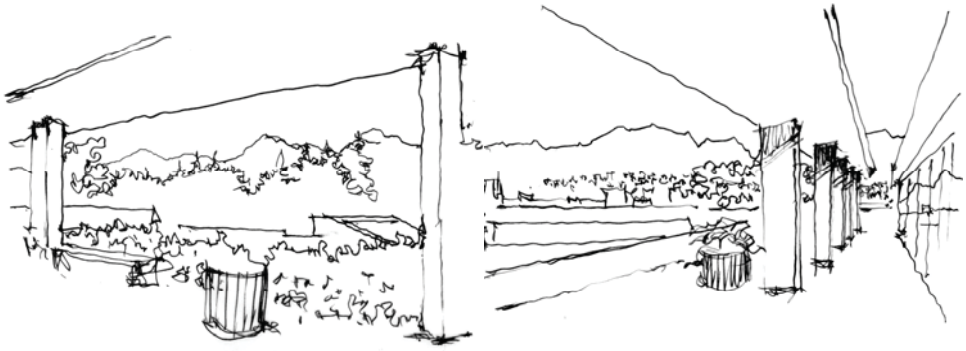


**Figure 159. The Humanities building, framing devices: concrete pergola on the rooftop terrace. Sketch by the author.**



**Figure 160. The Humanities building, framing devices: rooftop terrace. Photo by the author.**

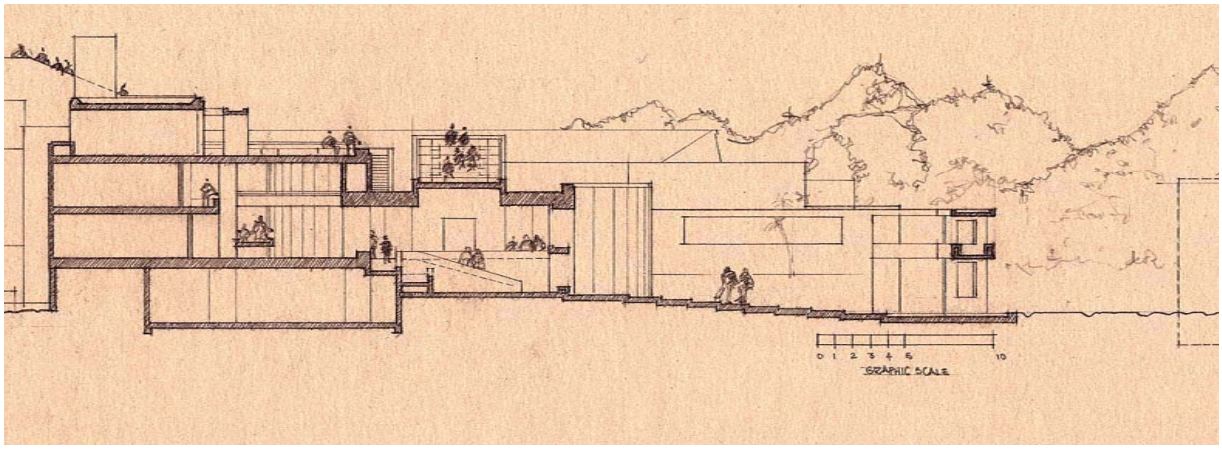



**Figure 161. The Humanities building: transversal section. Drawing by the author.**

explorations of new spatial experiences that rely extensively on the physical properties of "transparency" with functional and even symbolic-ideological connotations of the latter concept for architectures of total integration, inside and out. Beyond this now generalized modern use of glass in relation to spatial integration, I want to point out a subtle, meaningful act of presentation, the result of what I perceive is a thoughtful interpretation of the properties of reflective materials which Salmona did with glass in this case. Using reflection in this given situation, the architect underlined a message. In doubling the hills, he brings forth the image of something that was there, visible but not "evident."[401] Salmona appears to have prepared an event that makes the place an aesthetic experience and reveals critical messages concerning the environmental deterioration and generalized oblivion of the *cerros* of Bogotá.[402]

***

At the westernmost part of the building I found an intimate "corner."[403] That particular niche and threshold is formed by few architectural elements: the cantilevered turning point of the concrete pergola, a lone-standing buttress and a simple bench—both, brickwork made—materially humble but conceived with decorum. The bench incorporates a planter retaining some smoking, humid, dark soil and houses flourished bougainvilleas: these (no doubt) are core living element of this intimate architectural

[401] Concerning the emphasis Salmona made in the discourse of his mature work on the role of architecture as revelation, which goes beyond visual presence into latencies of history, the memorable, and even spiritual existential aspects, see, for instance, Salmona "Palabras en la Apertura de la Exposición en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 10.

[402] This critical situation and the lure of Bogotá's geographic specificity (the hills and the *Sabana* variable, highly luminous skies in particular) are clearly exposed in Salmona, "Arquitectura Para la Memoria" 50. The subject is the subject of a section of Chapter VI.

[403] I borrow the word from Bachelard's metaphors of domesticity frequently retaken by Salmona. For instance, see Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 40. Salmona's reference to Bachelard in the source cited is explicit. Concerning "corners" see, Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 c1969) 136-47.

For instance, see Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 40. Salmona's reference to Bachelard in the source cited is explicit.

composition. Alone, I then savour a delightful, fleeting moment. The last rays of the sun travel through the hollowed mass exposing only this "corner" on the terrace level, to the western panorama. Then, my encounter with the sunset happens: sitting on the bench, my back reclined against the buttress, in the gaseous diagonal of a solar shaft that, across the threshold is heading to the *cerros*. I am there to feel these last sun-shafts—passing through the hinge between the two volumes making up the half cloister—which are sensed as the only responsible for igniting the eastern hills with shimmering reddish luminosity. The sun is in retreat. By my side, under the gargoyles of the pergola, two empty, still wet concrete barrels wait for more rain water to come with the next diluvial *sabanero* downpour.

I continue along this promenade approaching the edge of the terrace and looking over the rectangular court. From above, I note, the hybrid architectural composition that bounds the courtyard: two sides, L shaped, are a rather conventionally and rhythmically arranged as a cloister; the third side is a free articulation of fragmented round volumes behind a closed plane; and the fourth is a simple one storey passageway. The two west-bound sides—from north to south—are higher volumes open to the court in the form of a reticular loggia, made of solid and deep—though neat and simple—brick masonry frames. Frontal to my view, the northeast side—facing the hills and the White City—is a lower threshold between the court, the antechamber and the entry courtyard. That low threshold is a structure intended for transitions, both as articulation between key open and enclosed spaces of the composition—the two courts and the antechamber—in the transit to and from, the complex of semi-circular volumes—housing the auditoriums—that stick out from the lower roof-terrace level, as analogous geologic topography. The rectangular courtyard therefore acquires a particular hybrid configuration.

As to the intentions behind the unconventional and intriguing compositional marriage of volumes coming from such different imaginative and formal origins, I conclude that, the lower terrace level towards the *Cerros Orientales* is a way of clearing up the loggia for an eventual involvement of the meaningful eastern landscape in front. The fragmented round volumes—whose function as closed auditoriums is introverted by nature—have complex

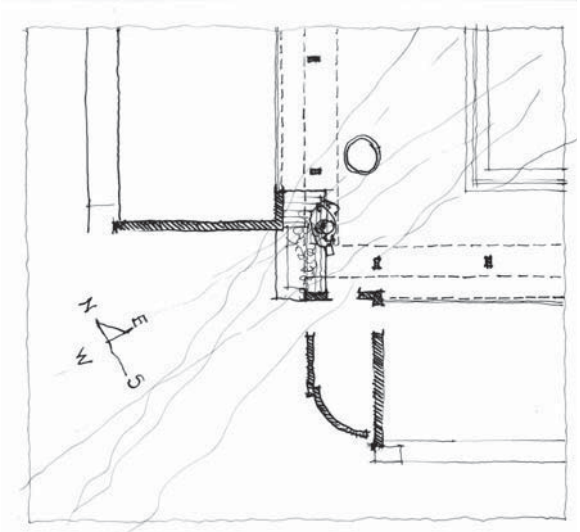



**Figure 162. The Humanities building: southwest "corner" on the rooftop terrace. Layout, sketch by the author.**



**Figure 163. The Humanities building: southwest "corner" on the rooftop terrace. Photo by the author.**

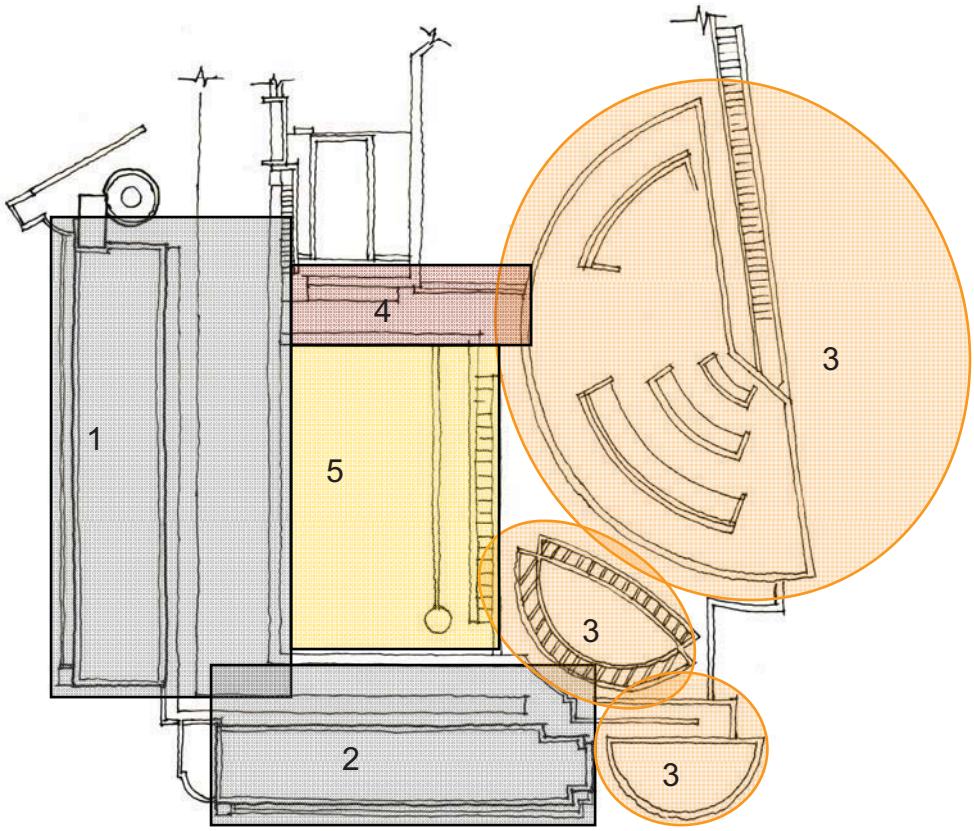



**Figure 164. The Humanities building, the rooftop terrace around the cloister: 1 & 2, L-shaped wings; 3, auditoriums; 4, passageway, courtyard. Layout, sketch by the author.**

and attractive shapes and favor compositional freedom. Therefore I infer that those introverted boxes at the east edge against an uninteresting neighboring structure are together a free topographic articulation perhaps with the intention to interact with the urban context, not the immediate one but, the one far behind. That edge of the composition was treated as a "back" and not as a "façade." One may argue that there is a formal analogical—to say metaphoric—articulation of the volumes and shapes behind the eastbound wall of the courtyard. The fragmented round volumes are in-between the dweller in the loggia and the hills: they are perceptually juxtaposed as analogical first plane in the experience of the landscape of the hills in the back, as these are perceived by dwellers in the court and around the loggia. However, this speculation requires further insight and experiential verification from within by means of the dynamic perspective of the subject dwelling in the lofty loggia. There we must go.

***Funnel to a Fragmentary Landscape***

Reaching the southeast edge of the higher terrace, one is situated above the region of the building made up of contrasting obtuse-angular and smooth-round shapes. I found myself open to the nearby and remote urban landscapes, As if exposed on ship's prow, fresh winds and stridency hit you at once. The surroundings are made up of the anarchic superimposition of constructions, the highway, a few patches of carefully arranged greenery, and some neighboring traces of previous agricultural land partition with the mountains as a monumental background. I start stepping down to a lower terrace level in search of the court… on the ground floor? In the Humanities building, the complex (multileveled) topographic stratification makes the idea of a ground floor ambiguous to say the least. While walking on the east edge of the court, one floor above it, alongside a stratus populated by smooth curved parapets, crowned by radial skylights—like erupting ribs of buried prehistoric animals—I make an unexpected stop. A peculiar disruption on the way suddenly occurs. No higher than the "horizon" level of an average human body, two long sinuous walls convexly approach without touching each other, defining a funneled space, at the end of which a fragment of the urban landscape neatly shows. The parapet at the edge of the court is made into a bench in the axis of the space between the curved walls. One is invited to sit facing the city view, with the void of the court behind.

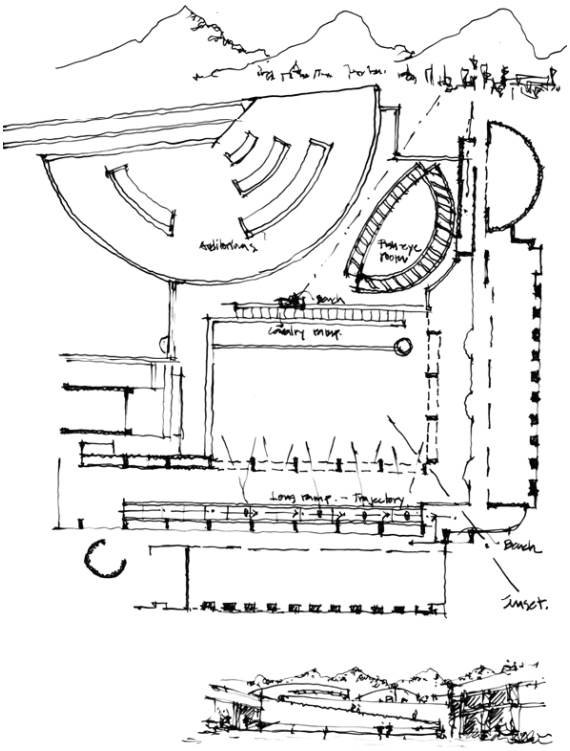


Figure 165. The Humanities building and the hills. Sketch by the author.



Figure 166. The Humanities building and the hills. Photographs by the author.

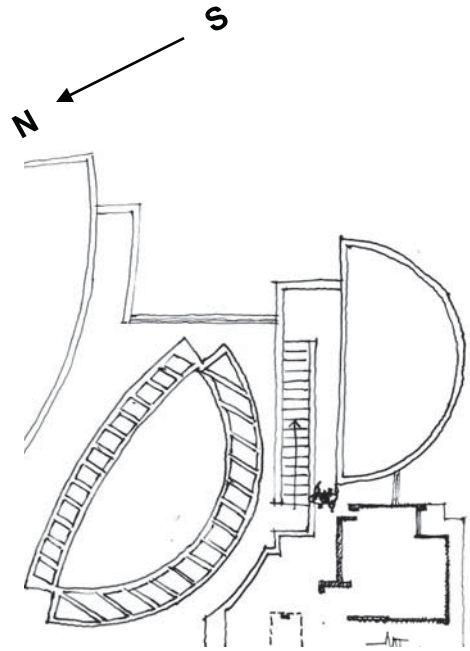



Figure 167. The Humanities building: southeast edge on the rooftop terrace. Layout, sketch by the author.

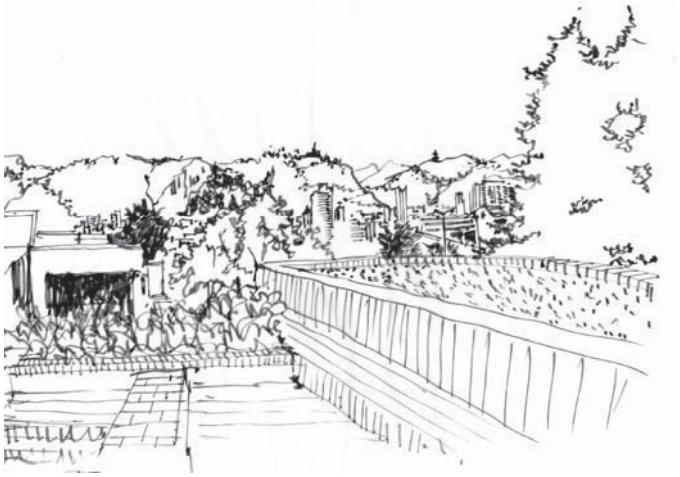


Figure 168. The Humanities building: southeast edge on the rooftop terrace. A view to downtown and the hills. Sketch by the author.

The expanding and axially refracting geometric patterns on the brick-floor accentuate that southeast directionality.

At end of the axis heading to the city, a single tubular handrail exposes the neighboring cityscape. The framed view however is neither a luring urban setting nor a magnificent natural landscape. The image obliquely offers bits and pieces of the bordering highway, some roughly finished ordinary median walls, and fragments of forestation in the foreground. The jagged downtown silhouette of high-rise buildings forms the middle-ground, but the "hills" of *Guadalupe* and *Monserrate* remain very present in the back. To any oriented dweller—to any local pretty much—it is clear that the view is leading to *La Candelaria*, the colonial foundational site of the city. The middle ground nonetheless erases the urban silhouette of that historic center. It is significant in this regard that, Salmona drew an "imaginary landscape" of Bogotá with quite similar orientation, recomposed with respect to the actual state of things, portraying a re-created profile and urban features. The drawing was contemporary to the generative creative process of the Humanities building and recently published. It reverberates in my mind when facing that the deliberately framed fragment of the actual urban landscape.[404]

***Panoptical: an Interlude for Reflection***

The moments prior to descending to the half-cloistered court along the stepped ramp are marked by incertitude. Another node is created, opening up new choices for detouring, "leeway and ambulation."[405] The sloping roof of the antechamber calls special attention from this panoptical location, as it has been made into a red stepped garden that I might visit taking gentle short ramp, just a few steps from here. Parallel to the red sloped

[404] For related critical comments and pre-figurations of Bogotá see Salmona, interview, "Arquitectura Para la Memoria" 49-50. The referred drawing, 145-L "*paisajes inventados*" (invented lanscapes) corresponds to the preliminary design phase of *the Avenida Jiménez* urban renewal (1995-2000) developed in parallel to the Humanities building. It was first published in *Mundo*: *Salmona* 2 (2002): 44.

[405] See Edward Casey, *Getting back into place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 131.v. I refer to the openness of place and the notion of a playful existential space as developed by Casey based on Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper, 1977) 171. Casey alludes to Heidegger's meaningful passage on the Greek temple.



**Figure 169. The Humanities building and the hills. Funneled view towards Bogotá's foundational site. Photo by the author.**

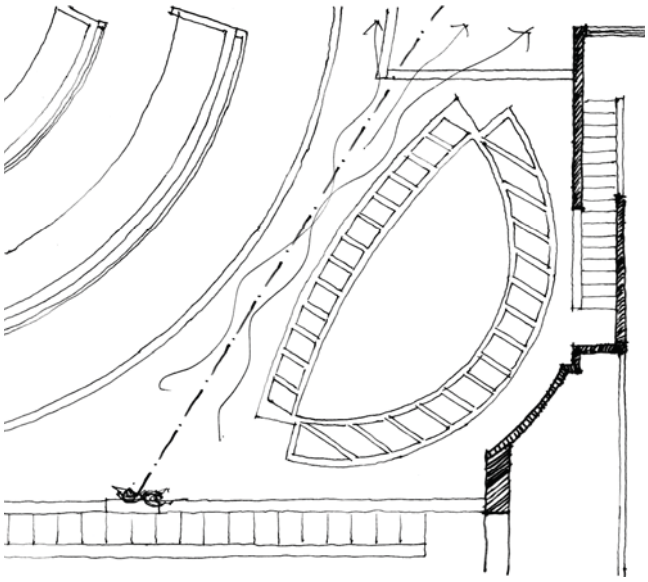


**Figure 170. The Humanities building and the hills. Funneled view towards Bogotá's foundational site. Layout, sketch by the author.**



**Figure 171. Imaginary urban landscape. Sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

garden, from the same ramp departs a straight flight of steps that guides one up, back to the high-terrace level, near the east-west rotated tower where I first encountered the hills. The roof of the tower is a perfectly oriented—eastbound—open-air amphitheater whose scene, I realize, is backed by the mountains. By its elemental configuration with the magnificent mountains as background, it recalls the primitive Minoan straight stepped open theater at Knossos and the Greek mountain-oriented ones at Dodona or Delphi. No great event is presently taking place there, but a party of six still lingers in one of the upper corners against a high parapet in the twilight. Beyond the circular water court, others move alongside the vast semicircular parapet, on a magnified concave fragment of pre-Columbian geometrically ornamented ceramics (or even basketwork) which, from here looks glued to the "white city" campus forested landscape. Across the ceremonial entry-court some people slowly step up, walking in, and many others rush down, moving out. The bridge enclosing the entrance court is crossed between the circular court and the auditoriums area, adding humane vitality to spatial complexity. The proliferation of exits and entries, corners and thresholds, levels, stairs, ramps, oblique paths and slanting surfaces is such that it becomes almost impossible to enumerate and label. I then ponder exponential options for *erring* and wandering perambulation. The place composition, with all of its spatial elements and possibilities alludes to the vivid image—and subjacent theme—of a "circular labyrinth."[406]

The disposition and degree of enclosure of these roofed and open-air architectural spaces disorient, to then re-orient the dweller; and define boundaries of different dimensions with the natural and built elements of the surroundings, which make the dweller interact at different scales with the created "world" and the "world" around, in what may be called an "allocentric" manner.[407] In this composition by Rogelio Salmona's place-

[406] Borges' metaphors of time often recurred to the idea of circularity and the labyrinth figure; for instance see Jorge Iván Parra Londoño, *Hablemos de literatura* (Bogotá: Fondo de Publicaciones del Gimnasio Moderno, 2002) 163-67. The labyrinth theme as analogous to this place-composition might be my own oblique connection. However Salmona referred to the Virgilio Barco library, as distorted "felicitous" version of Borges's labyrinth. See, as well, Salmona, "Arquitectura Para la Memoria" 47. The Virgilio Barco library is the immediate subsequent project (1999-2001) in which he retakes the compositional elements and thematic explorations of the Humanities building (1995-2000).

[407] See Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: a Philosophical Topography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 53-54.



**Figure 172. The Humanities building: rooftop terrace, northbound. Photo by the author.**

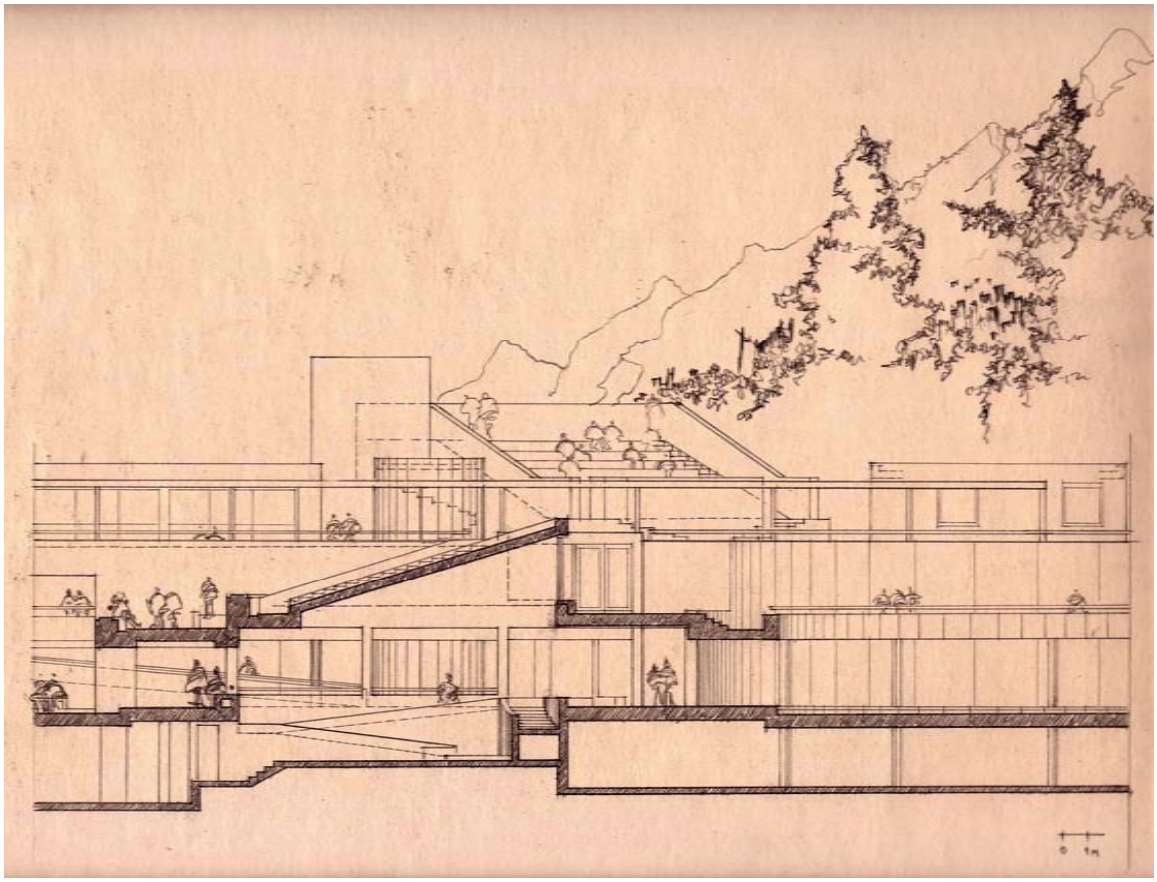


**Figure 173. The Humanities building: longitudinal section (fragment). Drawing by the author.**

making is foreseeing meaningful subjective and collective events. Place-making, one might say, is as well the preparation of the architectural setting for the indissoluble dimension of human experience taking place here, in the context of the elements of Bogotá's urban landscape that are here de-familiarized and "revealed" wondrously.[408]

***Stepping Down Alongside the Court on the Rampa Caballera[409]***

> *Just as joints allow the body its movement and equilibrium, so do stairs, passages and bridges to architecture. The body is in movement in terms of a space. In medieval cities a ramp was used to facilitate the movement of the horse. That same element is used today to allow walks and make promenades, to climb up and step down; to make a bridge.[410]*

The slanted promenade stretches the full length of the court. Stepping down, the body is, once again, gently estranged. The steps, similar to those of the antechamber and the reading room, are long and slightly sloped, and the risers lower than customary—judging by modern ergonomic standards. This architectural element, introduced to give special experiential dimension to various inclined transitions within the building is not without historical precedents. It was originally intended to facilitate climbing for horse-riding. Téllez made note of this odd re-creation of the "cavalry" (or broad-stepped) ramp recurrent in Salmona's works.[411] The de-contextualization and re-creation of this old architectural theme results original, in the sense of its imaginative "metamorphosis": the

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[408] See Rogelio Salmona, "Palabras en la Apertura de la Exposición en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* 10. The subject is further treated in Chapter VI 185-87.

[409] The terms in Spanish refer to a broad stepped ramp intended in medieval times for cavalry. Salmona re-contextualized. I use the Spanish name of this architectural element as in Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 463, 542.

[410] Rogelio Salmona, "Las Escaleras, los Pasajes, los Puentes," preliminary manuscript (unpublished) discarded material of Arcila, *Triptico Rojo*. Consulted in the Rogelio Salmona Studio archives. My translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *Asi como las articulaciones del cuerpo permiten su movimiento y su equilibrio, las escaleras, los pasajes y los puentes lo hacen con la arquitectura. Es el cuerpo en movimiento a partir de un espacio. La rampa en las ciudades medievales se hacia para que el caballo pudiera moverse fácilmente. Ese mismo elemento se usa hoy para poder caminar y hacer recorridos, subir, bajar, pasar puentes.*

[411] Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 463, 542.

bizarre transfiguration and unconventional (poetic) use of this image in the context of a contemporary architectural composition. Bachelard proposed that the poetic image appears on the language "above ordinary language; the language it speaks with the poetic image is so new that correlations between past and present can no longer be usefully considered." [412]

To our sense of touch, the large and wide escalated brickwork parapet that follows the slightly inclined steps is a warm and smooth frozen cascade, running down alongside the rhythmic sloping walk. The cascading effect indeed is given to the dweller as more than just a formal metaphor: a subtle indentation in the brick mass collects the rain water forming, on occasion, a fluid liquid handrail. This subtle sensorial device resulted from a simple but ingenious put together of the figured bricks Salmona typically used, facing one another, in the axis of the counter top of the serrated parapet. One line of receded bricks marks the wet canal in the imbrications of a thousand one jambs. It is tangible: the top surface of this wall was made to be sensuously touched along the walk.[413]

The floor made up of a dense fabric of intersecting lines in various baked-clay tones, adds ornament to the courtyard. Carpeted in juxtaposed reticular and rhomboid patterns, the floor surface modulates the vast open space. In a ritual of careful in situ arrangement, side by side with the *quadrillas* of artisans during construction, Salmona hand-drafted, in real scale, the geometric patterns of differently fired brick tiles.[414] The subtle variations in color of the oblique displacements of the thousands of tile-lines that inter-weave the geometric theme, and the different indentation in the mortar joints, produce perceptive

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[412] Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* trans, with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) 74. As reviewed in Chapter I, Bachelard understood imagination as distortion, marriage and metamorphosis of word-images.

[413] The idea of Re-creation in the work of Salmona might be extended, analogically, to the reuse and reinvention of material modules and pieces (signs) giving birth to more complex elements (like words) that he made part of his architectural "vocabulary." See, for, instance Ricardo Daza and Cristina Albornoz, "Vocabulario Olvidado de la Arquitectura Moderna," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos* 82-83.

[414] During a construction site visit (22 Feb. 2006) I had the chance to witness on-site creative procedures of Rogelio Salmona. He dialogued with and instructed the craftsmen, drafted and 'performed' 1:1 scale solutions, and made in situ design variations to the project. See "From the Drafting Table to the Construction Site," Chapter VI 201-04.

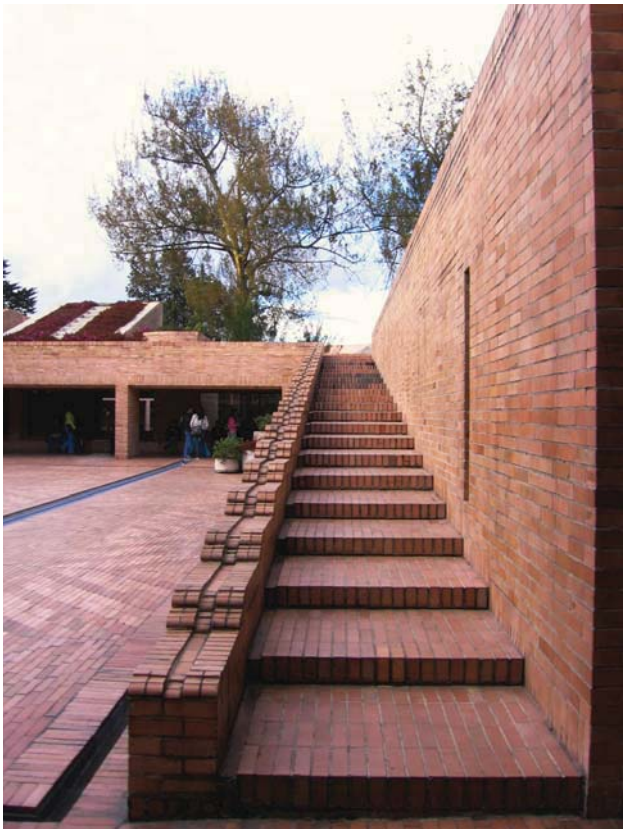


**Figure 174. The Humanities building: "*rampa caballera*". Photo by the author.**

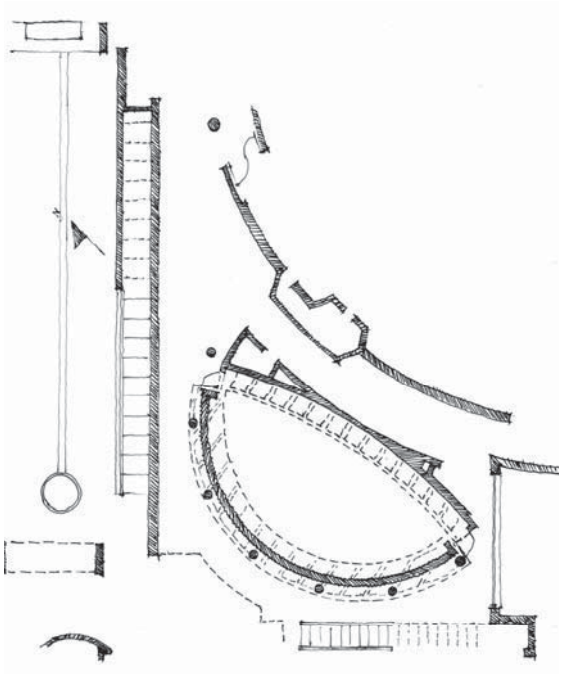


**Figure 175. The Humanities building. Layout (fragment) sketch by the author.**

optical itinerancy, causing the eye to formally reconstitute figure and ground.[415] Laughing waters spring from an ochre drum placed near the end of the *rampa caballera* in the crossroads of two fine water canals. Re-created most likely from remote Hispanic Moorish traditions—also transported to the American continent to the colonial *casas de hacienda*—those water threads (Castillian *atarjeas*) frame the geometric ornamental program of the court.[416] One major *atarjea* traverses the open space parallel to the ramp and the hills too, inviting us to follow it while descending in the open air.

Walking down the pliable and stretched "cavalry" ramp I perceived that the cloister-like rhythmic façade which limits the courtyard is subtlety displaced with regard to the axis of the ramp. This 'anomaly' in the façade, a displacement gesture at the corner of the courtyard, induces a diagonal transit in and out of the loggia. Visibly, the drum-like fountain has been put on a diagonal axis to the displaced edge, to accentuate the angular condition, attracting one to the open space. Crossing the threshold indicated by the fissure left by such displacement one finds a sheltered more somber double-high loggia. That suggestive interior captures my attention in the confluence of stimuli of this corner; I proceed in.

***"Fish's-eye" Room***[417]

The presence of another semicircular wall lateral to my cone of vision guides smoothly the course of the spontaneous promenade. This enclosure is punctuated by freestanding round columns. Wall and posts are washed by zenithal sunlight coming from a subtle gap in the ceiling, which extends along both sides of the round enclosure. A chiaroscuro ambiance gives the whole setting with a mysterious aura. I closely follow the hermetic boundary attempting to sneak in the space behind. Through a rather discrete door

[415] Salmona in personal interview (21 Feb. 2006) made reference to the incorporation of a "Lusitanian tradition" transported to South America (Brazil in particular) as a source for potential re-creation. See Chapter VI 223.

[416] Germán Téllez, *Rogelio Salmona, Arquitectura y Poética del Lugar* (Bogotá: Escala, 1991) 302-303. Téllez makes acute note of architectural precedents, in Alhambra and makes a connection to the colonial house of "Antón Moreno" near Popayán in southern Colombia. The subject is relevant to the case, though Téllez' wrote in reference to Salmona's earlier work Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres (1980-1982).

[417] The room that is the subject of the following narrative passage is colloquially referred to as "*el ojo de pescado*" (fish-eye) by the Rogelio Salmona studio collaborator, architect Fernando Amado.



**Figure 176. Rogelio Salmona during construction site visit to the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre. Photo by the author.**



**Figure 177. The people: "*cuadrillas*" of workers in the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre. Photo by the author.**

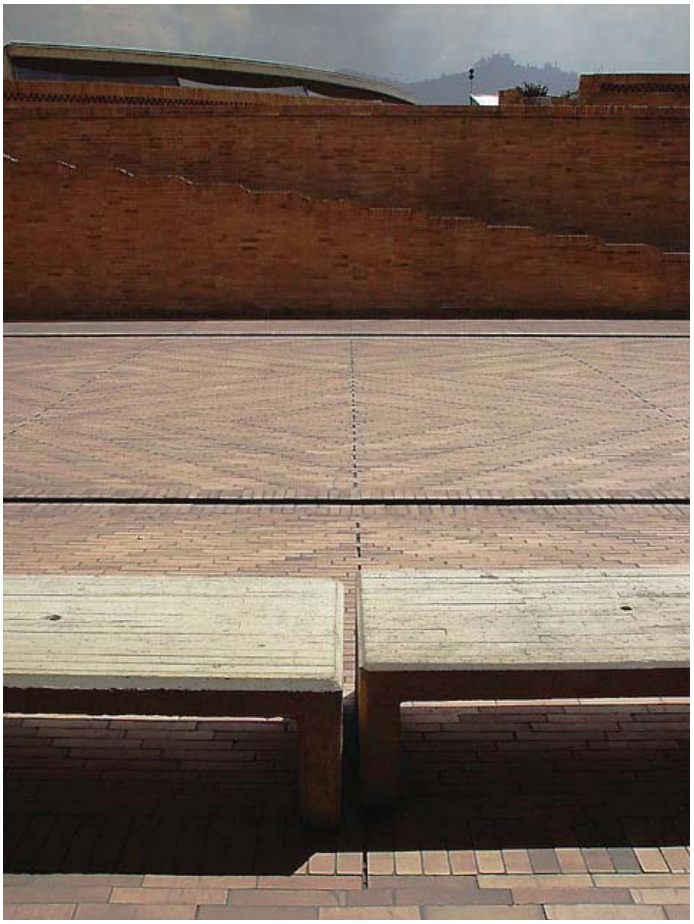


**Figure 178. The Humanities building: courtyard. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro .**

opening I discover another world within. It is definitely not a chapel, given the secular academic activities of this architectural complex.[418] The space in fact operates as seminar room. Yet I can only define this event as a domestic "religious" spatial experience. A mobile intermingling of sun shafts and shadows made by the concrete ceiling ribs produces an intense emotion in me, a dweller of this isolated and introverted enclosure. The skeleton of shadows distorts in sinuous shapes on the concave walls on both sides of the eye-shaped room.

***Back to the Antechamber; an In-Between***

The view of the courtyard is blocked by the solid wall that receives the "cavalry" ramp. Reaching the end of the somber corridor and sensing the court by the murmuring of the water of the main *atarjea,* I note that underneath the corridor floor the blue fluid line suddenly disappears only to fall a few steps ahead as singing, fleeting, water, down at the edge of the entrance court. In this corner one is in a threshold between two courts, tangent to the antechamber. For a few memorable moments my body moves flanked by the two differently leveled and diagonally displaced courtyards, in a mixture of pleasing obliquity and stunning tension. Proceeding through this corridor, in a momentary lapse concur multiple experiential images. Down below, in the entrance court, processions of incoming and outgoing people cross by each other, traversing sideways the sloped open space, and us such performing ceremonies of arrival and departure. From this half-raised perspective the nodal antechamber reappears, with its complex crisscrossing of boundaries, inhabited by tangent shafts of sunlight and numerous beings that move in the diverse confluent spaces in various directions, suspended on bridges, stairs and ramps. People roam around on the many platforms and passageways at different levels. As if exploded, the antechamber is projected through its hollowed boundaries towards many other spaces with different depths, textural and luminal qualities. The silhouette of a human body poses against the commanding source of light. That character seems to be observing us

[418] I Recall Salmona's reference (in the above referred personal interview – 21 Feb. 2006) to the connatural condition of architecture as *religio*, regardless of its "functional" program. Noteworthy, one established meaning of the word *religio* refers, in general terms to "the performance of rites, ceremonies […]" See Oxford University Press. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1605.

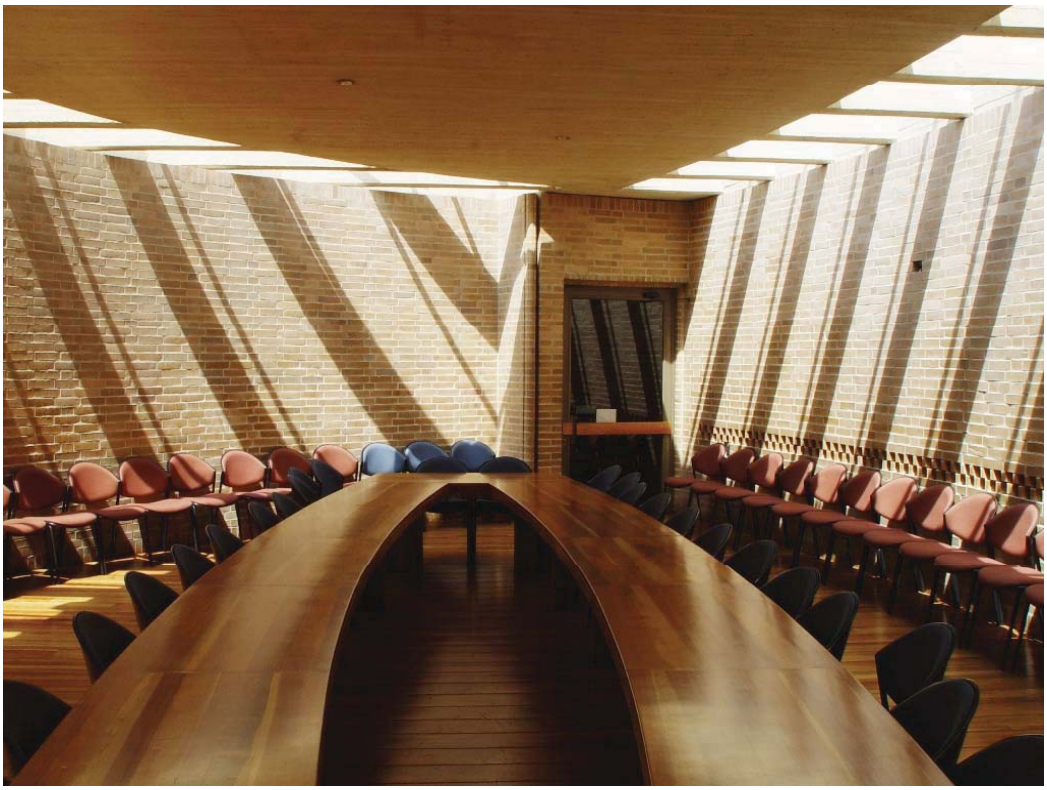


**Figure 179. The Humanities building: "fish-eye room" interior space.**
**Photo by Ricardo L. Castro .**

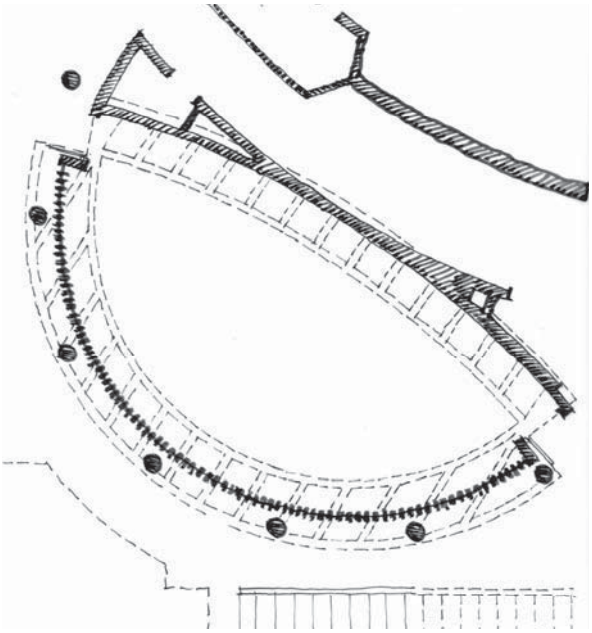


**Figure 180. The Humanities building: "fish-eye room" Layout.**
**Sketch by the author.**



**Figure 181. The Humanities building: "fish-eye room" enclosure.**
**Photo by Ricardo L. Castro .**

from the clerestory window on the terrace above. I think of myself and have the same strange feeling of being that person.

These moments and corporeal positions reflect a situation that is concomitant with the spatiality of the places Rogelio Salmona composed in the Humanities building; a subject of exploration that permeated the entirety of his mature work. I refer to the constant in-between situation of always being in limbo between spaces and hollowed limits with transitions and the continuous expansion of boundaries that unfold from one place to another. Place exhibits a "folded" character, this is, 'inwards' (within) as 'outwards'…"to other places." Places situate with respect to other places "and various orientations and perspectives that are possible even within the bounds of a particular place and reflect the very open-ness of place as a structure that allows the appearance of things within it." [419]

***The Grid and the Inclined Plane: Eurhythmic Re-orientation***

A hovering ramp at the edge of this corridor announces a new beginning. The long U shaped concrete beam extends diagonally out beyond the cone of one's vision appearing only itinerantly behind the cloister façade, between rhythmic massive brick frames still wet from the recent downpour. The ramp inhabits the lofty space of the loggia receding behind a two storey spatial gap. Suspended in the double-height space it inclines upwards to the west, counter up to the solid serrated profile of the *rampa caballera* outside, which, climbing north, in turn bounds the court against the eastern hills. Sequences of brickwork frames of the loggia, in-between, mediate this counterpoint.

While engaged in the perceptually prolonged experience of ascendance, the frames dynamically juxtapose to the open space of the courtyard, attracting one's body and attention eastward. With the continuous shifting of horizon and the progressive discovery of the mountains one feels a sense of astonishment. The *cerros* appear lateral to one's body, making the gentle ascent wondrous. The experience is modulated by the brick masonry disposed in multiple verticals and horizontals: a built reticule that, while ascending, dynamically frames the meaningful exterior. There is a carefully studied effect

[419] Malpas,172.

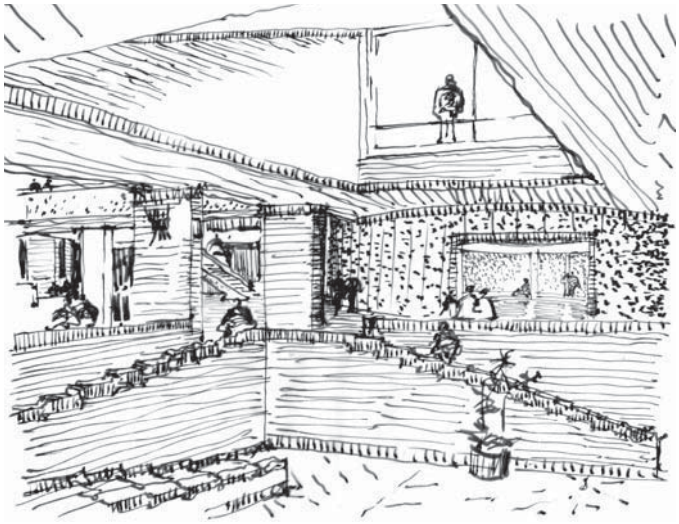


**Figure 182. The Humanities building: the antechamber. Sketch by the author.**

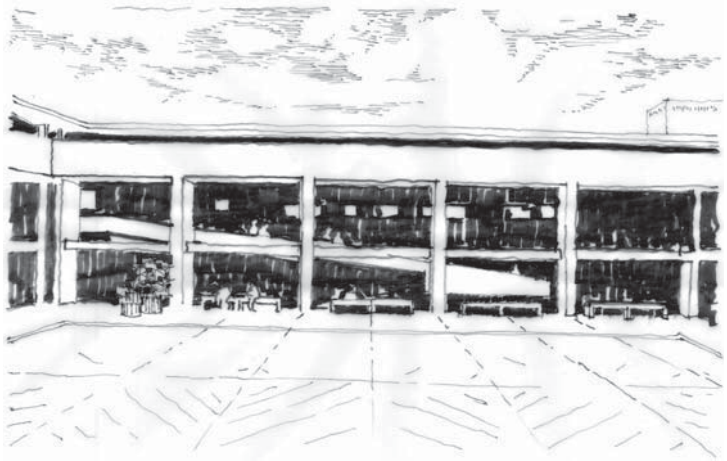


**Figure 183. The Humanities building: loggia and ramp from the courtyard. Sketch by the author.**



**Figure 184. The Humanities building: long ramp and loggia. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro .**

of framed view that Castro poetically matched to the Japanese landscape tradition of "borrowed scenery" or *Shak-kei.*[420] The experience of walking up the ramp, product of one of the most recurrent compositional strategies of Salmona's works, is lived, not in the wide open horizon of the court but, in oblique and eurhythmic ways.[421] The eurhythmic situation depends on the juxtaposition of the striated logia boundary and the rhythmic body motion, the tempo of the walk. The built reticule frames the landscape giving measure and scale to one's body.[422] In its poetic impact and seemingly long duration, the aesthetic experience of the walk along the inclined path dominates the more prosaic objective destination: a mezzanine that recedes behind the spatial void of the loggia in penumbra. Walking on the loggia mezzanine—in the periphery of the court—the eastern panorama disappears and one's attention is averted down on the textured rhomboid patterns of the floor. The free promenade has taken me again, in another unexpected way, to the same nodal antechamber zone. The spiraling-up ramps around the empty square void reappear, and the end of the ascending path faces one east again to the hills, impressive, behind the green wall that first welcomed us.

This time, I take the opportunity to climb even higher to the sort of primitive theater atop the cubic tower. People standing on the upper edge hang out, looking westward, attracted by still iridescent patches of a now dusky sky. I catch a couple wrapped in a long, long, kiss in complete inadvertence. Here we are all caressed by the wind. I sit down on a solid step of this sloped place which leaves me facing exactly east and exposes the dense urban landscape which is attempting to take over the slopes of the hills. Still magnanimous, the purple-green "natural" masses stand in the background above the sprawling hard landscape of human inhabitation.

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[420] See Ricardo Castro, "Syncretism, Wonder and Memory in the Work of Rogelio Salmona," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America.* eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 155, 159. On *Shak-kei* see Teiji Itoh, *Space and Illusion in the Japanese Garden* (TNew York: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1965) 50. In reference to the Entsu-ji garden in Kyoto see Michaele Bring and Josse Wayemnbergh, *Japanese Gardens* (McGraw-Hill, Inc.: New York, 1981) 186- 188.

[421] See for instance Robert L. Scranton, "Vitruvius' Arts of Architecture," *Hesperia* 43. 4 (1974): 494-499. In personal interview (14 Feb. 2007) Salmona alluded to the Greek conception of "*eurhythmia,*" speaking about the tempral experiential dimension of architecture. See Chapter VII 225.

[422] See Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 34-35. In the source cited, Salmona narrates childhood remembrances related to the relationship between body, reticule (or frame) and a progressive change of horizon (growth) that are analogous to the point I make.

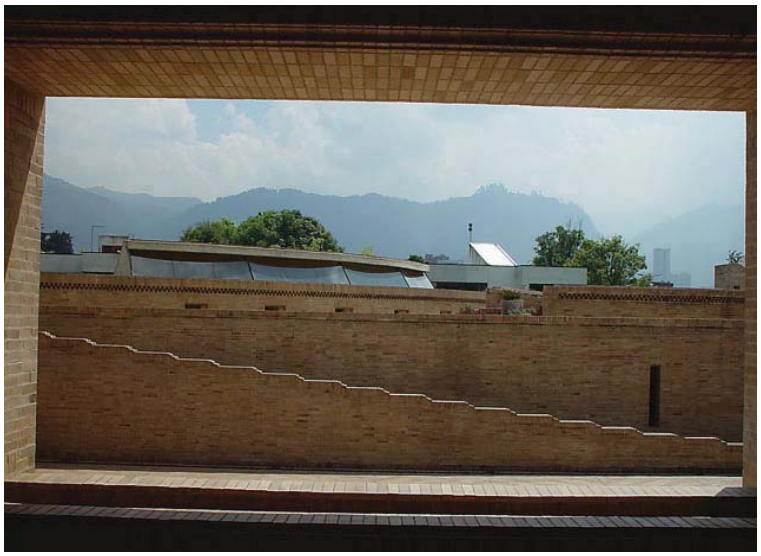


**Figure 185. The Humanities building: frames, ramps, eastbound. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro .**

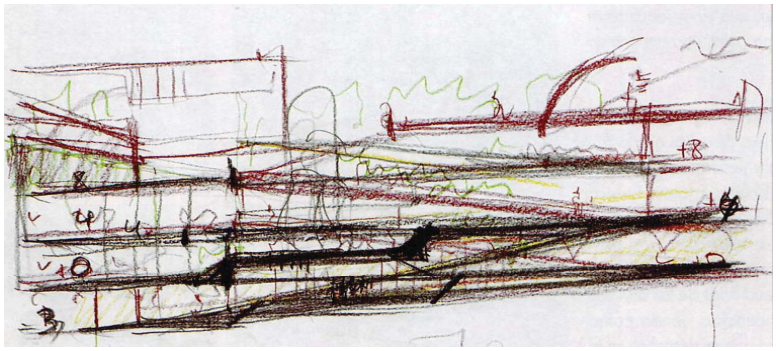


**Figure 186. Ramps.**
**Design sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

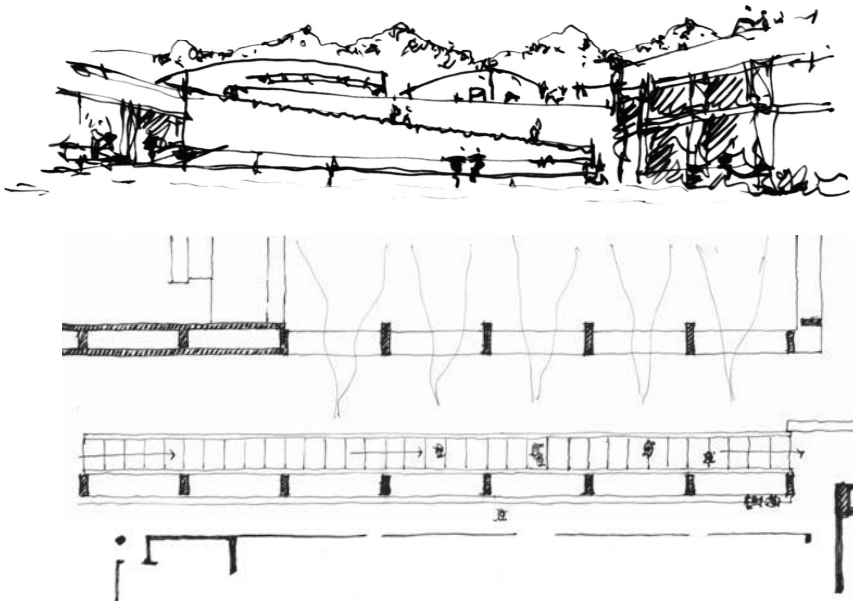


**Figure 187. Ramps, frames and the hills: a ritual of ascendance and landscape celebration. Drawing by the author.**

***Epilogue: From Perception to Consciousness; a Recollection***

The composition of places that make up the Humanities building is demonstrative of Salmona's exploration of possibilities and creative strategies of poetic re-creation as well as his search for a dynamic, seductive, spatiality of perambulation, obliqueness, unexpected encounters, continuities and discontinuities. The qualities and complexity of the project admits many layers of interpretation. I have concentrated on the aspects that deal with the generative processes of site interpretation and poetic re-creation for place-making. Salmona's reading of the specific geographic attributes and historicity of the urban landscape of Bogotá and his further conception of a spatial narrative or plot convey an ethos of landscape-celebration by inciting poetic experience to the dwellers via poetic re-creation. The former aspect logically transcends into an ethical attitude *vis a vis* a comprehensive notion of site and a technological interpretation of place-making. Ethics and poetics therefore go hand in hand. These architectural functions merge in the making of an educational building that, in its joyful experience, subverts customary institutional, instrumental efficiency of this type of spaces.

The site was apparently of little interest, at least at the ground floor level, judging by its most immediate limits. This land parcel once was a void terrain delimited by two rather anodyne structures of classrooms and laboratories. A chain link fence separates the land from a highway with some intruding high-rise housing developments. A fragment of the north east edge of the lot is bound by a line of old conifers, most likely the trace of a typical agricultural land partition of the Bogota's *Sabana.* The north section opens up to the green areas of the university campus. By means of a comprehensive interpretation of the site and the introduction of poetic strategies of re-creation, its potential was drastically enhanced. The once rather unattractive plot was turned into an enchanting, soul stimulating, socially and poetically provoking articulation of places. It is my assertion that Salmona's site interpretation operated in expanding rings of geographic apprehension at diverse temporal (historical) levels. A minimum recollection of the culturally modified nature of the *sabana* surrounding us may help in the task of reading the possible logics operating behind Salmona's poetic approach to this piece of land.







**Figures 188, 189 & 190. The rooftop theater at dusk: a narrative strip. Photographs by the author.**

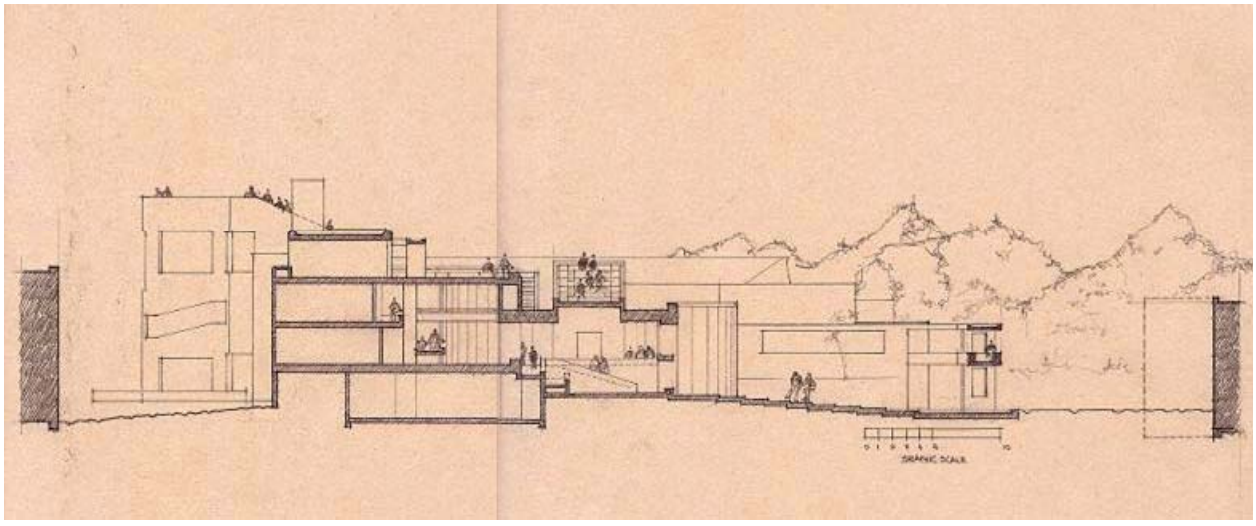


**Figure 191. The Humanities building: transversal section. Drawing by the author.**

The actual natural beauty of the *sabana* landscape is in fact the product of 500 years of human culture upon it. Unlike other foundations of *Indias* (i.e., Mexico City), prior to the arrival of the Europeans, this highland plateau was not the site of any major pre-Hispanic architectural centre. As colloquially Colombian Scholar G. Arciniegas reminded us, this was a reflecting landscape of reeds and marshes, mostly aquatic, where the aboriginals fished and hunted, edged by impressive hills.[423] However, the mountains were sacred, site to the mirror-like ritualistic lagoons that punctuated the *Muisca* territory. The colonial foundation of the early 1500's was protected by the tutelary *Monserrate* and *Guadalupe* hills. The spread of an exponentially multiplied city, passing from a few hundred thousands to more than seven million in less that two generations (late 1950's to early 2000's), occurred alongside the meaningful presence of those silent witnesses:the hills. Rogelio Salmona—it is noteworthy—recalled this determining concern in the conceptual and material articulation of his work.[424] Today's formlessly expanding city occludes the *cerros* and its dwellers have come to take them for granted: they have naturalized this distinctive magnificent geographic feature, diminishing its experiential magnificence. Bogotá is located on a highland plateau of "sain and shine" and an ever-shifting sky of particular intense luminosity. Salmona was an explicit advocate of the experiential qualities of this landscape and a critic of its historically irresponsible development. It is evident that the confluence of his diverse interests, from poetry to botanic and former studies in sociology of art, as in urban and historical geography, found concrete expression in this project through the specific architectural craft of place-making.

The project was proposed as a human-made ochre topography composed of *plateas* at multiple levels, thresholds, steps, ramps, enclosures and open spaces. The architect carefully studied and redefined horizons of diverse degrees of containment. Limits were treated as modulations with respect to the surroundings. Those boundaries produced

[423] Germán Arciniegas, *Diario de un Peatón* (Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma, 1998) 79-81.
[424] See for instance Rogelio Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly: Permanence and Change in Architecture,*" ed. Mikko Heikkinen (Jyväskylä, Finland: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2003) 14. See, as well, Salmona, interview, "Arquitectura Para la Memoria" 50.

"allocentric" spaces conceived not in isolation but in relation to others; either to those forming part of the same composition, or to significant features in the surroundings. At given perceptual moments and in specific locations, the building selectively occluded the nearby, the urban fabric or, like Corbusier, the "middle ground," bringing forward, in an astonishing manner, the eastern hills. The Humanities building is a directed promenade at some times, though "leeway" and "perambulation"—in E. Casey's terms—define most of one's movement. The idea of subjective movement through space is central to its experience. Characteristic of the spatiality of its places—which one could call erotic or of desire—is a continuous delay in approximations, continuities and intentional discontinuities. The intentionality of composition is consistently based on perceptual obliquity. The constant situation of obliqueness creates a strategic pattern of subjective experience. The places are discovered laterally and-or diagonally, when considered in plan, as well as reached in various slanted ways, considering the numerous strata of its topography. This experiential condition persists from one's rite of entrance to one's ultimate confrontation with the open air and the city-bounding hills.

Compressing these recent memories, I recollect some meaningful events of my transient dwelling in the Humanities building. The site is approached by walking on a pre-existent informally developed path, seemingly blocked by a tall tree-wall. Through a fissure on it, round and tangent to our bodies, the "façade" eludes us. A turn in the path begins to make us sink into the land, gently sloping down, in the penumbra of a hybrid subversive high-mountain rainforest re-creation, recalling moments of the Andean geography. This announces the first built threshold. The first ceremonial court of the complex is of distorted geometry, whose ground slants upwards, inducing us to traverse it by climbing diagonally to reach what finally seems to be the entrance—a concept that, in this case, is not really applicable. The antechamber, a complex world of its own—I use the word to denote the experiential totality of the place—provokes in us a sense of disorientation. Bridges, stairs, ramps, buttresses and pillars proliferate. Vertical tension and perspective explosions surround us while choices of perambulation, in all directions, open up. The ochre world is particularly ignited by tangent shafts of light impacting myriads of brick planes and layered ceilings of warm concrete tones. Premonitory images of an expansive

modern spatiality analogous to Piranesi's *Carceri* of imagination comes to mind—images of enticing spaces of complexity and disorientation to be discovered. It is noticeable that the nodal fragment of the composition surrounding the antechamber hybridizes two design strategies based on the exploration of "flow of space" initiated by the early 20th Century modern tradition: Loos' *Raumplan* and Le Corbusier's Freeplan, basically. I note too that these design tools were peculiarly amalgamated, and subverted by Salmona[425] not with mere formalistic intention, but in order to create an intense subjective experience. Such is what I call the oblique experience of constant desire as manifested in the continuities and discontinuities through which diverse places relate to one another while allowing progressive and selective discovery of a world outside.

I feel attracted by the luminous filigree of a translucent brick drum behind which a round aquatic court like a spoon mirrors the shifting glow of red clouds in the sky. I cannot help but make a metaphor with the local, tiny sacred lagoons and the ponds that punctuate the Bogotá highland-plateau regional landscape, mirroring the ever shifting sky to us mortals on earth. Immersed again in the midst of sensorial stimuli, I shift direction to a half cloistered court preceded by a lofty loggia within which a great, long ramp pierces the void. The eurhythmy of that ascendance resided in the tempo of the smooth walk in relation to the sequence of frames interposed between our bodies and the exterior. On this continuous changing of horizon the *cerros* of Bogotá begin to appear. The limit changes—it expands. All this happens behind a first solid brick plane behind which, the serrated analogical topography of the building rooftops interacts with the hills in the background, shifting according to one's corporeal motion. The notion of limit was, in Salmona's mature work, the most explicit subject of his exploration.[426] He explored it by means of a selective re-creation of architectural experiences from universal architecture. Salmona's words come to mind, and to the place-subject:

> *The limit may be the sky, the infinite, the horizon, a sudden luminosity, a reflection, an atmospheric shift, a*

[425] This duality is persistent, for instance, in the in the theoretical approach of the collected essays of Max Risselada and Beatriz Colomina eds., *Raumplan Versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, 1919-1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998).
[426] Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona" 94.



**Figure 192. G. B. Piranesi, "Prisons." Preliminary drawing for plate VIII.**

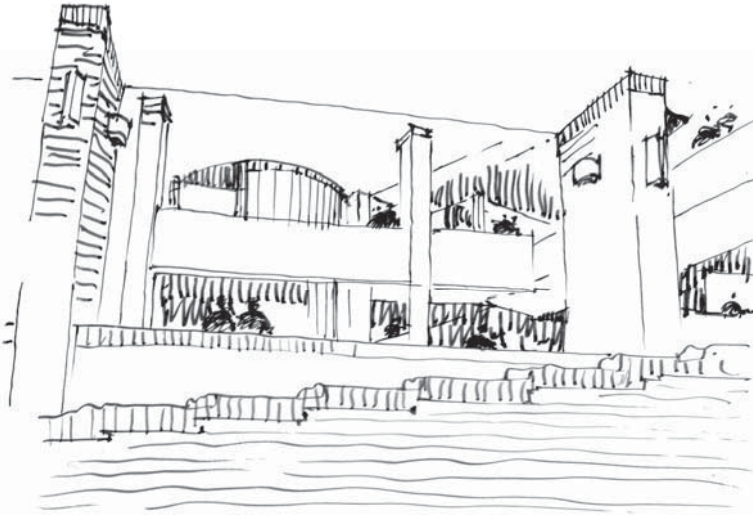


**Figure 193. The antechamber. Sketch by the author.**

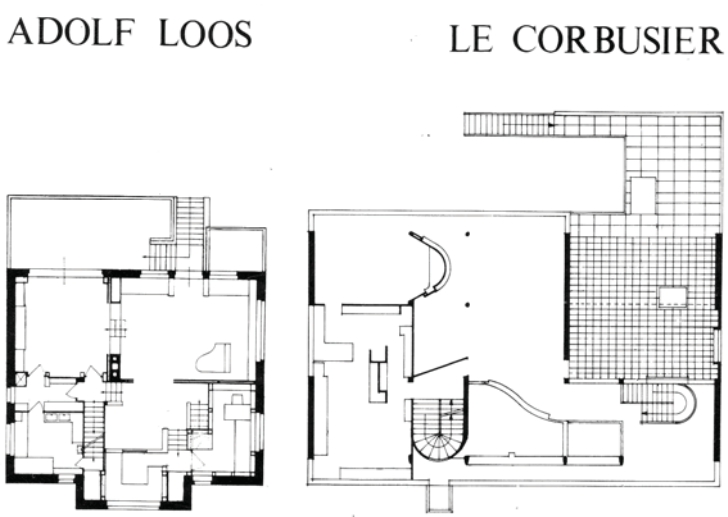



**Figure 194. *Raumplan Versus Plan Libre* (book cover, fragment).**

> *transparency. However, starting from that boundary or limit, another element appears or is suggested; after this, one more, and so on successively.* [427]

The vivid narrative that articulates the experience of this place alludes to a swirling circular labyrinth, altering our conventional perception of chronological time. The final reward is a regained sense of orientation and a meaningful encounter with different moments of urban landscape of the city. The magnificent hills, in particular, were "made evident," they were "brought forth" [428] to a site that otherwise would be more than irrelevant. For more than 50 years Salmona was interested in, and worked on, the general problems related to what may be called the transit from a natural environment to a totally fabricated one. Early readings of geographers like Georges Friedmann, Pierre George, anthropologists such as Maurice Leenhardt and Lucien Levy Bruhl, and historians of landscape like Marc Bloch, were decanted through Pierre Francastel's critical thinking on art and society and plausibly forged his course. I assert this as an intuitive and persistently creative problem-solving concern with historicized notions of landscape and technology, and modern concepts of architectural space, ultimately reflected in the all inclusive poetic activity of place-making.

It is not random therefore that, in virtually all of Salmona's interventions in Bogotá, the celebration of specific features of its historically transformed landscape is highlighted. For more than forty years: from the Residencias el Parque (1964-70) passing through the sketches and (inconclusive) preliminary design for the Jorge Eliécer Gaitán cultural center (1980-89) and the Archivo General de la Nación (1988-1994), to the Humanities building in question (1995-2000) and the subsequent (almost parallel) explorations in the Virgilio Barco library, ending wit his posthumous work—the Gabriel García Márquez

[427] My translation from Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona" 94. The Spanish original follows:
> *El límite que puede ser el cielo, el infinito, el horizonte, una luminosidad repentina, un reflejo, un cambio de la atmósfera, una transparencia, pero que a partir de esa frontera o límite aparezca o sugiera otro elemento que sigue después, y así sucesivamente.*

[428] I make a literal translation of the terms Salmona employed to explain the revelation of place latencies. See Chapter VI, 185-86.



**Figure 195. The Humanities building and the urban landscape.
View to the northeast from the roof terrace.
Photo by F. de Valdenebro.**

cultural centre in La Candelaria (2004-2008)—the creative approach to the posed problem of the *cerros* of Bogotá urban landscape is persistent and consistent.

In a different level of reflection, one may conclude that the Humanities building is essentially a place of joy, leeway and eventual—not forced but meaningful—gathering and encounter. In conceiving the building—a graduate studies academic facility—the spaces in-between and the experience of these, it is proportionally evident, acquired particular relevance; perhaps even above the realm of classrooms and auditoriums. For the philosophy of graduate studies—he made this explicit—is of a trans-disciplinary nature which demands scholarly interaction while research might happen in anxious isolation. The production of aesthetic experience—a poetic one—happens in confluence with ethical concerns that extend to society as a whole. The words of Paul Valéry come as a flower to this place made of finely interwoven places:

> *'My Temple,' this man from Megara would say,*
> *'must move men as they are moved by their beloved'*.[429]

[429] Paul Valéry, "Eupalinos or the Architect," *Dialogues,* trans. William McCausland Steward (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956) 75.



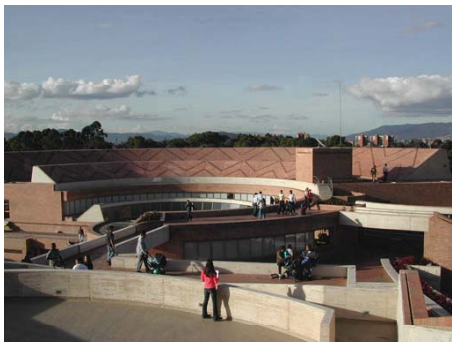


**Figure 196. The Residencias el Parque (1964-70). Rogelio Salmona, architect. Photo by the author.**

**Figure 197. The Virgilio Barco library (1998-2002). Rogelio Salmona, architect. Photo by the author.**



**Figure 198. The Virgilio Barco library (2001). Rogelio Salmona, architect. Excavations and land modifications during construction as landscape framing device. Photo by the author.**



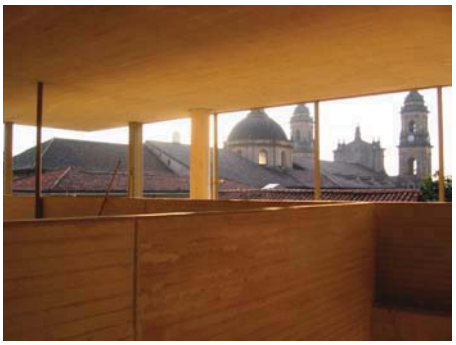


**Figure 199. The Virgilio Barco library (1998-2002). Rogelio Salmona, architect. Peopled rooftops Photo by the author.**

**Figure 200. The Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre. Rogelio Salmona, architect. View to the Catedral Primada of Bogotá Photo by the author.**

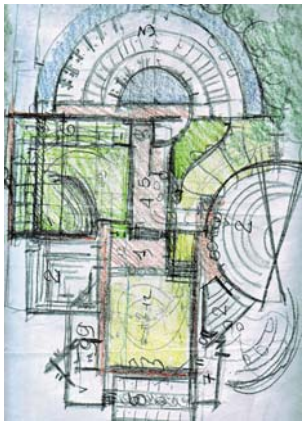




**Figure 201. The Humanities building; an encounter. Rogelio Salmona, architect. Photo by Alejandro Tamayo.**

**Figure 202. Rogelio Salmona during a construction site visit (22 Feb. 2006) to The Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre. The circular court frames the view of the "*cerros*" of Bogotá. Photo by the author.**





Tell me (since you are so sensible to the effects of architecture), have you noticed, in walking about this city, that among the buildings with which it is peopled, certain are *mute*; others *speak*; and others, finally—and they are the most rare—*sing*?—It is not their purpose, nor even their general features, that give them such animation, or that reduce them to silence. These things depend among the talent of their builder, or on the favor of the Muses. [430]

[430] Paul Valéry, "Eupalinos or the Architect," *Dialogues,* trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 83.

***Preamble***

The conclusive Chapters, VI and VII, originate in three conversations with Rogelio Salmona, taking place at his home during the last year of his life: one on September 1, 2006 and two on February 14 and 21, 2007. These conversations happened late in the research process of this study and after the visit to the Humanities building that makes up the narrative and reflections in *Part Two*. However, several informal meetings at his studio and construction-site visits with Salmona anteceded these final dialogues. My interest in Salmona's work goes back to 1988 when I first visited the Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres as a student, in the company of Professor Ricardo L. Castro, during a workshop with the Universidad de los Andes in Cartagena de Indias. An apprenticeship-oriented process began in 1992, when I had the opportunity to work as a draftsman in the architect's studio. This research turned formal in the fall of 2001 as a doctorate study at McGill University. These conversations were also prepared by readings of authors dear to, and on occasion suggested by Salmona while researching for this dissertation. In the structure of the thesis, these dialogues have a conclusive character, for reasons previously mentioned, related as well to the pertinence of presenting, after the place-experience, the architect's voice and relevant scholarship on his writings and referents.[431]

The three conversations occurred spontaneously, according the architect's availability and physical health limitations. Rogelio Salmona continued to be involved in new design commissions and supervised ongoing constructions while affected by a terminal cancer. The architect avoided answering fixed questionnaires and occasionally could engage in informal conversations of considerable length: over five hours in total. The material was digitally recorded, translated, edited and re-organized according to the relevance of the subjects treated. The topics ranged from the architect's ideas on central subjects to this thesis, such as architectural history, memory, tradition, ornament, urban landscape and technology, to the specific architectural and general societal problems-posed in the creative process of the Humanities building. Chapter V is dedicated to Salmona's place-

[431] In this presentational method I follow Bachelard's Idea of phenomenology in which perception and experience, being at the base of knowledge, though insufficient, should be followed by conscious discerning. See, for instance Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 c1969) xxi. See as well, Colette Gaudin, introduction, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* by Gaston Bachelard (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) xviii.

related ideas, poetic strategies and referents in general, while Chapter VI concentrates on problems-posed in the place-composition of the Humanities building.

Correlated scholarship in footnotes, drawings and photographs complement the dialogues. Some material was discarded or turned into an appendix. Further scholarship was inserted within the body of the text due to its relevance to the subjects treated. For the most part the insertions are selected excerpts from Salmona's writings or some of my critical comments that attempted to complement the subjects treated. The inserted commentaries are in brackets and Salmona's words are in *italics.* The voice of Salmona in the text is virtually unaltered; his statements, following a question or comment on my part, were not sectioned or modified. Although one objective of *Part Three* is to present in conversational terms the interpretive proposals of this academic study, my comments were at times synthesized to correlate with Salmona's. The translation is mine and the original Spanish transcript of the conversations along with a digital audio-file was given to the architect's studio archives for consultation.

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**Figure 203. "*Ofrenda*" (offering). Drawing by Rogelio Salmona.**

***Materiality: the Poetics of the Ruin***[432]

[Rogelio Salmona begins this dialogue by reading a meaningful fragment of his speech at the Finnish academy on the occasion of the Alvar Aalto Medal award.]

> *...between the "elephant" and the "butterfly"; between the permanent and the ephemeral, there is a relationship that we cannot ignore, for it would mean sacrificing the enormous importance of diversity. The ephemeral and the permanent are not watertight compartments. Again I evoke one of my sources. In Pre-Hispanic architecture, once the construction of the pyramid began, a cycle lasting another 52 years would be built upon the initial pyramid. What is permanent is ephemeral and what is ephemeral once again becomes permanent.*[433] *The ephemeral again becomes permanent. The issue is to constantly extract, as Baudelaire used to say, the eternal from the transitory. There it is.*

One could say this might give an answer to the idea of the ruin: to the particular conception of the materiality and material 'erosion' [slow dissipation] of your works.

*Yes, of course.*

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[432] Rogelio Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly: Permanence and Change in Architecture*, ed. Mikko Heikkinen (Jyväskylä, Finland: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2003) 21. I quote Salmona from the cited source: "Architecture is called upon to become a beautiful ruin because it has confided in time, has transformed itself and has lived its own times."

[433] The English translation of this excerpt comes from Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant & Butterfly* 22.The fragment was read according to the original manuscript in Spanish, as follows:

> *...entre la mariposa y el elefante, entre lo permanente y lo efímero hay una correspondencia que no podemos ignorar, pues seria sacrificar la enorme importancia de la diversidad. Lo efímero y lo permanente no son compartimientos estáticos. Nuevamente evoco una de mis influencias: en la arquitectura prehispánica, una vez iniciada la construcción de la pirámide, se abría un ciclo de 52 años de duración. Al final del ciclo se inicia otro igual. Y sobre la pirámide inicial se sobrepone otra que durará a su vez, otros 52 años, y así sucesivamente. Lo permanente es efímero.*



**Figure 204. "*Ofrenda en Pareja*" ( mutual offering). Drawing by Rogelio Salmona.**



**Figure 205. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres, exterior detail, circa 1995. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

***On Material Reciprocity***

You have spoken of living materials in architecture. Beautifully you expressed this in reference to the Bogotá shifting sky which is a central element of your architecture, the particular vegetation, the wind…

*Yes, and the luminous qualities too.*[434]

[I quote Salmona's intellectual mentor, Pierre Francastel on the subject: "The play of sunlight and shadow gives life to the material, but this luminous quality is determined by forms based on technology and studied harmonies."][435]

There are inert materials too. I would put "inert" in quotation marks though.

*These materials are not inert but petrous.*

Let's say that [petrous] materials do not have abstract qualities, independent from their "mise en scène," the dwellers and the geography that they articulate.

*The fact is that materials become animated: they must be animated**,** which is fundamental; that is very clear.*

Not so, if one sees it in a very rational abstract manner or in a purely compositional one.

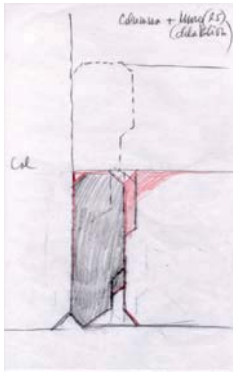
*But they are place-bound. The brick comes from one place, it is characteristic of a place, this is an important point. However, this does not mean that steel, used at a certain moment, is not place-bound.*

Did you ever read a text by Gaston Bachelard entitled *La flamme d'une chandelle*?

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[434] See Claudia Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* (Bogota: Taurus, 2006) 34. Salmona in the source cited recollects childhood memories of the particular, ever changing, luminosity of Bogotá. I quote: "A través de la ventana veía cambiar el entorno. En las mañanas o en las tardes, recuerdo siempre esa luminosidad cambiante […]"

[435] Pierre Francastel, *Art & Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* trans. Randall Cherry. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 131.



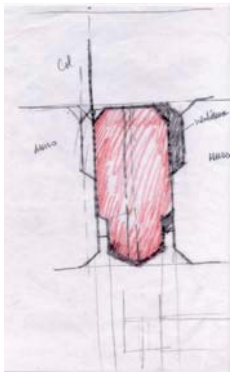


**Figure 206. Prefabricated concrete Jambs. Drawing by Rogelio Salmona.**



**Figure 207. Prefabricated concrete Jambs. Photo by Francisco de Valdenebro.**



**Figure 208. Experimentation with materials: color, modules, textures, resistance of bricks, jambs, glazed ceramic tiles, concrete prefabs. The Rogelio Salmona studio. Photo by the author.**

*It's represented there, yes…now I recall. La llama y el fuego, yes, it was the last one.* [436]

Loaded with a kind of technological nostalgia, he described how certain technologies lose poetic connotations. It is quite difficult [Bachelard said] to write poetically on the pushing of a button to turn an electric bulb on. However, how different—he said—it is to devote a poem to my gas lamp: to my relationship with the lamp and its flame. When I read this, it evoked in me, right away, the particular reciprocity you referred to and the interdependence between the architectural object and the subject who experiences it.

*Yes…and also* [with] *nature.*

Has reciprocity been central to your concerns?

*No, this has been coming to me progressively… I don't know. I would have to recall many things to answer this. You take me a bit by surprise. When did I begin to think in a particular way thus, starting to make architecture with a specific view of things, leaving standards aside? This was a gradual process. Did I answer you? Perhaps not…*

Never mind; this is very likely of my own invention.

*No, there is no invention; what you say has a concrete base but, obviously, it has been elaborated.*

I draw a scholarly parallel, like poets do, but of a different sort. Gaston Bachelard's "poetics of imagination" are based on a form of humanism that proposes mutual dependence between man and the world: a reciprocity that is a subversion of previous unidirectional forms of humanism that see the world as "resources" to be controlled,

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Salmona makes reference to Gaston Bachelard,, *La flamme d'une chandelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975 c1961).

dominated, and aesthetically manipulated.[437] It is a matter of letting the world transforms you too. I think this has been gradually gaining dimension as your work develops. Starting with the Casa de Huéspedes, the idea of the ruin becomes connatural with that of reciprocity: architecture that is particularly sensitive to the transformations of its natural milieu. This man-world reciprocity is a new humanist message. This aspect, I believe, is a contribution of Rogelio Salmona to contemporary world architecture.

*Yours is a complicated demonstration.*

I explore this by means of a parallel with poetry. What Salmona makes with architecture parallels what Bachelard conceived of poetic imagination and Borges [poetically too] proposed about [time and] history. One could say there is a brotherhood of thinking. Once you told me a sentence which I took as a good joke: "great spirits…

*…Always meet"? Le Corbusier said so! He was accused of plagiarism of a project in Japan… by Raymond. [Le Corbusier] was told that the Errazuris house was copied from one, previously built, by Raymond. Then he quickly solved the impasse, though, very intelligently: "great spirits always meet."*

***Materials: Site and Place***

When I come to Colombia I delight in photographing [local] materials and seeing people [for instance carefully] cutting slate… and I think of the generalized urge in Colombia, among my contemporaries, for making (Norman) Foster-like buildings, with incredibly high budgets. A question arises as to the sense and meaning of this attitude. One wonders if this new trend benefits the salary and working conditions of the Colombian construction worker, and of course it doesn't. Development is not there. I believe the ethical posture of your architecture includes this aspect; you could work…

*Like them!*

[437] On this aspect I draw on the central argument of a "subversive" humanism of reciprocity between man and world reflected in the writings of Bachelard. This idea is elaborated by Mary McAllester Jones, [in] *Bachelard Subversive Humanist* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).





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**Figures 209 & 210. Light-ochre concrete: tests and samples by F. de Valdenebro. Photo by F. de Valdenebro.**

**Figure 211. "In situ" concrete prefabrication in the *Gabriel García Márquez* cultural centre. Photo by the author.**
**Figure 212. Local stone of the savannah of Bogotá. Photo by the author.**



**Figure 213. Exposed concrete walls of the Rogelio Salmona studio. Photo by the author**

And is it not that you prefer brick?

*No I m not interested at all* [in brick] *in this regard. It is not a question of taste, the problem goes deeper. I use brick because we have brick, but, had I worked in a region with no brick I would have had to reinvent the material for that region. If even that were not a possibility, one would work with imported materials. Let's suppose a region where there is nothing, a desert, and one has to do a project in a desert… what would one do?*

Like Neutra in the desert house: I'd do it with materials coming from elsewhere. This would be more difficult for the challenge is to "naturalize" a series of autonomous parts: glass panels and metal elements that come to the site, each one speaks its own language, and one's task is to put all parts together to make them speak the same language in situ.[438]

*Yes, because one is able to domesticate that. Not to use glass in the house obviously wouldn't make sense, but: the land, the shape, the sinking, and the 'hollowing' finally, all allow architecture to fit that place. Using elements coming from somewhere else, which are absolutely required, yet, which one readapts to specifically form part of that place, or to be more precise, of that architecture.*

Concerning site and place, what you just said is true: "the site is turned into a place."

*…a dwelling place, not just any kind of place.*

As preexistence, however, the site in and of itself is a place and has potential.

*The issue is that all architecture is a re-creative act and not "pure" creation.*

Yes, but unfortunately we live now in the cult of the tabula rasa.

[438] The subject (and desert house as an example) was spontaneously brought for discussion by Salmona. Then I implicitly alluded to a central argument of David Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002) 239-58.



**Figure 214. Brick architecture in Bogotá, past and present. Photo by the author**



**Figure 215. Traditional Architecture of Bogotá: brick and petreous materials. The Museo Nacional de Colombia (the national museum of Colombia).**

***Poetic Blending and Cultural Synthesis: the Poetics of Historicity***

The site is interpreted but the place is invented, let's put it this way. In the process of place invention, many elements are at play other than responsiveness to site and material: I speak of that other component that comes from the "artist" to give it a name.

*It comes from the artist, it is okay.*

In your case one sees consistent reliance on aspects of memory and experience, which come from a belief that [the making of] architecture is a process…

*…of accumulation, enrichment and re-creation.*

Certain elements are brought together not just because I liked them or I remember this or that. [I recall Bachelard who wrote that "the poet does not confer the past of his image upon me, and yet his image immediately takes root on me." [439] Re-creation would then be the instauration of an architectural culture.] In the process of inventing "place" for Latin America, what did you bring from personal interpretation?

*You are going too far. I am not inventing anything for Latin America, no one does.*

However, on several occasions you have been conscious [and explicit] about that.[440]

*Of course I thought that there should be an attitude towards Latin America in one's work.[441] I thought that certain characteristics were, let's say, analogous between*

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[439] Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* trans. with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) 72-3.

[440] See Rogelio Salmona, *Chile,* letter unpublished (October, 1990, consulted in the Rogelio Salmona studio archives). Salmona in *Chile* gave an extensive and detailed answer to a questionnaire (of unknown author) about his life as an apprentice to Le Corbusier, the vision of, and position taking—by him and other Latin American colleagues, then living in Paris—regarding the specificities of a modern architecture for Latin America. The subject is treated in my "Building Identities in Place: Problems Posed in the Early Formative Stages of Architect Rogelio Salmona," 18-20. <http://sites.google.com/site/plasalmona/> (21 Aug.2008). See, as well, Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly* 20. Salmona in that text "venture[s] beyond the limits of Colombia" to question the non-critical adoption "of the Modern Movement in Latin America," as well as the kind of architecture that arises from "momentary inspiration" without "keeping in mind the local, geographic, historical and technical conditions."

*Colombia and Venezuela, Venezuela and Ecuador. Language unifies things: we have the idiom, part of the history, there are complexities, things that bring us together and others which dissociate us enormously; there are things that are close and others that are very distant. A Latin American architecture will never exist as such: it is like talking of a European architecture, which is not accurate. There is architecture in Europe and yes; there are some* [common] *characteristics.*

I have the impression, however, that the architecture of Rogelio Salmona, in Latin America, Colombia, in Bogotá's highland plateau or Cartagena de Indias presents some specific elements of what you have called "intelligent cultural synthesis."[442] Or, was it Téllez who coined the term? Did he borrow it from something you said?

*No, a cultural synthesis certainly exists.* [Rogelio Salmona once wrote that:]

> *Architecture is* [...] *a cultural fact that proposes and, in certain instances, provokes civilization. It is an intelligent synthesis of experiences and spaces, and of a handful of nostalgia.* [443]

As for the elements of cultural synthesis that you have found, which are very particular because they are subjective, where, and which ones are they?

*I don't know, it's up to you to… "look for the treasure"…I don't know.*

It seems to me that it is not a random occurrence that you bring together certain architectures, for instance: the north of Africa and the south of Spain, and it happens that these are very similar; you bring the pre-Hispanic; you show particular passion for and interest in the Italian Baroque which has [meaningful and parallel] manifestations in

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[441] Salmona, *Chile* (letter unpublished).
[442] See Germán Téllez, *Rogelio Salmona: Obra Completa 1959/2005* (Bogotá: Escala, 2006) 142.
[443] See Rogelio Salmona, "An Architectural experience," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America,* eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 164. The text was translated from Spanish by Ricardo L. Castro from a lecture given by Salmona at the School of Architecture, McGill University, Montreal 28 March 2000.

Latin America. All those things together, added to a conscious position taken *vis a vis* the contemporary reality and the legacy of a "modernity" which comes to you as something in construction: [all those elements, read in terms of poetic images] blend to produce a *sui generi* expression of modernity.[444] I think it does not come as random action on your part. It seems to me that, instead, you speak of a particular interpretation of…

*Say the word once and for all: History.*

[We may say] history yes, continuing to build history but also inventing a new tradition.

*…Attempting to invent it. I attempt to give more appropriate answers to a reality that is transforming and modifying so rapidly. We are living an acceleration of history, among other things, and one must be aware of this fact.*[445]

I would say that we are living, more than an acceleration of history, an explosion of history. Time is flow[446] but, in matters of history we do better in not being "historicists." I mean historicists in the linear sense: after this [period] comes the next and so on.

*Naturally not! I do not mean it in that sense. I am saying that all these connections between the south of Spain and, let's move to the pre-Hispanic Mexico, between this and the other, those leaps* [he seems to describe poetic transfers] *are configuring a cultural body of thought which allows an attitude that enriches what one is making.*

This gives us a sense of belonging, because that's what we are to some degree: we are a very particular form of Western culture.

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[444] On the subject see a meaningful excerpt of Salmona's testimony in, Ricardo L. Castro, *Salmona,* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores) 95.

[445] See, for instance, Pierre Francastel, *Art & Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* trans. Randall Cherry (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 18. Francastel's statements on the subject are significantly similar.

[446] Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly," *Elephant and Butterfly* 13. From the previous text I borrowed Salmona's references to time in Heraclites, linking them to analogous references (of Heraclites and time) in Jorge Luis Borges. See, as well, Jorge Iván Parra Londoño, *Hablemos de literatura* (Bogotá: Fondo de Publicaciones del Gimnasio Moderno, 2002) 164-67. Parra elaborates on the concept of time in Borges and makes comparisons with Nietzsche and Hume and a parallel to Heidegger's "Being and Time."

*Yes, Exactly.*

Somewhat graciously Arciniegas called us América "ladina" due to our condition of being sort of second class [hybridized] Europeans and…not. A different geography, as well as this cultural synthesis makes up what we are. We are that reinvention. "America is an essay"—Arciniegas said.[447] As to how Salmona *sees* Latin American architecture, I understand that you attempt to transcend the local.

*Obviously one transcends the local, one must transcend it. It would be sad not to do it. Although this is something I cannot say or know. Only time will tell, time more than history.*

No, this isn't just a conscious thing like [a formula]: I will put together this and that and the other. Had you been able to clearly explain this…

*No, I cannot…*

Francastel says exactly so: "the explanation of the works escapes many times…"

*Oh yes, of course: "to the understanding of the artist."*[448]

Because the artist operates with a different set of premises: the artist is "syncretic" in his/her sources but the work of art is not.[449] He states it clearly: the artist takes things

[447] Germán Arciniegas, *América Ladina,* ed. Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda (Mexico D.F. : Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993) 331-40. The word "essay" in Spanish, and as implied by Arciniegas, has a double connotation: it is academic text but also experiment, an attempt or try.
[448] In Pierre Francastel words: "[t]he reality of man surpasses all the systems." *La figure et le lieu : l'ordre visuel du Quattrocento* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967) 27.
[449] Francastel, *La figure et le lieu* 45. See, as well, Francastel *Art & Technology* 148. In the cited source Francastel states that: "The [artistic] object is always a totally human product. It is neither a fragment, nor an accumulation but a synthesis."

coming from different origins and articulates them [in the unity and newness of a world]. I link this [idea] to Heidegger's statement on poetry as the origin of all art.[450]

***History, Memory and Tradition***

After a period of revision in search for the possibility to consciously make use of history and tradition (distorted in most cases into what we call "postmodernism") we are in the cult of novelty for its own sake, particularly amongst young architectures.

*Yes, but this is recent…It is what we live nowadays, yes, but it is more evident in so-called developed countries than in those which rather lag behind: I don't see that…*

Yes, although it is more than latent in Colombia's case in the professional field of architecture. Such is the trend of young architects and [design] competitions. In the re-creation or conversion of a site into a [new] place, architectural history and tradition, and memory too, are words that come into play, though; these words are used—*differently,* Salmona interjects—…often interchangeably and not very properly. What I would like to know is what, for you, is architectural tradition, as differing from history and memory?

[Rogelio Salmona takes a brief coffee break, comparing the "memory" of the small digital device recording our conversation with the MP3 player that always accompanies him.]

*Well, history is obviously what man and time together have been accumulating: what they have been building, right? Tradition is what has been formed with history. As an architect, one finally continues to a certain degree: one continues, enriches, improves and transforms tradition. In my case, knowledge of history has been important; and the historic "promenade" because history is not only written, history is walked, lived…*

What do you mean by walked [and lived] history: one's own history?

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[450] See Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings,* ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 184-85.




**Figure 216. Perugia: urban landscape.**
**Drawing by Rogelio Salmona.**

*No, history in general, the history that one may roam around and use in order to be able to do architecture: the history of architecture, bottom line.*

Do you believe therefore that when you visit, for instance [the palace of] Knossos in Greece, you are paying a visit to history?

*Yes, of course yes.*

We are speaking nevertheless of an experience in present time.

*It is an experience in present time in which I 'look at' the past with present eyes.*

When you have approached those architectures of history, to call them this way…

*I have looked at them with the eyes of today. With my own eyes, according to the evolution, the knowledge and the readings I have been able to make; I mean by this, in terms of my own possible approach to history. That is precisely why the study of history was so important to me:* [The study of] *history as a whole, to be able to understand the history of architecture in particular: because one cannot understand the history of architecture without knowledge of general history.*

History is accumulation but, its understanding is a horizontal process. In order to understand the palace of Knossos in its [temporal] context one has to look at it horizontally [this is, synchronically.]

*Well, yes…and I can also look at it vertically.*

Let's imagine that one draws two axes: a horizontal one to understand history. [I refer to the circumstances of giving birth to architectural facts.]



**Figure 217. Venice: urban landscape.**
**Drawing by Rogelio Salmona.**

*…and a vertical axis too.*

A vertical axis that we could call tradition… So, tradition is what one "continues, retakes and tries to improve."

*Exactly, exactly …and memory is what is stored…what stays in 'my memory' from my personal experience and serves as a measure—in the most comprehensive sense of the word. It is not only a number but a dimension, to be able to re-create what I think I must create at a given moment.*

Continuing with the aspect of memory: you have said that "architecture is a way to see the 'world' and transform it."[451] This statement looks to me, to some extent, like Le Corbusier's in that, in architecture one must know how to "see." How could you describe the act of seeing for an architect; what does it consist of?

*First of all, having an ample general culture, not only architectural but general. Music, literature and poetry may help to see and understand.*

Thus it is a kind of seeing that is not visual, [it is rather a cognitive metaphor.]

*Of course it is not just visual, naturally not. But the visual is important; the visual* [with time] *is formed. One not only sees just because: one must know how to look at.*

Had I to define your architecture, I would say it is modern architecture after the modernist concern for identity, which ultimately arose from a "historicist" world view,[452]

[451] See, for instance, Salmona, "An architectural experience," *Transculturation* 164.
[452] See William Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (third edition, New York: Phaidon, 2002) 24. From the reference I quote: "[t]he idea [of modern architecture] itself relied upon a 'historicist' view of world development stemming from philosophers like Hegel, who conceived the fact of culture as direct expressions of an evolving historical spirit."

that implied, not the (19th century) recovery of past styles, but the differentiation of modern architecture from those of the past, to configure their own historical period.[453]

*The fact is that they* [the modernists] *did it!*

They did it consciously. That is what I call a "historicist" concern.

*The word historicist may not sound so good there.*

Philosophers like H-G. Gadamer identify a form of historicism in the understanding of history as differentiable periods [Hegel for instance as noted by Curtis]. That preoccupation, I would say, does not exist in you anymore. There is a somewhat overcoming of this world-view that also implies a different 'vision' of time.

*Of course, it must be like that!*

Téllez says that the best of Casa de Huéspedes is the "history lesson" it conveys. I would argue that, for a naïve person in matters of the history of architecture, when we experience that place for the first time, enjoying and making it memorable—like when one reads a poem and a whole world appears—by no means can it tell me: this is Uxmal or that comes from Alhambra, if I don't have previous historical knowledge. Only with further knowledge may one transit from experience to history.

*No, it is not history;* [the *Casa de Huéspedes*] *is not a lesson in history.*

It is a poetic lesson…

*Exclusively, almost exclusively.*

[453] Curtis, *Modern Architecture* 11. As Curtis suggests, "basic to the ideal of a modern architecture was the notion that each age in the past has possessed its own authentic style, expressive of the true tenor of the epoch."

C.R. Borges was told something, and I would say the same about you; that Borges used to look at the history of literature as a poet, destroying and recomposing it. Thus, he looked at [history] in present time, playing with it, unlike a literary critic.[454] That illustrated vision contributes perhaps to the cliché of historicism in the work of Salmona.

*That, by the way, is false.*

If it is not history, what could be the closest word to your [creative] attempt?

*It is composition.*

***Architectural Composition***

We speak of design processes, but the word design perhaps does not come to terms.

[The term] *is Compositional… let's make it clear, because architecture for me is composition in the end: one composes with water; one composes with light; with clouds, with voids and transparencies, that is composition. One does not make a projection with a tree; the tree is composed within the building. That's why I prefer to talk about composition. The way it used to be in the past, by the way; finally, like in music too, one composes with notes.*

[454] María Esther Vázquez, *Borges, sus días y su tiempo* (Buenos Aires: J. Vergara, 1985) 286-7. In the cited source Raimundo Lida in conversation with Borges made in addition the next enlightening analogy: "El Poeta puede leer parcialmente, puede devorar a sus victimas. ¿No es Valéry el que dice que el león está hecho de cordero digerido?—Isn't it Valéry who says that the lion is made of digested lamb? The translation is mine.

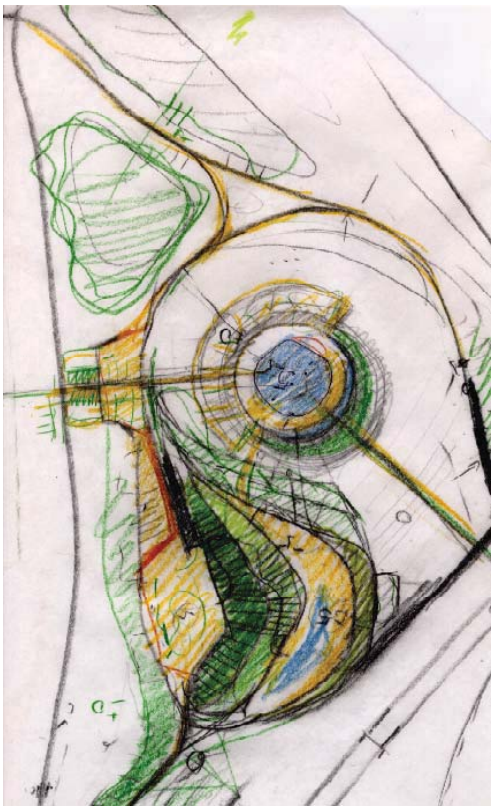


**Figure 218. The Virgilio Barco library and park. Design sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

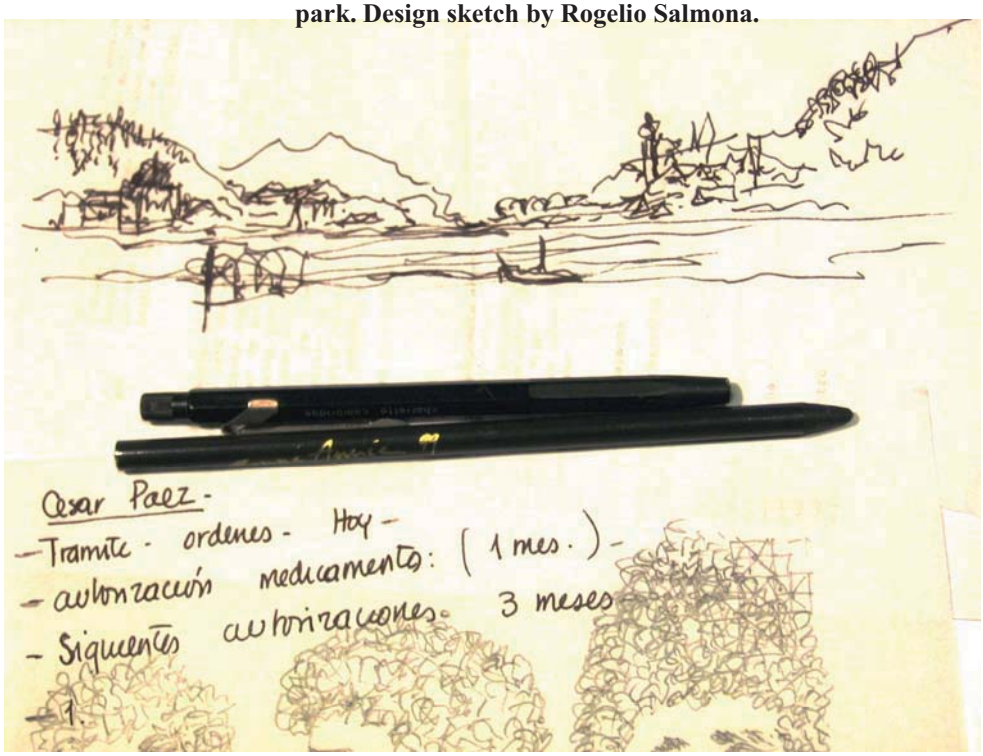



**Figure 219. People and landscapes: 'random' sketches by Rogelio Salmona.**

***A Handful of Readings: "The Intelligentsia of Pleasure"***[455]

> *There are two approaches to architecture: the intellectual, on one side, and on the other, the experiential.* […] *Geography, history and anthropology help one to acquire knowledge and a wider perception of what one sees.*[456]

*When one makes a wall the attempt is to animate it, to make it a singing, vibrant thing.*

Do you remember what Paul Valéry said of buildings in "Eupalinos or the Architect"?

*That* [they] *sing. That there are architectures that sing and architectures…*

There are three kinds of buildings:

*Some which do not say anything. Well, the ones which sing…*

The singing ones are the best.

*And the others are those… that speak.*

Architecture [that speaks] is at its best, prose. However, architecture is poetic [when buildings 'sing',] and that depends on the intentionality and talents of the architect.[457]

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[455] I borrow the quoted subtitle from "Las Inteligencias del Placer", a section of Claudia Arcila, *Tríptico Rojo: Conversaciones con Rogelio Salmona* (Bogotá: Taurus, Alfaguara S.A., 2007) 51-54.

[456] My translation, from Arcila, *Tríptico Rojo* 53-54. The Spanish original follows:

> *Entonces hay dos aproximaciones a la arquitectura. Es intelectual por un lado y experimental por el otro.* […] *La geografía, la historia, la antropología, ayudan a tener una percepción más amplia y un conocimiento de lo que vemos.*

[457] See Paul Valéry, "Eupalinos or the Architect," *Dialogues,* trans. Denise Folliot ( New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) 83. From the source I quote:

> ...have you not noticed, in walking about this city, that among the buildings with which it is peopled, certain are *mute*; others speak; others, finally -and they are the most rare-sing?-It is not their purpose, nor even their general features, that give them such animation, or that reduce them to silence. These things depend upon the talent of their builder, or on the favor of the Muses.

*Yes,* Valéry *talked about* "*une architecture qui chante.*"

C.R. And [Eupalinos] talked about a building that must take dwellers as if by the hand of their beloved[458]

*I used him* [Paul Valéry] *for the "Cruz de Boyacá."*[459] *I borrowed a phrase from Valéry to give* [the speech] *a special 'something'. I wanted to justify having been awarded the "Cruz" because it was not that obvious. I said: according to Eupalinos the architect is the one who gives orders, number and order. Do you remember that?*[460]

Is it in *Eupalinos*? When did you read that text for the first time?

*When I was with* [Le] *Corbusier, perhaps?*

Was Le Corbusier a man of this type of culture?

*I believe so. But, for the most part Valéry came to me from Francastel, not so much from Le Corbusier.*

C.R. Did Bachelard's texts come to you through Francastel's seminars?

*I don't know how I got to Bachelard. Wait; Paúl Valéry and even the Eupalinos issues, I think it was my mother who, from a trip to France, brought back several books so I read*

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Valéry's metaphor is subtle and of multiple significations; it illustrates not only the analogy between architecture and music. Expressing the synaesthetic, attributes of certain buildings, he aims at establishing the ultimate poetic nature and the possibilities of architecture as experience of a poetic "world."

[458] Valéry "Eupalinos or the Architect," *Dialogues* 75. Valéry's character, Eupalinos said: " 'My Temple,' this man from Megara would say, 'must move men as they are moved by their beloved'."

[459] In 2006 Rogelio Salmona was honored by the presidency of the republic of Colombia with the *Orden de Boyacá* in the "*Gran Cruz*" category. The "*Cruz de Boyacá*" award was instituted in the centennial (1919) of the battle that closed the liberators' campaign in the Nueva Granada (August 7, 1819).

[460] See Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 40. Rogelio Salmona makes reference to the "poetic possibilities" of the solid, hard to mould language of architecture and by analogy alludes to Valéry's "Eupalinos."

*Valéry even* [before], *here in Bogotá: in my first year of architecture, I did not to finish the second. Bachelard was way later.*

Was it after your return to Colombia?

*No, in France, but I had not built architecture yet. I was reading Bachelard because it was cited by Francastel at some moment, or he recommended it to me.*

During your stay in Europe [1949-57] Sartre was in 'furor.' Do you remember having read "Existentialism is Humanism"?

*Yes,* [but] *the issue is I was Marxist, we were hard communists. Sartre's humanism did not interest me that much though I found it very respectable.*

Proust?

*Proust of course was a reading.*

What about phenomenology, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*? Jacques Mosseri says that the Virgilio Barco library "is a complete lesson on Phenomenology of Perception which describes the essence of things as of their existence and of ours before them."[461]

*Merleau-Ponty? I was in Paris when he was in full effervescence; although Le cru et le cuit and the other, Tristes tropiques* [both by Claude Levi-*Strauss*] *were important*.

Was phenomenology something you approached [intently], or was it more intuitive?

*It was rather intuitive because I read little on that.*

[461] Jacques Mosseri, "La Biblioteca Virgilio Barco: un Recorrido Virtual," *Mundo*: *Salmona* 2 (2002): 81. The original (Spanish) excerpt follows: "Es una lección completa de Fenomenología de la Percepción que describe la esencia de las cosas a partir de la existencia de ellas."

Did you read the traditional "Building, Dwelling Thinking"?

*By Heidegger; that one I read, it was important. However, I read Heidegger later on (around the 1970's), here in Colombia.*[462]

You cited [Heidegger] in a lecture at Los Andes University. [Rogelio Salmona paraphrased Heidegger, yet, he did not provide a specific reference. By the content, I would argue that Salmona took ideas from "The Origin of the Work of Art."[463] I quote Salmona's reference: "All art is poetry in its essence, as Heidegger told us, and he claims for architecture, sculpture and music to be re-conducted to poetry."][464]

*And… what about **Do kamo**, did you find it?*[465]

Yes I found ***Do kamo***! [In the summer of 2002, during a conversation preparatory for this dissertation, Rogelio Salmona suggested reading *Do kamo* to me. The discussion then was centered on his argument about the necessary balance between technological advance and social-economic and cultural evolution. In further archival research in R. Salmona's studio I found written testimony on Salmona's remembrances of his 'formative' period in Paris at La Sorbonne and the influx of P. Francastel in his subsequent interest for issues concerning the historicized dimension of architectural facts. Rogelio Salmona wrote about this concern, reflected in his response to Le Corbusier's regulatory plan for Bogotá, developed while he worked in the French master's studio. I quote Salmona's words:]

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[462] On Salmona's allusion to Heidegger's thinking see, for instance, Rogelio Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 88.

[463] See Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* 184-85.

[464] My translation; I quote the original sentence in Spanish: *"Todo arte es en esencia poema, nos dice Heidegger y clama para que la arquitectura, la escultura y la música sean reconducidas a la poesía."* The quotation was taken from a Word document entitled "Encuentro de dos mundos, Uniandes, 1992," in the file, "Textos y Escritos Rogelio Salmona" (Consulted in the Rogelio Salmona studio archives).

[465] Salmona refers to the book by Maurice Leenhardt, *Do Kamo; La personne et le mythe dans le monde mélanesien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971). The English version is *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World,* trans. M.Gulati (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

> *Bogotá for me was a tangible reality, not an abstraction. I was living a very disturbing dichotomy. I decided then, in 1952, by the end of the project to talk about Le Corbusier's ideas with Pierre Francastel at the Sorbonne where since 1949 I had been attending Francastel's courses on the sociology of art. Regularly after the courses he asked me about the project and other works and made acute and pertinent comments. He suggested readings to me and I decided to then take the courses of Maurice Leenhardt and Pierre Georges. Then, I discovered the implications of history, the legacies resounding in architecture…*[466]

*Do kamo* parallels a central theme of your architecture. I found it relevant how [Maurice Leenhardt] stresses on the necessary correspondence between technological transformation and social advance. Was [*Do kamo*] suggested by Francastel too?

*No, the fact is that one book leads to another; there are interests. Therefore one reads one and the interest grows. Do kamo is beautiful. I hardly remember the specific subject; I read it so long ago*[467].

It is about this anthropologist who spent 25 years in the south pacific islands and concludes, fundamentally, that there are not "primitive" and "advanced" societies but mythical and rational ones. [The central argument is that myth and reason are complementary modes of thinking about, and giving account of, the world.]

*Exactly.* [He stated that] *as well there are logical and a-logical modes of thinking. What is the name of the author of Do kamo… Maurice Leenhardt?*

---

[466] Rogelio Salmona, *Chile*, letter unpublished (October, 1990, consulted in the Rogelio Salmona studio archives). See further elaborations on the subject in my "Building Identities in Place: Problems Posed in the Early Formative Stages of Architect Rogelio Salmona," 18-20. <http://sites.google.com/site/plasalmona/> (21 Aug.2008). See as well the "Orientation bibliographique" (bibliographic orientation) of Francastel, *Art et Technique* 292-99.

[467] Salmona, *Chile* (letter unpublished).

Lucien Lévy Bruhl? Right, Maurice Leenhardt; Lucien Lévy Bruhl wrote …[*Primitive Mentality*,[468] an important precedent to Leenhardt research that Salmona also suggested to me, in previous (2002) conversations.]

What about Pierre George?

*Pierre George, because I attended his courses: I attended his courses for a year at La Sorbonne, when he taught urban geography.*[469]

Geography and botanic sciences, have these been a passion in your life?

*No, these are not passions but interests.*

The passion is architecture…

*Even better! Or knowledge, who knows!*

***

[468] Lucien Lévy Bruhl, *La mentalité primitive* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1931).
[469] A relevant book with the ideas on urban geography that Salmona was taught in Paris, at La Sorbonne is Pierre George, *Précis de géographie urbaine* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964, c1961).

***Each new Project is Always the Same and Always Different"***[470]

*I am writing a text now about the Moravia project*[471]*: why don't you take a look at it?* [I read fragments from Rogelio Salmona's manuscript for the Centro Cultural Moravia:]

> [It] *is a multi-spatial building to perform musical activities, in addition to other cultural ones such as conferences, poetic recitals and theatrical activities. To the effect, it is composed by two kinds of spaces: some are sheltered while others are open. The main sheltered space is an amphitheater of circular escalated form, to house about three hundred people. The back of the scene is transparent towards the exterior of the room, to make visible the theatrical and musical performances from the outside. The wider part of the semicircle includes a high gallery to achieve dramatic and musical effects: for a choral group to climb up, or to be the place of theatrical actions or special effects, in addition to those offered on the traditional scene. In these circumstances the spectator is surrounded by, immersed in the interior of a drama or cultural event, like in a work by Bertolt Brecht. Therefore it corresponds with spatiality proper to the contemporary theater.*

Contemporary and original theater, in the terms you use to define originality, as going back to the origins for theater in its origins was a participatory rite.

*Well, yes; in its origins,* [472] *we can add that.* [Continuing with Salmona's manuscript:]

---

[470] Rogelio Salmona's projects thematically, formally and experientially don't change radically from one to another; there is no abrupt leap. Change happens gradually and in a process of patient and thoughtful experimentation on consistent themes and problems; Salmona made it explicit. See for instance, Salmona, "Textos de Rogelio Salmona," *Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* 84-95. This approach to artistic work most probably traces back to Francastel's concepts on artistic specificity. On the subject of specificity see Francastel, *Art & Technology* 146-7.

[471] The project for the cultural centre Moravia in Medellin, Colombia, was at the time of this interview (February 15, 2007) in the processes of construction and simultaneous production of working drawings.

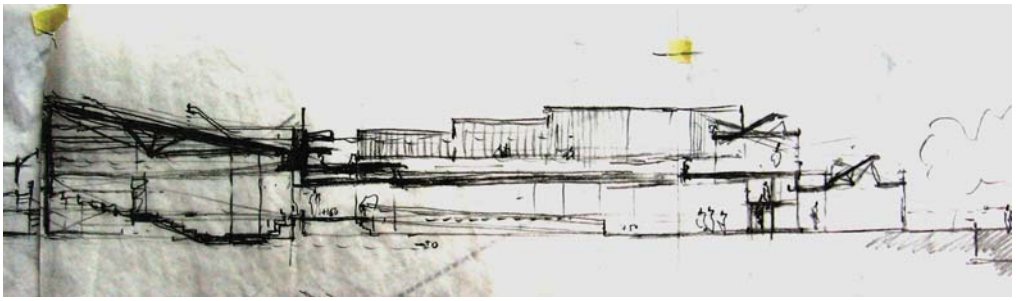


**Figure 220. The Moravia cultural centre.**
**Design sketch (section) by Rogelio Salmona.**

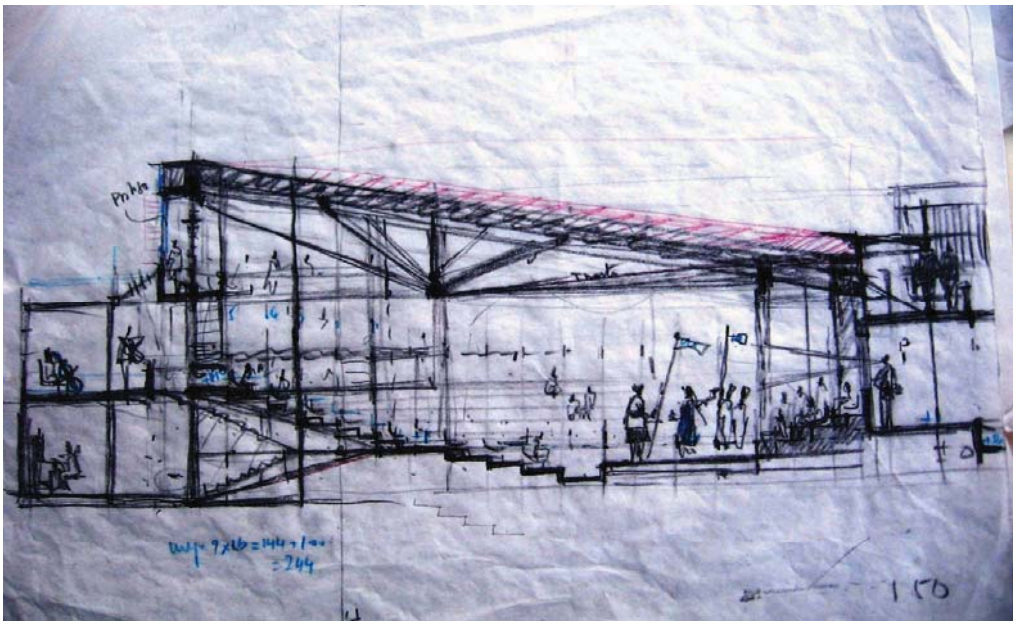


**Figure 221. The Moravia cultural centre: main auditorium.**
**Design sketch (section) by Rogelio Salmona.**

> *The heart of the project is a courtyard that serves as scenario of open air events and responds to the public space in front. This place is complemented by two other open spaces: one by the café that is planted with trees and the other with palms. A ramp leads one to the second floor where, overlooking the courtyard, a loggia, an auditorium and classrooms* […] *are located. The loggia expands to a grand exhibition space also suited to outdoor activities and an enclosed one for exhibition purposes. The journey culminates in a ramp that, surrounding the exhibition room gives access to an observation platform which overlooks the entire building. These differentiated places, observation platform and exhibition gallery (loggia) have been conceived for the building to be traveled through as to favor diverse simultaneous activities, both interior and exterior ones, which are fully justified by the benign weather of Medellin.*
>
> *The promenade was conceived as well for the city dwellers to discover the beauty of the surrounding city when roaming in and around the building. I consider that, in addition to producing emotion, one of the 'functions' of architecture is to reveal the unknown and make present the landscape which, only architecture conceived in terms of its surroundings (milieu) can frame and reveal.*[473]

[The similitude of explorations with respect to the Humanities building is remarkable. There is consistency in the problem-solving attitude, as it reveals significant features of

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[472] See Rogelio Salmona, "La Memoria del Agua," interview, by Claudia Arcila, *Magazin Dominical El Espectador 708* (1996): 6. From the source I quote: "Going back to the origins is already being original. One is not original just because, but in the need to recuperate what existed in its origin and disappeared from memory…" my translation, from the Spanish original.

[473] My translation; the Spanish transcripts and a digital audio file of the interviews were consigned to the Rogelio Salmona studio archives.

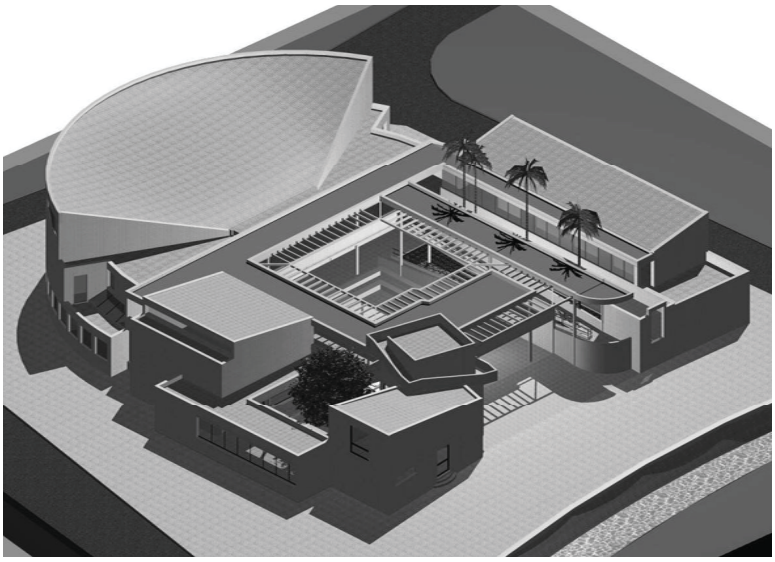


**Figure 222. The Moravia cultural centre: 3D image.**
**Drawing by the Rogelio Salmona studio.**

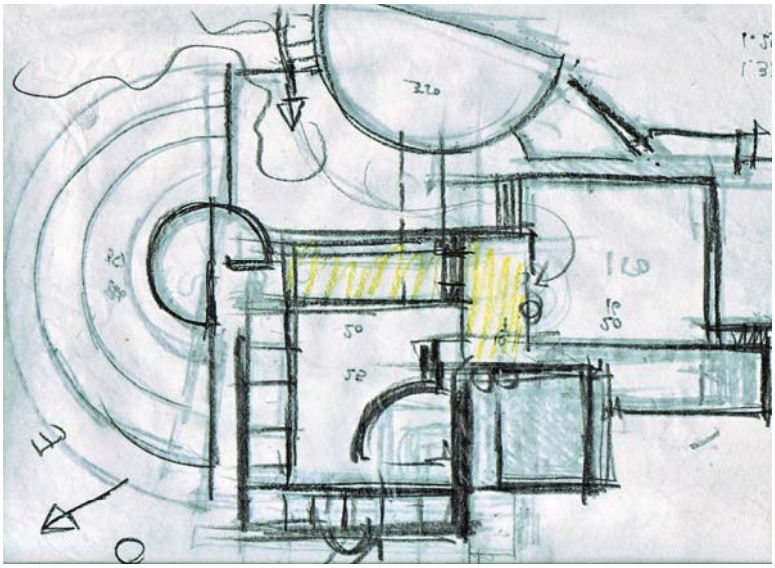


**Figure 223. The Humanities building.**
**Preliminary design sketch (layout) by Rogelio Salmona.**

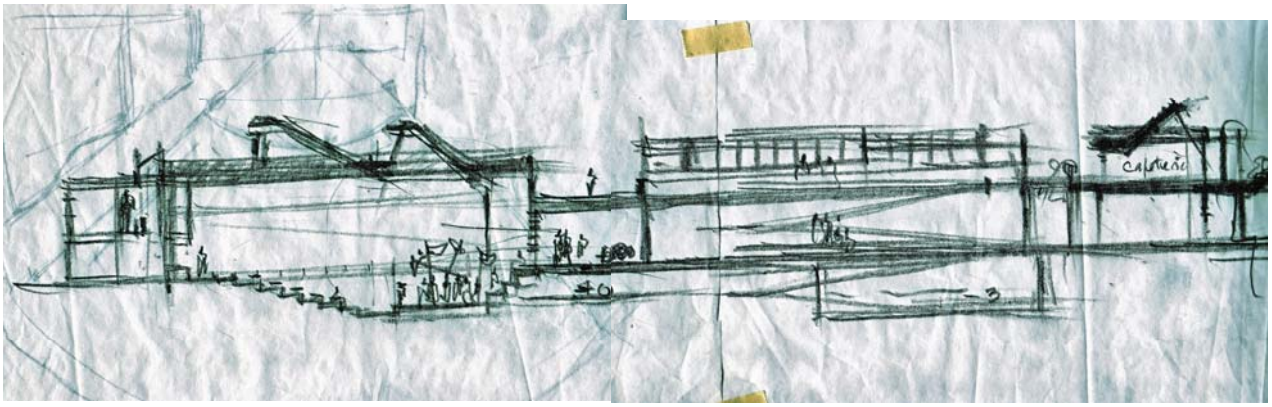


**Figure 224. The Moravia cultural centre.**
**Preliminary design sketch (section) by Rogelio Salmona.**

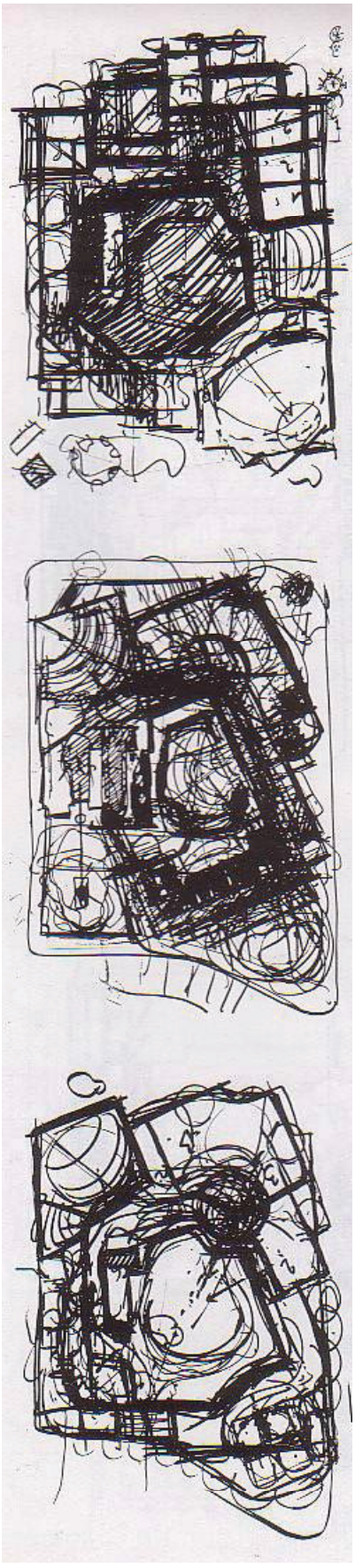
the urban landscape and the understanding of architecture as place-composition based on modulating collective and subjective experience in terms of an internal narrative and a preexisting site. The preeminence given to place as a successive unfolding of experience (discovery) is also important, as it is the role played by open spaces: the "heart" of the project is a courtyard. Rogelio Salmona subsequently reads fragments of a complementary manuscript on the Moravia cultural centre project:]

> *The interlacing volumes form a complex system that organizes voids and masses and makes them evident with their luminosity or penumbra, color and material. The sudden shifting of a plane, a diagonal meeting the corners of a hinged courtyard, the wind passing by the open precinct or the presence of an opening on a wall, are proposing sensations, emotions and evocations to the transient dweller. These are part of the event of architecture and create the atmosphere of each place.*[474]

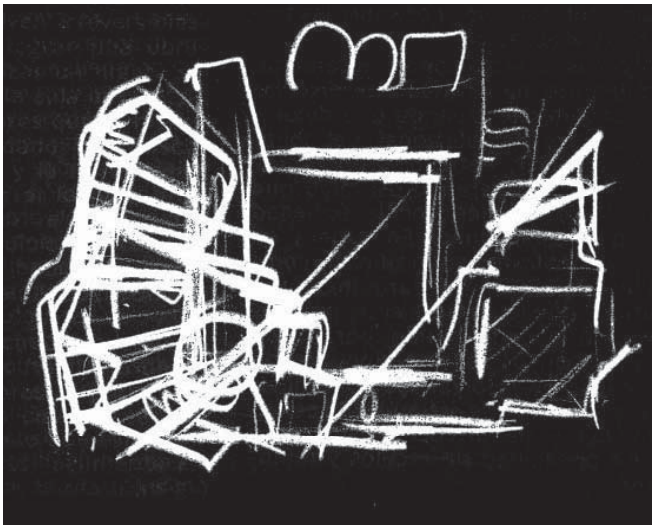
[This fragment holds the idea of a "sensitive geometry", the product of material imagination. The complex nature of architectural creation being on one hand, a composition of volumes, planes, masses and materials in general and, on the other hand, the proposition of a sensuous reality and a manifestation of the poetic dimension of our existence. Place-making, Salmona suggests, is the preparation of meaningful events.][475]

I see that you elaborate on the same themes: [a balance of open and sheltered spaces interacting, dynamic subjective and collective place experience, and celebration of the urban landscape through a spiral ascending narrative;] each work is always the same and always different.

[474] It is my translation.
[475] I draw on the title and ideas of Carlos Niño, "Geometria Sensible," *Mundo: Salmona* 2 (2000): 66-69, 81-82 (English summary).



**Figures 225 & 226 .The Jorge Eliecer Gaitán cultural centre, Bogotá, Colombia, 1981. Design sketches by Rogelio Salmona.**



***Architecture as Revelation of Latencies***

Some of the previous aspects are the topic for a question. Let's talk about architecture as revelation. I think of when you said *"architecture is revelation of latencies"*. [I quote a fragment of Salmona's introductory speech (8 April 2006, at MAMBO, Bogotá):]

> *It is a prime obligation to know how to reveal, to bring forth what is unknown or concealed; to make "entornos" evident, create landscapes and characterize each work whether it is institutional or residential.* [476]

I believe that [revelation] goes beyond the concept of landscape.

*Of course it goes beyond landscape; it is implicit.*

What site-latencies does architecture bring?

*It even brings historical facts, which are not explicit but, nevertheless there, and other geographic aspects which have not been discovered.*

You speak of historicized geography. Geography which has not been discovered…

*I mean that* [these aspects] *have not been seen, that they are ignotos (unknown), which have not been discovered because they are not evident.* [Salmona once said that:]

> *...architecture is also a way to reveal, this is, that it transfigures its spiritual content, trace by trace, until one achieves full consciousness and, if one does not make a*

[476] See, Salmona, "Palabras en la Apertura de la Exposición en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* 10. My translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *Es de primera obligación saber reveler, hacer conocer lo que es desconocido o secreto. Poner en evidencia entornos, crear paisajes y caracterizar cada obra, ya sea institucional o habitacional.*

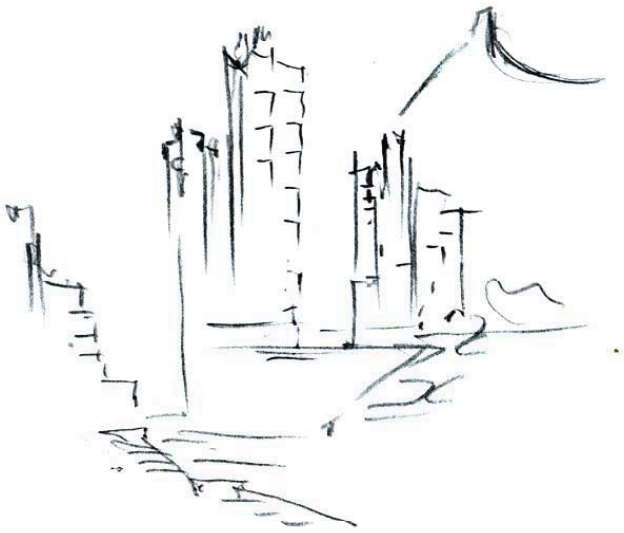


**Figure 227. Residencias el Parque, Bogotá: urban landscape.**
**Sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**



**Figure 228. Siena: urban landscape.**
**Sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

> *presence visible, only one reason would be left for it: the technical-functional*[477]

That these have not been fostered, is that what you mean?

*Yes, these have not been transmitted. I believe architecture may help to transmit.*

I would say that architecture reveals not only what is in the landscape or the site…

*But also, it reveals what is in memory.*

[On the subject I quote an excerpt of Salmona's testimony:]

> *The resonance is what one keeps and then activates. The resonance always remains. Finally, the spaces one makes are just corners of the world, and those corners are always mysterious and made to be discovered. My greatest joy is to transfer living resonances to people coming from the resonances I have proposed.*[478]

Thus it reveals other places, where one may metaphorically find an analogy.[479]

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[477] Salmona, "Palabras," *Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* 10. My translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *...La arquitectura es también una manera de reveler, es decir que transfigura su contenido espiritual, huella sobre huella, hasta llegar a la plena conciencia de que si no se hace visible lo que está presente, la arquitectura tendría una sola razón de ser: la técnica y funcional.*

[478] Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 38. My translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *La resonancia es lo que uno guarda, lo que uno activa. La resonancia siempre queda. Finalmente los espacios que uno produce son rincones del mundo, y esos rincones siempre son misteriosos y hay que descubrirlos. El mayor goce que tengo es cuando la gente vive y recibe resonancias de lo que es, a través de las resonancias que les he propuesto*

[479] The reference to transferring "resonances" coming from "other places" is recurrent in Rogelio Salmona's recent discourse and 'evident' in the experience of his later works. Salmona's allusion to Bachelard is explicit. See, for instance, Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 122 -23. I relate Salmona's words to Bachelard's idea of "trans-subjectivity" of poetic images and "reverberation" in poetry making. See

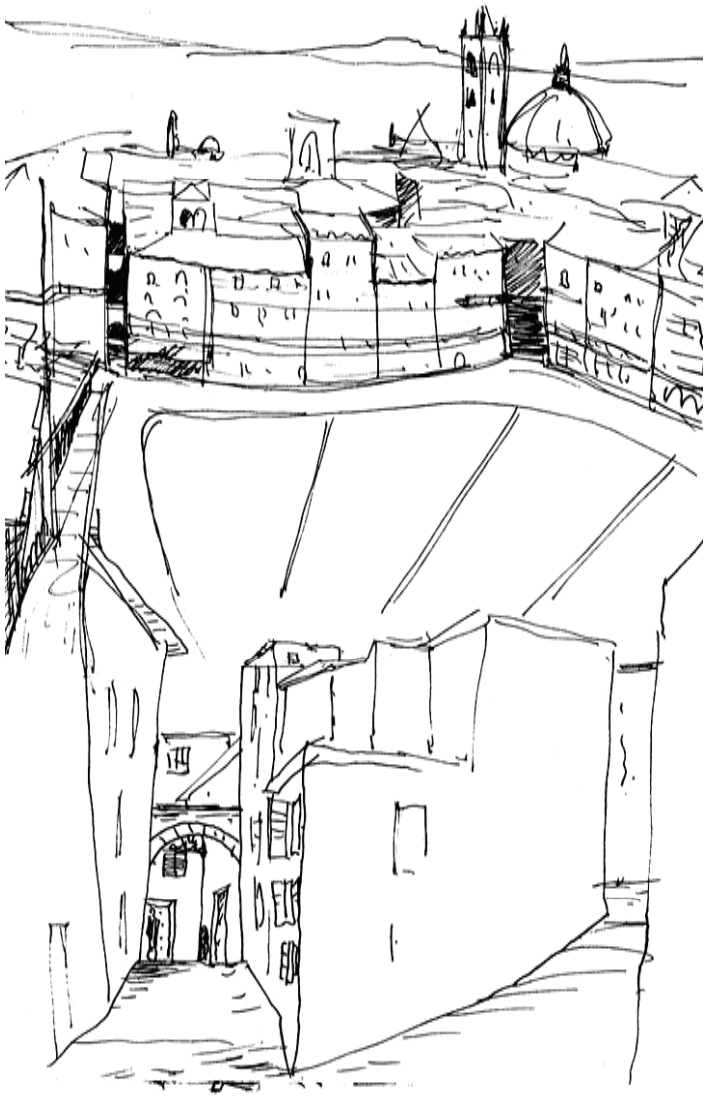


**Figure 229. Siena: urban landscape.**
**Sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

*That too; and this is what I wanted to add as coda to the Moravia text. I say:*

> *Only when those factors are achieved with authenticity and are appropriated by the community; when they create emotion and enchantment and get to be a-temporal, the poetry of a particular architecture appears.*

***The Word Entorno and its Related Meanings: Translations from Spanish to French***

[*Entorno,* meaning totality of site and landscape, was a recurrent word in Salmona's speech. I find the word close to an all inclusive notion of place. Rogelio Salmona refers to *entorno* constantly, relating it to a surrounding context that includes the physical geography but also implies experience, memory, society, historical traces and latencies on site. David Leatherbarrow refers similarly to the idea of "topography" as a "name for this passive and productive, silent and eloquent milieu."[480] Spanish and French were Rogelio Salmona's languages of habitual use and enthusiastic etymological research.]

*Entorno* is a word charged with meaning in the Spanish language. It has various connotations. What does *entorno* mean to you?

*It means all that surrounds us: geography, light, the sun, the people, forestation, vegetation, everything.*

…frozen in time?

*Not frozen, no; living in time. Why would you freeze it?*

No, surely not frozen; with time sediment.

*Leaving the sediments, that's even better. Is there a French dictionary around? There it is: a French to Spanish one, to know how one says entorno in French*.

---

Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* trans. with an introduction by Colette Gaudin (New York: The Bobbs and Merril Company, Inc., 1971) xix.

[480] Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* 210.

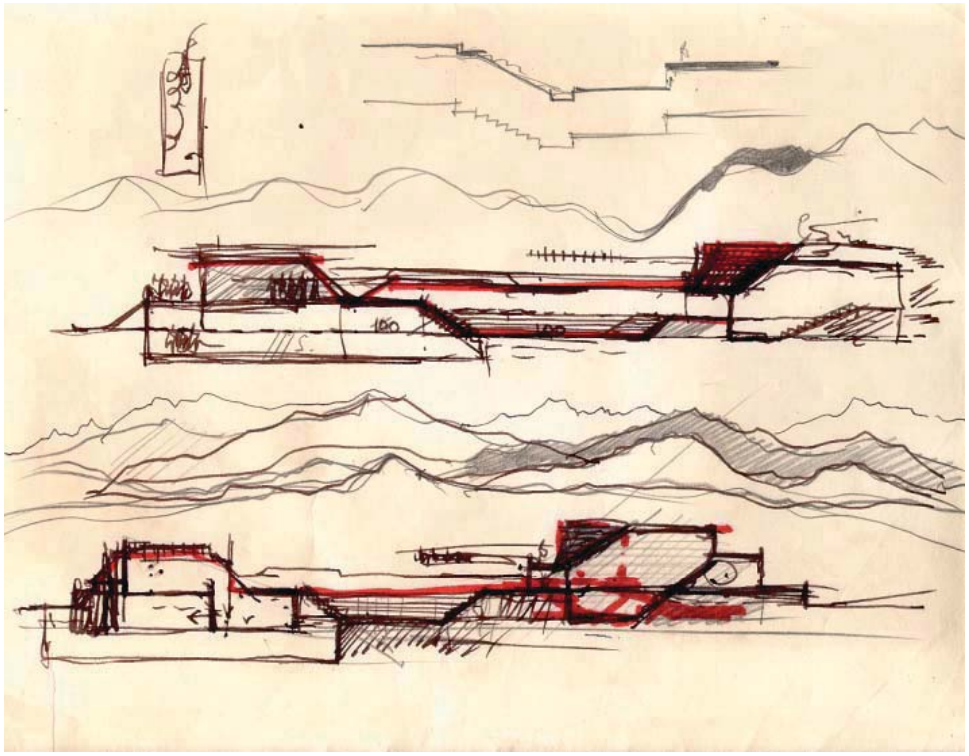


**Figure 230. The Jorge Eliecer Gaitán cultural centre: sections with topographic references. Bogotá, Colombia, 1981. Design sketches by Rogelio Salmona.**

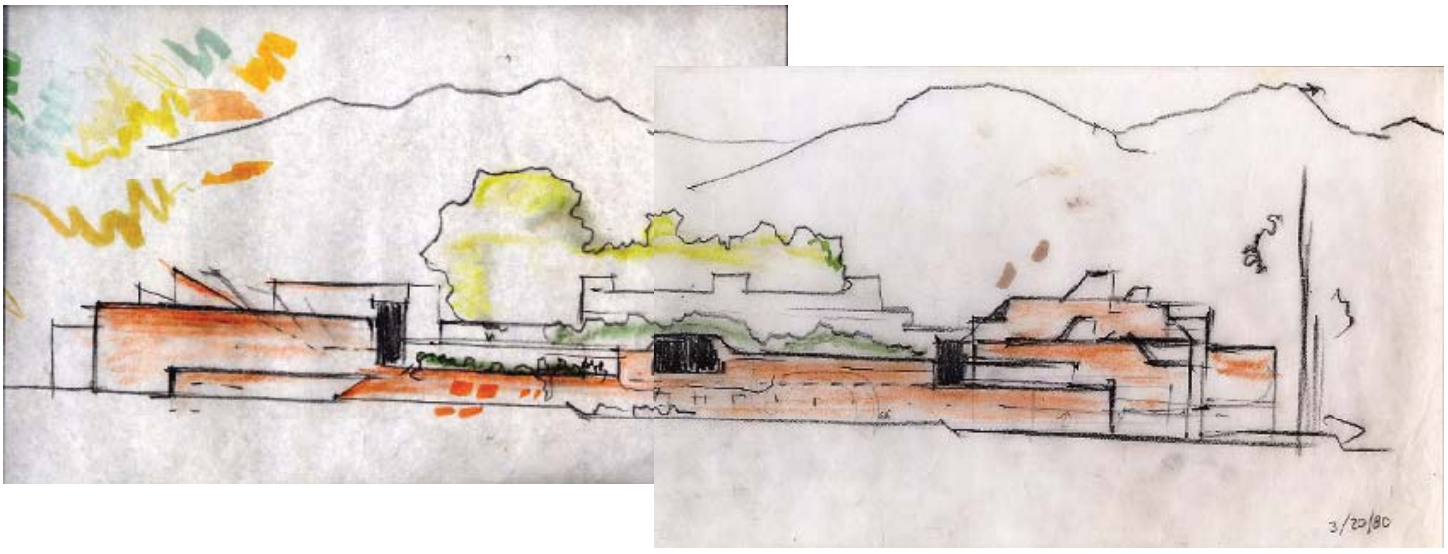



**Figure 231. The Jorge Eliecer Gaitán cultural centre: facade, with reference to the *cerros* of Bogotá. Design sketches by Rogelio Salmona.**

If I ask you to describe to me the word *entorno*, which is a marvelous word in Spanish, does it exist in the French language?

*Contour ?*

Contour: *Ligne or surface qui marque la limite d'un corps.*

*No, that is not the word!*

*Encadrement*, [framing] there you have another [word] you like, master Salmona.

*Encadrement? Yes.*

*Encadrement Dynamique*, not static. Let's look for French *entourer.*

*Je m'entoure de quelque chose.*

Entour: *Voisinage, environs, milieu.* There is also *Milieu* which has to do with place. [For we have: Neighboring, neighborhood, proximity, vicinity, middle-ground environment, background, surrounding, right in the middle.] [481]

*There it is!*

C.R. *Entourer*: *susciter autour de soi*.

*That is what one does with architecture: "susciter autour de soi."*

***

[481] The English translation of the *Entour* correlated concepts of *voisinage, environs, milieu,* was taken from *The Pocket Oxford Hachette French Dicitonary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 466,163,276.

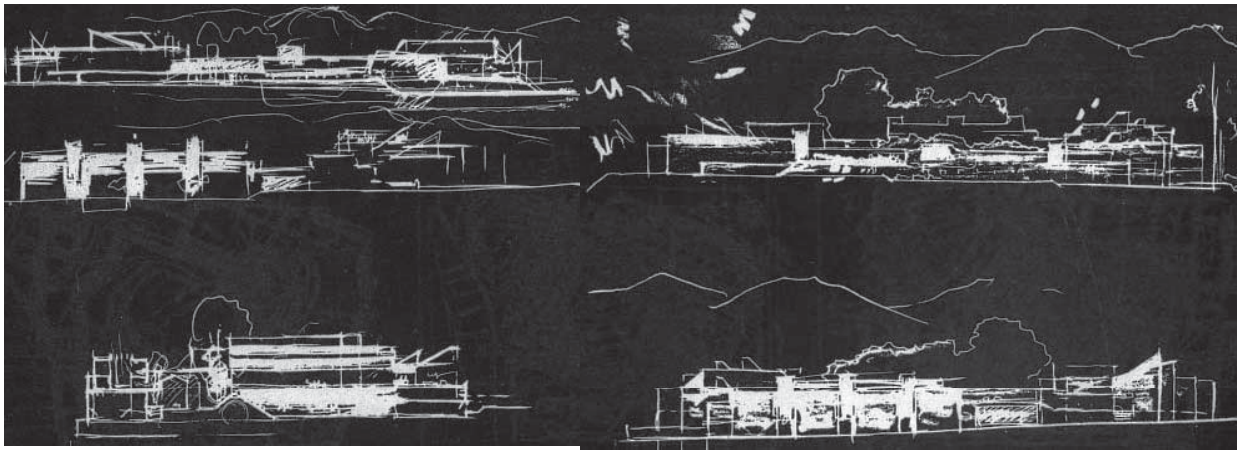


**Figure 232. The Jorge Eliecer Gaitán cultural centre: sections and elevetions with topographic references. Design sketches by Rogelio Salmona.**



**Figure 233. The *Monserrate* hill: pathway to the sanctuary. Urban landscape with imaginary features. Drawing by Rogelio Salmona (circa 1998).**

***The Cerros de Bogotá: Transiting from a Natural to a Technological Environment.***[482]

Why the [Bogotá] hills?

*How come…why the hills? What do you mean by that?*

In one way or another, your most significant projects involving collective spaces…

*Keep a relationship with the hills. The issue is that, in my opinion, the hills are the most characteristic attribute of Bogotá. Therefore, to the furthest possible extent, one must attempt to value them; to valorize them.* [On inquiring about the indiscriminate construction occurring on the hills salmona once said:]

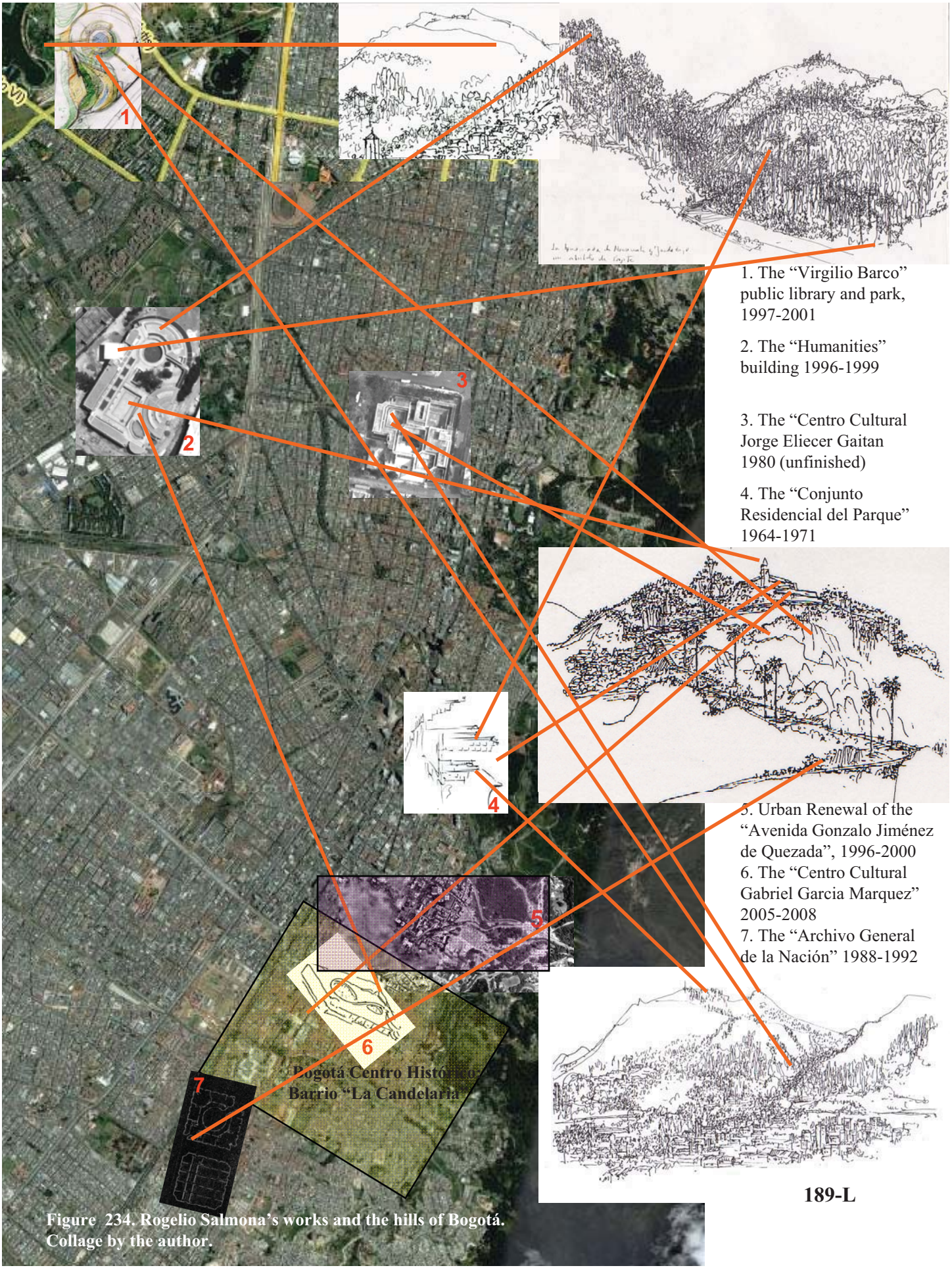
> *In the neighborhoods of the rich and the poor evenly, the hills are being razed due to minimum governmental control. Furthermore, there is a kind of architecture that, sitting on top, ignores them and has done anything possible to block the hills—favoring commercial interests due to their fantastic views. Though, in doing so, this architecture prevents all others from enjoying that spectacle.*[483]

[In conversation with Bogota's city mayor (2004-2007) Luis Eduardo Garzón and the architect Carlos Hernandez, Rogelio Salmona was just as critical of the disregard for, and destruction of, Bogotá's urban landscape. The hills were an implicit subject, I quote:]

> *Architecture* [in Bogotá] *has been dedicated to 'speculative' issues. The aspects that characterize this city have not been taken into account: the exaltation of the entorno (milieu) and the beauty of its landscape.*[…] *The*

[482] Pierre Francastel addresses this problem, based on Georges Friedmann's thesis concerning the "passage" from a "Natural environment" to the "environment of technological civilization." See Francastel, *Art & Technology* 136. See as well Georges Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain? (P*aris: Gallimard, 1950). It is noteworthy that Rogelio Salmona was assiduous to Francastel's seminars on the sociology of art while Francastel was writing *Art and Technology.*

[483] My translation, see Rogelio Salmona, interview, *Arquitectura Para la Memoria*, by Ricardo Posada Barbosa, *El Malpensante* 19 Dec. 1999, Jan. 2000: 50.




1. The "Virgilio Barco" public library and park, 1997-2001

2. The "Humanities" building 1996-1999

3. The "Centro Cultural Jorge Eliecer Gaitan 1980 (unfinished)

4. The "Conjunto Residencial del Parque" 1964-1971

5. Urban Renewal of the "Avenida Gonzalo Jiménez de Quezada", 1996-2000

6. The "Centro Cultural Gabriel Garcia Marquez" 2005-2008

7. The "Archivo General de la Nación" 1988-1992

**Figure 234. Rogelio Salmona's works and the hills of Bogotá. Collage by the author.**

> *cerros are Bogotá's greatest strength, and a funicular is the most adequate mode of transportation to reach them. Between* [the] *Monserrate* [hill] *and* [the] *Teusacá* [river] *we could locate recreational and sportive facilities for the million and a half students coming to the city center and recuperate and protect the foothills for leisure uses.* [484]

This is one aspect I relate to the general problems that your architectural work addresses. That is to say, the deterioration of the landscape because, the "natural" landscape…

*It is no longer natural.*

It is never "natural" because it is a cultural construction.

*That is right.*

I argue that Pierre George's thesis on the transition from a natural environment to a technological one is a concern that articulates a good part of your architectural work. [485]

*We agree on that, but things are not that radical. Did you read Urban Geography by Pierre George?*[486] *Very good, I add on the subject that, what you just said about the technological world and Pierre George is very much fair, because, techniques—and not technology, I clarify—come from the technological world.*[487]

I think that this topic coincides with that of techniques: *techne* and technology.

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[484] My translation, see Lonja de Propiedad Raíz de Bogotá, *Conversaciones con Bogotá* (Bogotá: Sello Editorial Lonja de Propiedad Raíz de Bogotá, 2005) 224.

[485] As previously seen, to nurture the interest on this problem Rogelio Salmona would take Pierre George's urban geography course, with similar theoretical propositions.

[486] Salmona makes reference to Pierre George, *Précis de géographie urbaine* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964 c1961).

[487] Salmona's argument in this paragraph however relates more directly to the main argument of Pierre George, *L'ère des techniques, constructions ou destructions?* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1974).

***Techne-Poiesis*: *'Stretching' Local Building Traditions***

*Techne and poiesis: poetry arises from technology, because techne is technology while poiesis is labor, the work; because, in fact poiesis is the labor of the worker. Furthermore, in Aristotle* [*poiesis*] *is the work of the slave; and techne is the accumulation of cultures of an epoch. Techne is technology: it is the invention with which man elaborates, builds the world. Poiesis is the way* [*man*] *makes it.*

[On the subject Rogelio Salmona previously wrote:]

> *Techne brings awareness of the intentionality and possible transformation of the creative process of a given object to its creator. It favors the continuing transformation of techniques in the light of the knowledge acquired through making. The difference between "making" and its "know-how", between poiesis and techne, is resolved in technology which, as I said before is logos.* [488]

*That is written in the "Nichomahean Ethics"*[489] *which, is a must re-read. Unfortunately, I lost that book.*

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[488] Rogelio Salmona, "La Experiencia es Mía, lo Demás es Dogma*," Seminario Abierto El Oficio del Investigador, Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, Bogotá, 19 Nov. 1997. (Unpublished text consulted in the Rogelio Salmona studio archive) 2. My translation; the excerpt from the original manuscript in Spanish follows:

> *La techné le permite al creador entender y transformar el proceso de creación y la finalidad de un objeto dado, favoreciendo la transformación continua de las técnicas a la luz de los conocimientos adquiridos por el "hacer". La diferencia entre el "hacer" y "saber hacer", entre poeisis y techné, se funde en la tecnología, que como ya lo dije es el logos."*

[489] The reference to Aristotle is consistent with the one consigned in his "La Experiencia es Mía, lo Demás es Dogma" *Seminario.* On the subject see David Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Techne* (University Park, Pa: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) 31. Roochnik in that reference reminds us that *techne* in Aristotle has ethical implications, I quote: "it is in the use of *techne*, not simply in the *techne* itself that the ethical value resides." Salmona's interpretation shares a similar ethical connotation. An English translation of *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics,* is in the online MIT classics: <<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>> (21 Aug. 2008). The word *techne* nonetheless is translated from the Greek in its most general and common meaning as "art." See as well Aristotle, *The Rhetoric, Poetic and Nichomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, trans. Thomas Taylor. (Frome: Prometheus Trust, 2002).



**Figures 235. Rogelio Salmona during a construction site visit to the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre (Feb. 22 2007). Photo by the author.**

The difference between the artisan and the artistic creator resides in that the artisan has almost a "genetic load" that makes her/him learn a craft. He/she learns it in an almost unconscious and unquestioning manner because the craft comes from a given tradition, that she/he inherited, has assisted in the making of, and can therefore repeat.[490]

*And in fact the* [the artisan] *repeats it.*

That happens in the vernacular. The difference between craftsman and artist is that the artist is capable of forcing techniques.

*And of course* [the artist] *leaps: the artisan does not.*

Do you think that there is some of that in your interest in forcing techniques?

*I think so. I tried it from the beginning. I think that there was a tradition in Colombia, or rather in Bogotá…*

Yes, you may generate problems of cultural identity.[491]

*That, by the way, makes no sense: but we would have to go beyond, even to the issue of the same use of the material. Many of those [ornamental] elements exist within that regional cultural tradition: for instance the brickwork called "espina de pescado"* [fish spine.] *About those enriching elements, I said to myself: this is useful! Why not? When making a wall, how can we forget all that accumulated richness, which required years of experimentation?*

And, one learns from the artisan too?

---

[490] See, for instance, Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* 232. Leatherbarrow elaborates on the work and ideas of the architect Aris Konstantinidis.

[491] In the mid 1980's a polemic aroused in then young professional circles of architecture on issues of "identity" given a supposed inappropriate association between brick (a common building material) and the architecture of Bogotá. The polemic extended to the impact of the Bogotá contemporary brick architecture on other regions of Colombia. See for instance Enrique Silva, Humberto Silva et al., "Nuevo Espiritu Nuevo," *Proa* 363 (1987): 11-13.

*One learns, and one talks to them: but it is rather difficult because they have the tradition ingrained, not knowing why. They know how to do certain things coming from that tradition yet, after that –that's where it ends. They are not capable of going beyond. Let's say this about the field* [of brick masonry]. *In ceramics it occurs, and for all the so called regional traditions of artisans. However, if you give them the chance to go a bit further ahead they understand, and they do it rapidly, they adapt easily.*

I will mention a phrase with a particular inflection: "Tradition, in order to be alive must be remade."[492] That re-made though, does not mean to repeat: it means to reinvent.

*Yes, we agree on that, but I already said so: I said that one must remake tradition.*

I brought the sentence from David Leatherbarrow.

*The one I said is written somewhere. It is very similar in the end.*

Let's talk about materials that are [architecturally] animated. In Colombia we have the fortune of a relative technological lag.

*That depends: a lag in what?*

Obviously, if we understand technology properly there is no such technological lag behind: It's rather a technical lag behind.

*Yes, that's more accurate.*

It has to do with the luck we have of including certain crafts and labor skills which are still not only possible but vital among us, doesn't it? In France you were working with

[492] Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* 211. My colloquial reference was imprecise. The exact quotation from the reference follows: "…for tradition to stay alive it must be remade."





**Figures 236 & 237. Rogelio Salmona during a construction site visit to the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre (Feb. 22 2007). Photo by the author.**

the "High Tech" of the times [Jean Prouvé] and with Le Corbusier who produced technology [inspired] either in vernacular or in advanced techniques. [493]

*To a certain degree.*

However, when you landed back in Colombia (1957) there was already an interest in identity, and people were starting to work with certain materials [i.e. brick].[494]

*No, working with the materials available in this country.*

But in Colombia, at the time, there was a parallel interest in other types of technological developments. [The then important and large firm] *Cuellar Serrano Gómez* was much more about "pushing the envelope" with an impeccable reinforced concrete craft, what Silvia Arango called "*alardes*" or spatial defiance with technology.[495]

*With techniques*[496]

With advanced techniques, yes: technological approaches to advanced techniques.

*The 'others' were not to too far in what they were doing. That depended on the type of work though. In small works, houses for instance, they didn't use those, let's say* [advanced] *techniques. They used them in much larger and important buildings, where it was feasible.*

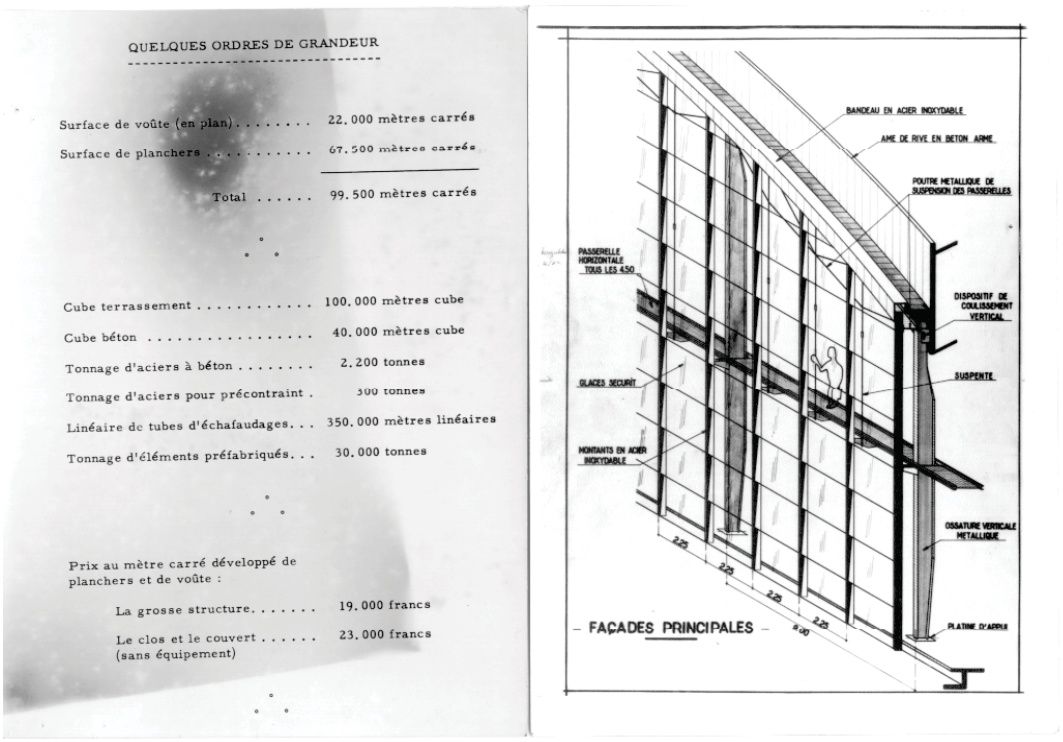
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[493] See Cristina Albornoz, "Biografía," *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos,* ed. María Elvira Madriñán (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 13. Rogelio Salmona 'drafted' for Jean Prouvé when the latter collaborated in the design of the CNIT building (1954-58) in La Défense, Paris, by Robert Camelot, Jean de Mailly and Bernard Zehrfuss. Prouvé is said to have been mostly in charge of the curtain wall system. While working with Le Corbusier, Salmona developed the entire set of plans for the Jaoul houses in all versions (1954-57). In the Jaoul houses Le Corbusier made use of traditional building techniques: exposed brick loads bearing walls and "Catalonian" vaults. See Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 62-64.

[494] On the subject see my "Building Identities in Place" 20-31.

[495] Silvia Arango, *Historia de la Arquitectura en Colombia* (Bogotá: Centro Editorial y Facultad de Artes, 1989) 216-28.

[496] Salmona clarifies an imprecision in the use of the word technology: the distinction between techniques and technology, suggesting the relativity of the concept of high-tech as simply related to the use of advanced techniques devoid from logos ethical and poetic intentionality. See, for instance, Rogelio Salmona, "La Experiencia es Mía, lo Demás es Dogma," *Seminario* 2-3.




**Figures 238 & 239. The CNIT building, La Defense, Paris (1954-58). Document with project specifications and detail of the curtain wall system, found in the Rogelio Salmona studio archive, from the times (circa 1956) when Salmona worked for Jean Prouvé.**

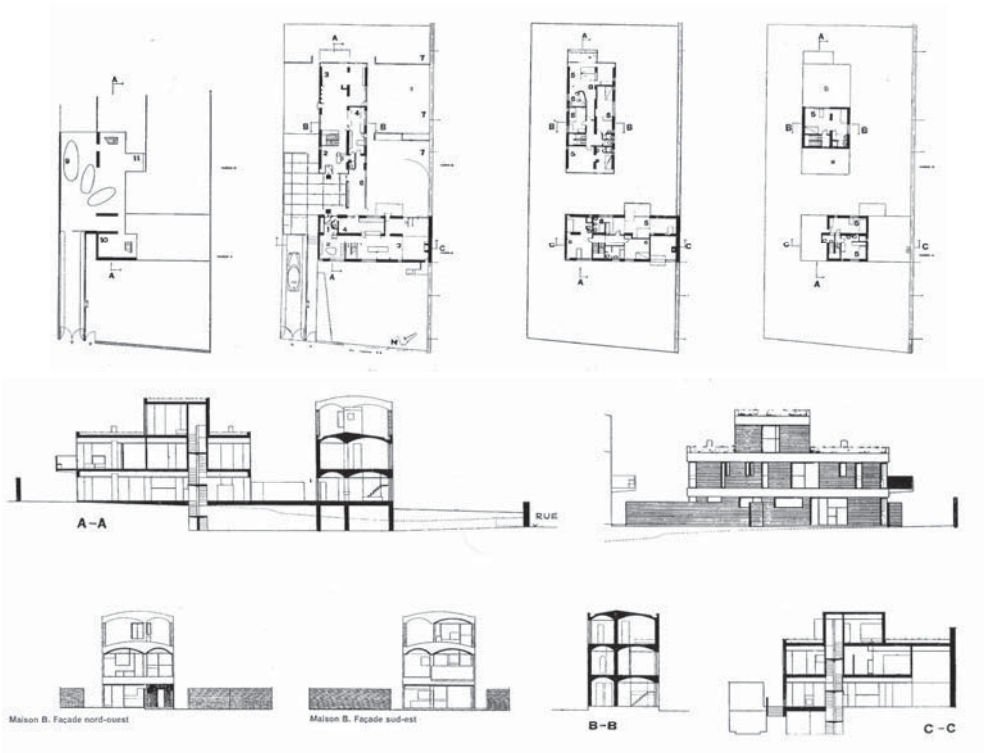



**Figure 240. Jaoul houses: plans sections and elevations. Project developed by Rogelio Salmona during his apprenticeship period with Le Corbusier.**

But you did the opposite. We are in a high-rise tower [Torres del Parque] that [in this regard] could be seen as complete nonsense. A work of impressive complexity….

*Yes,* [I] *made it with the most traditional material possible: what this shows is that one may use materials the way one wants.*

Once you told me about the necessary correlation between technological advance and cultural, social and economic transformation.

*The fact is that technological advance means cultural advance too.*

But if the two do not go hand in hand something fails.

*In Colombia cultural advance, with regard to technological advances, goes hand in hand in these times.*

This is not [necessarily] true: for in Colombia we may well build with the same techniques or even more advanced…

*Yes, but importing materials… is a different thing.*

Exactly, although [such a scenario] has sociological and economic implications…

*Wait a moment! …and moral ones.*

Moral no: ethical ones.

*You are right: ethical, I was mistaken with the little word.*

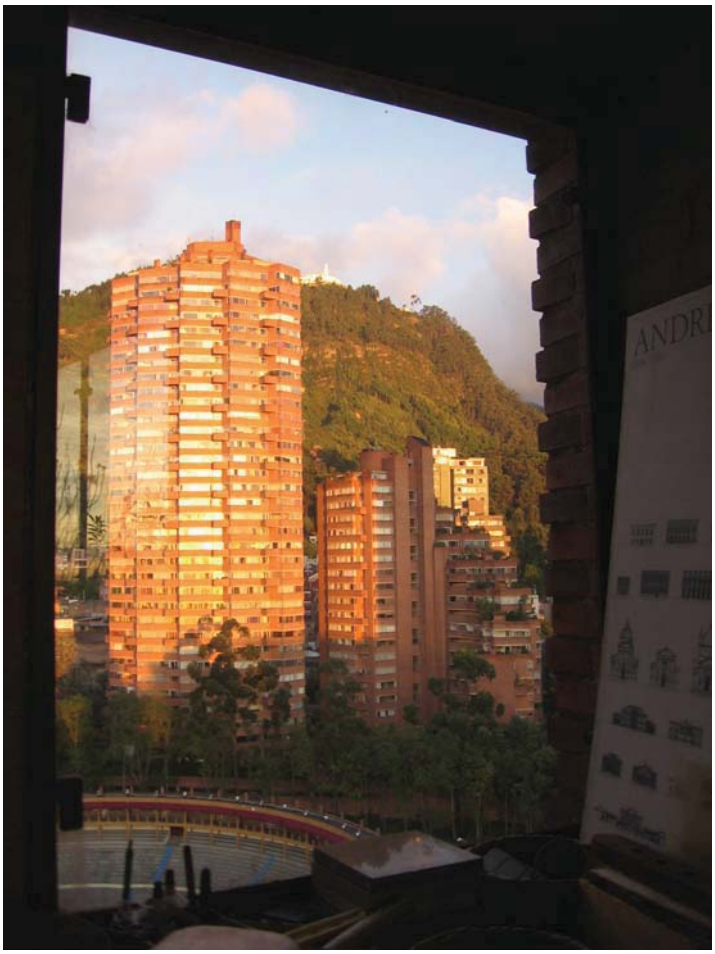


**Figure 241. Residencias el Parque, Bogotá: view from the Rogelio Salmona studio.**
**Photo by the author.**

That is precisely what I wanted to talk about: that there is an ethical consciousness, because decision making in architecture…

*Of course, it is an ethical position.*

Whenever one decides to work with stone [or] plywood, there are implications: one involves people and leaves others unemployed.

*One makes decisions that are ethical.*

However this is not obvious for all architects. Due to a sort of provincialism complex we have the opposite as a [generalized] ideal. When did you start to feel the motivation, to make architecture with [site, social and cultural] specificity?

*In Paris, since I was in France, thinking of how I should act on my return. Because I saw Corbusier doing certain architecture for India which I did not think was the most appropriate. I thought that at that time. To some degree I was mistaken but, Sarabahi, and all that, I didn't consider it to be too into the Hindu tradition.*[497] *I thought there was a Hindu tradition and I also thought there was a possible, different Hindu modernity: because Sarabahi could be placed, to some extent, in any warm weather place.*

[The issue concerning the growing sentiment of a necessary detachment from Le Corbusier and his global practice, in search for local identity, is developed in my "Building Identities in Place." From this source I bring the following relevant fragment of Salmona's testimony:]

> *So…what did we used to talk about?* [Speaking of the Latin American fellow draftsmen at the master's atelier,] *in part, about the general problems of Latin America… but, most of all, of an architecture for Latin America and*

[497] During his apprenticeship with Le Corbusier Rogelio Salmona elaborated on drawings for the Sarabahi House in India. On the subject see Téllez, *Salmona: Obra* 61-62.

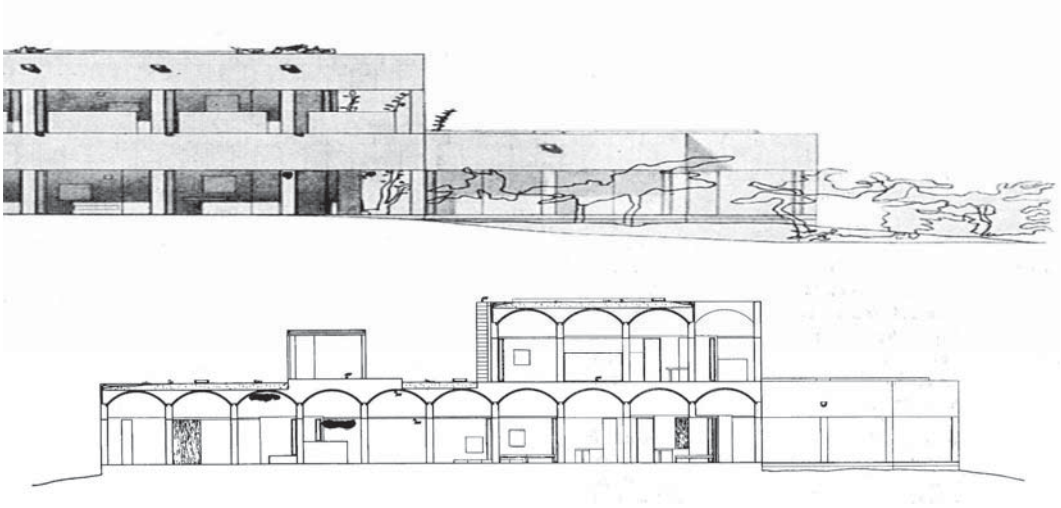


**Figure 242. Sarabahi house, by Le Corbusier. Section and elevation.**
**Drawing by Rogelio Salmona.**

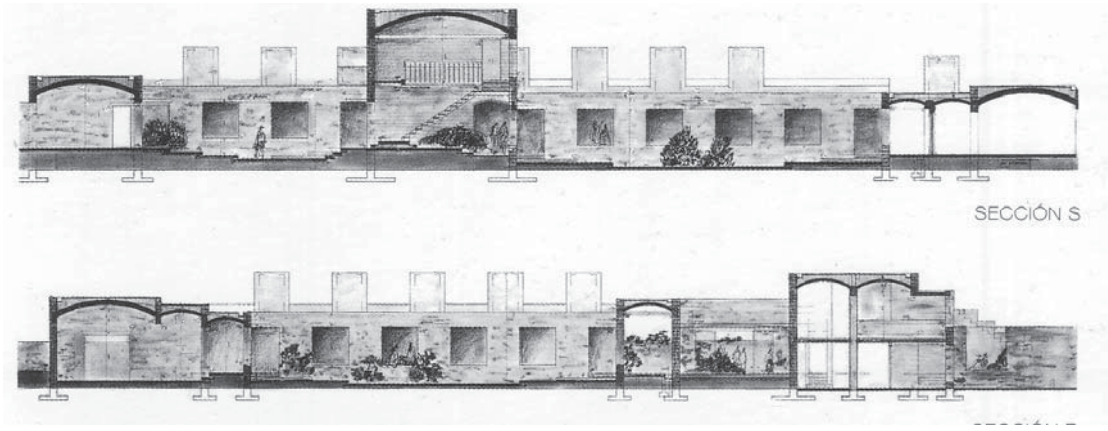



**Figure 243. The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Sections and elevations.**
**Drawing by the Rogelio Salmona stdio.**

> *especially of Le Corbusier's architecture in Latin America. It is strange how for many the most important thing was to take Le Corbusier's architecture to Mexico and South America. To me this criterion lasted until my big disillusionment: The Bogotá Plan in 1950-51.* […] *I don't know what would have happened, in what direction my architectural activity would have gone if the Bogotá Plan had not occurred. From that moment on I confirmed in real fashion Le Corbusier's theories. The way he faced the problem… it all started to create a timid rejection in me, each time more marked. To draw proposals destroying 90 percent of the city of my childhood, the city of remembrances, was not easy.*[498]

Echoes of Sarabahi are present for example in the Casa de Huéspedes, The latter being a more complete work in my modest opinion. But I just take Sarabahi into account based on representation and good photography. There is nonetheless in both an impressive sensitivity to landscape. [I speak of] an experiential, lived landscape, not merely a pictorial one. I agree, however, [in Sarabahi] that there is some cultural detachment.

*To a certain degree; and I stress, I was equally mistaken to some extent. Anyhow, I said, there is a need to resolve the Colombian problem the Colombian way, to put it simply. The French way was not the one. I was there, for 10 years getting to know the context well and even working with Prouvé. Because Prouvé was not possible here, to a great extent: but everything is relative, obviously. The first project that was proposed to me when I arrived in Colombia, the Besudo building, that white building…*

*Very Corbusian, bottom line,* [the Besudo] *was the first project in which I could not escape Corbusianism, although I attempted something with a local material. I proposed*

[498] See Salmona, *Chile* (letter unpublished) See as well my "Building Identities in Place" 10-20.

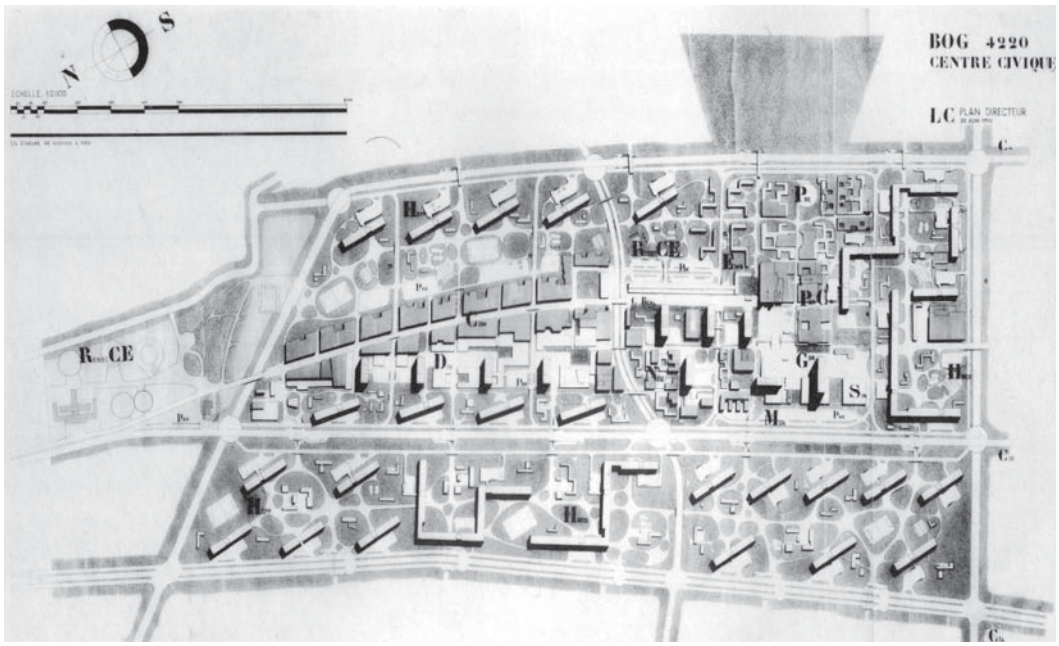



**Figure 244. The "Plan Regulador de Bogotá," by Le Corbusier (circa 1951). Civic centre, layout.**

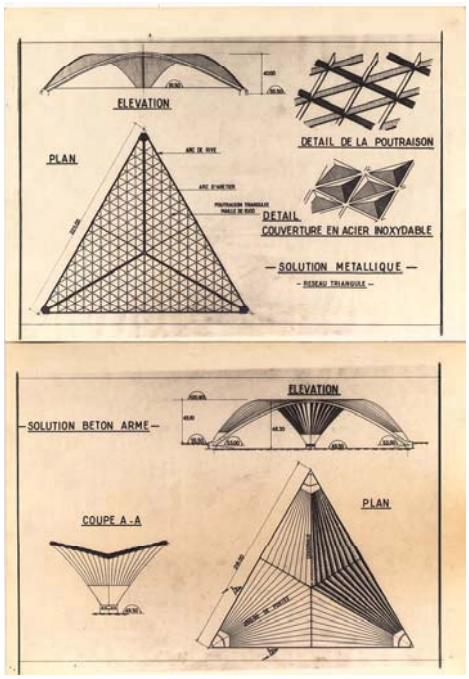



**Figure 245. The CNIT building, La Defense, Paris (1954-58). Set of plans found in the Rogelio Salmona studio archive, from the times (circa 1956) when Salmona worked for Jean Prouvé.**

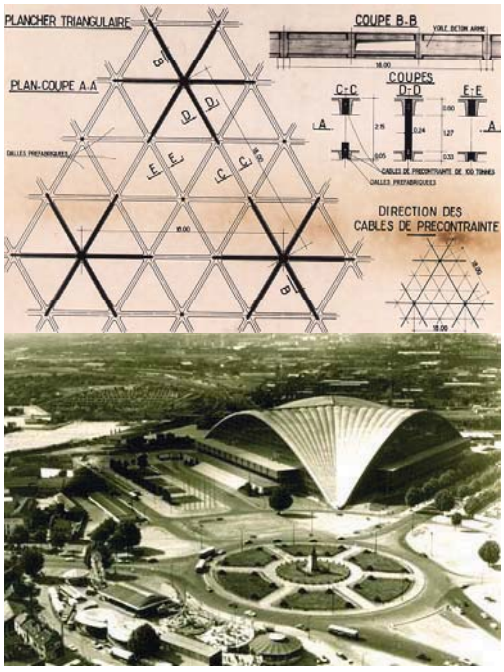



**Figure 246 . The CNIT building, La Defense, Paris (1954-58). Archival photograph (circa 1962) unknown author.**

*brick masonry: the building is in fact more suited to brickwork than to the whitewashed walls it ended up having. If one thinks carefully, it is more adaptable to brick than to white walls in all its forms and complexity. That was the first project.*
*The second was El Polo. There I could operate more freely. I said to myself: I will take the liberty to use* [exposed brick] *a material that the sponsoring bank accepted, for it was the cheapest: labor, the best; load bearing walls, because nothing else was required at the time. The wall and the architectural form made up the structural aspect.*[499]
[Imbrications, I interjected.] *Imbrications of spaces according to the walls; I even had the liberty then to look for the most appropriate form: to get rid of that rather sterile rationalism with which we were building our architecture at that time.*

***Ornament is no Crime***

Then, with time, came an increasing enrichment in the treatment of materials. I was very surprised when, by the time I worked for you (1992) I praised the S.C.A tower[500] and you gave me a tour of the many little mistakes in the brickwork. You told me: "I have to live with this." At the time (1992) [with the Archivo project] you had started to explore more consciously the possibilities of a playful, ornamental use of the [baked-clay] matter.

*I tried steadily since the beginning to enrich the form, as such, based on the material. Not to fall into ornamentation for the sake of ornamentation but to achieve an enrichment of the space itself coming from the material. This happens for instance in the V.B. library.*

[499] See my "Building Identities in Place" 27-30. I treat the subject concerning the search for identity via a change in the culture of building, the meanings and values with which Salmona invested the *El Polo* project and the local polemics around it, in local professional circles.
[500] See Téllez, *Salmona: Obra Completa,* 142-45. In 1964, Salmona's competition winning project reminiscent of Wright's Price Tower, though materially and formally authentic or, distinct, the S.C.A. tower is home to Rogelio Salmona's studio.



**Figure 247. The "Besudo" building.**
**Photo by Germán Téllez.**

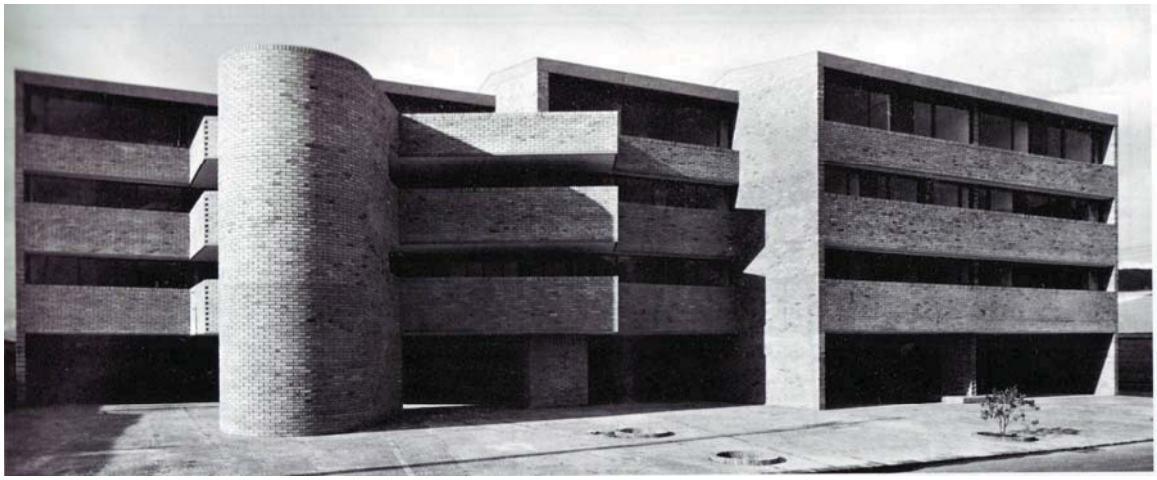


**Figure 248. The "El Polo" residential complex. Photo by Germán Téllez.**

[This creative standpoint of Salmona most likely comes from Francastel's ideas. I quote: "Form is a function of the material, but it also complements it and constitutes an autonomous system that becomes integrated into it."] [501]

In the inclined [semicircular] parapets of the Humanities building we have: first, a skylight to grab tangent sun shafts, and second, a way to frame the landscape. In addition you decided to enrich the exterior surface subtly with a geometric pattern.

*Yes …and, naturally I tried to enrich it!* [But that happened] *from the beginning because already in El Polo the issue was to enrich the materiality by means of using one material only and the same form.*

Could you trace the pertinence of that enrichment? I see for instance that in the semicircular parapets the roof is tiled with brick-like ceramic tiles and the fabric is based on a pattern of diagonals [that seems to] belong to Pre-Columbian basketry.

*Yes, in part that comes from there: It comes from the Quimbaya museum*

The brickwork of the Quimbaya museum however is still very clean…

*And the other* [in the Humanities] *is dirty or what? The word clean is dangerous.*

No it's not dirty, let's say bald, simple. And in the Humanities it is much more pleasing:

*The fact is I played a bit with it. As you know a gap in the joints is sometimes necessary because the* [baked-clay] *material requires room to expand. It must be dilated but, one may do this in specific ways. Thus, I stressed on a pictorial tradition found in pre-Hispanic ceramics, why not? And in this way I made a reference, which amounts to saying, I paid homage: by this I mean to make something memorable.*

[501] Francastel, *Art & Technology* 131. In the source cited Francastel's comment corresponds with an image of Le Corbusier's *Unité d'habitation* in Nantes.



**Figure 249. The Humanities building: rooftop parapets.**
**Photo by the author.**

I would say ornament…

*…Is Good!*

There was a whole discussion in the XIX century about ornament, yes, ornament, no, with Loos [and "Ornament and Crime"] that ended up turning into a kind of dogma: no ornament, otherwise we are not modern.

*You are right.*

I see that [the no-ornament dogma] matters very little to you.

*It matters nothing to me, because, that is not the problem: on the contrary. I thought that, properly understood, ornament is based on elements of tradition: from that we have skirting boards that are treated with an ornamental element which is made of the same brick but placed differently; that is an ornament finally. And the upper part of the wall, for instance, I do it in a different way.*

[Frank Lloyd] Wright was the master of that.

*Wright had it clear.*[502]

With ornament Wright emphasized horizontality (which was essential to his architecture) as well as the differentiation of the roof from the body of the wall. He also talked about integral ornament. Did you visit the work of Wright?

*I only saw Oak Park: had I seen Taliesin, it would have been ideal.*

[502] During these dialogues Salmona constantly referred to the master modernists (Particularly Le Corbusier, Aalto and Wright) in present tense, as if they were still alive. For textual coherence, however, many of these sentences, like this one, were edited in the past tense.



**Figure 250. Rogelio Salmona: floor details: Photo by Enrique Guzmán.**



**Figure 251. Rogelio Salmona: floor details. Photo by Enrique Guzmán.**



**Figure 252. The Humanities building, floor details: Photo by the author.**

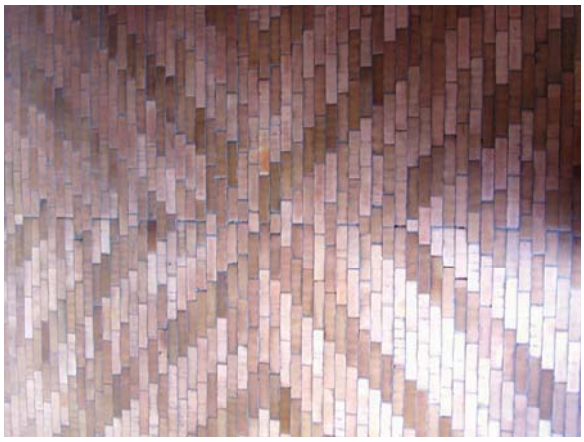


**Figure 253. The Humanities building: floor details. Photo by the author.**

Did you visit [H.H.] Richardson's work?

*Yes of course, and all the Sullivan epoch; the first Chicago epoch, I saw that!*

***From the Drafting Table to the Construction Site***

I want to ask you about your passion for keeping close contact with the construction site. With few exceptions your projects happen where and when you can visit them and *make* them. Where does this position come from? In the Western tradition we have an increased distance between conceiving (composing) the project and making it, in situ. Architects now design to, and from anywhere: submitting at times very complete sets of drawings, projecting from afar to build anywhere, say, a shopping mall in Beirut. They come up with a [random] concept and visit the site, perhaps, and just for a day.

*Those are just some* [architects]*, just a few of today's so called "stars."*

Well, and all the large firms: the most important [the largest] projects in the world are being done this way.

*Yes, that's the way it is.*

When did this ethical attitude start and where does it come from?

*From the very first work: I had to follow it step by step.*

C.R. Le Corbusier, for example: How was his relationship to the construction process of the projects you assisted with, at that time?

*The truth is that Le Corbusier had good control through certain people that he trusted in. Though he had control over the work during construction.*

Was he a visitor to the site much?



**Figure 254 . Rogelio Salmona during a construction site visit to the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre (Feb. 22 2007). Photo by the author.**

*He visited the works, he traveled: with* [l'unité d'habitation] *in Marseille, he visited the construction site very frequently. Le Corbusier was a serious person on that matter.*

About the idea that one does not design for places which one doesn't deeply know.

*I believe in that.*

Where do you think that [conviction] comes from? Does it have to do with Francastel and your training in matters of culture and sociology?

*Not so much. It has to do, yes, with issues of general culture. I believe one cannot respond to a place without knowing it; or: come up with a solution for a site without responding properly to that place. Of course the answer must be appropriate: based on what? Based on oneself, first, to be able to know if one is 'targeting' the problem or not.*

The site exists and the place is made. And sometimes [often in fact] the place also preexists because it entails certain forces and a dynamic that pre-exists.

*Well, yes, for the most part* [the problem] *is place invention.*

There are techniques that allow one to detach a little more from the construction site. The way to work in Colombia has a lot to do with the pleasure and possibility…

*…to participate in the construction process: It is a pleasure to do it and a necessary intervention. This is very important, for the work in addition is built by a worker to whom one must explain and help. Because I am not the one who is building the work, the work is built by another. And the good or bad quality of construction relies on that other person. Therefore one must be with him, explaining and trying to help him. He, ultimately, is just doing his job: if one tells him to build the wall, he does it. He may do it*



**Figure 255. Rogelio Salmona during a construction site visit to the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre (Feb. 22 2007). Photo by the author.**

*his own way and not your way. Then, he may end up doing it wrong. One must tell him how one wants it.*[503]

Somewhat like in music: we have interpreters and scores.

*Of course, it is the same… the same. The worker then is going to do the job the best he can: if one helps him, the wall will be better built. But if one allows him to do it on his own, then he does it, most surely very well in his own way, though, it may not be the way one was expecting the wall to be.*

Have you changed many of the *things* thought out in your plans, when you were on the construction site?

*Yes, there is a lot that changes. Many changes* [occur] *in the sense that, although I am not allowed to say it, I have improved, I do think* [the construction site] *has improved my work. I don't mean that this is good or bad, I enriched it. I don't mean that I have enriched tradition or the ways of architectural making. I must be careful with this topic.*

I noticed your plans don't have the degree of detail equivalent to the actual complexity of the parts as they were finally resolved. There are no plans showing total resolution of floor patterns and other similar details. It seems that these things were left to a dialogue and further resolution in situ. Is this something you have been implementing?

*In part, yes.*

And, also in part, have you acquired sufficiency, in the proper sense of the word?

---

[503] Salmona's account alludes to the previously mentioned *techne-poiesis* relationship for the process of place-making; the architect is the *tekton* who masters *techne.* See for instance Maria Karvouni, "*Demas*: The Human Body as a Tectonic Construct," *Chora three,* ed. Alberto Pérez Gómez and Stephen Parcell (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999) 108.



**Figure 256. Rogelio Salmona during a construction site visit to the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre (Feb. 22 2007). Photo by the author.**



**Figure 257. Rogelio Salmona during a construction site visit to the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre (Feb. 22 2007). Photo by the author.**

*There is sufficiency, but it's not complete. For example I am now facing a problem in the Fondo de Cultura building* [the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre 2005-2008] *which I don't know how to resolve. I only know I have to resolve it in that* [in situ] *manner, because that is a good process. It has given me good results in the past and I see no reason to modify it. I am reassured and insecure at the same time, due to the general form of the building, which is different. Therefore I have doubts on how to resolve the problem, although I know I must do it that way. It is a complex situation.*

[The day after concluding these interviews (February 22 2007) I visited the construction site with Rogelio Salmona and the builder (general administrator and structural designer) of the work, engineer Francsico de Valdenebro. In precarious health conditions, affected by the invasive cancer that put an end to his life, Salmona, for more than three hours, walked the entire construction area, overseeing workers and resolving details. Several constructive discussions happened with people of mixed organizational levels and diverse métier: for instance between Salmona, a master brick mason, de Valdenebro and the architect in residence. During the site visit Salmona dialogued and instructed workers and artisans of diverse crafts. The resolution of certain details required producing hand drawings, arranging materials such as wood scaffolding, tiles and brick elements of different forms in situ. His task as *tekton* advising, assembling and giving orders was accomplished by gesturing and bodily performing forms and uses of space.

Due to physical limitations during the last two years of his life Salmona was forced to leave the studio and work at home in the production of drawings and the coordination of studies with technicians and clients. However, he never gave up on the intimate relationship with the construction site that, he believed, was required for the adequate completion of an architectural work.]



**Figure 258. Rogelio Salmona during a construction site visit to the Gabriel García Márquez cultural centre (Feb. 22 2007). Photo by the author.**

Pierre Francastel said that the artist's work addresses problems of two kinds: some target society as a whole and others the medium [or techniques] with which the artist works.[504]

*And* [the artist] *works with the appropriate techniques.*

[Salmona makes reference to Francastel's idea that artistic work begins by addressing a "media" or technical problem: ["t]he artist first attempts to resolve a technical problem. […] The problems faced by the architect involve, first, exploiting and elaborating a medium […] then interpretability. "][505]

If I want you to situate the problems you wanted to talk about, based on your [*techne*] of architecture, what would these be?

*You put me in a conflict because… I would not know how to answer this. It is very intuitive, so to speak. Well, the Humanities building is the accumulation, we may say it is almost the synthesis, of my recent buildings, my compositions. So there is an accumulation, let's say, a summary of experiences, of ideas and results, even* [the overcoming] *of frustrations that I could have with other projects.* [I did] *what I could not do in other projects due to time limitations, or because the program didn't suggest it as such, because of politics that impeded upon one's achievements, in short, for many of those reasons. When a project allows for, one attempts therefore to overcome all the frustrations of what one could not do here or there. And I wanted to achieve a diversity of forms and spaces giving character to what the graduate studies mean. Like the Casa de Huéspedes, this is a place of encounters. It is not the place of a classroom where a student 'comes in' for a lesson and leaves.* [The Humanities building] *is a gathering place where people of diverse disciplines meet regardless of their practices and schools of thought.*

[504]Francastel, *Art & Technology* 325-29.
[505]Francastel, *Art & Technology* 327-28.

As a graduate student, one often comes with particular concerns, wishing to share, debate, or reinforce the results of thinking [and research] produced in isolation. It is knowledge gained in solitude, [in a situation] which tends to create anxiety.

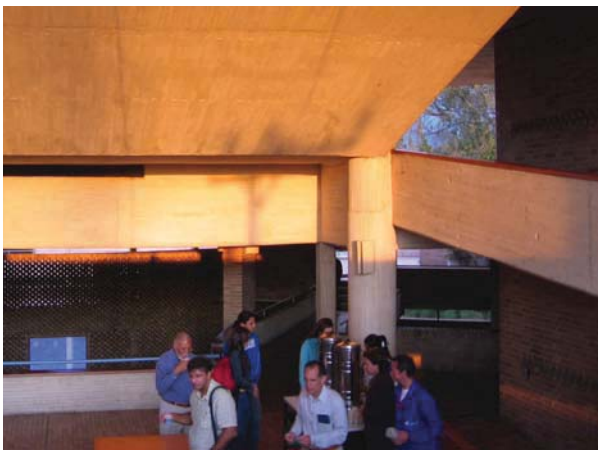
*That is true. Therefore, to achieve this "encounter" one must bring together all possible elements. For instance, to stop making the roof as the 'roof' only, and turn it into a place of 'encounter' by means of paths, promenades, ramps or stairs of diverse forms, allowing people to reach the places where they will create the habit of gathering together. It's important to achieve diversity within the unity of the project. Architecture therefore creates a habit, as Bourdieu said. People go there and discover the place. Throughout the place they discover a landscape; the dwellers discover a site were they like to be; all that creates a habit: people come and go, and several of them meet.*
*After several years of existence the project has demonstrated that it's possible to achieve, and reasonable to propose, these kind of things. And a place like that could also have large garden, however, this idea is rather a product of my own personal interests. It may as well have been just a platform with benches, however, I though it was important to re-create nature within the building too; this, also to avoid a drastic change between the building and the surrounding geographical context.*

Beyond the aspect of [inside-out] continuity, architecture [one could say] is fiction. The way you articulate nature in your project is intentional: a composition with plants and soil as creation of a parallel world, beyond mere re-presentation of the surroundings.

*Yes, obviously it is not representing* [the surroundings,] *it is re-creating them, though; it is giving continuity as well. This is a very important point: the continuity between its interior and the exterior, to prevent the building from a drastic rupture between both. Finally, interior and exterior blend in the project. In doing so I tried to make a… —*







**Figures 259, 260 & 261. The Humanities building: encounters" Photos by the author.**

Symbiosis? I interjected—*a symbiosis, yes, but it goes beyond that; yes, let's say a symbiosis between exterior and interior.* [506]

The project is a plethora of thresholds: it is made of in-between zones and different spatial qualities: there are gradations. It is not fusing exterior and interior, but rather it is a series of places that relate differently with the exterior. What would be the difference between your intentionality and Wright's concept of "breaking the box" by opening the project to make it 'one' with nature? What would then be a step forward?

*Well, there is something about that [concept] there. It is not only Wright, but the whole tradition of Cistercian churches; the French Cistercian cloisters.*[507] *That place is somewhat sacred in the end. Finally, architecture to me is "religio." What do I mean by this? It means that architecture is religion; I am not a believer though I am religious. The religious aspect is very important, which, from Latin "re-ligare" means to bind together, to congregate.*[508]

[Rogelio Salmona related the idea of "religio" to the "temple" and the notion of "revelation of place." He wrote on the subject, exemplifying the Greek temple, I quote;]

> *It has been said that the Greek temple, supposed to be the dwelling of the gods, more than enclosure was the center from which to embrace with one gaze the vibrant plenitude of the landscape: its magnificence consisted in allowing the contemplation of one place and every place, in a sort of simultaneous vision. In this way, the function of the temple,*

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[506] Salmona, "Between the Elephant and the Butterfly." Elephant and Butterfly 20. From the reference I quote: "How can one forget the symbioses architecture-landscape, silhouettes-transparencies, stone-water, the rain-the sun, and not highlight the colours and changes in light?"

[507] See, for instance, José Baltanás, *Walking Through Le Corbusier: a Tour of His Masterworks,* trans. Matthew Clarke (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005) 137. A connection can be made to with Le Corbusier's project La Tourette and its precedent, the Cistercian monastery in Le Thoronet. La Tourette began to be developed right before Salmona concluded his apprenticeship with the French master.

[508] The etymology offered colloquially by Salmona, from Latin *religio*, likely from a prefixed *re-ligare,* "to bind together …to reconnect" is appropriate, tracing back to St. Augustine, consistent with modern scholars like Joseph Campbell and Tom Harpur. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion#cite_note-3>

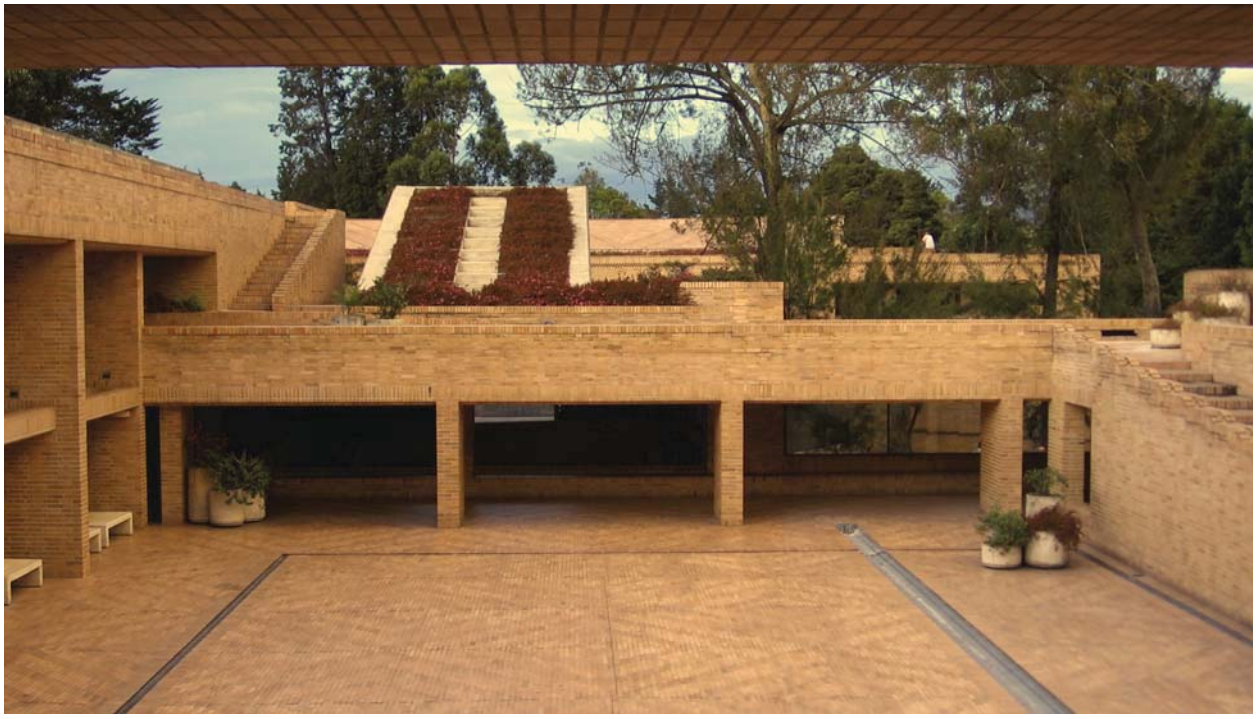


**Figure 262. The Humanities building: cloister.**
**Photo by the author.**

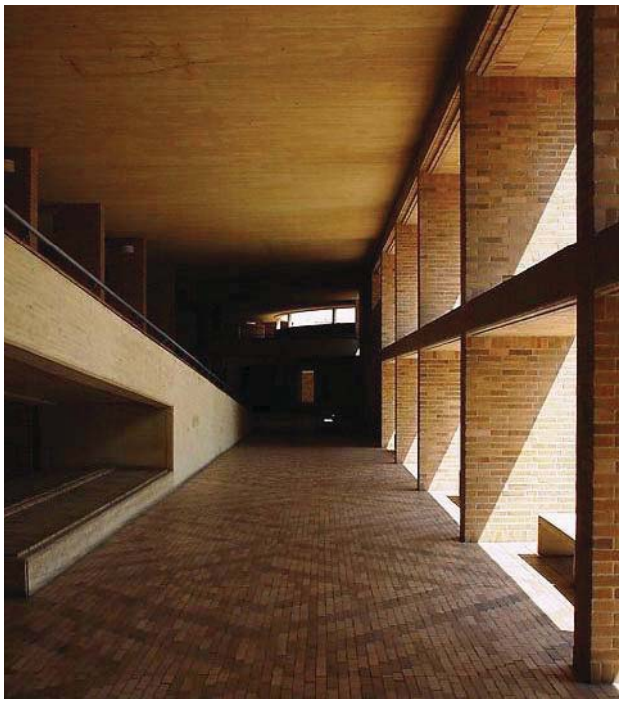


**Figure 263. The Humanities building: cloister.**
**Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

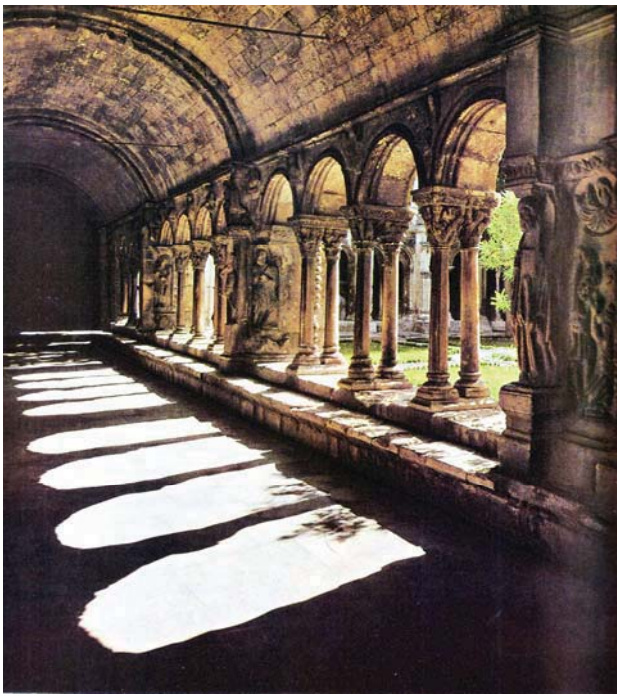


**Figure 264. The Cloister of Saint-Trophime, Arles, France, end of the 12th Century.**

> *and the essential objective of its art was the revelation of place.*[509]

*Architecture is a place of congregation and acquires therefore a religious character, almost a sacramental one. I relate this to pre-Hispanic architectures, which are ceremonial places.* [The following excerpt is of particular relevance:]

> *What I have been searching for, by means of re-creating diverse architectural experiences, particularly the pre-Hispanic ones, is to approach the problem of limits for, in those ceremonial and cosmic architectures I find an experience that allows me to understand better the continuity of those architectural spaces and their relationship with the cosmos. Teotihuacán, Monte Albán and Pachamac are good examples of the architectural and universe relationship.* […] *In the* [Inka] *Pachamac temple, for instance, you access diagonally, across its spatiality to find an obstacle, so turn and discover another diagonal. And, as you climb and rise high, you gain awareness of the sky penetrating the project.*[510]

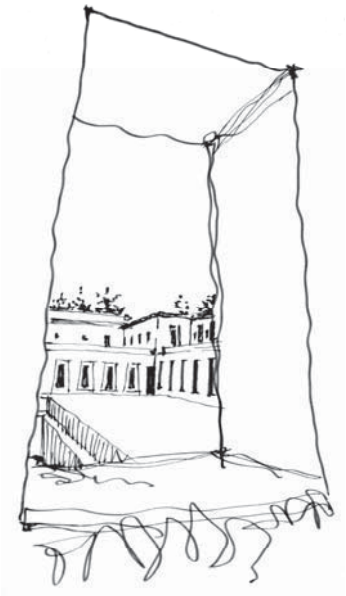
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[509] Arcila *Triptico Rojo,* 143-44. My translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *Se dice que el templo griego, supuesta morada de los dioses, era, más que un recinto, el centro desde el cual se podía abarcar, con la Mirada, la plenitud vibrante del paisaje; que su grandeza consistía en permitir la contemplación del lugar y de todos los lugares, en una suerte de visión simultanea. De modo que la función del templo, el alcance esencial de su arte, era la revelación del lugar.*

[510] Salmona, "La Experiencia es Mía, lo Demás es Dogma," *Seminario* 10-11. My translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *Lo que yo he buscado, a través de diversas experiencias arquitectónicas, particularmente las prehispánicas, es acercarme al problema del limite porque en esa arquitectura ceremonial y cósmica encuentro un vivencia que me permite entender mejor la continuidad de los espacios arquitectónicos y su relación con el cosmos. Teotihuacán, Monte Albán, Pachamac, son buenos ejemplos de esa relación entre arquitectura y universo.*



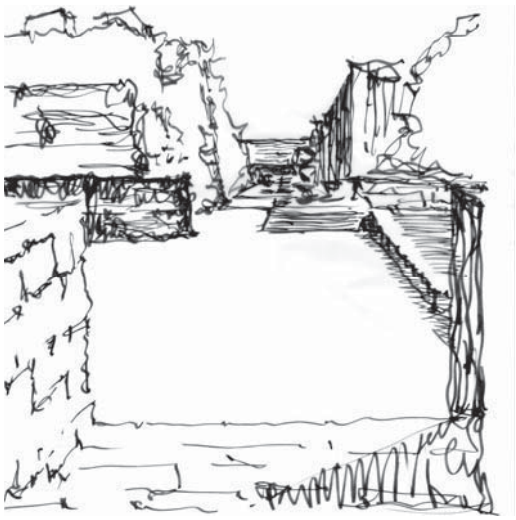






**Figure 265. The Inca *Pachamac* temple and archeological site, near Lima, Peru. Sketches by the author.**

*The building for graduate studies* [Humanities] *is ceremonial to a great extent, as is the Virgilio Barco library, in the sense that the occasion allowed me to make something ceremonial. That was the intention in the Casa de Huéspedes, which is a ceremonial place too, but with a slightly different character.*

As general discourse however we could apply these [ideas] to a graduate studies building in many other locations: Let's go now to the site.

***The Humanities Building: Site Interpretation***

[The project] responds to concerns you have previously voiced: the idea of the enjoyment of space, being generous with all those places *other* than the classroom in which one meets, a particular sensitivity to the amicable aspects of the landscape around, the interior-exterior correlation, and other aspects. Was the intention from the beginning to liberate the lot? How did you perceive the lot that first time you went there?

*Horror, no, it was horrible. It was a quite an arduous process and there are some sketches of it but, I cannot explain beyond what was made. Obviously I attempted to put in evidence the whole landscape that was not* [present] *on the ground but above. What wasn't, down there, was nevertheless, up there, and vice versa.*

'Down there' is an inner world.

*Yes but, what is up there happens to be down there too. If what is on ground is valid, then, what occurs above becomes even more valid. The fact is I had to make evident all the exterior landscape of the campus and the infinite limit it offers: and the possibility for the building to display that remote vision when one reaches higher grounds.*

To the north and the northeast is the campus landscape.

*And, on the other side is the city.*

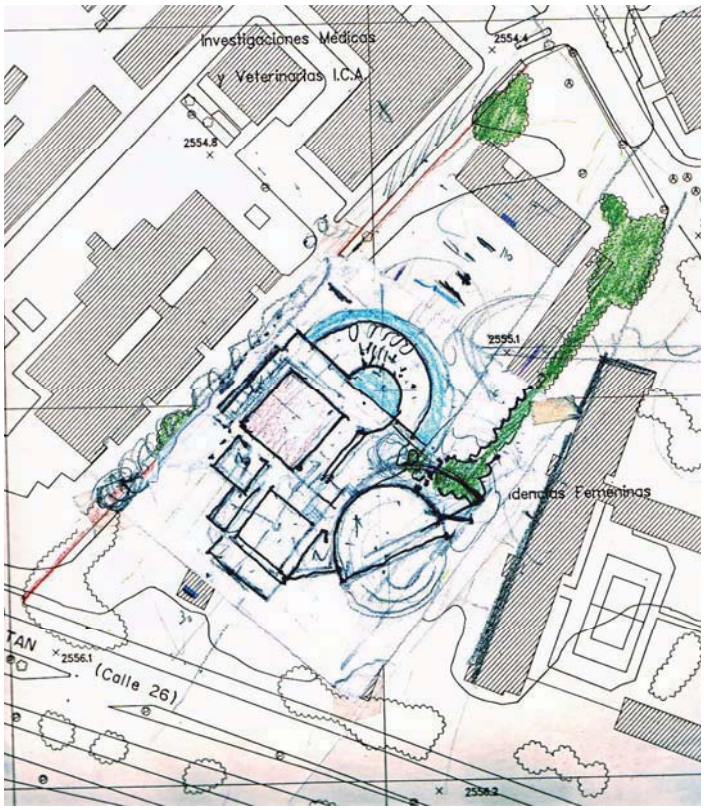



**Figure 266. The Humanities building: site plan. Preliminary design sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

**Rogelio Salmona pasted a preliminary sketch of the building (on velum paper) and marked in green the existing tree wall and the other pre-existing trees that were going to be incorporated in the new architectural place-composition.**

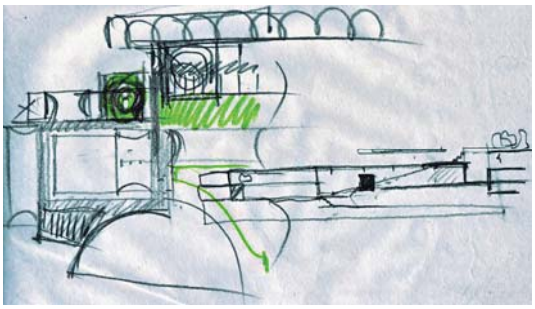


**Figure 267 . The Humanities building: preliminary design sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

**Salmona's sketch synthesizes key compositional elements: paths, laterality, courtyards and diagonals ascending to the rooftop terraces.**

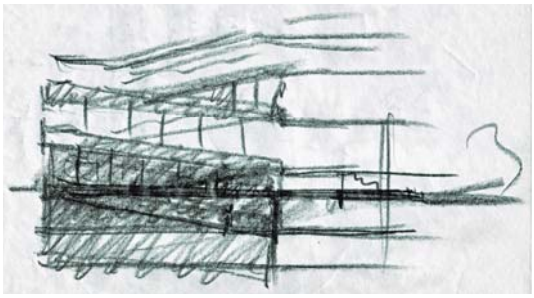


**Figure 268. The Humanities building: ramps. Preliminary design sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

**Salmona's sketch evidences the essence of the building's experiential narrative, spiraling up to discover the urban landscape.**



**Figure 269. The Humanities building: site plan, in the context of the surrounding "White City." . Preliminary design sketch by Rogelio Salmona.**

**The image shows Salmona's attentiveness to the east-west, informally developed, pathway (my emphasis - yellow arrow) connecting the Humanities building site with the Leopoldo Rother museum of architecture. The sketch also shows his marked intention to make the building be approached laterally and at an angle.**

Le Corbusier discarded the "middle ground." In your case we have both. The intermediate landscape is almost with you.

*In fact it is just that… it's there!*

[At this point in the conversation Rogelio Salmona gestured positions and situations with regard to the relationship between dwellers and the experienced landscape.]

*The west is horrific and it harbors only ugly things, but towards the hills… yes.*

There is a wondrous moment however, when the cloister opens up precisely to the southwest. There is a modest balcony there and a place through which the afternoon sun shafts penetrate [the hollowed structure] and one discovers a sun in retreat.

*In the joint of the two bodies; that was difficult to resolve*.

[This is the joint] between the two bodies of that 'perverted' cloister.

*It is perverse.*

Perverse, yes: such is an 'aberration' of a cloister.

*One must be wicked in those cases*.[511]

[511] I introduced the word 'perverted', alluding to Bachelard's notion of imagination as the faculty of "*deforming images*": a distortion or "metamorphosis" of images. See Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les songes: essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Paris: J. Corti, 1943) 7-13.

***Site Limitations***

*I had a serious problem with the site, being located between those two buildings. An awful project (the ICA building) is located on the west side, neglecting everything: it neglects the landscape, it neglects the campus of the Ciudad Universitaria and it neglects architecture in the end. On the east side is a project from the 1960's or 70's, rather acceptable, of discrete, comfortable, very mute "white architecture." Therefore, I had to do something exalting between those two projects. The line of trees remaining from the fence of the former greenhouse that used to be there was the most important feature. I said: I must take advantage of this to create a peculiar entryway through the trees, as part of a first promenade, alongside water, with the access in the back, where three other trees, which I preserved, are situated. Subsequently one arrives in the vestibule which allows continuing access to the left, right and center of the project. The purpose was, among other things, to offer options to penetrate and, as the project was being discovered, make disappear the unpleasing surroundings an in turn make appear the pleasing "entorno" (milieu) perceived on the upper part of the building.*

I see that the project has a labyrinthine soul. It is a "*promenade architecturale*"…

*But it is more than that.*

Yes, since [Le Corbusier's] "promenade architecturale" is too conducive, unlike this, which is very much [rich and] free. In fact one gets lost in one place only to reappear somewhere else. [512]

*It is the end of the façade; I mean that the façade exists no more. All is façade!*

[512] On the analogies with, and distinctions from Le Corbusier's "promenade" see Ricardo L. Castro, *Salmona* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 1998) 28-29.

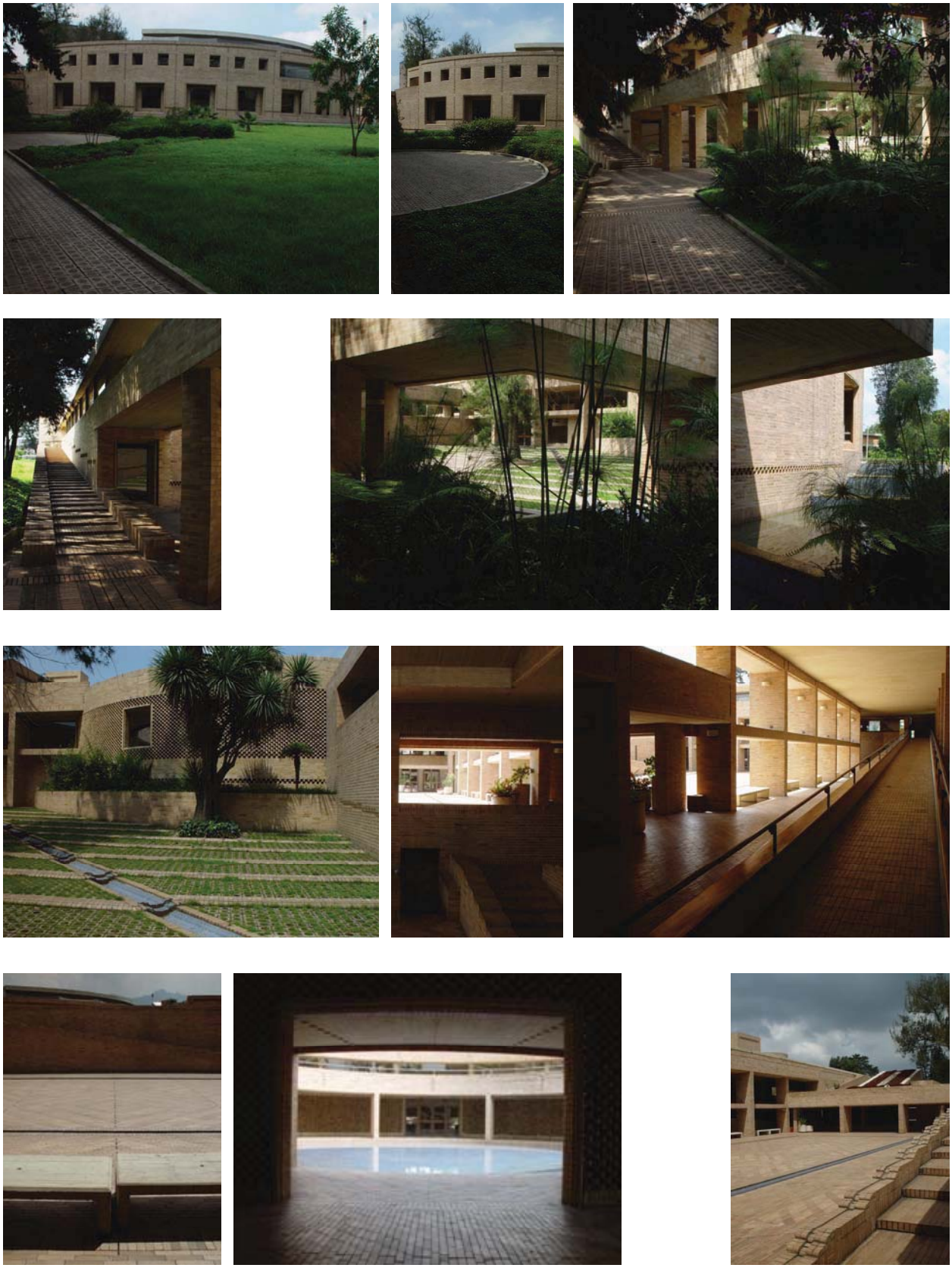


**Figure 270. The Humanities building: a narrative strip.**
**Diagrammed by the author, photographs by Ricardo L. Castro.**

Right; this point is very interesting. I would like to discuss it in terms of the Humanities building: the extreme of the no façade projects is the *Virgilio Barco* Library, because that is a place where…

*Everything flows.*

And it opens up to all the elements of the landscape.

*But there* [in the Humanities] *this happens too, it's there too.*

Not necessarily; I interpret that in the Humanities building [concerning the façades] there is a clear differentiation I find appropriate. You [seem] to have doubted whether or not to locate the reading room and the cloister between the 'front' and the 'back': both have rhythmical, relatively conventional façades.[513] That [aspect] was always unclear though, the [eastbound] location of the set of auditoriums was not doubted, for that part [is] a volumetric composition intended to interact with the landscape of the hills, isn't it?

*Yes.*

That part of the project would be the no façade, for it is a multidimensional composition, to "modulate" in time and space the dweller's landscape experience bringing it forth in such a way that certain parts of the urban landscape are concealed while others are increasingly prominent. I see there an important achievement of the project. What about the other sides, those edges where the project relates to the [chain link] fence avenue?

[513] The existence of a front is highly debatable in the case of the plot of land were the Humanities buildings is emplaced. Two sides could be considered the front: the one facing the avenue (highway) and the other against the campus, buffered by a generous green area. These two edges are invested with a certain formality. The two other sides of the lot, being rather backs, were approached with more freedom as modulations with radically different lateral contexts: one with minimum potential in terms of views—towards the west, with the ICA building blocking the view—and the other apparently limited in possibilities at ground level though potentially attractive on a higher urban ground landscape with the *cerros* of Bogotá as the background.

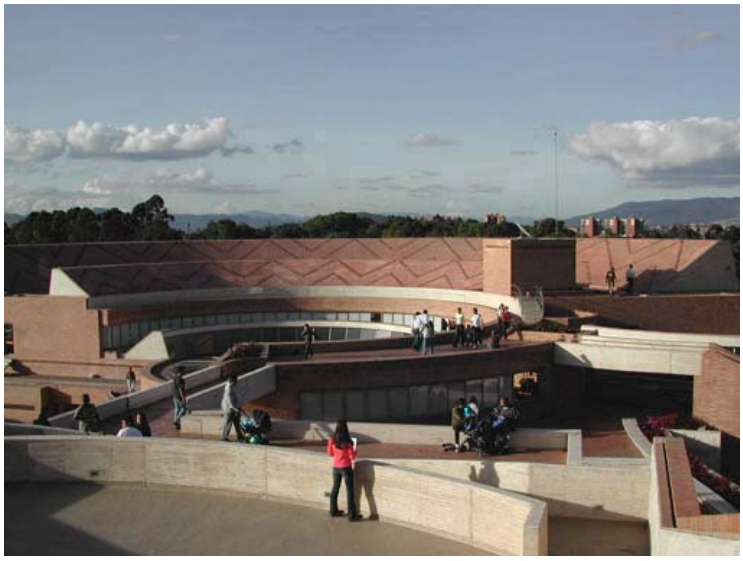
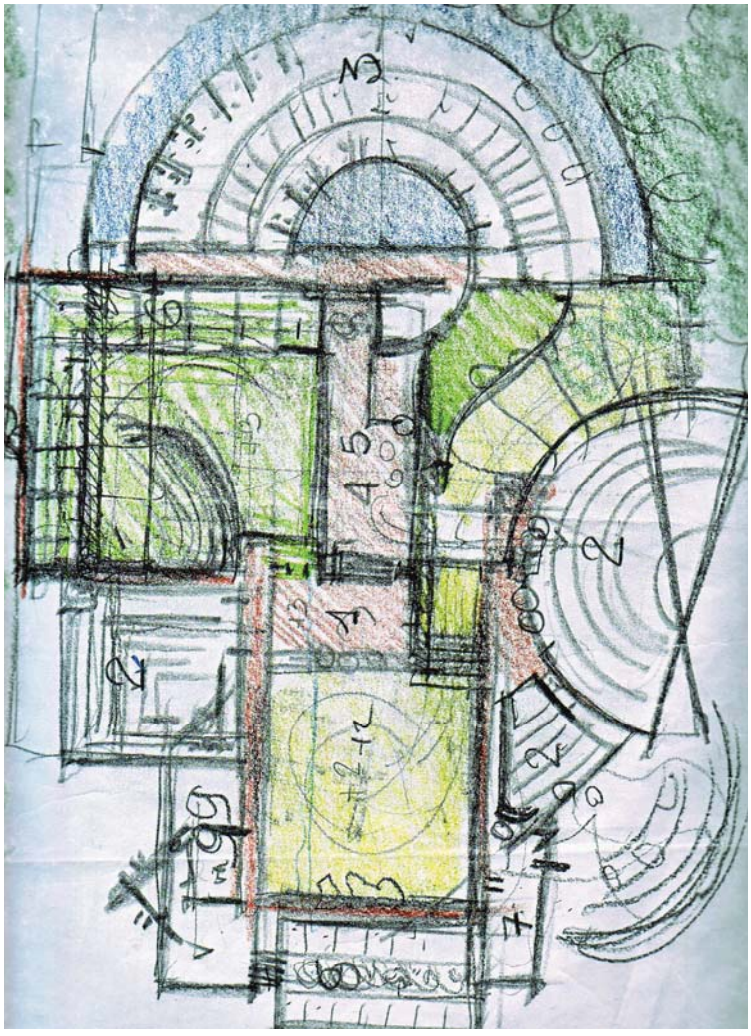
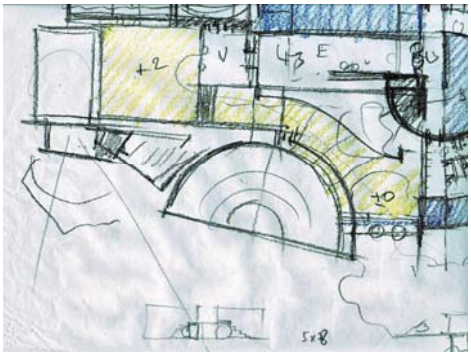
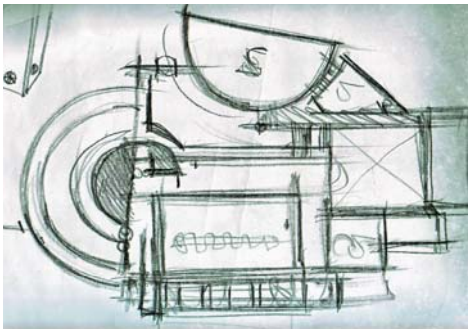
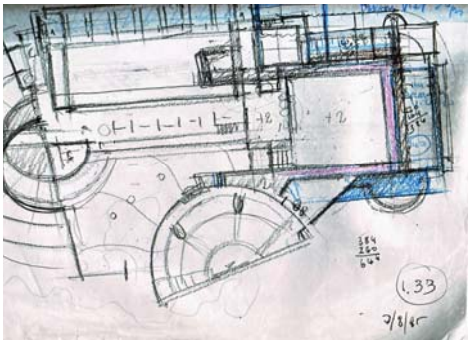


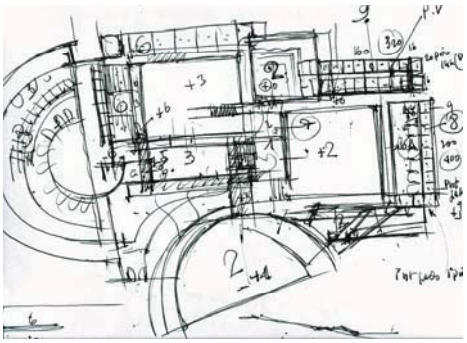
**Figure 271 . The Virgilio Barco library: a "no façade building." Photo by the author.**











**The images show variations on the compositional themes of displaced courtyards. The project, at some point included an additional orthogonal courtyard, while the neat circular one, the "mirror moon," had not been sufficiently developed.**

**Figure 272 . The Humanities building: layouts. Preliminary design sketches by Rogelio Salmona.**

*The noisy 26th* [highway] *west! On the north side, the side of the reading room, the luminosity was an important* [factor]*, coming east-west according to the equinoxes to make the sunlight come in slanted and unobtrusive to the reader. This aspect made me determined to flip over the project, for, at some point, it was not too clear to me as to "how." Actually, I proposed an intermediate courtyard, a courtyard in between the other two.*

One could say that the reading room façade has a certain pictorial presence, in the sense of composing a rhythmical façade to be approached from a certain distance. However I perceived an explicit rejection of any frontal approach by the dweller. You gave importance to the humble though active oblique path that approaches the round façade.

*Yes.*

That little path [is] the one the most students take. One arrives, tangent to that drum, which is never seen frontally. In addition you proposed a screen of trees, instead of exposing the building in an axial and imposing way. One drifts to come in obliquely, the way you, later on want us to continue discovering the building. What trees did you place in the area that mediates between the building and the "white city"?

*There are some Pinos Romerones and Palmas de Cera, both native. The Palmas de Cera are very transparent and vertical, to allow one to see through them. The Pinos Romerones are elements of enclosure that also stifle the noise that comes from the road that is there* [on the lot edge.] *Those* [Romerones] *are going to grow higher; obviously it will take a long time. Unfortunately the Romerón is a slow growing tree. The Palmas de Cera, essentially, let one see through to the Pino Romerón, thanks to their slender trunks, and from there, to the hills, which are still visible from certain points.*[514] *Above all, it was*

[514] Abundant literature on the flora of Andean region and the *sabana de Bogotá* circulated from the shelves to the drafting tables and computer screens of the Rogelio Salmona studio. Among the sources I easily found next to the drafting tables are: Alfonso Leyva Galvis and Michele Cescas de Leyva, *Arboles de la Sabana de Bogota* (Bogota: Ediciones Uniandes, Facultad de Arquitectura, 1980); Corporacion Autonoma Regional (CAR), *El manto de la tierra, flora de los Andes* (Bogota: Lerner, 1995); Enrico Banfi and Umberto Quattrocchi, *Guia de plantas tropicales silvestres* (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1997).

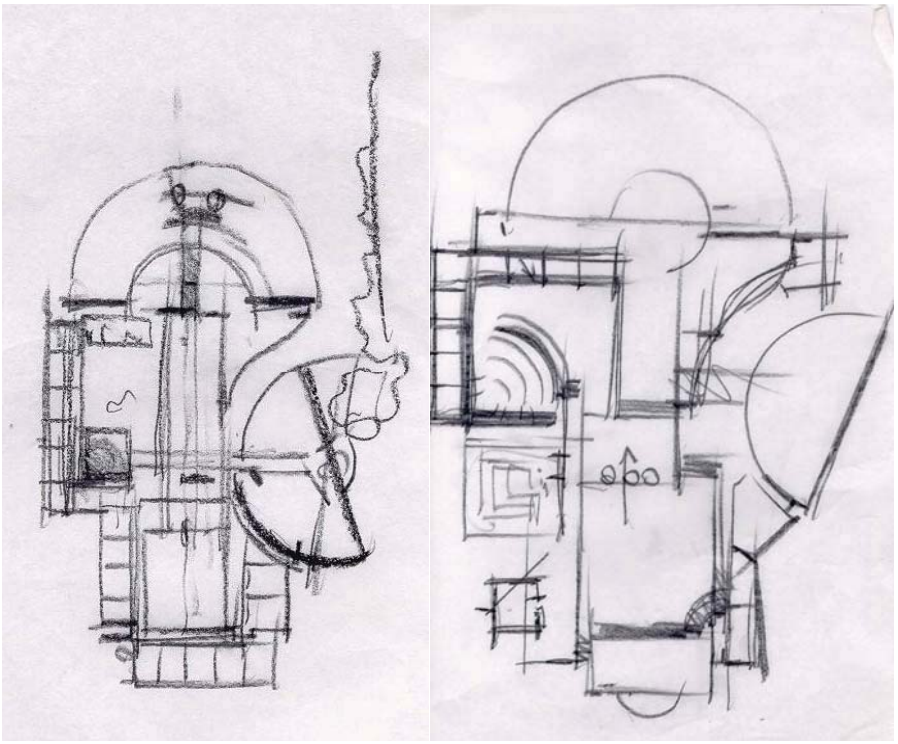


**Figure 273. The Humanities building: preliminary layouts.**
**Design sketches by Rogelio Salmona.**

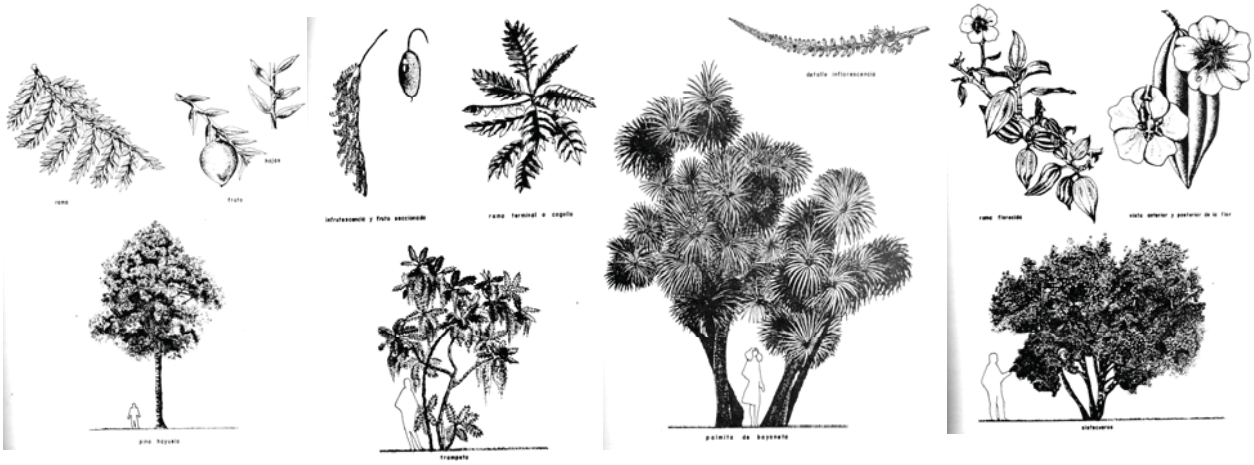


**Figure 274. Flora of the *sabana* of Bogotá. Some of the species frequently used by Rogelio Salmona.**
**Botanical plates, consulted in the Rogelio Salmona studio. Common names, from left to right: *Pino Romerón* (also called Hayuelo), *Trompeto*, *Palimta de Bayoneta* (Spanish Bayonet) and *Siete Cueros.***

*important to allow the equinox sunlight from the northeast (on April 21, July 21 and October 21) to come in tangent. The rays of the sun come slanted and are captured by the skylight which opens up to allow the light to penetrate the interior of the library, providing a semi-ochre luminosity, which has the color of the concrete at that point.*

The building (as I perceived it) is conceived particularly in relation to those two moments: the moment (infinite ones) when the day starts and, at the end of the day at which time the building is marvelous. You allowed for transparencies, which let sunlight to penetrate to the transient zones, at times all through the classrooms.

*Yes…That's clear, because, tangent light has a different color.*

Geographically speaking, up to where does the site analysis extend?

*To me, the site extends to the most ample "entorno" (milieu) possible. To the cosmos, almost; I say the cosmos and it sounds pretentious, but that is the way it is. The site is not only the virtual limit, chosen limit, lot limit or the limit reduced to the surroundings but the most expansive amplitude possible. It extends even to the Sabana's luminosity. An example of this is what I just mentioned about the equinoxes and solstices.*

That is geographic dimension in present time. There is also a historical geography.

*That is the historical dimension. In certain projects we also have idiosyncrasies, the evolution of the place and behavior of its people. Each place is different. Each inhabitable place, in Bogotá for instance, is different; in Paris and in every city. Finally the way people have occupied urban territories responded to different epochs, sometimes coming from different regions and settling in diverse places.*

***

As to the Humanities building, if we draw concentric geographic "rings" and the first one is the "white city:" What is the meaning of, commitment to, the challenge or pre-figuration suggested, beyond the literal limits of the lot given to you?

*The commitment was enormous. First, because (in my opinion) in the "white city" you find the most representative and interesting samples of modern architecture in Bogotá.*[515] [I refer] *mostly to the works that were built at the time* [following its foundation, 1936]. *The work of the architects Bruno Violi and Leopoldo Rother are two fundamental precedents there. I thought that making an intervention there, on that site, was an ethical and moral commitment: this is to say, I could not be mistaken. By the way, I don't know if I was mistaken. There was another obligation, I said to myself: the "white city" is no longer white. I changed the material, and, by making* [the project] *with* [brick] *a different material, so seldom used there (that's why it is being called the white city) I had to come up with a very representative building but not disproportionate, out of context in the middle of the "white city". The color of the building is almost imperceptible due to the* [surrounding] *trees and the same spatiality that it has, which is very much hollowed-out.*

I would say the Humanities building is not a "building"—but a composition of places.

*It is a place composition; it is a place. That was the aim;* [to make] *a place composed of places, by means of architecture*.[516] *For, without architecture there is no* [built] *place, and here we are back to the beginning. Something similar happens with* [my] *house in Tabio: it's not a house, but a place with a house: a place with a sheltered place within.*

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[515] The "white city" houses sixteen modernist "national monuments" of Colombia (*Bienes de Interés Cultural de Carácter Nacional*), nine among these were designed by Leopoldo Rother. For a comprehensive monographic study on the work of Leopoldo Rother see, Hans Rother, *Arquitecto Leopoldo Rother: Vida y Obra* (Fondo Editorial Escala, 1978).

[516] Salmona addresses the "folded" nature of place. A parallel can be drawn with Jeff Malpas, [in] *Place and Experience: a Philosophical Topography* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 172. Place, Malpas in the reference writes, exhibits a "folded" character: 'inwards' (within) 'outwards' […] "to other places." Places are then 'located' in respect to other places […] "and various orientations and perspectives that are possible even within the bounds of a particular place and reflect the very open-ness of place as a structure that allows the appearance of things within it."



**Figure 275. The Leopoldo Rother museum of architecture.**
**Photo by the author.**
***The commitment was enormous. First, because (in my opinion) in the "White City" you find the most representative and interesting samples of modern architecture in Bogotá.*** **Rogelio Salmona.**

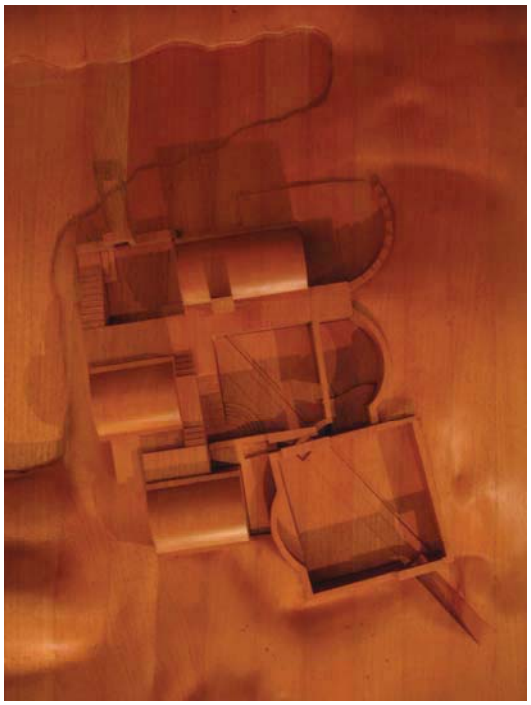


**Figure 276. Pathway in the "white city." Photo by the author.**



**Figure 277. The Leopoldo Rother museum of architecture. Photo by the author.**





**Figures 278 & 279. Rio Frio*:* the architect's house. Developed in parallel to the Humanities building.**
**[…]** ***it's not a house, but a place with a house: a place with a sheltered place within.***
**Rogelio Salmona.**

***The Humanities Building and the Urban Landscape***

What are the elements of the Bogotá landscape that you wanted to celebrate in the building, let's say, the magic elements of its landscape?

*The light, the profile of the hills, the scale…*

Have you intently inquired about and read chronicles on a landscape that you wanted to recollect or, re-compose? It is well known that the *sabana* is not as we see it today. [517]

*No, it has been transformed, clearly. The issue was rather projective, because in the end, the history of landscape is just that; the history: First, cultivation and then some economic action upon it. And if one starts studying the history of landscape in general, it is seen that, the notion of landscape we have today is a cultural one. There is an amazing book on that by… Cegni, I remember. In this book, he writes a history of landscape based on the history of the French rural landscape by Marc Bloch[518]—it is very important for you to read it. Marc Bloch was that great scholar of the rural landscape of France. He explains how the notion of landscape was created. Cegni draws on it for his study on the history of Italian rural landscape (the one I read) although I also read the other* [Bloch] *but, those are three highly scientific volumes. It is very interesting because it shows the different stages of development in history: how it moves from an economic stage to a defensive one, then back to economic; and how the notion of a cultured landscape comes from the idea of "bel paisaggio" which is the creation of an aristocracy that wants to see its surroundings embellished. Therefore they created a landscape, with architecture. First they painted it: that's why we see, through the work of Caravaggio in the architecture, the windows with the landscape in the background. And second they built it; logically they were* [gradually] *building it.*

---

[517] See Rogelio Salmona, "Sin Memoria no hay Paisaje," interview, by Claudia Arcila *Número* 21 (1999): 68-73. See as well "La Memoria del Agua," interview, by Claudia Arcila, *Magazin Dominical El Espectador 708* 8 Dec. 1996: 6. Salmona in the two referred interviews stresses what could be called the historicity of the *sabana* of Bogotá and its (now urban) landscape, and the possibilities of innovation by means of re-creation of the specific geographic attributes and the memory of the Bogotá landscape.

[518] The reference is to Marc Léopold Bloch, *Les caracteres originaux de l'histoire rurale francaise* (Paris: A. Colin, 1952). See, as well, Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 143-44.



**Figures 280. The Humanities building and the urban landscape.**
**Photo by the author.**



**Figures 281. The Humanities building and the urban landscape.**
**Photo by the author.**

The concept of landscape is, as well, a relatively recent pictorial invention. That is not the idea of landscape you refer to, I think that yours is rather landscape as cultural action, moreover, it is landscape as poetic creation.

*It is a cultural action!* [I quote Salmona on the subject:]

> *The natural landscape has been elaborated in time, but I see it culturally. It has been said, French people looked at landscape differently after Corot painted it.* […] *A cathedral emplaced in flat landscape makes it and becomes a particular symbol linked to a series of facts, not only aesthetic but also historical and social, of behavior and mystery. That is what I attempted with the Torres del Parque.* […] *The landscape was transformed and a new spatiality was created* [519]

[With Luis Kopek,] you once wrote a report on the hills of Bogotá, appendix to the Avenida Jiménez urban design project. There you prefigured the Bogotá hills, almost literarily. The landscape you describe and draw in that report is by no means a product of nostalgia.[520]

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[519] Arcila, *Triptico Rojo* 80. My Translation; the Spanish original follows:

> *El paisaje natural se ha ido elaborando con el tiempo, pero yo lo estoy viendo culturalmente. Se dice que los franceses vieron el paisaje francés distinto después que Corot lo pintó. […] Una catedral puesta el paisaje plano esta creando ese paisaje y a la vez un símbolo particular ligado a una serie de hechos no solamente estéticos sino también históricos, sociales, de comportamiento y misterio. Eso fue lo que intenté con las Torres del Parque. […] Se transformó el paisaje y creó una especialidad diferente.*

[520] See Rogelio Salmona, Luis Kopec and Francisco de Valdenebro, introduction, *Estudios y Diseños Para el Eje Ambiental de la Avenida Jiménez*, report submitted to IDU, Bogotá, 1997. The central subjects of the report are: the environmental deterioration and potential landscape re-creation of the *cerros* (the eastern hills of Bogotá) as a sustainable milieu, visual spectacle to the city dwellers and meaningful phenomenological experience of promenade, pilgrimage and recreational practices in general. Given the technical nature of the document, the experiential inflection given to the narrative is remarkable.



**Figure 282. Mediterranean landscapes. Photographs by Rogelio Salmona (circa 1953).**

*No, it is a new landscape that, one could intervene on and achieve.*

How do you conceive the idea of urban landscape in the Humanities building project? What is your attitude with regard to the urban landscape?

*There are two* [dimensions of] the *urban landscape there. The "white city", nearby, which I had to make evident and, in that specific site, I could only do it on the upper part, while the lower part was of little interest; there was some potential if seen 'through something'. I was interested in revealing through that something, what something? The existing trees! In the lower part you see the tree trunks and you see the* [neighboring] *architecture. And when you walk, that rather simplistic architecture starts giving a rhythm to the walk due to the verticality of the trees. Then, a dynamic landscape was created, different from the static and rather impoverished one left there by the existing architecture.* [Facing the Library] *I used the same system by planting the romerones, on one side, and on the other side, the palmas de cera. However, on the awful ICA side, the west one, which has no point of interest, I built a stronger tree wall and a dam, for a change so as to raise one's gaze high to 'god' and not to the horrible wall in front.*

On the roof of the semicircular auditorium set against the hills, which one sees [from the cloistered court] forming the horizon: those volumes [in the foreground] dialogue three-dimensionally with the hills [in the background]. Once you told me you wanted to cover those flat roofs with water?

*To make them of water, with water on top!*

What did you want to achieve with this?

*Well, to see the reflection of the sky. Yes, I wanted the sky and the mountains to be reflected on that other side, because I was sure one could see the silhouette of the mountains reflected on the water, but it was not possible to do it for silly reasons. The fact is that water is a very good isolating roofing material in itself. The sky reflection was*

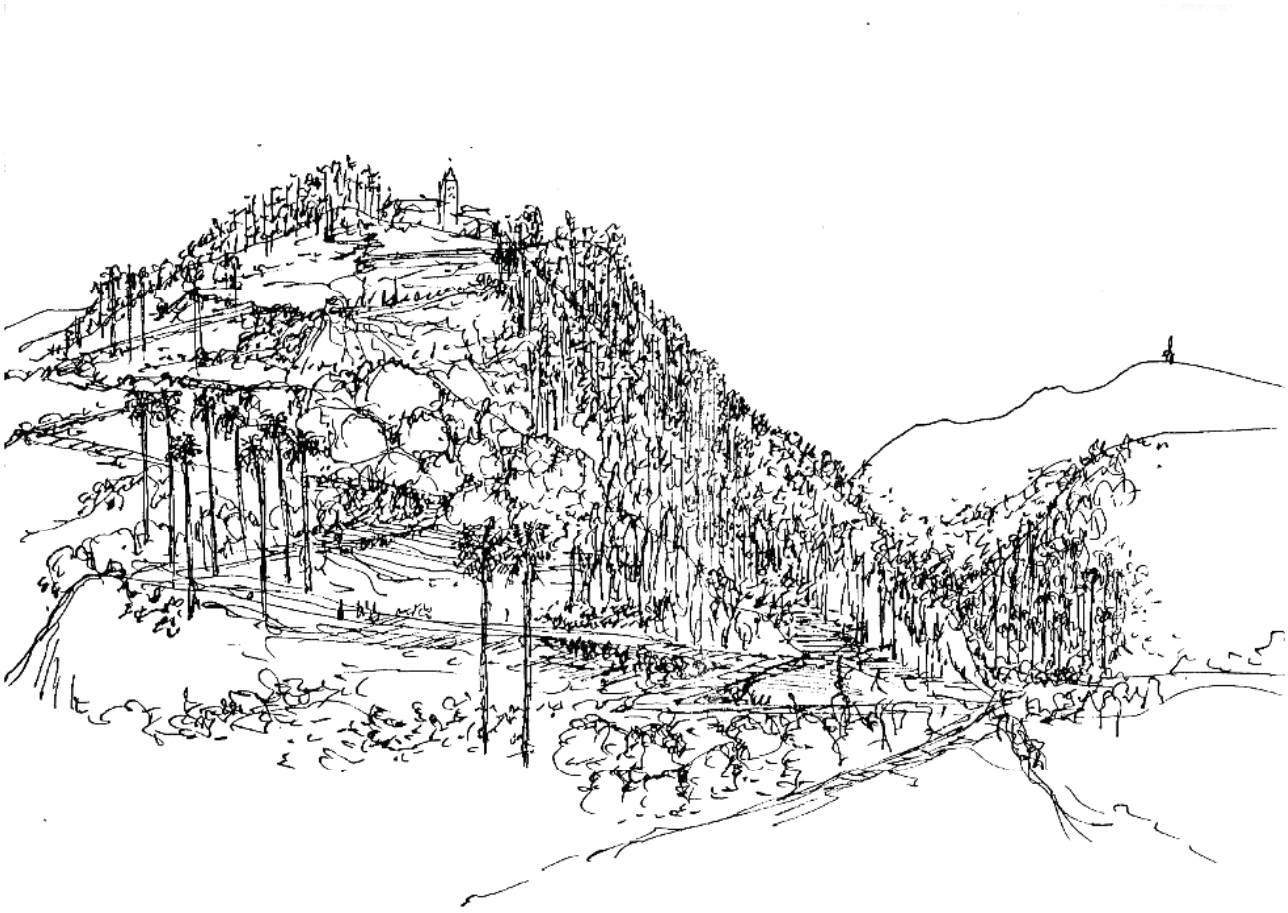


**Figure 283. The *Monserrate* hill: pathway to the sanctuary. Landscape with imaginary features. Drawing by Rogelio Salmona (circa 1998).**

*in addition to keeping an ideal temperature and preventing it from leaking. Things always come together, but, it was impossible to do it.*

The circular court with the water [mirror] has no precedents. In the Archivo project (1990), one must traverse in the tension of the [round] space but in the Humanities building the center is inaccessible. I would say it embodies the sense of the Greek myth of Hermes.[521]

*Yes, one must turn around.*

That courtyard mirror: did you make it in memory of some other place?

*No…no, I brought it from the Archivo. One thing led to another: as geometry it came from the Archivo.*

There are two glass-enclosed places in the Humanities building where one may read poetic intentionality [towards the landscape]. One is the strip…

*Up there in the library, the wide opening on the central axis: when entering the library one sees the sky by virtue of that high widely open window backing up the lofty space. There is a stunning time lapse when the tangent rays of the sun shine in as if they were welcoming you.*

There is another place where one finds a continuous glass plane, up on the terrace, where people work: when one sits or walks along the glass wall, the hills are duplicated.

*There is transparency* [and] *there is a reflection.*

---

[521] On the Greek deities of Hermes and Hestia in their relationship to issues of place and organizations of space see Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 137-144. See, as well, Jean Pierre Vernant, "Hestia-Hermes: the Religious Expression of Space and Movement," *Myth and Thought among the Greeks,* trans. Janet Lloyd and Jeff Fort (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press 2006, c1965) 157-96.



**Figure 284 . The Humanities building: mirroring circular courtyard. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

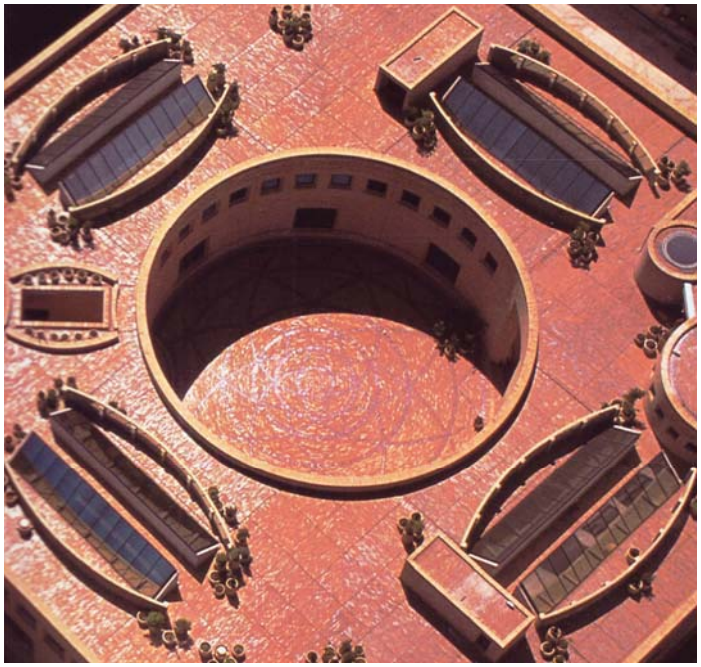


**Figure 285. The Archivo Nacional de Colombia, Rogelio Salmona, architect (1990). Circular courtyard. Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

***Rooftop Parapets: favoring an encounter with the hills***

Something more pragmatic on the Humanities building: You use a series of parapets [which work as skylights too]. Those [parapets and] skylights not only irradiate that special oblique luminosity inside. What is their objective outside on the terrace?

*Well,* [the parapet] *is an important horizontal from which the silhouettes of the first, second and third plane are demarked: the eye takes you to that concavity. Let's say that,* [atop the terrace] *one 'ends' with the horizontal. This is especially evident in the Virgilio Barco, atop which, the cut towards the mountain is very clear.*

For instance, in the semi-sunken space of the cafeteria this [effect] is marvelous. The experience one lives there, I would say, denaturalizes the natural. When the hills become a natural [inadvertent] thing, one stops feeling emotion for them. When one lands in Bogotá for the first time or comes back after a long time, that emotion arises.

*That is why this must be revealed: Stepping out there, you have the view, with the first plane that blocks everything else; essentially one perceives the hills only.*

What do you mean by "blocks everything else"? What did you want to block?

[I meant] *to block part of the city in the first plane; although* [the city] *is discovered later on: because discovery also occurs gradually.*

This happens similarly with the diagonal plane; the use of ramps provokes that wondrous effect. I would describe it as the wonder of gradually shifting the horizon to let [things] appear and produce a sort of time elongation. When one ascends, one stretches time.

*It is an elongation of our perceived time duration.*

The parapets then conceal parts of the urban landscape: why didn't that interest you?



**Figure 286. The Virgilio Barco library and the "*cerros*" of Bogotá. Photo by Francisco de Valdenebro.**

**"The only place of the city where we may see the "guarding hills" without the pollution of bad architecture we have thrown to Bogotá." Rogelio Salmona.**

**Testimony collected by engineer F. de Valdenebro (22 April 2006). The Spanish original follows:**

***"El único lugar de la ciudad desde donde podremos ver los cerros tutelares sin la contaminación de la mala arquitectura que le hemos hecho a Bogotá.."***



**Figure 287. The Virgilio Barco library: mirrored "*cerros.*" Photo by Francisco de Valdenebro.**




**Figure 288. The Virgilio Barco library and the "*cerros*" of Bogotá. Photo by Francisco de Valdenebro.**

*By means of the* [parapet] *I reveal* [things]. *This is an important and necessary architectural element which, at the same time, accomplishes another objective: it may reveal or it may block, and perform the two tasks at the same time.*

Le Corbusier did something evident and clear [in his Unité d'habitation in Marseille for instance,] which [Louis] Kahn also did. On the roof terrace of Exeter Library, Kahn creates openings starting precisely at the right height for the eye to see the sky only. One goes up there to read [or simply walk] and only sees the sky. He purposely occludes what might be called the "middle ground." [522]

*Yes, but I do the same: I am interested in that too.*

Although: you are not interested exclusively in that.

*No, but in fact, there are certain points where it has exclusively that effect. There are other* [places and moments] *however in which it is another thing, because the promenade allows for both: to come closer and to detach. In the cafeteria of the Virgilio Barco library I wanted to only let sky appear. You don't see the hills until a certain moment. There is a* [horizontal] *cut out of the first planes, leaving the sky and the mountainous silhouette.*

What happens on the roof terrace of [Le Corbusier's] Unité d'habitation in Marseille?

*There are children.*

Yes but, in terms of landscape and experience?

*Well, you see the sea and Marseille; you see remoteness. It is a pleasant site but it's not so exciting.*

[522] Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground* 17-18.



**Figure 289. The Humanities building. Rooftop parapets: an encounter with the hills. Photo by Germán Téllez .**

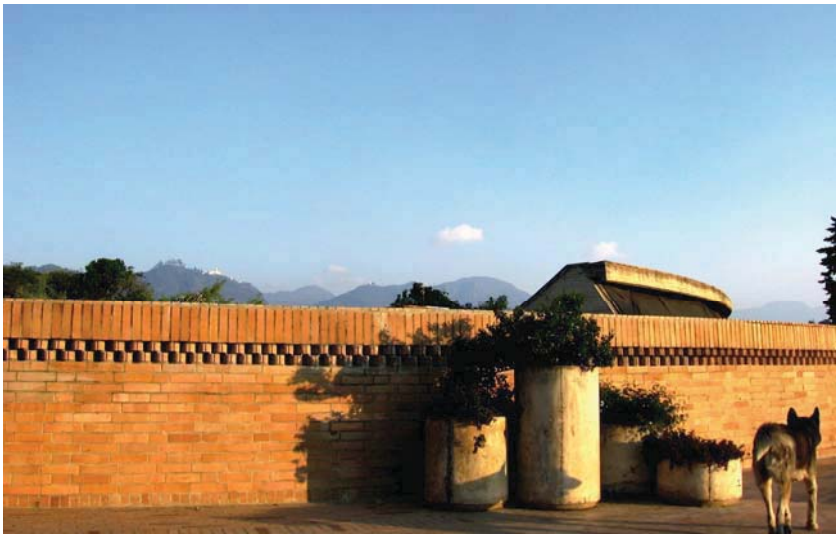


**Figure 290. The Humanities building. Rooftop parapets: an encounter with the hills. Photo by the author .**

However, one does not see Marseille.

*No, one does not see Marseille although one sees the gardened avenue.*

Did you realize what Le Corbusier specifically concealed?

*From a certain height down, yes.*

Thus [Le Corbusier] makes a horizon. This is what happens, somewhat, in parts of the Humanities building and the Virgilio Barco library. Was that the same strategy?

*No; one must not take this literally for it has nothing to do with that.*

However, it is part of the achievements of modern architecture. Thus it is a reflection of the masters' work as these are re-elaborated. It is tradition that is remade; re-experienced.

*Most likely Le Corbusier based that [decision] on children safety issues. Surely he was given bylaws to keep up with certain parapet height, for I do not know what… il ne faut pas se pencher. I don't think so because this would have had precedents or he would have done this afterwards. Le Corbusier would have continued with this type of approximations.*

Doesn't it happen elsewhere in the work of Le Corbusier that you know of?

*Perhaps, tell me where?*

In La Tourette, for instance!

*Perhaps in La Tourette but, I am not so sure about this.*

***Poetic Amalgam of Traditions: a Historicized Modernity***

There is a series of elements, [of spatial design strategies] that link the project to an immediate architectural tradition; to the so-called masters of modern architecture.

*Yes, naturally.*

You resort to strategies such as the garden terrace, taking it to a different level, and the idea of building the "promenade" but also the building of spatial topographies. I see this as an amalgamation of essential concepts of spatiality belonging to the tradition of modern architecture: [the *Raumplan* by A. Loos and the *Plan Libre* of Le Corbusier, for instance, traditionally seen as opposites.][523] Does modern architecture remain a topic on which you weave your architecture with tradition and less so with history?

*No, with both; and you said the right word: it is an amalgam. The fact of the matter is that history is implicit and permanently there. There are elements not only of modern architecture but also elements of universal architecture.*

Is there a lack of prejudice in some way?

*No prejudice at all! In the same way, I may use elements that were employed in Alhambra for* [a contemporary] *brick-made architecture in the making of the fountain, and why not? Or those that have been used in Brazil, coming from a Lusitanian tradition to Latin America; one that we did not have here* [in Colombia]*...and why not?*

This reminds me of the Chinese writer, Nobel Prize winner Gao Xingjian, saying [through an autobiographical character, in his novel *The Book of a Lonely Man*] that, the less doctrinarian a man is, the more humane he becomes.[524] Something that characterizes your architecture is your capacity to enjoy the architectures of the world by re-embodying

[523] This antagonism is the topic of Max Risselada and Beatriz Colomina eds., *Raumplan Versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, 1919-1930* (New york: Rizzoli, 1988).
[524] See Parra, *Hablemos de Literatura* 86. J. Parra quotes Gao Xingjian from the Spanish translation of *The Book of a Lonely Man* as follows: "un hombre sin doctrina se parece más a un hombre." The original quote is in Gao Xingjian, *El Libro de un Hombre Solo* (Bogotá: Del bronce, 2002) 191.

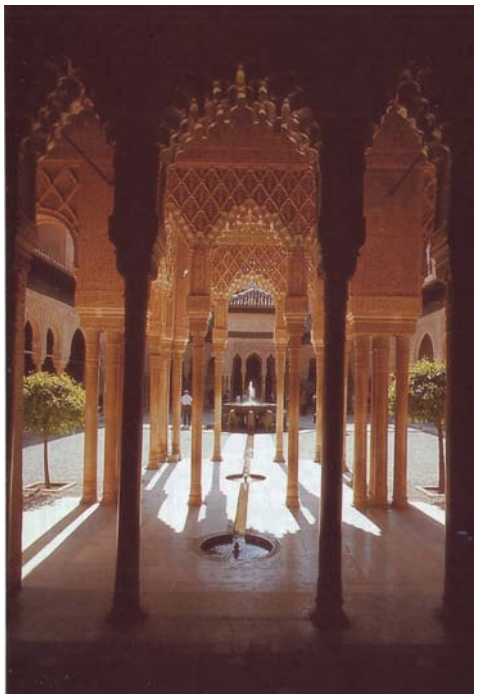


**Figure 291. Alhambra: the "*Patio de los Leones*."**
**Photo by Germán Téllez .**



**Figure 292. The Humanities building: fountain.**
**Photo by Enrique Guzmán.**

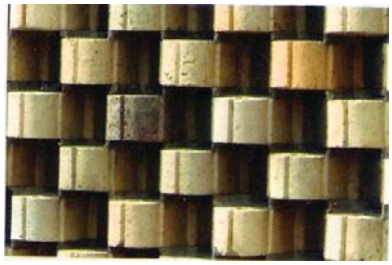


**Figure 293. The Humanities building: jalousie.**
**Photo by Enrique Guzmán.**

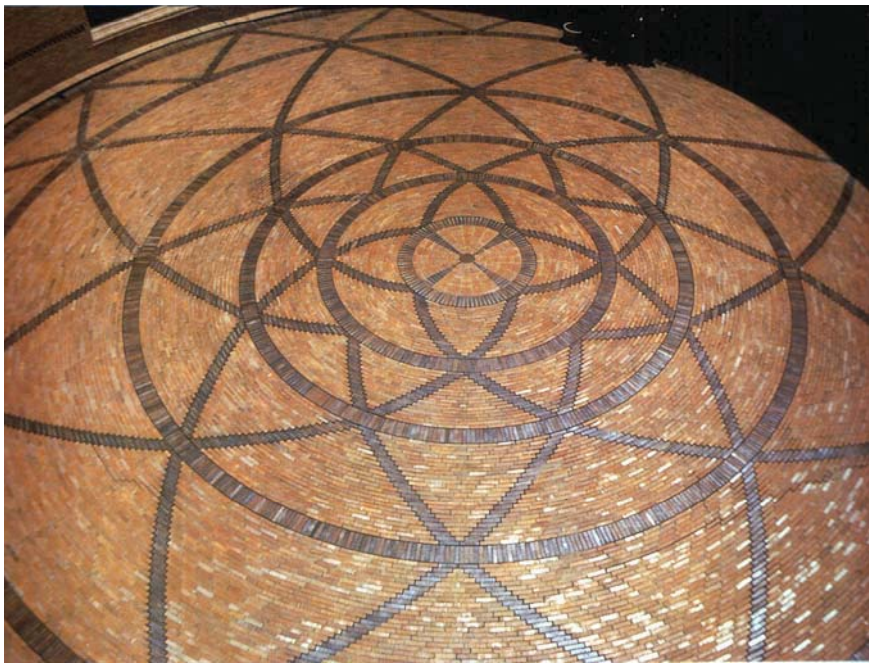


**Figure 294 . The Archivo Nacional de Colombia, Rogelio Salmona, architect (1994). Circular courtyard: ornamental floor pattern.**
**Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

***No prejudice at all! In the same way, I may use elements that were employed in Alhambra for brick-made architecture in the making of the fountain, why not? Or those that have been used in Brazil, coming from a Lusitanian tradition to Latin America, one that we did not have here. Why not?*** **Rogelio Salmona.**

them. I link that to a poetic attitude more so than to a historicist or a rationally restrictive, intellectualized one.

*We agree on that.*

Did you ever attempt a parallel between poetry writing strategies and place-making?

*No, not even literarily would this be easier.*

Borges, did you read Borges? I see aspects similar to Borges in your work, regarding conceptions of time and history. [I speak for instance of] the enjoyment of history in present time; and a concept of time that is no longer the Western linear one.

*Borges? Yes I did. That is precisely Borges.*[525]

***From Space-flow to Place-Bound Equilibrium***

In the [Western] tradition of contemporary architecture, from the modern masters to the contemporary context, if one looks intently at the masters Le Corbusier, Wright, Neutra and others, there has been a celebration of [and exploration of] horizontality. A celebration too, of what has been called the "flow of space," but its extreme however would be the no-place, because, had one been able to conceive of totally fluid architecture, totally one with the exterior, no definition of place would exist.

*Yes…*

What is the input of the vertical to architecture?

*The vertical? Similar to what the horizontal gives to architecture. Isn't it?*

[525] Rogelio Salmona, "La Biblioteca Continua," interview, *Bibliotecas Publicas y Escolares,* by Carlos Castillo (Bogotá: Fundalectura, 2001) 156. Speaking about the Virgilio Barco Library, in the cited source, Salmona made succinct reference to an analogy with Borges' labyrinth.



**Figure 295. The Humanities building: Long ramp in the logia.**
**Photo by Ricardo L. Castro.**

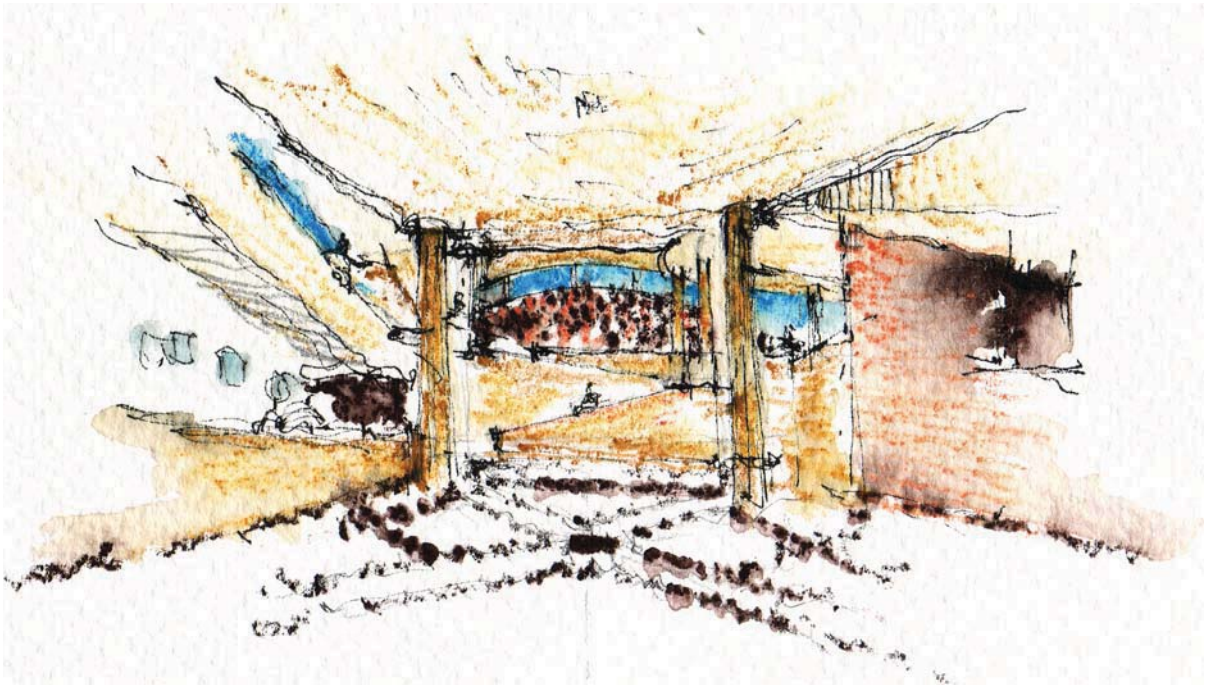


**Figure 296. The Humanities building: interior**
**Sketch by the author .**

[Qualifying:] the horizontal gives expansion.

*Well, the vertical gives rhythm; it gives the eurhythmic, above all, and in the best sense.*

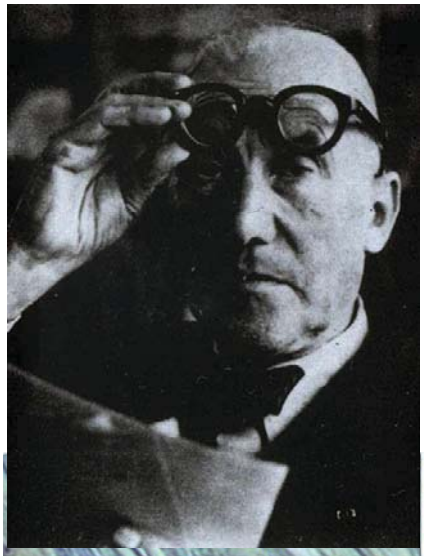
The vertical relates to temporality too.

*But, of course: that is why I say eurhythmics. Eurhythmia finally is the rhythm between the metope and the triglyph… tan, tan, tan… it is a number. It is so beautiful this concept in Greek architecture.*

In your most recent projects (the Humanities for instance) the vertical is primordial. The Humanities building is a wonderful forest of elements which one would not be able to define with precision: are these columns, pillars or buttresses? These categories begin to lose value. Columns at times are evident, other times walls are segmented and rotated. The vertical is celebrated. Why is this so?

*No. There is equilibrium between the vertical and the horizontal. There is no celebration as such. I looked for equilibrium.*
*Finally, if I were asked to define myself then I would say, I am a classic: a classic in the best sense of the word; a modern classic.*

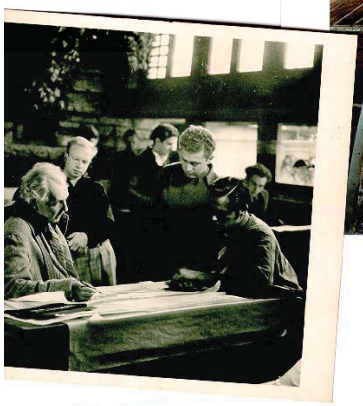
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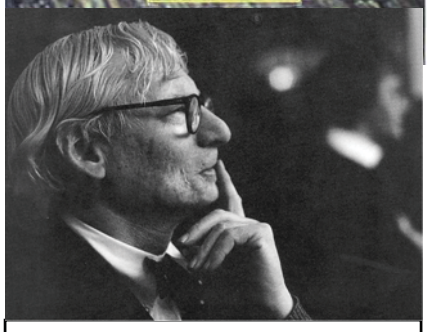
*Finally, if I were asked to define myself then I would say,*
*I am a classic: a classic in the best sense of the word;*
*a modern classic.* **Rogelio Salmona.**

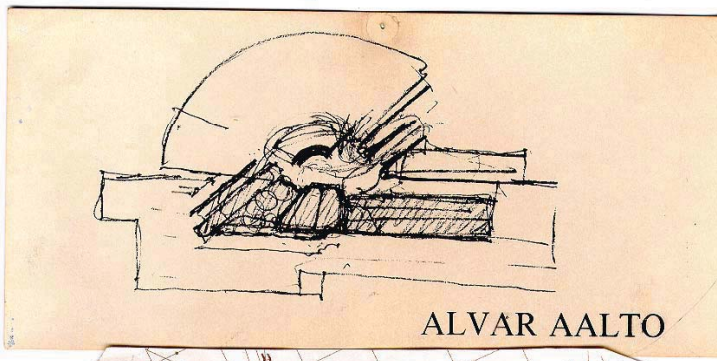


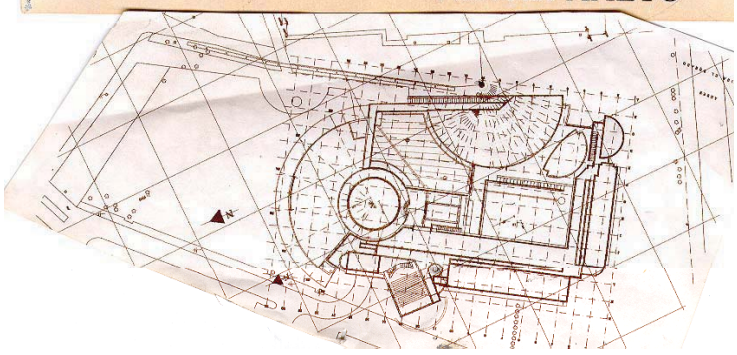








**A Poetic Amalgam of Traditions: Historicized Modernity**

**Figure 297. The Humanities building. "Souvenirs" pinned to the walls of the Rogelio Salmona studio. Collage by the author.** **225-L**

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***Coda***

Place is the ground of our experience, knowledge and agency in the world. Therefore place is ground for world-making. The process of place-making as world-making then seems to be circular. By virtue of the poetics of imagination, however, I allow myself a poetic license inspired in Gaston Bachelard to propose that place-making, as poetic re-creation, is an elliptic and spirally ascending process. In this way place-making re-creates the world, translating, transforming and blending experiential images. Rogelio Salmona has brought awareness of the possibilities of poetic re-creation in architecture to the context of contemporary architectural design practices—which I find more encompassing to call "place-making." As I have shown throughout this dissertation, his ideas on architecture and the living legacy of his work prove it. Salmona once said:

> *The greatest pleasure I have happens when people live and receive resonances of what is there by means of the resonances I proposed.*[526]

We live in times of a generalized "weak architecture" that looks for originality in the tabula rasa as in mere aesthetic speculation and is "grounding [itself] in no ground."[527] Salmona's path to authenticity—which I found parallels his dear *Do Kamo*—was different, it was grounded in experience.[528] It then comes as more than a coincidence that "the *Kamo,* or authentic person, was a participatory personage existing in relationship with other humans, with nature and with mythic beings."[529] Salmona's message is simple, clear and beautiful, but nowadays is commonly overlooked:

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[526] Claudia Arcila, *Triptico Rojo: Conversaciones con Rogelio Salmona* (Bogotá: Taurus, Alfaguara S.A., 2007) 38.

[527] I use the terms in quotation marks, as a critical comment to the undertone of nihilist celebration in Ignasi de Solà Morales, "Weak Architecture," *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture*, trans. Graham Thompson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997) 57.

[528] *Do Kamo* was perhaps the most resonant of Salmona's readings from his formative period at *La Sorbonne*. See Chapter VI, 179. On the subject see Maurice Leenhardt, *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World.* Trans. Basia Miller Gulati. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

[529] Deborah Van Heekeren, "'Don't Tell the Crocodile': An Existentialist View of Melanesian Myth," *Critique of Anthropology*, 24. 4 (2004): 430. Noteworthy Van Heekeren's essay looks at *Do Kamo* through lenses of Heidegger's thinking.

> *As we move through built spaces, through architectural spaces, we receive visual, olfactory, auditive, and haptic (tactile) stimuli. They are corners that preserve the emotions and memories of the world. We live in these memories as the stars do in the firmament, always attracted among them.* [530]

Architecture as the art of place-making is specific and has its own histories and traditions. The task of re-creation wisely understood should be nurtured by this accumulated knowledge. Salmona brought this awareness throughout his work and speech. For that reason, during the journey to the places of the Humanities building, my experience alternated with sketches, moments of analysis and critical reflection as I was preparing myself for further place re-creation. As our "place-world" is the source of its own re-creation, and the Humanities building is a "world of experience," many imaginative connections are possible. These connections made throughout the thesis speak about the open nature of the work itself. The work allows for imaginative speculation more than just inducing rational demonstration. On this I drew on Bachelard's conception of imagination and his reflections on the problem of "method" for the analysis of poetic activity. The places of the Humanities building are preparation for new imaginative re-creation.

With my journey and experiential report I paid tribute to Salmona's grasping of place-making. As he proposed, to conceive architectural places one must be prepared by experience, one must "make journeys to [built] history," live meaningful places, analyze and make them memorable to then re-create them in the occasion of new circumstances, sites, social needs and aspirations.[531] Place-making demands to be ethically responsive to the pre-existing world—which, as architects, we see in terms of site and context—but

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[530] Rogelio Salmona, "An Architectural Experience," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America,* eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 165. The text was translated from Spanish by Ricardo L. Castro from a lecture given by Salmona at the School of Architecture, McGill University, Montreal 28 March 2000. The experiential engagement with place and the understanding of architecture as an event in time (memory), not only in space, are key aspects of Salmona's previous description.

[531] See Chapter VI, 172.

also requires being poetically imaginative. Sites are interpreted and reinvented to be turned into dwelling places. My task was simply to be consequent to Salmona's legacy by means of this journey of *theoria.* I narrated my experience of a building which, seemingly isolated behind a highway, sitting on a university campus jammed with buildings, nonetheless connects to the urban landscape in multiple dimensions, substantially as a memorable place-experience and as meaningful product of a poetic cultural synthesis. In the research process I acquired substantial knowledge on the architect and the place as pre-existence, and built a suited interpretive framework.

Poetry-making and place-making are analogous, as poetry occurs there—in the world, and is world re-creation too**.** The idea of world was seen here as a sense of totality experienced in meaningful moments of perception. For that reason I made emphasis on place as aesthetic experience and stressed architecture as an art of experience that comes from the re-creation of an experienced world.[532] Rogelio Salmona was particularly conscious of the notion of re-creation to produce poetic experience: translation, "transsubjectivity," amalgamation, distortion and coupling of experiential images were essential to his architectural compositions. Metaphors were also crucial to Salmona's compositional strategies because:

> *Through metaphor we can know nameless distant things via the resemblance to familiar local things. In both the arts and the sciences this leap or "transference" is crucial for knowledge and can be made only by imagination; it is beyond the reach of local identity.*[533]

"The main function of architecture is to produce emotion," Salmona said, and the "sites" for human inhabitation from which we depart the creative process of place-making "preexist;" they are culturally made; they are not just natural or urban but cultural landscapes. The re-creative elements of place-making are in-the-world.

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[532] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Sheed and Ward Ltd. (New York: Crossroad, 1998-1975) 63. I draw on Gadamer's concept of *Erlebniskunst*; see Chapter II..

[533] Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love: Architectural Longing After Ethics and Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006) 70.

***Place-related themes and problems***

Rogelio Salmona addressed relevant problems and also developed architectural themes of which he talked on various occasions. They resonate in the places subject to this study. These themes and problems were experienced, rationally traced, critically reviewed and also imaginatively approached throughout the dissertation. Pierre Francastel's concepts of specificity and intentionality of artistic production enlightened the methodological approach to their analysis. The problem-solving and creative themes addressed by Salmona are specific to the art of place-making and extensive as well, to the society and times he lived in. The notion of intentionality pervades the creative attitude of the architect towards the specific and general problems—and the explorations—targeted by the architect. These are the contributions of Rogelio Salmona to society as a whole and the field of architecture. Although Salmona's architecture is clearly locally inflected, site and culturally specific, both types of contributions extend beyond the limits of local interest. Finally, somewhat parodying his master Le Corbusier I propose "Rogelio Salmona's "five" strategies "towards a new" subversive modernism:

1. ***The Relevance of Historicity.*** The understanding and valuation of the past is inherent in the ethical construction of our present and future.[534] Historicity may poetically be articulated to nurture the process of world making, which I traduce for architecture as place-making. Rogelio Salmona structured poetically in a cultural synthesis some pertinent architectural elements—as poetic, experiential images—of the historicity of the modernist avant-garde and the hybrid cultural context of Latin-America.[535]

2. ***Do Kamo.***[536] The *kamo,* the authentic participatory being, brings awareness of the complementarities between affective and rational modes of knowledge: the necessary correspondence or balance between the technological and the socio-cultural. Salmona based on this principle his interpretation of the relationship of art

[534] For pertinent definitions on concept of historicity see, for instance Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, second ed. (London: Cambridge University Press) 673.
[535] See Chapter VI 168-69.
[536] See Chapter VI 179.

and technology and the response—with architectural places—to the context of the Colombian society and cities, Bogotá in particular; the place which he made his own "corner" in the world.

3. ***The Problem of the Fabricated Landscape***. The concern for today's man made world and the reciprocity between dwellers and cityscape—particularly reflected in his architectural explorations concerning the *cerros de Bogotá*—and the organic relationship between the experienced architectural object and the city were consistent and persistent problem-solving interests through the work of Salmona for over four decades.[537] The Humanities building properly reflects these explorations. I summarize the problem, paraphrasing Francastel, as the transit from a natural environment to a fabricated one, seen both as an ethical (environmental) and poetic challenge of contemporary society.[538]

4. ***Obliqueness: Architecture without Prejudices.*** I assign metaphorical and spatiotemporal connotations to the obliqueness perceived in the places of Humanities building. Rogelio Salmona developed a place-making practice that draws directly on the legacy of his modernist predecessors, continuing, transforming and, most importantly, subverting the given traditions.

   I refer on one hand to a normative subversion of the so-called heroic period of modernism by appropriating traditional world architectures in terms of poetic images. These were prime material to Salmona—as experienced in present time and with an all sensorial engagement in place. I refer on the other hand to the particular amalgamation of modernist spatial architectural concepts (i.e. *Raumplan* and *Plan Libre*) for the continuing exploration of a "space-time flow" which Salmona made the subject of a delightful experiential obliqueness. This aesthetic exploration was not devoid of an ethical intentionality. Salmona's structures a plot to make us

[537] See Chapter V 188-90

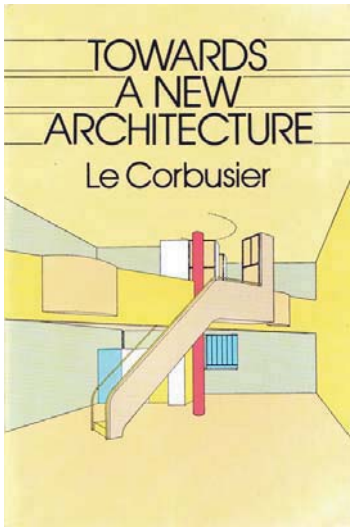
[538] Pierre Francastel addresses this problem, based on Georges Friedmann's thesis concerning the "passage" from a "natural environment" to the "environment of technological civilization." See Pierre Francastel, *Art & Technology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* trans. Randall Cherry. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 136. See as well Georges Friedmann, *Où va le travail humain?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950). It is noteworthy that Rogelio Salmona was assiduous to Francastel's seminars on the sociology of art while Francastel was writing *Art and Technology.*

discover a landscape, to liberate a site that was imprisoned, and sensually convey a message to the dwellers celebrating the hills' monumental presence—denouncing insensitive landscape deterioration. Obliqueness, continuities and discontinuities, and *eros*—a mixture of desire and delay—were also used to structure the spirally ascending, labyrinthine narrative; the experiential 'plot' of the building. I link this spatial experience to the baroque perception: a parallel Latin American baroque world that nonetheless finds points of encounter with the Baroque period in the western tradition. On this view I draw on Ricardo L. Castro's making of interpretive "connections" on the work of Salmona.[539]

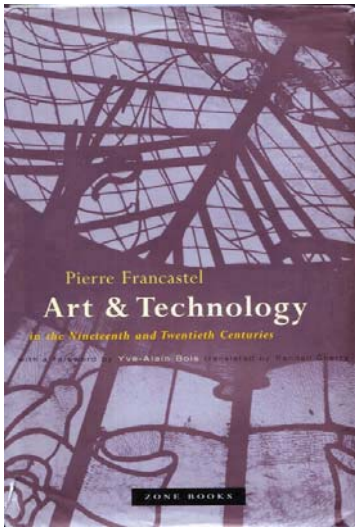
5. ***Subversive Humanism***. Finally, Salmona proposed a new humanistic approach to the world. The contemporary world, it is arguable, should not be seen fatalistically as a "post-human" nihilist era nor as dictated by instrumental rationality and exhaustion of resources, while we are in it, significantly acting upon the Earth. I match the living legacy of Salmona's places to an oblique, displaced "subversive humanism" of reciprocity between human agency and the earth. This humanism is no longer unidirectional one from mankind to earth—the latter being considered as mere matter of spoliation. In this I connect Rogelio Salmona to Bachelard's approach to science and poetry.[540] Giving Rogelio Salmona the benefit of the doubt that he gave once to his master, I recall Le Corbusier's words:

**"*Great spirits always meet.*"** [541]

[539]See "Syncretism, Wonder and Memory in the Work of Rogelio Salmona," *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America.* eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden.(Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 155-63.
[540] See particularly the poetic message of Gaston Bachelard in *La Flamme d'une Chandelle.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975, 1961. See as well, my comments in Chapter VI 163-64.
[541] See Chapter VI 165.


TOWARDS
A NEW
ARCHITECTURE
Le Corbusier


ORGE ELIECER GAITÁN


Pierre Francastel
Art & Technology
in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
ZONE BOOKS

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***Select Texts by Rogelio Salmona:***


"Textos de Rogelio Salmona." *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos.* Ed. María Elvira Madriñán. Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006. 84-95.

"Palabras en la Apertura de la Exposición en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá." *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos.* Ed. María Elvira Madriñán. Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006. 17.

"An Architectural experience." *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America.* Eds. Felipe Hernandez, Mark Millington and Iain Borden. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. 164-66.
Translated from French by Ricardo L. Castro. Lecture at the School of Architecture, McGill University, Montreal. (28 March 2000).

"Between the Elephant and the Butterfly." *Elephant and Butterfly: Permanence and Change in Architecture.*" Ed. Mikko Heikkinen. Jyväskylä, Finland: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2003. 13-24.

"Un Obrero del Cosmos," Interview (6, 22 & 23 Nov. 2002). By Carlos Gustavo Alvarez. *El Tiempo* 10 June 2003, Sec. Libros: 6.

"La Biblioteca Continua." Interview. *Bibliotecas Publicas y Escolares.* By Carlos Castillo. Bogotá: Fundalectura, 2001. 148-168.

[With Silvia Arango.] "La Arquitectura en la Ciudad." *La Ciudad: Habitat de Diversidad y Complejidad.* Eds. Carlos Alberto Torres, Fernando Viviescas and Edmundo Pérez. Bogotá: Unibiblos, 2000.

"Arquitectura Para la Memoria." Interview (19 Dec. 1999). By Ricardo Posada Barbosa. *El Malpensante* (Jan. 2000): 50.

"Reflexión sobre la ciudad", *El colombiano* (Medellín), *Literario Dominical,* 27 July 1997:10-11.

"Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres: Cartagena de Indias, Colombia." *Periferia* 13 (1994): 48-66.

***Select Texts by Rogelio Salmona: in chronological order, with annotations***

(2002) Manuscripts (excerpts) for the book with Claudia Arcila, *Tríptico Rojo,* unpublished. "Cultivar el paisaje, un acontecimiento entre dos límites." Manuscript discussing ideas of limit, the links between landscape and culture, the architectural elements that articulate the corporeal experience of landscapes and, significantly, an imagined 'run over' the landscapes of the *Virgilio Barco* library.

(2001) Interview. "La Biblioteca Continua." By Carlos Castillo. *Bibliotecas públicas y Escolares.* Ed. Castilla, María & Constanza Padilla. Bogotá: Fundalectura, 2001. 148-169.
The text gives Salmona's description of the *Virgilio Barco* library, manifesting his intentions and actual results. The testimony of the architect is centered on his understanding of this type of institutional buildings and the role of cultural centers for the community and the city. Includes technical anecdotes and describes important determining factors related to the program and the site as these were interpreted. Estensive, colloquial language.

(2000) Speech, unpublished. "*Entrega sede de post-grados, facultad de ciencias Humanas. Universidad Nacional de Colombia*." Inaugural ceremony of the Humanities building. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Salmona describes his creative intention to reshape the institutional character of the educational building, linking cultural and political aspects.

(1999) Interview. "Sin memoria no hay paisaje." By Claudia Arcila.
*Número* 21 (March-May1999): 68-73.
Discussion on the notion of landscape as one of the most significant cultural acts, historically constructed. Well documented interviewer (Erudite language).

(1990) Interview. "Rogelio Salmona, Poeta del Espacio." By Carlos Muricio Vega. *Credencial* 48 (Nov. 1990): 14. I quote from the Spanish original:
"Lo inteligente y lo difícil en la arquitectura es ser actual y saber mantener ese vínculo con el pasado, y ser moderno."

(1999) Lecture manuscript, unpublished. *Reinventar la casa del hombre, de los bienes raices a lasraices de los bienes*. Seminar on economy and culture Bogotá: ESAP (4 Nov. 1999).
The text elaborates on the origins of the city and the "science of urbanism," and offers insights into his understanding of contemporary Bogotá, in particular.

(1999) Manuscript, unpublished. *La importancia del espacio público*. Public lecture in Bogotá (14 Oct. 1999).
The text is a short historical account of the origins of urbanism in Latin America. Particular references to Bogotá are made. It makes explicit references to G. Bachelard's ideas on the *Poetics of Space.*

(1999) *Casa en Cota*. Manuscript. Unpublished.

First-hand manuscript of the architect's experiential narrative of one of his works: a country house in *Cota,* Colombia.

(1998) Lecture manuscript, unpublished. *experiencia es mía, lo demás es dogma*. Bogotá (14 Oct. 1999).
Elaborates on the Greek origins of Technology, the value of experience in the *savoir faire* of the craft and the central concerns that articulated his making.

(1997) Lecture manuscript, unpublished. *Temas tratados por Rogelio Salmona en visita realizada al Archivo General de la Nación el 18 de abril de 1997.*
Archivo General de la Nación. Bogota (18 Apr. 1997).
Salmona touches upon the central elements of his architecture: syncretism of historical and experiential referents, multidisciplinary interests and the prevalence of open space in the Americas; the notion of reflection and limit in architecture and the poetics of place.

(1997) Report, unpublished. [with] Luis Kopec and Francisco de Valdenebro. *Estudios y diseños para el eje ambiental de la Avenida Jiménez, entre la carrea 10ª. Y la estación del funicular*. Bogotá-IDU (Urban development institute).
The central subjects are the environmental deterioration and potential landscape re-creation of the *Cerros* (hills) as a sustainable milieu, visual spectacle to the city dwellers, leisure facility and meaningful experience (promenade) of pilgrimage. Given the technical nature of the document, the experiential inflection given to the narrative is remarkable.

(1996) Manuscript, unpublished. "*Arquitectura es Recrear.*" "Architecture is Re-Create"
The text emphasizes re-creation as compositional strategy. The architect draws parallels between literature and architecture stressing that the making of architecture requires experiential memory of lived places.

(1995) Speech manuscript, unpublished. "*Guillermo Bermúdez*." Bogotá (8 June 1995).
Salmona talks in memoriam of his deceased colleague and former associate in earlier projects, architect Guillermo Bermúdez.
He highlights the participation of Bermúdez, F. Martínez and himself in the construction of a distinctive contemporary architectural culture in Colombia.

(1994) "*Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres*: Cartagena de Indias, Colombia."
*Periferia* 13: 48-66.
The text offers an experiential narrative by Salmona with emphasis on his intentions with the project as to the spatial configuration and the interpretation of *Cartagena de Indias*.

(1994) Lecture manuscript, unpublished. "*La arquitectura como un acto cultural.*" Mexico City, UNAM.
The architect stresses architecture as action of cultural re-creation around which, he develops the notions of materiality, appropriated technologies and an spatiality of 'open spaces.'

(1992) *El encuentro de dos mundos.* Manuscript of a public lecture, held at Universidad de los Andes. Bogotá, April 6 1992
Presents a balance of his experience and concerns. Of particular interest the intellectual construes on and illustrations of the 'open space' as historically traceable constant in a diversity of architectures in the 'Americas'.

(1985) *La ciudad, lugar de la historia.* Public lecture held at Universidad de los Andes. Bogotá, Mars 6 1985. Manuscripts. Unpublished.
Preliminary manuscript for a public lecture. The architect presents in disconnected manner place construes explicitly referred to Heidegger's text "Building dwelling thinking".

(1983) Interview. "Entrevista de Álvaro Medina a Rogelio Salmona". *Proa 317* . Bogotá (317), 49-53. Presents concerns place-making as a form of political action from the field of architecture. Colloquial language.

(1968) Lecture series, unpublished. *Urbanización e integración social.* Seminar: *Urbanización y marginalidad.* Bogotá.
Academic paper, approached from the social scientist perspective. Elaborates on aspects of internal migration, displacement and adaptation to urban life of new immigrants. The text stresses on the need to attend to the qualitative aspects of urban space that are occluded by the mainly quantitative concerns of modern urbanists.

(2000) Interview. "Para el entendimiento y la emoción." By Claudia A. Arcila *La U.N. Pregunta* 7 (13 Feb. 2000): 14-15.
Although the text is written in the form of article, it is clearly the result of a conversation with the architect. It articulates long "quotations" by Salmona. The subject treated is the architect's approach to the Humanities building as a reshaping of the educational institutional building and unique opportunity to synthesize previous architecural experiences.

***Select Journalistic Notes***

Echeverri, A.M. (1988) "La ciudad es un lugar de libertad", *La Prensa,* 16 October, 25-26.
The article articulates long "quotations" by Salmona, where the reader will find the value of the document.

Garcia, J. "La ciudad es un libro abierto." *El Tiempo,* 9 April1999*,* sect. C: "última." (Last C)
Journalistic note addressing the public exhibition and consultation of major ongoing urban projects, illustrated with an image of Salmona´s Virgilio Barco library.

Posada-Barbosa, R. "La avenida Jiménez es ahora otro paseo." *El Espectador,* 29 January 2001, sect. B:3B
Journalistic note on the inauguration of the Avenida Jiménez project.

Paz, O. "La ciudad y la literatura." *El Universal,* 27 September, 1992. 144.
In this short essay by Octavio Paz it is noteworthy that the text (found in Salmona´s archives) is illustrated with an image of the public spaces of his (1965-1970) Residencias El Parque.

Arcila C. "La Memoria del Agua." *El Tiempo*, *Magazin Dominical 708.* December 8 1996: 4-11.
Salmona elaborates on the History of the city and the notion of memory of experience as it was incorporated to the Avenida Jiménez de Quezada (1996-1999) project.

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| **Figure 1.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Aerial view while starting construction, circa 1980.<br>Source: *Periferia* 13 (1994): 52.<br>Photograph credited to the Rogelio Salmona Studio Archive. © | **63-L** |
| **Figure 2.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Aerial view, circa 1995.<br>Photo by Antonio Castañeda<br>Source: Castro, Ricardo L. *Salmona.* Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 1998. 156. | **63-L** |
| **Figure 3.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Aerial view, 2007.<br>Photo by the author. | **63-L** |
| **Figure 4.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Design Sketch by R. Salmona.<br>Courtesy of the Rogelio Salmona Studio. © | **64-L** |
| **Figure 5.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. First floor plan.<br>Source: *Periferia* 13 (1994): 52. | **64-L** |
| **Figure 6.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. © | **64-L** |
| **Figure 7.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Entrance courtyard.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. © | **64-L** |
| **Figure 8.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. © | **65-L** |
| **Figure 9.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. The *Patio del Poble Morado*.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. © | **65-L** |
| **Figure 10.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Sections and elevations.<br>Source: *Periferia* 13 (1994): 53. | **66-L** |
| **Figure 11.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres. Promenades, ramps and thresholds.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. © | **66-L** |

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| **Figure 12.** | The Castillo de San Felipe de Barajas, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. ©<br>Source: Castro, Ricardo L. *Salmona.* Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 1998. 20. | **68-L** |
| **Figure 13.** | The "Nunnery Quadrangle," Uxmal.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. ©<br>Source: Castro, Ricardo L. *Salmona.* Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 1998. 19. | **68-L** |
| **Figure 14.** | The Jaoul houses. Sections and elevations.<br>Source: Téllez, Germán. *Rogelio Salmona: Arquitectura y Poética del Lugar*. Bogotá: Escala, 1991. 63. | **69-L** |
| **Figure 15.** | The Sarabahi house. Elevation.<br>Source: Téllez, Germán. *Rogelio Salmona: Arquitectura y Poética del Lugar*. Bogotá: Escala, 1991. 62. | **69-L** |
| **Figure 16.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. © | **72-L** |
| **Figure 17.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres, view from the Cartagena bay.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. ©<br><br>Source: *Periferia* 13 (1994): 50-51. | **75-L** |
| **Figure 18.** | Cartagena de Indias. Urban landscape.<br>Drawing by Rogelio Salmona.<br>Courtesy of the Rogelio Salmona studio. © | **75-L** |
| **Figure 19.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres, circa 1982.<br>Photo by Germán Téllez.<br>Source: Téllez, Germán. *Rogelio Salmona: Arquitectura y Poética del Lugar*. Bogotá: Escala, 1991. 294. | **76-L** |
| **Figure 20.** | The Casa de Huéspedes Ilustres, exterior detail, circa 1995.<br>Courtesy of Ricardo L. Castro. © | **76-L** |
| **Figure 21.** | Apollinaire's aphorism transcribed by Rogelio Salmona.<br>Courtesy of Valérie Lechêne. © | **76-L** |

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| **Figure 22.** | Colombia, location map.<br>Sketch by the author. | **78-L** |
| **Figure 23.** | The s*abana* of Bogotá.<br>Sketch by the author. | **78-L** |
| **Figure 24.** | "*Inundación en la Sabana"* (Flood in the savannah).<br>Oil on canvas by Gonzalo Ariza, 1960 (152).<br>Source: CIFA Universidad de los Andes. *Cerros de Bogotá.*<br>Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2000. 153. | **78-L** |
| **Figure 25.** | Topograhical Map of the *sabana* of Bogotá.<br>Sketch by the author. | **79-L** |
| **Figure 26.** | *Sabana* of Bogotá, satellite view.<br>Source: CIFA Universidad de los Andes. *Cerros de Bogotá.*<br>Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2000. 25. | **79-L** |
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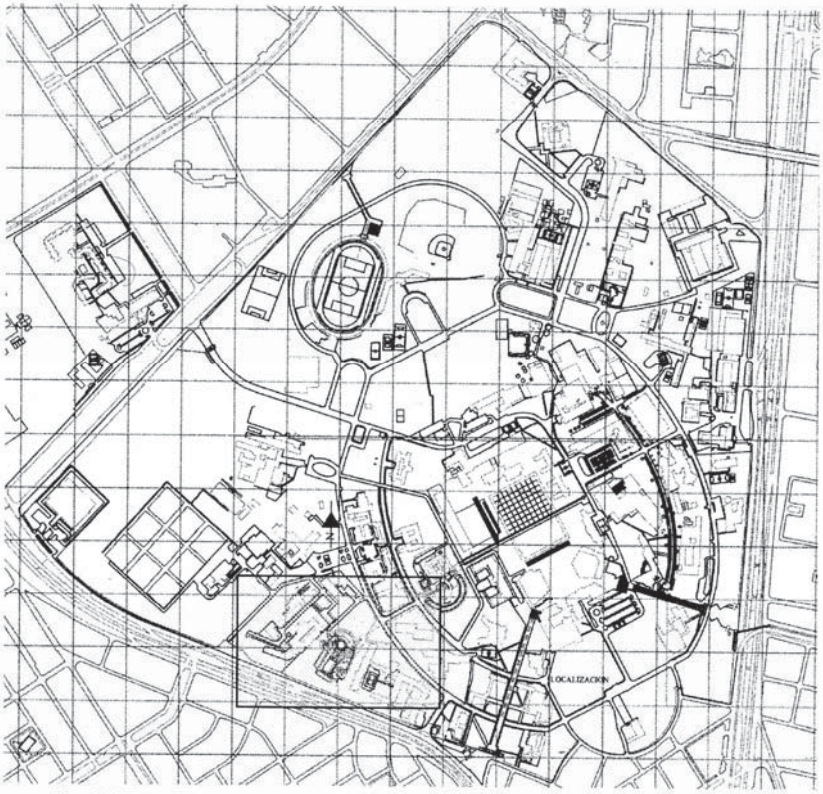
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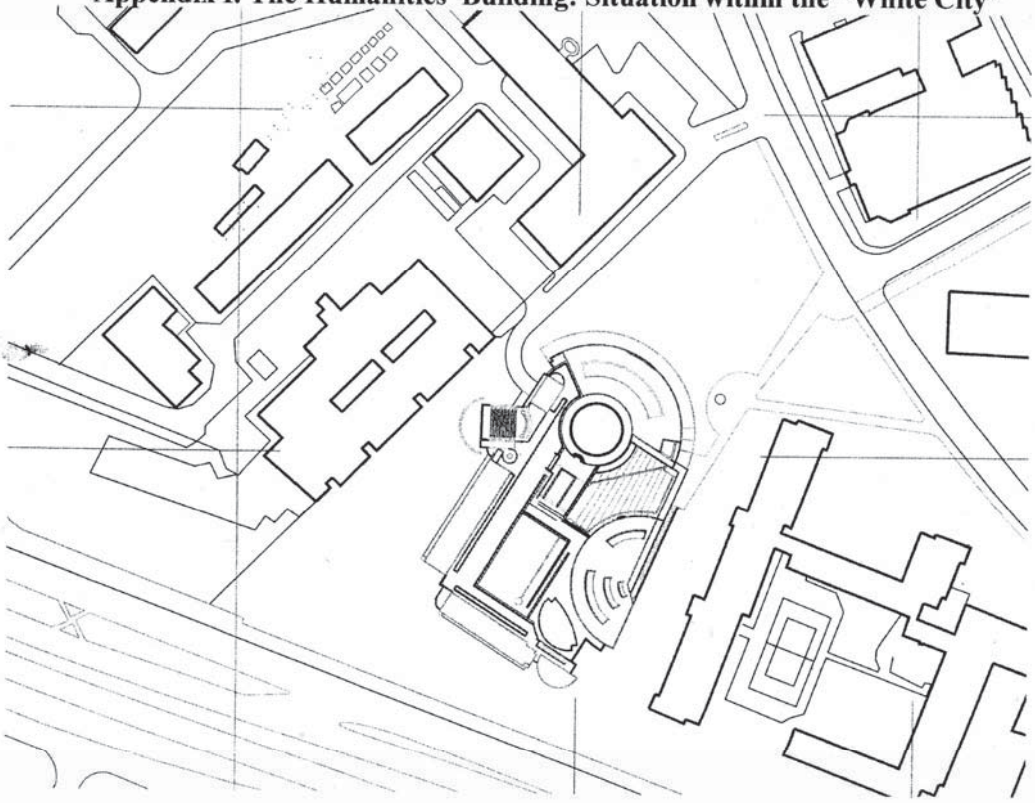
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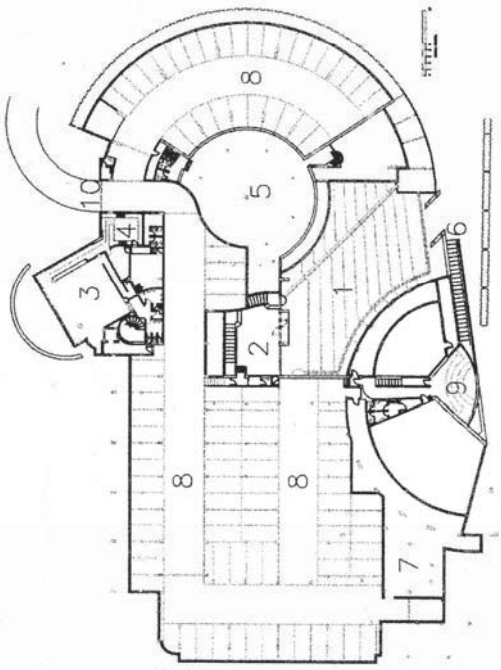
To my parents, family and close friends, for their emotional and even financial support. To Beatriz who accompanied me for so many years, since my first contact with Rogelio Salmona in 1991. Lastly, to my beloved Maria and Juan; I dedicate this work to you.




**Appendix I. The Humanities Building: Situation within the "White City"**

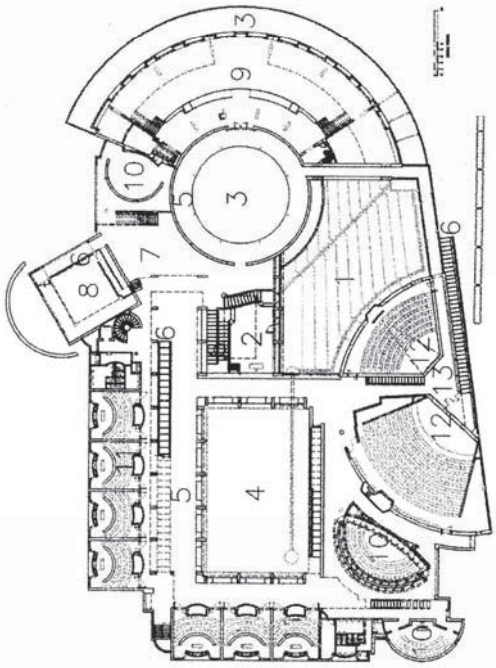


**Appendix I. The Humanities Building: Site Plans**



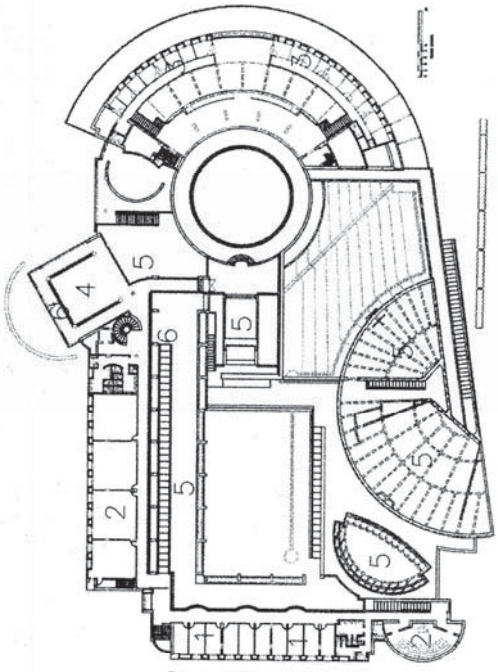
Parking Level (Basement)

1. Entrance Courtyard 2.Antechamber 3. Café 4.Kitchen 5. Storage Room (library). 6. Ramp. 7. Storage. 8. Parking 8.Classrooms 9. Access ramp to Parking area.



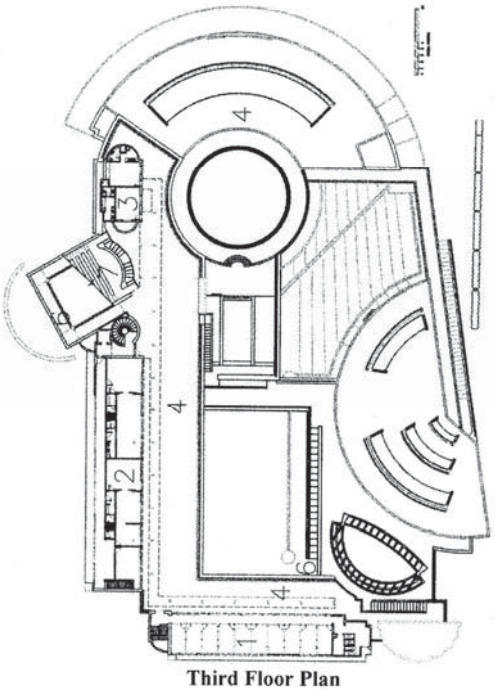
First Floor Plan

1. Entrance Courtyard 2.Antechamber 3. water-mirror courtyard 4.Courtyard 5. Logia 6. Ramp. 7. Exhibitions 8. "void" over cafe 9. Reading Room 10. Seminar Room 11. Classroom 12. Auditorium. Entrance Courtyard.



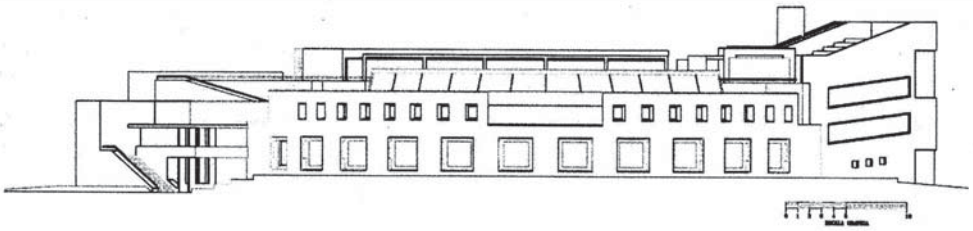
Second Floor Plan

1. Researchers (cubiculum) 2. Seminar Rooms 3. Reading Cubicles 4. Exhibitions and parties 6. Ramp. 7. Open-Air Theater

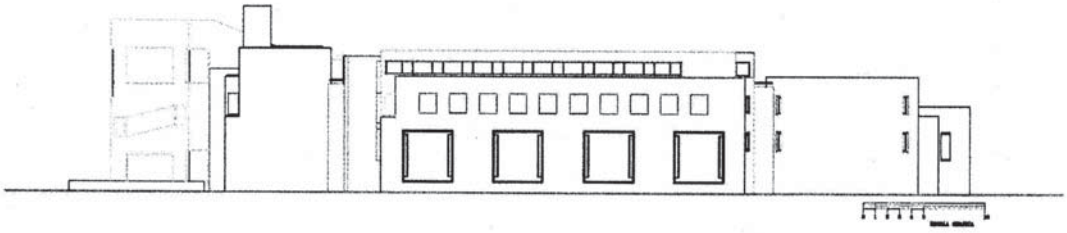


Third Floor Plan

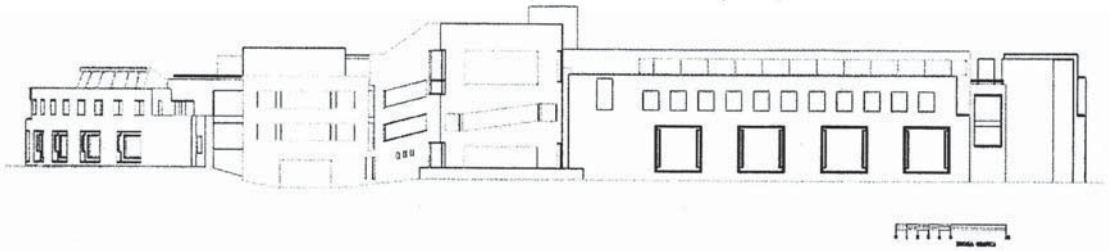
1. Researchers (cubiculum) 2.Administration 3. Guest-Rooms 4.Rooftop Terrace 6. Ramp. 7. Open-Air Theater



**North Elevation** FACHADA NORTE



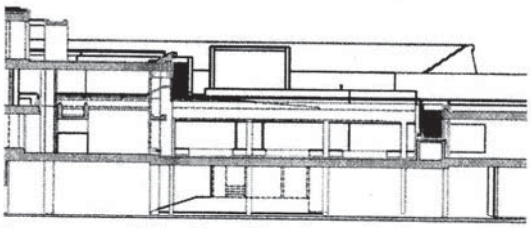
**South Elevation** FACHADA SUR



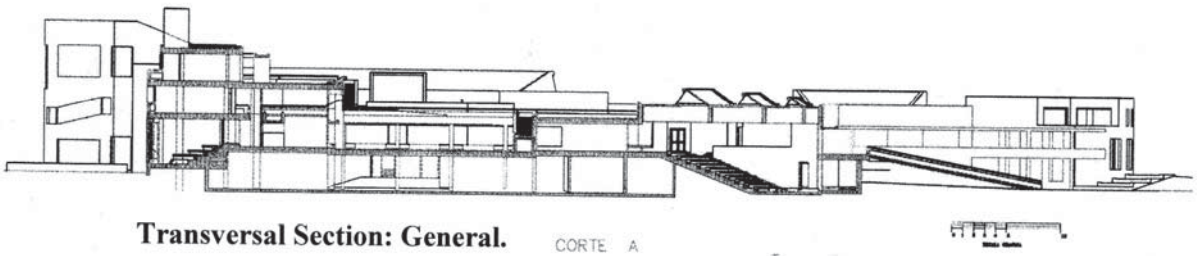
**West Elevation** FACHADA OCCIDENTAL



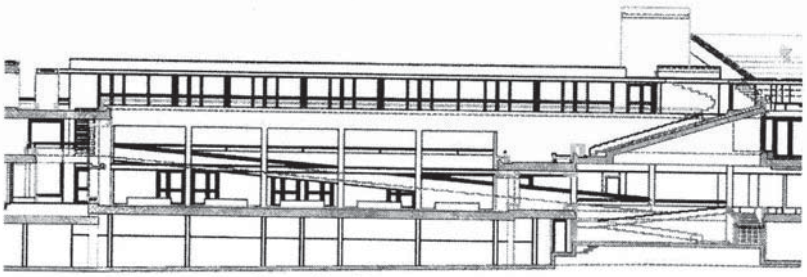
**East Elevation** FACHADA ORIENTAL



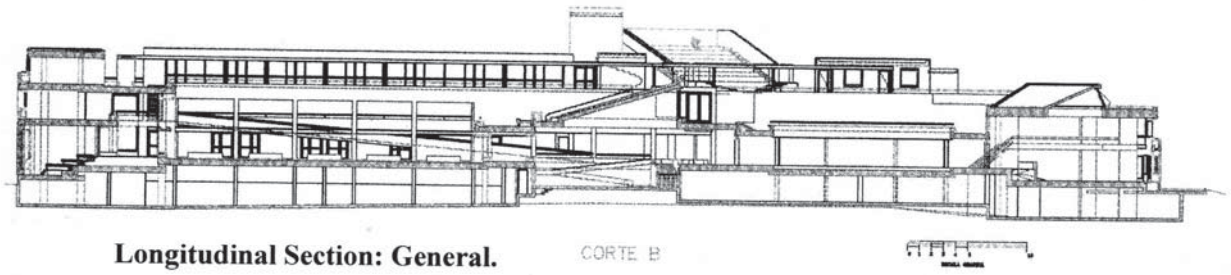
**Transversal Section: Logia and Courtyard**




**Transversal Section: General.**



**Longitudinal Section: Courtyard and Ramps**




**Longitudinal Section: General.**

**1958**
Casas Palenquero, Pereira

**1958-1960**
Edificio Bessudo, Bogotá

**1959**
Edificio Mejía, Cali

**1959**
Casa E, Bogotá

**1959**
Colegio La Enseñanza, Bogotá

**1959-1960**
Casa en Pereira, Pereira

**1959-1962**
Urbanización El Polo Club, Bogotá

**1959-1968**
Casa Latorre, Bogotá

**1960**
Edificio Borde, Bogotá

**1960-1961**
Urbanización San José, Pereira

**1961-1963**
Cooperativa Los Cerros, Bogotá

**1961-1962**
Casa en El Chicó, Bogotá

**1961-1962**
Casa Cajiao, Bogotá

**1961-1963**
Colegio Universidad Libre, Bogotá

**1962-1965**
Urbanización La Palestina, Bogotá

**1962**
Concurso Caja Agraria, Fredonia

**1962**
Casa Bursztyn, Bogotá

**1962**
Apartamentos en terrazas para la CPD, Bogotá

**1963-1971**
Fundación Cristiana de la Vivienda, Bogotá

**1964**
Urbanización Cavipetrol, Bogotá

**1964-1965**
Urbanización La Coruña, Bogotá

**1965-1970**
Residencias El Parque, Bogotá

**1965**
Edificio Betoma, Santa Marta

**1965-1966**
Casa en La Cabrera, Bogotá

**1965-1969**
Casa en Santa Margarita, Bogotá

**1966**
Casa en El Poblado, Medellín

**1966**
Pequeña Biblioteca, Bogotá

**1966-1970**
Casa en Los Rosales, Bogotá

**1967**
Edificio en Germania, Bogotá

**1967-1969**
Urbanización Usatama, Bogotá

**1967-1974**
Edificio Sociedad Colombiana de Arquitectos, Bogotá

**1968**
Concurso Coltejer, Medellín

**1968-1975**
Desarrollo Urbanístico Timiza, Bogotá

**1968-1969**
Casa Amaral, Bogotá

**1969-1971**
Estudio Ecológico y Turístico del Parque Nacional Tayrona, Santa Marta

**1969**
Concurso Alcaldía de Bogotá, Bogotá

**1969**
Sede Federación y Asociación de Facultades de Medicina, Bogotá

**1969-1970**
Casa Alba, Bogotá

**1969-1971**
Remodelación Parque de la Independencia, Bogotá

**1970**
Apartamentos en la calle 72, Bogotá

**1970**
Edificio Amalfi, Bogotá

**1970**
Casa en Villa Isabel, Bogotá

**1970-1971**
Edificio Río Gaira, Santa Marta

**1970**
Calle de Las Escalinatas, calle 26, Bogotá

**1970-1972**
Edificio El Museo, Bogotá

**1971**
Edificio en El Rodadero, Santa Marta

**1971-1972**
Edificio Beetar, Bogotá

**1971-1973**
Sede Automóvil Club de Colombia, Bogotá

**1972**
Estudio Paisajístico de la Avenida Los Cerros, Bogotá

**1972**
Apartahotel en Bogotá, Bogotá

**1972-1974**
Casas en El Bosque del Retiro, Bogotá

**1973**
Apartamentos Escalonados, Bogotá

**1973**
Organización del Espacio Público entre la Biblioteca y el Museo Nacional, Bogotá

**1975**
Edificio en San Diego, Bogotá

**1975-1976**
Casa Puente, Bogotá

**1975-1977**
Edificio El Pinar, Bogotá

**1975-1986**
Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, Bogotá

**1976**
Casa en Medellín, Medellín

**1976-1981**
Edificio Alto de los Pinos, Bogotá

**1977-1978**
Urbanización Rafael Núñez o Terrazas del Salitre, Bogotá

**1977-1978**
Casa Arango, Bogotá

**1978-1979**
Casa Franco, Tabio

**1979**
Taller Roda, Bogotá

**1979**
Conjunto Altos del Río, Cali

**1980-1982**
Casa de Los Huéspedes de Colombia, Cartagena

**1980-1989**
Centro Cultural Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Bogotá

**1981**
Recuperación del Parque Nacional Olaya Herrera, Bogotá

**1981-1983**
Edificio Balcones del Nogal, Bogotá

**1982**
Apartamentos en El Rodadero, Santa Marta

**1983**
Casa en Turbaco, Turbaco

**1984-1985**
Museo Quimbaya, Armenia

**1985-1986**
Sede Fundación para la Educación Superior, Cali

**1985**
Sede Deportiva Niza, Bogotá

**1985-1987**
Renovación Urbana Nueva Santa Fe de Bogotá, Bogotá

**1986**
Concurso Jardín Botánico José Celestino Mutis, Bogotá

**1986**
Parcelación Río Pance, Cali

**1986**
Remodelación Librería Oma, Bogotá

Source: María Elvira Madriñán, ed. *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 96.

**1986-1989**
Edificio Castillo Grande y Piñango, Cartagena

**1986-1988**
Edificio Altos de Santana, Bogotá

**1988**
Taller Herrán, Bogotá

**1988-1994**
Archivo General de la Nación, Bogotá

**1988**
Casa Jaramillo, Pereira

**1988**
Casa en Tabio, Tabio

**1988**
Concurso Plan de Vivienda Chambacú, Cartagena

**1989**
Concurso de Vivienda Carlos Lleras Restrepo, Bogotá

**1989**
Edificio Altos del Refugio, Bogotá

**1989-1990**
Hotel Bahía Sardinas, Isla de San Andrés

**1989-1990**
Casa Sotará, Tenjo

**1990**
Concurso Sede Deportiva Compensar, Bogotá

**1990**
Casa en Anapoima, Anapoima

**1991**
Conjunto de Vivienda en Chigorodó, Chigorodó

**1991**
Edificio Calle 71, Bogotá

**1991**
Casa en Subachoque, Subachoque

**1991**
Casa en Lago Mar, Girardot

**1991-1992**
Edificio Bahía de Cartagena, Cartagena

**1991-1996**
Casa en Cartagena, Cartagena

**1992**
Propuesta para el Desarrollo Urbano de la Isla de Tierra Bomba, Cartagena

**1992**
Concurso Sede Escuela de Artes, Universidad del Valle, Cali

**1992**
Casa Lago Grande, Girardot

**1992**
Edificio Cantalapiedra, Bogotá

**1992**
Casa en San Andrés, Isla de San Andrés

**1992-1993**
Casa Cota III, Cota

**1992-1995**
Casa Cota II, Cota

**1992-1995**
Casa Cota I, Cota

**1992-2006**
Gimnasio Fontana, Bogotá

**1993**
Casa en Altos de Potosí, Sopó

**1993-1995**
Edificio Plaza 86, Bogotá

**1994**
Concurso Sede Principal, Banco Popular, Bogotá

**1994-1996**
Equipamiento Comunal Nueva Santa Fe de Bogotá, Bogotá

**1994**
Concurso Sede Vicerrectoría de Postgrados, Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Bogotá

**1994**
Casa Vientos, Tabio

**1994**
Casa en Cajicá, Cajicá

**1994-1997**
Sede para la Vicepresidencia de la República, Bogotá

**1995-1997**
Casa Tierra Negra, Subachoque

**1995-1997**
Casa El Encinar, Chía

**1995-2000**
Edificio de Postgrados de Ciencias Humanas, Universidad Nacional, Bogotá

**1995-1997**
Casa en Sindamanoy I, Chía

**1996**
Parque República de El Salvador, Cartagena

**1996**
Sede para la Corporación Autónoma Regional de Risaralda, Carder, Pereira

**1996-1998**
Casa en Sindamanoy II, Chía

**1997**
Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Belén, Alcalá de Henares, España

**1997-2000**
Casa en Riofrío, Tabio

**1997**
Facultad de Enfermería Universidad Nacional, Bogotá

**1997**
Recuperación Ambiental del Camino a Monserrate, Bogotá

**1998**
Centro de Convenciones para la Vicepresidencia de la República, Bogotá

**1998-2000**
Recuperación de la Avenida Jiménez de Quesada, Bogotá

**1998-2000**
Casa Toscana, Tabio

**1998**
Casa en El Rosal, El Rosal

**1999-2001**
Biblioteca Pública Virgilio Barco, Bogotá

**2000**
Casa en El Chicó Alto, Bogotá

**2000-2002**
Parque Virgilio Barco, Bogotá

**2000-2001**
Jardín Infantil San Jerónimo del Yuste, Bogotá

**2000-2002**
Jardín Infantil Santa Marta, Bosa, Bogotá

**2001-2003**
Casa Altos del Chicó, Bogotá

**2002-2006**
Casa en Florida, Florida, EE. UU.

**2002**
Concurso Centro Social del Adulto Mayor Compensar, Bogotá

**2002-2006**
Viviendas para la Empresa Municipal de Vivienda de Madrid, Madrid, España

**2002-2004**
Casa Altazor, Bogotá

**2003**
Casa en Sopó, Sopó

**2003**
Concurso Interaulas, Universidad Nacional, Bogotá

**2003**
Centro Cultural Universidad Nacional de Manizales, Manizales

**2003**
Edificio en Santana, Bogotá

**2003**
Desarrollo Urbanístico Alalpardo, Madrid, España

**2004**
Ampliación Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, Bogotá

**2004-2006**
Fondo de Cultura Económica de México, Bogotá

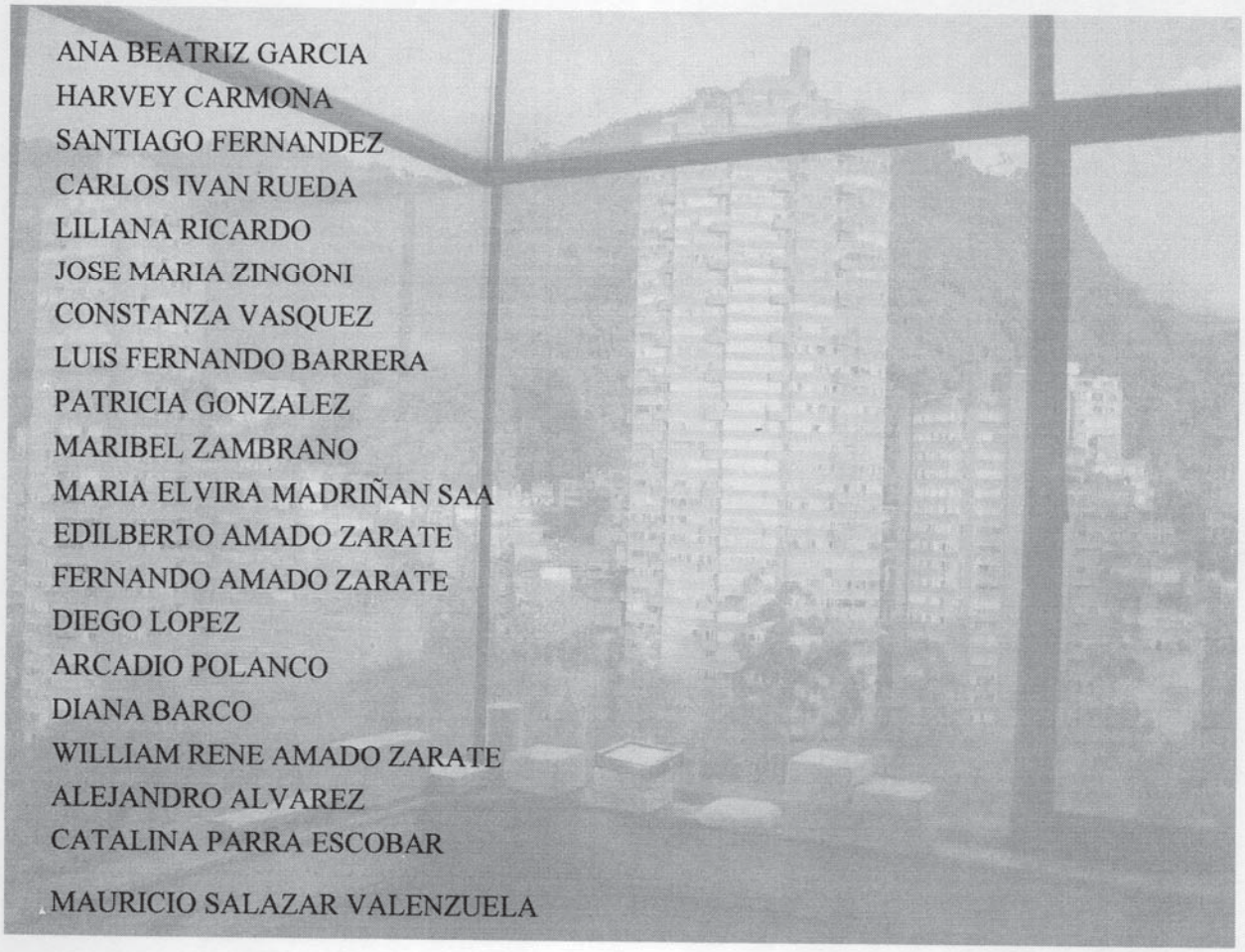
**2004-2006**
Campus Universidad Pedagógica en Valmaría, Bogotá

**2004-2006**
Casa Puente II, Tabio

**2005-2006**
Edificio Tecnológico de Alcalá, Alcalá de Henares, España

**2005-2006**
Edificio de Apartamentos en La Candelaria, Bogotá

Source: María Elvira Madriñán, ed. *Rogelio Salmona: Espacios Abiertos/Espacios Colectivos* (Bogotá: Panamericana, 2006) 97.




**Courtesy of Yaneth Alarcón, administrative officer of the Rogelio Salmona Studio.**