



Winner: Final Degree Project PFC

A positive happening

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I. A positive happening

Hundreds of stones hidden away in a remote corner of the Pardo woodlands. Literally dozens of capitals, bases, mouldings, mullions and keystones – the ruins of the Church of El Buen Suceso, built by Agustín Ortiz de Villajos in 1868 which once stood on Calle Princesa, before it was demolished in 1975 and fell into oblivion.

My fascination with this discovery led me to create a record of each piece, noting down their size and weight, before embarking on a painstaking reconstruction of the church that once stood on this site. Indeed, if temples rank amongst the most fascinating works in the history of architecture, then I wanted to be responsible for designing one. It was then that I realised that for me, rather than a romantic ruin, those 620 ornamental stones essentially represented a weight of no less than 190 tons.

By happy coincidence, the site was none other than the only non-protected area bordering the Pardo Woodlands, where the Way of Saint James once passed and as of today a magnificent viewpoint from which to admire the whole of Madrid.

This was the start of the madness involved in designing a church suspended in the air. A light pearly envelope rising up on the foundations of an imposing and sturdy base. The envelope has its own weight, offset by the moment the stones produce by means of a series of scales that form the façades. Actual cranes, but which are designed to look like cranes of the feathered kind. Ornamentation is no longer a crime, but rather a form of equilibrium, and geometry is the tool used in its construction. Eight different shapes intervene in the creation of this project.

A hexagon for the floor extends over the horizontal plane, whilst a spiral lends a sense of organisation to the plant. The project features 45 angular shapes that distribute the structure stress. A series of helices provide tensile support for the envelope. The project design also includes a series of curves, whilst a catenary arch supports the entire design. Each element has its own weight, and the inexorable force of gravity causes everything to fall. That's one thing we can be completely sure of.

II. Ceramic flooring

The ceramic tile floor traces the complex geometrical pattern that is the defining factor behind this project. The plant projections mirror the volumetry defined by the catenary and the grouped cranes. Inspiration comes from the floors of the Basilica of San Giorgio, designed by Andrea Palladio, with areas paved in ceramic tiles in tones of red, green, black and white. The circumference of the areas beneath the domes are outlined in black and white marble, reminiscent of the Church of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza by Borromini. The ceramic floor tiles, featuring bright colours and gloss finishes, allow for the entire envelope to be reflected on the floor, thereby multiplying the spatial scale,



whilst also reflecting the shadows projected by the ceramic latticework, forming two clearly distinct yet coplanar geometric patterns.

III. Ceramics for the envelope

A light envelope made up of hundreds of ceramic pieces, measuring 45 x 6 cm in white and featuring a pearly finish, provide latticework shade from the sun. The pattern is created thanks to the staggered layout of a single piece, shaped like a fish-scale, arranged at 90° angles to one another. White ceramic tiles were chosen due to their reflecting and lightweight characteristics, as well as for reasons of cost. The metal fastening system holds the tile in place, compressed by a double strip of neoprene, thereby preventing cracking. Elements that enclose a monumental whole, broken only by the rays of light that serve to traverse, reflect and diffuse them, immortalising essentially human emotions, albeit only for a moment.

IV. Conclusion

This project is merely the result of an optimistic and non-judgmental study of geometry, equilibrium and monumentality in architecture; a series of experiments rooted in reason, intuition and the imagination. Adolf Loos once said that architecture arouses sentiments in humanity, and that the architect's task is therefore to make those sentiments more precise.