

Building Duration / El Portico de los Huespedes

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El Portico de los Huéspedes is a pedagogical, design-research project that tests the possibility of an open-ended architecture, where duration links between past and future. It is a work of architecture as becoming: 'work' meaning the structure, rhythms and strategies of the effort, and 'work' as El Portico itself, which, in every instance, is a calling forth of what has taken place towards what could yet be.

The project began in 2014 on lands along the Pacific coast of Chile and continues at annual intervals each August. The starting point was a volume defined by Gunnar Asplund's Woodland Chapel. This volume acted as a trace that measured the landscape and allowed us to forego formal questions; the work became instead a constructive problem of erecting and articulating the volume.

The project's development from this beginning has not been determined by a fixed set of drawings. Instead, each year, the work begins anew when students encounter El Portico and the traces of time, labor, craft and thought left by those before them. Students are given a task (a plaza, walls, an enclosure, columns, a floor) that leads the project towards some additional possibility of appropriation. Working on these tasks, they draw, model and build full-scale mock-ups to test possibilities. They work in spaces nearby or, in recent years, bring drawing tables and tools under the completed roof working with the wind and winter sun.

In the first year, students defined the site and erected a structural frame on wooden piles founded into the sand. The following summer, a brick plaza tied El Portico into the landscape; a secondary roof structure, also built the second year, was clad the third using inexpensive wooden siding disposed in four waterproof layers. The fourth year, three wall fragments began to suggest enclosure. This past year -- the fifth -- a possibility for habitation: an inside defined by a concave wall punctured with lean windows; a locking door, a finished floor of wood and concrete and a brick plaza just outside. In intervals between each August, other teams of students led by partners in Chile intervened: a field of concrete columns cast with fabric formwork; wooden ribs and a concrete slab that formed the shell of the wing completed this past year.

The fixed nature of the tasks, rudimentary tools and the short, three-week period generate an intensity. On-site discussions of tests made in different modes and at various scales guide decisions. These decisions are also informed by the traces of the past manifest by El Portico as it is encountered in every moment, and by the work students know will continue in the years to come, by other hands; it is with this knowledge that the project is able to transmit an understanding of architecture that links past to future, bringing into presence the uncertain and open-ended potential of the life of a work and its fragility as a human endeavor.



Building Duration / El Porcico de los Huilspedes

El Porcico de los Huilspedes is a pedagogical, design-research project that tests the possibility for an architecture of uncertainty and openness where duration functions as a link between past and future. It is a work of architecture as becoming: work meaning the structure, rhythms and strategies of the effort, and work as El Porcico itself, which, in any instance, calls forth what has taken place towards what could yet be.

The project began in 2014 on arid lands along the Pacific coast of Chile and continues at annual intervals each August. The departure was a volume defined by Gunnar Asplund's Woodland Chapel. This volume acted as a trace that made it possible to measure the landscape and forego certain formal questions; the work became instead a constructive problem of erecting and articulating the volume.

No fixed set of drawings determined the project's development from this outset. Instead, each year the work begins anew when students encounter El Porcico and the material traces of time, labor, craft and thought left by those before them. Students are given a task: a plaza, walls, an enclosure, column, joints, a floor that leads the project towards some additional possibility of appropriation. They draw, model and build full-scale mock-ups — sometimes in parallel — to test possibilities. They work in spaces nearby or, in recent years, bring drawing tables and tools under the completed roof with the wind and sun.

In the first year of the work, students defined the site and erected a structural frame on wooden piles founded into the sand. The following summer, a brick plaza tied El Porcico into the landscape; a secondary roof structure, also built that year, was clad the next spring in responsive sections sliding disposed in four waterproof layers. The fourth year, three wall fragments began to suggest enclosure. This past year, a possibility for habitation: an inside defined by a concave wall punctuated with lean windows, a locking door, a finished floor of wood and concrete and a brick plaza just outside. At intervals between each of the five Augusts, other student teams led by partners in Chile made their own interventions: a field of concrete columns cast with fabric formwork; wooden ribs and a concrete slab that formed the shell of the wing completed this past year. Each intervention takes place in direct relation to needs determined at that moment without a larger consultation; trust and a certain responsibility towards the work make this possible.

The fixed nature of the tasks, rudimentary tools and the short, three-week period generate an intensity. On-site discussions of tests — in different modes and scales — guide decisions. These decisions are also informed by the student's knowledge that the work will continue in the years to come, by other hands. It is with this knowledge that the project is able to transmit an understanding of architecture that links past to future, bringing into presence the uncertain and experienced potential of the life of a work and its fragility as a human endeavor.

