

The magic of light and its secrets

Obsessed by this vital energy and the effects achieved on the perception of reality, the artist reveals to us those glares that we ignore due to their ubiquitousness. Moreover, he points them out and magnifies them, transforming them into reflections and making the spectator to stop for a moment.

Francisco Ugarte (Guadalajara, Mexico, 1973) is an architect and artist. He has constantly developed his creative process since more than ten years ago, when he decided along with some college classmates, to start a workshop that functioned as some kind of laboratory where they began to develop collective and individual works. Guillermo Santamarina, a renowned Mexican art critic and curator was who made a stop to analyze Francisco's work, giving him and his "workshop" fellows the opportunity to mount their careers' first art exhibit in 1997. To this day, Francisco Ugarte has showed his works on several Mexican cities, France and England among other countries; in addition, he has received awards and acknowledgements as an artist and architect.

Within the Parque Agua Azul, a landmark of Guadalajara, Francisco installed a white circle between the trees. This circle measured twenty-four feet in diameter and three feet in height, looking more like a section of a sphere emerging from the depths of the earth. "I wanted to install a "projector" of what happens on the premises," Francisco explains. With that simple element, the artist attains the necessary conspicuousness for the brief instant in which the shades of the trees travel through the white surface; Or when a dead leaf, deprived of all force, falls to rest defeated; Or the when the wind's violent shaking of the surroundings induces changes in the perspective. With a piece like this, what is improbable becomes reality, since it uncovers the quotidian beauty making the enviroing space to not remain the same.

Sitting in his studio located in Guadalajara, a place full of drawing tables, computers, rulers, papers, pieces of glass, a place for bright colors with some kind of linear and neat disarray, a classic trait of the artist, Francisco tells us that his pieces originate on the basis of a definite proposal. "As in architecture, where I have to create something using certain given elements and a problem to be solved" he states. Light is without any doubt his muse and raw material. Even in his studio, light seems to be the protagonist, letting itself be seen through long horizontal windows, hidden behind blinds and capriciously going across the trees' leaves, over which the artist does not reign.

Francisco Ugarte was invited to install a piece in a patio of the *Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Oaxaca*. After arriving to the site, he studied the roughly three feet thick high walls and their irregular texture loaded with years of history, and the doorways connecting to other area of the museum. "Usually, this patio is used to set a sculpture on the middle of it, annulling the whole space" Francisco says plainly. The artist's proposal was to paint the walls snow-white, paint the doorways black and install a squared black crystal wall slightly taller than 3 feet at a short distance of the original wall. The effect is immediate: the sun, as everyday since many years ago, bathes the patio and every corner of it, but the reflections caused by the crystal makes it different. The aging curves of the wall seem to tell a story that was untold until that moment, and the nowadays-trustworthy floor, on which the effects of time on its stone are more noticeable, has a different version of the facts. The spectator makes a stop thanks to the new reflections of the lights, the shades and movement of that place, caused by Francisco's work.

In Mexico City's *Museo Experimental El Eco* Francisco played with the spectator's security regarding the viewer's own situation, by installing mirrors on the walls. "It is called Auto because I set three mirrors and the space was auto-modified. I did nothing," the artist says with a hint of amusement. Thus, the new reflections give the impression of other spaces, of unvisited paths. The spectator looks at himself inside an inexistent place. "The idea of the mirror is also strong, since you see yourself

viewing the piece. You become aware of your being there,” Francisco says joyfully while he shows the images that documented the event.

At the *Instituto Cultural Cabañas* Francisco installed a negative 1:20 scaled model of the building. That is, the twenty-three patios of the construction rely on volume and, since they are covered with mirrors, reflect the sky ordinarily captured by those spaces, enhancing the light, which is the source for life nourishing the building. “The children were the ones who enjoyed this piece more,” the artist remembers and adds: “When the children enjoy my work, I become convinced that the work is good.” Twenty-three reflections of the sky, twenty-three skies captured in a building conceived to house homeless children, twenty-three perspectives of the world that these kids knew.

The fact that the works of this artist is part of valuable collections such as the one belonging to the *Instituto Cultural Cabañas*, the famous Jumex Collection, Patrick Charpenel’s collection and the one belonging to Aurelio and Gabriela Lopez Rocha constitutes perhaps an important signal of the acceptance of this artist’s works.

Francisco Ugarte’s videos have a relationship with patience, observation and all those things that seem to never change. It is like the reflection of a quiet lake that is suddenly violated by a vessel’s serene pass, leaving a wake of small waves that we continue seeing until they vanish and calmness returns. Or the desert’s sand that raises turbulent and playful after the indifferent pass of a truck, remaining suspended on the sky while the already far away vehicle gets lost from sight, as if demanding the adjournment of a party that just started.

It is possible to find light or one of its physical traits on all the works of this author: straight lines, angles, transparency, glitter, opacity and white and black colors. The materials used serve the same purpose: videos, slides, photography, glass, metal or any other that can physically or emotionally emulate this energy that greatly captivates the artist. Francisco Ugarte has a theme, a reason that motivates his passion. That is why he amazes the spectator every time that viewer discovers how the unnoticed, with a little bit of attention and a different focus, can become surprising.

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