

ARCHITECTURES FOR SOLITUDE. PROLIFERATION AND PANDEMIC OF ISOLATED CHAPELS [CHILEAN VERSIONS]

Arquitecturas para la soledad. Proliferación y
pandemia de capillas aisladas [versiones chilenas]

Arquiteturas para a solidão. Proliferação e pandemia
de capelas isoladas [versões chilenas]

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*Spaces for the
solitary spirit.*
Five covers edited
between 1998 and
2019.
Source: Luis
Fernández-Galiano,
with references
to Chilean
works, cited in
"Architectures
for solitude".
Composition by
the author using:
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ABSTRACT

"Architectures for solitude", which are those that are small in size and were first used by a single resident to later be inhabited by a very small number of people as a place of spiritual retreat or for liturgical rites, deals with analysing the circumstances and causes of the great increase in the number of isolated chapels that have been projected and built in the first two decades of the 20th century around the world, and particularly in Europe and Latin America. The study of such a notorious proliferation focuses, by way of example and symptom, on a reduced repertoire of works designed by Chilean architects. Methodologically speaking, although the progress presented only contains some indications of the procedures used, the study will be carried out by reviewing the pages and cover pages dedicated to them by architecture publications, printed or digital, resorting to the discursive strategies of architectural types and semantics analysis, comparison and statistical calculation, the communicative potential of the photographic image, and the expressive capacity of the word. From the theses raised, it is proposed that the term "chapel" be redefined to re-signify it; of the cases presented, that the heterogeneous formal repertoire of contemporaneity starts from the vernacular to venture into experimentation devoid of prejudice. Ultimately, the data allow us to deduce that the current rise of hermitic architectures is related to the circumstances of hegemonic urban societies, as well as to predict that the process will be accelerated by upcoming pandemics.

Keywords: Solitude, chapel, Eduardo Castillo, Pezo-von Ellrichshausen, Smiljan Radić

RESUMEN

"Arquitecturas para la soledad" (aquella de reducidas dimensiones que primero fue usada por un solo residente y después habitada por una mínima cantidad de personas como lugar de retiro espiritual o ámbito de ritos litúrgicos) se ocupa de analizar las circunstancias y causas del gran incremento del número de capillas aisladas que se han proyectado y construido en las dos primeras decenas del siglo XX en el orbe, y particularmente en Europa y en Latinoamérica. El estudio de tal proliferación porcentual se centra, a modo de ejemplo y de síntoma, en un reducido repertorio de obras proyectadas por arquitectos chilenos. Metodológicamente (aunque el avance que se presenta solo contenga algunos indicios de los procedimientos utilizados), el estudio se llevará a cabo revisando las páginas y portadas que les dedican las publicaciones de arquitectura, impresas o digitales, recurriendo a las estrategias discursivas de los análisis de los tipos arquitectónicos y a la semántica, a la comparación y al cálculo estadístico, a la potencialidad comunicativa de la imagen fotográfica y a la capacidad expresiva de la palabra. A partir de las tesis planteadas se propone que se redefina el término capilla para resignificarlo; de los casos presentados, que el heterogéneo repertorio formal de la contemporaneidad parte del vernáculo para aventurarse en la experimentación carente de prejuicios. Los datos, finalmente, permiten deducir que el auge actual de las arquitecturas eremíticas está relacionado con las circunstancias de las sociedades urbanas hegemónicas, así como pronosticar que el proceso se verá acelerado por las situaciones pandémicas venideras.

Palabras Clave: Soledad, capilla, Eduardo Castillo, Pezo-von Ellrichshausen, Smiljan Radić

RESUMO

"Arquiteturas para a solidão", aquelas de dimensões reduzidas inicialmente utilizadas por um único residente e, mais tarde, utilizadas por um número mínimo de pessoas como locais de retiro espiritual ou âmbitos de ritos litúrgicos, trata da análise das circunstâncias e causas do grande aumento da quantidade de capelas isoladas que foram projetadas e construídas nas duas primeiras décadas do século XX no mundo e, particularmente, na Europa e na América Latina. O estudo dessa proliferação percentual foca-se, a título de exemplo e sintoma, em um repertório reduzido de obras de arquitetos chilenos. Metodologicamente, embora os avanços apresentados contenham apenas alguns indícios dos procedimentos utilizados, o estudo será realizado através da revisão das páginas e capas a elas dedicadas por publicações de arquitetura, impressas ou digitais, recorrendo às estratégias discursivas da análise dos tipos arquitetônicos e à semântica, à comparação e ao cálculo estatísticos, ao potencial comunicativo da imagem fotográfica e à capacidade expressiva da palavra. A partir das teses levantadas, propõe-se que o termo capela seja redefinido para ressignificá-lo e que, dos casos apresentados, o repertório formal heterogêneo da contemporaneidade parte do vernáculo para se aventurar na experimentação desprovida de preconceitos. Os dados, por fim, permitem deduzir que o atual auge das arquiteturas eremíticas responde às circunstâncias das sociedades urbanas hegemônicas, além de permitir antever uma aceleração do processo devido às futuras situações pandêmicas.

Palavras-Chave: Solidão, capela, Eduardo Castillo, Pezo-von Ellrichshausen, Smiljan Radić.

INTRODUCTION

This text thematically addresses a phenomenological analysis of the significant increase in architectural religious and secular projects and works, related to the conventional notion of isolated chapel, that has taken place in the first two decades of the 20th century around the world, especially in the European Community and in Latin America, through the strategic review of examples of cases projected by Chilean architects. The definition of chapel of limited to the one which arose architecturally from the ancestral building of hermitages and, among the goals, a range of works are presented, showing the heterogeneity of responses given to the recent programmatic requirements, ones tied to tradition, to the vernacular or to the modern, and others developed by similar preventions to those that have arisen due to epidemics, are among the initial purposes. Methodologically, the lexicography, typological analysis, comparatism and statistics are recurred to, although data tables are omitted, articulating a discourse interspersed with illustrative images that provide the first glimpses about a still unfinished university research project.

CONTEXTUALIZATION. CHILEAN EREMITIC ISOLATION, CONTEMPORANEITY AND PARTICULARITIES

As a prelude or premonition of the transformations that began to happen around the world in 2020, sped up by the epidemics, the architecture of solitude and confinement, compelled by the need for distancing, forced by the imposition of social and environmental isolation that zoonosis pandemics politically demand, has seen two decades of a growing boom, of exponential increase, of experimentation both from the proposals of the Modern Movement and the archaeological findings. The apartments, minimal even to stenosis, that property developers offer as residential models of the future, the shrunken bedrooms, even converting them into capsules or oriental silk cocoons, the boxes considered as rooms, or the museums, as has already been trialed in Coimbra to show a single work of art, with capacity for a single spectator, are signs of the theory that will give grounds to the approaching architectural paradigm [Figure 1].

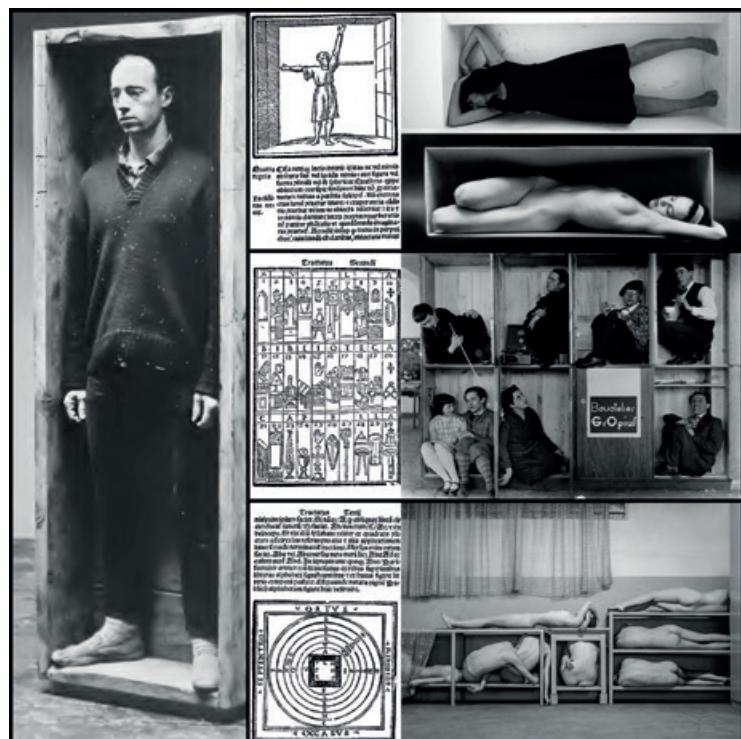


Figure 1

Boxes-houses-chapels-cells-hermitages-rooms:
Robert Morris, Self-portrait 1958. Congestorium artificiosae memorie, 1553. Ana Díez, Hueco 2011. Ruth Bernard, Box 1962. Edmund Collein, Bauhaus 1928 | Evelyn Bencicova, Ecce Homo 2015. Source: Composition by the author.

From all the elemental architecture used to impose limits and boundaries for people, to confine them in an ever smaller living space, causing distress when approaching walls, to the contact with the fingertips of the constricted inhabitants (Romberch, 1553; Parra, 2019), perhaps never as significant as now as that which began its walk with the residential model that in the past, on being placed on the wasteland, they called hermitage (Sevilla, 2000) (Vorágine, 1997). That is the say, with the shelter of the hermit, with the exiled refuge that, with the passing of time, led to what it is today, generically and inaccurately, what we call chapel (Sadeler, 1594). In the individual site for the solitary and silent retreat, linked to the first ascetic initiatives, where the cell (cave or cabin, cavern or simple rock and branch roof), is a minimal empty room, that is rooted in the religious typology of open, independent, autonomous chapels, although not that of chapels incorporated in other buildings that they functionally depend upon.

Except as reference, this article does not use the chapels that dictionaries defined as buildings adjoining a church, or that are an integral part of it: nor those that are a formal and organically dependent fragment of another building, be this a temple or a palace, nor those where a relationship of dimensional submission between the components is implicit, but rather those that have hierarchically and spatially cut ties from a superior entity. That is to say, of the chapels inherited from those which were isolated, unoccupied small buildings, raised with a certain constructive and structural elementality; in general, anonymous, cheap, solid, sustainable, with an easy upkeep, integrated into the environment, located in unpopulated areas, and that were of common ownership. Those that used to have just one room, of a unique indoor space that was used as a temple: to extraordinarily house certain individual or community rites of the Christian liturgy. The users, and not the intermediaries, like Diogenes with the barrel he lived in, were those who were in charge of their conservation. Those primitive hermitages, once they perished and their former tenants were considered saints, after the eremite builders and resi-

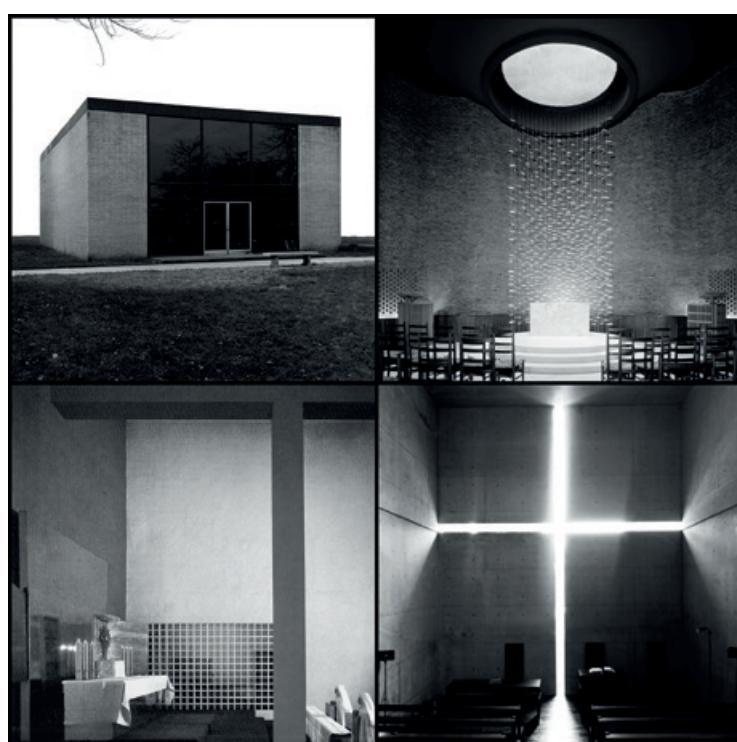


Figure 2

Four 20th century chapels:
Mies,
ITT Chapel, 1952.
Saarinen, MIT
Chapel, 1954.
Barragán, Chapel
of the Capuchinas,
1960. Ando, Church
of the Light, 1984.
Source: Composition
by the author.

dents were canonized, stopped being dwelling spaces of a single room, and were transformed into places of veneration. Thus, the house was transformed into a temple: and the domestic indoor space was converted, by the use and the rite, by the imposition of other habits, and the inclusion of new ceremonies, into a sacred interior.

The great masters of the Modern Movement, without omitting the Greek, Latin and Byzantine precedents, the medieval ones of the Way of St. James, or the magnificent examples of the European Renaissance, had already raised splendid chapels which were, actually, small churches: Mies van der Rohe, ITT Chapel, Chicago, 1952; Eero Saarinen, MIT Chapel, Boston, 1954 (Lambert, 2001) (Merkel, 2014). They built churches, which they kept calling chapels, even though some dreamed of being cathedrals (Lloyd Wright, Annie Pfeiffer Chapel, Lakeland, 1941; Le Corbusier, Chapelle Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamp, 1955), and humble conventional chapels (Luis Barragán, Chapel of the Capuchinas Sacramentas, Mexico DF, 1952-60), from whom our contemporary colleagues learned so much (Tadao Ando, Church of the Light, Osaka, 1989) [Figure 2].

The ecumenic proliferation of chapels has begun one of its algid periods in recent decades, from east to west, confirmed by the ferrous experimentation carried out with all conceivable architectural forms, from the extravagant spirals of Hiroshi Nakamura (Ribbon Chapel, 2013), to the metaphysical serenity of that projected by Zhang Lei (Nanjing, 2014), including the monolithic Bruder Klaus Field Chapel by Peter Zumthor (Wachendorf, 2007), or the most recent and welcoming one of Bernardo Bader (Salgenreute Chapel, 2016).

Not all were consecrated or projected to house religious rites that tradition had assigned to them. This is one of the particular aspects of contemporary chapels: the omission of both the sacred and the rituals that used to characterize them and that distinguished them from, for example, mere places of meditation. Today the word chapel is given indistinctly to the spaces for Christian worship, to spaces for reflection, to rest areas, and those for walkers and cyclists, whether these are pious pilgrims or inspired urban sportspeople (Parra, 2020).

From the century so far, it is 2018, according to the data collected, still unpublished, by the Department of Architectural Graphical Expression of the University of Seville, in an ongoing research project led by the author of this article, is the most prodigious in the building and inauguration of chapels in the European Community. Perhaps a small sample of indicators to back this comment is enough. In 2018, the Vatican State presented for the first time, the Venice Biennale of Architecture: they did this with ten chapels exclusively built for the occasion. Also, in 2018, in Germany, the Siegfried and Elfriede Denzel Foundation built the first three chapels of the "Sieben Kapellen" program: John Pawson was in charge of one of these, built in Unterliezheim. That same year, in the Portuguese Algarve, Álvaro Siza concluded the construction of what, by its discretion and wise humility, is one of the most honest among recent chapels [Figure 3]. Likewise, international tenders abounded on this topic, like the proposal by the multinational company, Hispalyt Ceramics: a Chapel on the Way of St. James, which would be raised in Palencia.

Neither Latin America as a whole, nor Chile in particular, remained outside this universal trend, which has had an effect on all current religions, and contaminated all spiritual movements eager for transcendence and mystic. From the southern chapels of Chiloe, nailed up forever in the dark unstable soil, or taken from one place to another using the exceptional practice of "tiradura"¹, a same woven thread links this heritage architecture with the

1 Tiradura is a traditional process on the islands of the Chiloé archipelago, where neighbors move an entire building on logs or even across channels, to move it from one place to another.

Figure 3

Four 21st Century chapels: Peter Zumthor, Wachendorf, 2007. Bernardo Bader, Salgenreute, 2016. John Pawson, Unterliezheim, 2018. Álvaro Siza, Lagos, 2018. Composition by the author.



2 Animitas are small shrines or miniature chapels, typically found by the roadside to mark the site where a family member was killed or to pray for the blessing of a local saint.

sincere and fragile architectures of the marginal chapels of the “animitas”², and for example, with the “Chapel of the Crucifixion”, built in Venice by Smiljan Radić. From that same string, as happens in the abacuses displayed in the basement of the Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art, dangled the “New Capilla País or Country Chapel Contest” in 2018, promoted by the School of Architecture of PUC-Chile, whose purpose was to build a network of some fifty of these in the least developed communities of Chile. These are tied, among others, to the eloquent chapels of the Benedictine Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity projected by the architect-monks Gabriel Guarda and Martín Correa (1964), and the concrete chapel that the architect Cazú Zegers curved in Puente Alto in 2003. And also, even though the distance from the last knot to the Quipu is greater, the Chapel of Retiro by Undurraga-Deves (2009) or, for other reasons, the pavilion-chapel of Pezo-von Ellrichshausen in Vitry-Sur-Seine (2017).

METHODOLOGY

UNCERTAINTY, TYPOLOGY AND COMPARISTICS

The study focused on determining the degree in which the multiplication of these self-centered architectures is being encouraged by the uncertainty of a culture and a population that feels lost, and perhaps abandoned due to the precarious biological destiny, or how it is promoted by the deer-like fear that the climate and health environmental crises stir up. This should be of more interest for architectural disciplines, although scientific research of its phenomenology does not strictly belong to their area. It is from there, that this study being developed by the author in the research group “TEP3939-Arquitecturas para la ciudad creativa”, proposes anamnesis analyses, that allow making a record starting from memory, with the intention of unveiling the etiology of the problem, looking into the casuistry, tracking signs and manifestations of the trauma, detecting symptoms to, through the project, present architectural responses that ultimately seek to proactively

collaborate, from living in the city and the region, to the global solution of the upcoming conflict.

In this synopsis, semantics and etymology are turned to, to rummage through the meanings; a comparistic methodology is entrusted, one already experienced by linguists seeking similarities and differences between the chosen case studies and, strategically and temporarily, the quantification and geolocation of these are omitted at a time which, tormented by brevity, these are isolated from their contexts. The statistical research behind the thesis outlined here, has been done by sifting through the information recorded in digital or printed press publications, and in specialized monographs and anthologies on ecclesiastical architecture, as well as parliamentary acts. It serves as a symptomatology of the growing attention that the media has been giving to this architecture, where in 2020, the journal *Arquitectura Viva* issue N°85, would dedicate a monograph to Chile, in which it published the Chapel of Remembrance by Eduardo Castillo, the Church of Colegio Villa María by Enrique Browne and the Cathedral of Our Lady in Los Ángeles, by Rafael Moneo. Previously, in 1998, issue N°58 was titled "Sacred Shape" (Fernández-Galiano, 1998), documenting divergent formal exercises performed in churches by Botta, Holl, Meier, Moneo, Piano, and Siza; while later, in 2017, the chapel-church-cathedral series led to a monograph titled "Spaces of the Spirit. From East to West: Eight Temples", where eight buildings were shown, located on four continents, sometimes called "temples" and on others, "spiritual spaces" (Fernández-Galiano, 2017a). This journal, just like *El Croquis* or *The Architectural Review*, has highlighted the chapels, small churches, oratories, basilicas, and sanctuaries of the current masters, of Peter Zhumtor, John Pawson, Álvaro Siza and Bernardo Bader, to mention four unparalleled Europeans of different generations, from a general catalog of works, placing them on its covers. On the hegemonic digital architecture platforms, practically the same occurs: they show that "places for personal meditation" figure among the most publicized architecture in recent decades.

CHAPEL OF NAMA AND CHAPEL OF RETIRO (NAMA: AUCO)

The humble Chapel of the Holy Cross de Nama is a true chapel. The award-winning Chapel of Retiro, projected by the Undurraga-Deves firm, just like the Chapel of San Alberto Magno of Requesens and Pávez (Valparaíso, 2014), is not, lexically or semantically, a chapel: it is a relatively large church. One that, due to its size and due to the complexity of its floorplan, does not hide its ambition of being a sanctuary or a basilica. Both buildings are, in any case, temples. The Chapel of Nama, in the Suca Gorge, in the commune of Carmiña, in the Region of Tarapaca, is 3013 meters above sea level. It has a welcoming nave built from adobe and is covered with a straw mud roof. Perhaps built in the primordial times of the town's foundation, its surface area is barely 35 m². Its elementality is evident: it is a complex and, in all probability, perfect architectural entity. Surrounded by a low wall, it fills the heart of a rectangle, that is approximately 19 meters long and 9 meters wide. On the left, is the belltower, the internal structure that holds the two domestic bells. At the front, the blue door, framed in an austere portico of moving beauty. The door, the entrance, the portico open to the end of the atrium, the roof overhangs and, supported on the two emerging walls, limits an intermediate space that welcomes and embraces parishioners in the same way that the Bernini Colonnade does in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, but here without intimidating them. Whitewashed, with a votive vaulted niche, outlined against the conic rough mountains, the Chapel of Nama could well be exalted on a Mediterranean island, instead of on the Chilean high planes. Le Corbusier, Sert, Coderch, Rudofsky and so many other authors, sensitive to that which lacks pedigree, would have admired it (Rudofsky, 1964).

Figure 4

Four Chilean chapels: Chapel of the Holy Cross of Nama, 1856. Guarda-Correa, Benedictine Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity, 1964. Requesens-Pávez, Chapel of San Alberto Magno, 2014. Undurraga-Deves, Chapel of Retiro, 2009.
Source: Composition by the author.



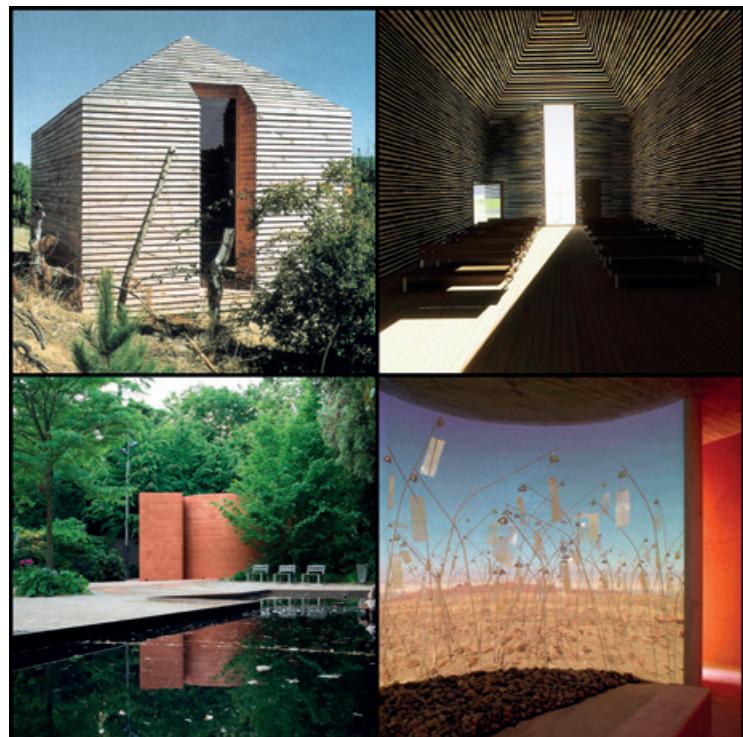
The Chapel of Retiro is sunk amid the foothills of Mount Carmel, behind the Carmelite Monastery of Auco, next to the guest house of the residential complex, to which it gives service (Fernández-Galiano, 2019). Built in 2009 with four muscular concrete screens, coated inside with recycled wooden cross-beams, it has a built surface area of 620 m². It is, let there be no doubt, a good project that, probably, would continue being of merit if it housed an auditorium, a library, a large gymnasium or a mall for the elite. It is not a chapel because of its size, its magnificence, its heterogeneity and its necessary floorplan complexity: it is so because of its administrative dependence of the Auco Monastery, as is the Sistine Chapel to Saint Peter's Basilica or the Pazzi Chapel, in Florence, where the last farewell to the master Brunelleschi was given [Figure 4].

L'ANIMITA CHAPEL AND BELL CHAPEL (CONCEPCIÓN: VITRY-SUR-SEINE)

The chapels spread along Chilean roads to remember the dead that perished there, signifying the site of their death are, because they as popularly called so, chapels. The "chapels of the animitas" contain cigarettes, words, offerings, photographs, dolls, flowers, fire, but never chaplains or hermits: neither do they have parishioners. The "animitas" are traditionally called chapels because the word shrine and the word monument seemed pompous to their founders, excessive for the name of such as succinct and germinal architecture; because "house of the anima", "soul-filled house" or "house of the spirits", were syntagms that were too poetic to assign them to a model or a toy-like architecture. "House of the Soul", as Eduardo Castillo (2002) called it in an article published in issue 85 of *Arquitectura Viva*, refers to what he projected for the municipality of Florida, which would also be called "Chapel of Remembrance" and "Capilla L'Animita" in commemoration of the popular "animitas". These are ideologically little chapels, little temples, secular sanctuaries, diminutive cenotaphs, fireflies, lanterns that light the night. Even if they have a simple wall, graffiti, a mud wall, stones or a hollow, they are architecture. So that university students do not forget what buildings are about,

these chapels have, miniaturized, reduced to sketches, imprinted on the skin, a symbolic house. This is the house drawn in children's notebooks and that appears in conventional dreams, the one sculpted in marble by Louise Bourgeois and that Juan Borchers traces on the blackboard in his classes. The one Castillo built with wooden planks alongside the road to Concepción in 2000, is a true chapel that sprouts from those anonymous and collective. A chapel with hermitage characteristics, with the essence of a mother's embrace and affectionate lap, with peculiarities of a setting for reflection. A "chapel as an archetypical shape, capable of identifying with the sacred", he states in the last paragraph of the aforementioned article (Castillo, 2002, p. 53).

In France, Mauricio Pezo and Sofia von Ellrichshausen projected and built in 2017, the so-called Bell Pavilion in the gardens of the Val-De-Marne Contemporary Art Museum, in Vitry-Sur-Seine, to harbor reproduced sounds and moving images (Fernández-Galiano, 2017b). This 50 m² building, raised in a few days with prismatic blocks on a pre-existing base, would house the projection of a video that the artist Christian Boltanski had recorded in the Atacama Desert in 2014, and that was played at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2015. The work, the recording, is called *Animitas*. It shows a plantation of metal rods covered by little bells, whose clappers are moved, through a plate hanging from them, by the torrid wind of the desert. The museum refers to the work of the architects as "bell pavilion" or as "oratory-pavilion". The authors themselves also call their baby this way, inured in ideating dissimilar pavilions, on describing and presenting their project: they call this projection room a chapel, when they allude to its religious nature and on insisting on its mystic. And once again, just like Castillo, they recall their knowledge of "*animitas*", stating that, in them, lies the seed of this dark and sinuous place, occupied by a seat where visitors can take their time in the plastic observation of an echoing view transmitted from the immensity of the Chilean landscape to the confinement of a room for contemplation [Figure 5].

**Figure 5**

Two Soul-Filled Chapels:
Eduardo Castillo,
Remembrance Chapel,
2000. Pezo-von
Ellrichshausen, Bell
Pavilion, 2017.
Source: Composition
by the author.

Thus, the Bell Chapel is not that distant from the so-called Rothko Chapel, projected by Philip Johnson, Barnstone and Aubry, inaugurated in Houston in 1971, today used as a museum, a meeting and conference room (Johnson, 1979). The Pezo-von Ellrichshausen-Boltanski folly and the octagonal oratory of Rothko, show the acceleration in the dissolution process of the traditional concept of chapel: how architecture for contemplation has gradually been converted into architecture to be contemplated. The terminological confusion has also been encouraged by haughtiness, or by arrogance, of wanting to put a name on something that perhaps should not have a name that identifies it, like those mistakes from the theory about the *non-places*. *Anonymous spaces* of Marc Augé (2000).

BENEDICTINE CHAPELS AND VATICAN CHAPELS (SANTIAGO DE CHILE – VENICE)

The infiltration of vernacular architecture into the contemporary one through the "animitas" is manifested in this and other avantgarde candidate Chilean chapels. Chilean chapels, many built in recent years, also have reminiscences and the impression of the chapels and church of the Benedictine Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity, projected in 1961 by the architects and monks, Gabriel Guarda and Martín Correa, which was built between 1962 and 1964 at Los Piques Hill, in Santiago de Chile. The *prägnanz* and transcendence of this church, which can be called a chapel on organically depending of a monastery as well as on containing inside, other small sublime chapels, is in some cases evident and, on other occasions, like in the Italian work of Radić, perceptible just in the subtlety of some details, or in the French work of Pezo, recognizable in the fluidity of the space. Thus, in the Chapel of San Alberto Magno, the cubic and diagonal space evidenced their ties with this; in the sinuous Chapel of the Holy Spirit of Cazú Zegers (La Colonia, 2003), the concrete curves avoid the tangency to introduce, like in Las Condes, but now contorted, thin bands of light; and in the Chapel of Retiro, even the signed Cross that indicates the access ramp, is inspired in the Cross of the monastic altar.

The Benedictine sites of the Most Holy Trinity, the amber colored Chapel of the Most Holy, just like the Cornaro Chapel of Rome, in the Church of Santa María della Victoria, are built with the golden light that emanates from sources other than knowledge. The Cornaro Chapel was just one of the eight funerary chapels that would conventionally open to the nave until Gian Lorenzo Bernini, impregnated it by sculpting Teresa de Ávila, for the recreation of the cardinal who ordered his work, accompanied by an angel, during one of his most moving and disturbing ecstasies.

Distant from the exemplary case of the "animitas", and in the antipode of the Benedictine chapels, in the sixteenth Venice Biennale of Architecture, in the fall of 2018, the Vatican as a participating state, presented to the secular world of architecture, a collection of ten recently conceived chapels. This first multiple-pavilion of the Holy See at a Venetian biennale arose dispersed, atomized, threaded in the forest of San Giorgio Maggiore Island. The Roman Church recruited, with the legitimate intention of gaining publicity through architectural promotion, the Chilean Smiljan Radić, the Englishman, Norman Foster, and the Portuguese, Eduardo Souto de Moura. Also Carla Juaçaba (Brazil); Javier Corvalán (Paraguay); Sean Godsell (Australia); Eva Prats and Ricardo Flores (Spain); Francesco Cellini (Italy); Andrew Berman (USA); and Teronobu Fujimori (Japan). The selection of the personnel was made by Francesco Dal Co [Figure 6]. There was a kind of casting of sorts, an aesthetic competition between them and their stars.

Anaxtu Zabalbeascoa (2018) correctly called them "Pavilion-Chapels". Pavilions because they were demountable artifices, transportable to other places, like those of the first international fairs. Too close to one another, one

Figure 6

Four Venetian-Vatican Chapels
2018: Eduardo Souto de Moura. Carla Juábaro. Teronobu Fujimori. Javier Corvalán.
Source: Composition by the author.



visible from the other, indiscrete, and sometimes strident, these proposals of relations between secular spirituality and religious architecture, that are so perceptible and eloquent both in a Romanic chapel, and in a Greek orthodox one, were left, in most of the projects, limited to pure scenography. Devised for detachment, they ended up being too simultaneous, thought for the disorder of the dispersion and the uninhabited, they were organized in a group and in the theatrical way.

The chapel projected by Radić, was built by the company Moretti, using eight curved concrete panels, of 5 meters in height, printed through a plastic bubble matrix, that form an open cylinder and constitute, in unison, the load-bearing structure and the enclosure of the building (Márquez, 2019). Two rectangular double-glazed sheets, of 3 meters wide and 6 meters long, slightly tilted towards a central beam that acts as a gutter, work as a transparent roof. The tree branches, more than the cloudy sky of Venice, begin to poke inside, to talk with the razed trunk that it uses, as a central column, the axis of this centripetal space. Perhaps this mast is a vertical of the cross, or *stipes*, and the metal beam is the horizontal crossbeam, or *patibulum*, even though they are only seen as a unit when the observer lifts their gaze. Perhaps the beam is the master beam that the biblical texts talk about, that where the mystic of the saints rests upon. The Chapel of the Crucifixion is inspired, or so the commentators say and the author affirms, in the votive altars which are the "animitas" [Figure 7]. Other emotional spaces, recognizable here, are the transparent and anguished ones conceived by Louise Bourgeois in her cylindrical cells: in her "Monastery dorms", in the cages that the *Structures of existence* collection comprise. The Vatican chapel of Radić is also a cabin crossed with a skewer (a confessional with a mute and squalid wooden priest petrified in the middle, a canopy for a Giacometti sculpture). It could have been built by one of those 3D printers that have worked hard during Covid-19 manufacturing masks.

Figure 7

Four fragments of a cross: Smiljan Radić, Chapel of the Crucifixion, 2018. Piero della Francesca. Details of the Dream of Constantine, 1452-66 and the Flagellation, c. 1455. Source: Composition by the author.



In the issue of ARQ+2 titled *Smiljan Radić. Bestiary*, it is possible to find several photographs, chosen by the architect himself to illustrate his poetic texts, that could also be proposed as grounds for his project. For example, those of the architectures comprising waste that "Fragil fortuna or Fragile Fortune" document (Radić, 2014a), or those belonging to "La muerte en casa or Death at Home" (2014b), and even those of the interventions of Gordon Matta-Clark or those of the works of Frederick Kiesler.

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, DIAGNOSIS AND FORECASTS

Since conceptual misrepresentations, hastened by the lack of accurate names, led to considering as "chapels", buildings that were not, perhaps today it is right to resignify this term in the particular dictionary of architecture as a building that seeks isolation and confinement, and that waives the concept of parishioners and of church (of common space), as well as the etymology of the word religion (*re-ligare*: reunite), and, thus, proceed to redefine it, given that the room is etymologically and functionally the place where habits take place and rites are seen, as a celibate room in conflict with coexistence, apt for life in solitude. A consequence of identifying the chapel with the minimal dwelling is the fact that forms of ephemeral existence are being tried out in chapels, similar to those proposed as forms of residence, as well as the opposite phenomenon, that the minuscule temple imitates the monastic house, and the apartment is limited to a hermitage.

Considering what has been said, a paradigmatic increase can be foreseen in the production of places where gods are invoked in solitude, one-to-one or in small groups of similar devotees. The proliferation of enclosed spaces where one can be intimate, where one can concentrate on oneself, augurs a return to the etymological monastic life (to the monastery like *monos terion* or the residence of the solitary man), the return to ways of coexistence based not on the shared house, but rather on the monographic niche, in the room as an individual monastery dorm (where one has to remove shoes before

entering) or as an indivisible and incommunicable dorm, connected to the outside telematically. The great difference between the genetic hermitage and the modern chapel is therefore, that solitude and calm were chosen, the isolation and inaction, voluntary, and the silence was not imposed from outside, but yearned from within (Andrés, 2010). That the search for this state was personal, volitive, and not demanded by a punitive political action, and that architecture responded to the human desire and not the cruel law of the market. It seems that architecture for hiding has a fruitful future [Figure 8].

Just as in other times when commissions dominated, including singular architectures of theaters, museums, teaching premises or malls, in the last two decades the construction of small public architecture for solitude (hermitages, chapels, oratories, and so on) have seen a curious increase, of around 50%, in the 2000-2020 period in the European Union, as well as in Latin America, and even, specific by countries, somewhat above this percentage in Chile and in Portugal. In the two-year period between 2019-2020, the twenty or so publications analyzed, documented that double the number of projects and works related with the notion of temple of the 1999-2000 period have been built in those countries. This notorious presence in the professional media, in all likelihood, coincides with what is happening in the material reality: the calculation of how many meters squared of chapel per nation and per year that have been built, has not yet been concluded.

This expansion, driven by the deer-like fear of extinction, will be accelerated by the pandemic, by the current one and those to come, where societies spread out, communities break down and away from their components, people flee the city to the healthier countryside, aspiring to the uninhabited, competing for private land, and returning to the means of life experienced by the hermits who, as Isidoro de Sevilla demonstrated in his Visigothic *Etymologies*, with its hermits and hermitages, led to the transcendental places that were later called chapels.

Figure 8

Hermits: Saint Zoerdade and Saint Blaise engraved by Jan Sadeler in *Sylvae Sacrae* (*Hermits in Landscapes*), 1594. Photogram of *O que arde* (That which burns), Oliver Laxe, 2019. Fragment of Richard Hamilton, *Just what*, 1956. Source: Composition by the author.



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