

## CIUDAD IDEAL (IDEAL CITY), THE SYMBOLIC SPACE

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"Architecture is the structure that connects the elements in the universe: earth, air, sea and human. The potential included in her concreted reality afford for mediation. It allows for a transfer between the mental and the understandable world "

(Claude Parent, "Structure", Architecture principle)

Ideal City by Rosario Montero, draws an architectural and geographical landscape of the Chilean territory, from north to south, strips of nineteenth buildings, accomplish the entire series.

Claude Parent noted that the transfer between mental and nature was possible only through the knowledge of the concept of "space." Deprived of an architectural structure, whatever its form or use, man is unable to establish conscious relationships with his surroundings and therefore needs material protection and shelter, but at the same time needs comfort and a niche for personal development, along with an integration with the rest of the community.

The vernacular forms of homes in the Mapuche community were open to the east, in a way that allowed the morning shine to enter gently through the branches. There was a physical and symbolic relationship between the cardinal points, the material construction and the placement of objects inside the house, thus creating a relationship with sky and ground.

In many indigenous communities, the importance of space and the mystical relationship with the universe fostered a specific form of social and community life. On Chiloe Island, in the south of Chile, there still remains a habit originated from social empathy. The Minga is a system among neighbors, which provides sufficient support and working hands in order to move their houses from one point to another. Two important concepts converge. The sense of community and the sense of belonging: the house is not abandoned to the sway of contingencies, or dismantled, but transported over oxen shoulders and neighbors; crossing rivers, sea and land, preserving in such a way the essence of the inhabited space.

Since its origins Architecture has had a ritual and magical sense, an invocation / creation (Ettore Sottsass, *sur la ville Sítuattíonístes Texts*, France) that shapes the lives of the communities who are born, love and die, in the space that is formed into a reflection of identity development, its importance lies in being aware that architecture is the creation of atmospheres and lifestyles.

Looking at the pictures of "Ciudad Ideal" this contemporary Ideal City by Rosario Montero, we can see different architectures and layers of middle-class homes, neighborhoods outside of Chilean cities and towns comprised by housing systems with invisible people, as a result of the hermetic facade, the community appears as nonexistent, or so it seems to be the message of its author. She photographs architectural units of a social class that has been restricted to certain amount of square meters that are reproduced in its economy. Some of them look as small walls of medieval castles, others such as German tale houses, and the simpler ones, are painted to remove the cheap gray cement.

Throughout the journey, the artist is collecting a gallery of houses perfectly alienated, which is sometimes perceived as unfinished toys or individual treasures, located in a rural or urban landscape, there is no data on the picture to certify the place as such, we assume it is somewhere in the north by the blue skies, or identify the south by its German influence, but these houses could be anywhere in the country and look identical.

Most of the houses keep their doors and windows closed; we are not allowed to perceive their residents or visible life. They are houses as modern objects, which follow a set of pre-established order, weakly-willed, disconnected from each other and from the natural and personal world (alluded by Claude Parent).

We can make a comparison with the work "Stella Plage" of the Belgian artist, Frederic Lefever (1965) that presents a visual history of several towns in Belgium and France; they are images of houses kept closed or unused or apparently abandoned. The reference and meaning lie in the seemingly insignificant photograph images that many would classify as banal, by a simple use of light, the front shape of the shot, which in the case of Lefever comes from the Dusseldorf school, without big noticeable change in shades, only generated by the change of seasons.

They are photographic point of views built from the ethnographic, documentary and also from expressive / subjective. The work of Rosario Montero could be classified at the edge of documentary, formally speaking, as most of the images have been slightly modified to accentuate a perceptual state of

neat order, they have been cleared of the chaotic signs that invade us daily in our visual space, such as telephone cables and wires of street lighting, without pursuing an embellishment of the image as a conscious act to accentuate the pure, the desired project, which ends up being sterile. The importance of these images lies in the registration, collection, intervention and intention of documenting a social map, as these houses refer to a closed and secretive world that is built into the silence, everything is turning inward towards the personal convenience, or to the disappearance of the community as a concept, exacerbated by the prevailing environment of today's cities, they close themselves in ghettos and barrios and the American gated communities.

As an example the series "Peuco", taken in the northern region of Chile, specifically in the city of Calama, where lies a large mining community, place in which great wealth and social inequalities are produced, which are allowed to be translated to through the images, as a world apart, with no green areas, or maybe just unreachable for the foreigner. Architecture could be functional to the climate of that region, but the pictures reveal and express in its serialization, the author's intention to make us see certain style of segregation or general symptoms of the contemporary city and how they are built.

In "Villa Portuaria" in the city of Valparaiso, large masses of concrete contrast with the historical concept of place, memory of thousands of communities that made their lives in the streets and in the eaves of traditional town houses. In the outskirts the city is adopting an aspect of contemporary standardized architecture through thousands of block buildings constructed everywhere, creating a new visual memory that is shaping and influencing the lifestyle and customs.

The artist Matta-Clark said: "We live in a city where every matter is architectural (where) the property is pervasive" and through his large and complex work he proposed, instead of building, to attack circles of production and consumption, extracting material and deconstructing from existing structures. For the majority of the population, anonymous and working class, home is the most basic concept and precious as a status symbol or as a place for self identify. We are able to see in these pictures, the invisible care of their owners, which amplify, decorate, rebuild and paint their facades. They have also sealed them, because the contemporary community development has not been of equality, trust, and openness to the other, and are now built on fear and mistrust. If the city which was once thought as an integrated space does not meet these expectations then are finally the houses that ultimately make part of the world, where individuals recreate their dream and personal spaces.

Photographs of "Ciudad Ideal" are shaped as antithesis and contradiction by Italo Calvino imagined dream in "Invisible Cities", though on the one hand, to dream with it has been an outcome of arbitrary development, but also a dream cast and rebuilt upon himself that takes its own life. They are architectures as life forms that eventually shine as a symbol of closure, sealed and distant cities, barely imaginable.