

Gustavo Pérez and Architecture



Lately, I've been thinking of buildings. I tend to see architecture in the ways that artists structure their work. In the hands of [Gustavo Pérez](#), a sandy colored stoneware clay body has become the basic building material, as well as the canvas for his composition. Whether he plans to engineer a series of lines, develops a pattern of slashes, or chooses to insert other clay elements into the surface of the clay, everything is integrated through this basic medium. Like a painter emphasizing the depth of color, Pérez will also apply glaze into the incised areas on a work, carefully and meticulously drawing our eye to the design.

Part architecture, part mathematical pattern, and part lyrical movement, Gustavo's sleek ceramic constructions are grounded in principles that relate to the built environment as well as sculpture. Due to their reliance on geometric form, their symmetrical characteristics, and their construction process, Pérez's forms seem architectural. Perhaps this is not an accident, for Gustavo builds his work as if logic and technology were indispensable to art. He does have a background in mathematics and engineering, which balances his facility with the clay. The progressive principles of cutting into modular units, assembling another form, and integrating the design with the structure are common to architecture and to the work of Gustavo Pérez. He is proudly aware of the built environment of his country and especially aware of contemporary Mexican architects. That's something that I really hear in our conversations.



When Gustavo discusses his country, he talks about “the many extraordinary contributions that this oppressed, poor, conflictive and many times neglected part of the world has made to universal culture. And I am not only thinking about the extraordinary ancient Pre-Columbian cultural heritage but also about our century with the contributions of writers...or the architecture of [Luis Barragan](#).” While an architect may have other compositional elements at his disposal—such as scale, light and space—there are some similarities. It's clear that there are affinities in architectural form, as Ignacio Diaz Morales states: “The shape of [Barragan's] spaces is clear and simple, composed of spontaneous, constructive geometry, an essential condition for

all architectural form. Space is manipulated with great agility and always aims to express the identity of the Mexican soul, without using inappropriate exoticisms.”

Without making specific reference to Mayan culture, the works of Gustavo Pérez are in some ways evocative of that Pre-Colombian culture. Perhaps this is an elusive and poetic quality that Gustavo Pérez shares with his fellow Latin American artists, writers and architects. “The ceramic art of the Maya, the Olmec, the Zapotecas well as the Korean, the Chinese, the Islamic or the Greek is our common heritage. We all profit from knowing it and the aesthetics, the sensibility and the techniques this huge legacy transmits,” Pérez has stated. I agree, of course, and Gustavo’s sensibility echoes the respect for history that many artists possess. Knowing the legacy gives them a foundation to build on.



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