FOOTPRINTS, TRACES AND SIGNS IN PATAGONIA

F1
First House in Western Patagonia, New Valley.

Many people have travelled to Patagonia – sent by the governments of Chile and Argentina for political and geographic purposes – thinking that they were venturing into 'finis terrae'; total solitude, infinite space, utopian savagery... So, whenever they saw vestiges of humanity on their travels; a footprint or other indicator of human occupation... it filled them with happiness. The exciting moment of discovery and recognition transformed the wilderness into a human territory.

This was the experience of the German geographer Hans Steffen who was commissioned by the Government of Chile to explore Western Patagonia and who has worked on the demarcation of borders with Argentina.

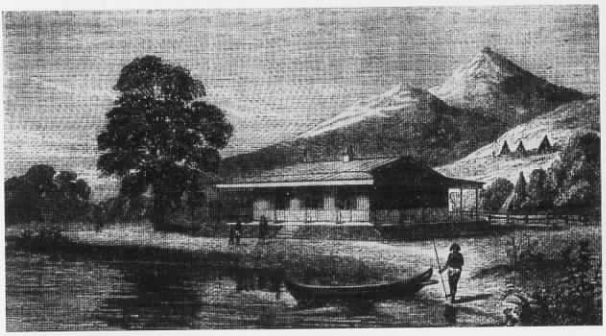
During his expedition to the mountain ranges of the Puelo River (1894-95), he wrote: "With every step, we came across increasing signs that we were approaching an inhabited area of the valley, we saw herds of horses and cattle, and finally, at noon on the 2nd of March, we found the little house [F1] made of cedar logs, built by a Chilean settler named Rosales, who had settled here four years earlier with permission from the Argentine authorities."

This was not the first house built in Patagonia. Indeed, in 1863, Pastor Waite Hockin Stirling, from the Patagonian Missionary Society reached the Falkland Islands. The pastor and other missionaries wandered around the Fuegian channels for years without much luck coming into contact and converting indigenous communities. The pastor then decided that it was time to do something different, writing: "Try a residence on solid ground".

He chose a place: Ushuaia, and arrived there in January 1869. They built a fence and a log cabin to live in: Cabin Stirling. However, this was only a temporary abode: he was waiting for a pre-fabricated iron home to be shipped from England, anxious to establish "a Christian village".

When the English house reached the Beagle Channel, Stirling was called back to England to be consecrated as the first Anglican Bishop of South America.

Back in Patagonia, Lawrence and Lewis, and several other missionaries and carpenters were left on their own to put together the iron house. [F2] It was 1871.



F2
First European House in Tierra del Fuego.

F3
The Bridges House, Haberton Port, Tierra del Fuego.

When Stirling left Ushuaia, the house (which he never used) was occupied by Pastor Thomas Bridges, who, after living there for fifteen years (1886), requested a waiver from the Ministry and a land grant from the Argentine government. They granted him land in Harberton (opposite Gableisland). Before settling, he travelled to England to buy a wooden house. While he waited for it to arrive, he lived in a tin shelter! The English house, which is still at Robbin's Cot, was described and sketched by Sofia Sanfuentes in 1995, "it has two floors, wooden windows with small glass panes and a porch to shelter from bad weather [F3] . Today, one of Bridges' great-grandsons lives there."

Looking at the house founded in Puelo by Steffen and those bought and put together by Stirling and Bridges encourages speculative thought.

Rosales' cabin in Valle Nuevo is built with vertical palisades and covered with reed grass. Even though it is perched on a cleared field, its formal appearance and materials merge with the surrounding landscape. The horizontal lines of the ridge imitate the foothills of the mountains behind. Even the constructive act of sinking the props into the ground is symbolic of a desire to conquer and, above all, to remain. The intent to create an established settlement is further demonstrated by the clearance of the surrounding area for cattle.

In this partnership with nature, all that one can do is take refuge and get along with nature, not try to dominate it. Naturally, the construction system of Cabin Rosales is a hybrid of the Spanish palisade and the Mapuche Ruka.

The rigid quality of Stirling House is alien to the landscape and traditional land use, unlike the Rosales hut at the other end of Patagonia. Judging from the remaining etching, it had a large covered corridor resting on solid concrete flooring, giving it ample, hierarchical height. The shallow roof is not suitable for snow, rain, or stormy winds like those regularly visible in the Beagle area.

In the background landscape to the house, two sharp peaked mountains stand out. Three yámana huts have been set up on a

hill, tapering off at the same angle as the mountain peaks. On the sea shore, the horizontality of the Stirling House has no formal relationship with the landmarks of the surrounding space. This is a house that observes, that dominates the landscape with its "strangeness." The most important aspect is that its prefabrication and later assemblage announce its nomadic nature. Its construction system and European design derive from the "bungalow", an English style of lightweight, collapsible, flat simplicity that was also spreading to Africa, India, and Australia at the time. It cannot be said that the Stirling House was not true to its destiny or traveling vocation. According to the articles by Bridges (for the South American Missionary Magazine) the property was taken apart and subsequently moved to Tekenica and River Douglas (Navarino) when the mission, following the route of the Yamana, settled in those areas.

Partnership with or domination of nature would seem appear to be two contradictory ways of occupying the land in Patagonia. However, they were not antagonistic; they coexisted.

The illustrious architecture of European origin was forced by the climate to undergo a process of vernacularization. Architecture of local origin or hispano-mapuche design, started to aspire to a better appearance, especially through their materials; a symbolic operation that also indicated how successfully the settler had installed established themselves in pastoral society.

It might be possible to create a chronology of materials used in Patagonian settlements on a case by case basis. Many of the buildings from the first half of the twentieth century are still there, and those being built today bear the imprint of the physical background. The combination of the different models and materials used, plus the adverse weather conditions and other local details and differences, coalesce to create a common gestalt for the Patagonian house.
But Patagonian culture is not just defined by its architecture; there is also the story of its nomadic inhabitants, their agricultural and pastoral practices, the characteristics and behavior of their livestock and above all, the creativity of their heroic domestic life, which remains unchanged since the day people first approached Patagonia determined to create a new ethos.

THROUGH JUNGLES AND PAMPAS

Indian trails, shepherd's paths, 'chilote' ranches (continental and offshore), backburning, weeding machines, manure, cattle or wild horses, the remains of fires, the odd "displaced" domestic plant, a bus stop, a kiosk, a tapera... all of these are deeds and features that have impressed natives and travellers alike since colonization, folklore and controversy.

The first expeditions, from both east (Argentina) and west (Chile), were mostly embarked upon "hand in hand" with the natives: Tehuelches, gorgeous nomads from the East, and tireless Chilotes, who rowed through all the fjords and rivers of Aysen. Perhaps one of the most valuable words one could hear in those days was shelter. The word conveys comfort and rest after a day's journey before one heads out once more. The word "shelter" is used synonymously with camp, and refers to both the permanent stations as well as the temporary ones. The Tehuelches

who accompanied George Chaworth Musters on his ride from Punta Arenas to near what is now the Province of Neuquén, used the term Aike to describe these posts (aiken, Haiken, kaiken, aikn...) along with a word to describe the location: Coi-Aike, Minik-Aike, Tapi Aike, Nibepo-Aike, Thamel-Aike... be it used for accommodation, as a trading post, or a rest stop, an aike always had to offer the four main elements of life in the area: meat, water, grass (for animals) and firewood.

Aboriginal trails were another feature celebrated by travelers. Paradoxically, finding them in the wild was a sign of civilization, a road to salvation. In 1900 the English scientist Hesketh Prichard (Who was searching for the last mylodon!) wrote: "Heading away from the basaltic region was, of course, our first wish. If we found the Indian trail (...) which stretches to connect one camp with another, all along from Lake Buenos Aires to Punta Arenas (...)... our problems would be over." And he found it! "As soon as we moved a little to the southwest, we stumbled upon the full Indian trail: that wonderful path that runs league after league, marked by the footsteps of generations upon generations of Indians who have migrated to the northern and southern extremes of the region with their wives and children, their tents made of guanaco skin and their few possessions."

In Patagonia, any trace of humanity invariably leads to a welcome refuge; an Aike. Even today, identifying an aike is usually a reassuring territorial act. Prichard (1900-1901) following the path, spots wild cattle and a camp. He got lucky, "Later we reached a haven made up of some bushes belonging to a sheep or cattle minder. It was a small place, desolate: a box of sticks and bushes and skins along the banks of the river with no door, and the inhabitants must have been very small to judge by the bed, which was a hole in the ground with a pillow made of wood (...) A duffel bag, old and stained, was tied to the ceiling, a tiny cracked mirror hanging from the center pole. There seemed to be no provisions, only a bag of weed. They had recently killed a lion, because we found the skull."

In 1947, the Bureau of Roads of Aysen Province commissioned the explorer Augusto Grosse to go on an expedition from Erasmus Bay to General Carrera Lake. They wanted to plot an interior route to transport products from the lake to the Pacific, which back then—and until the 50s—had to go through Argentina. It is incredible that even by the middle of the century, with Aysen Province well established there was still no road. A trip that was once treacherous now only takes a couple of hours.

After an eight day, arduous march, the expedition found two cinnamon tree logs cut with an ax. They clearly belonged to someone who had come from the opposite direction to them, since the path they had taken bore no trace of a journey. This was the first sign. Over the next few days they found numerous cattle trails and chopped logs. Upon returning to base camp, one of the men delivered excellent news: "We've come across a property with tools and kitchen utensils." Judging by the ashes of the hearth, the owner had been gone at least two months. The expedition members felt that their goal had been accomplished. They decided that there must have been a path to the "outside." Their paths had crossed and now they just had to follow the trail cleared through the forest. Mr. Grosse wrote: "... and in the afternoon we were already settled in the stranger's house. He couldn't have dreamed how busy his home

F4
The ranch of the first settler of Surprise Valley (1947).

had become. It was a pretty rustic construction, made of sticks carved with an axe and roof of canoes. It was very small, as it consisted of a single room with a further addition of a lightweight roof made of cattlehides and some branches for walls, which served as a kitchen. (...) The boys were happy to sleep in a closed house-like enclosure." [F4]

From then on, progress was much faster as they found new paths through the wilderness. As they made their way back they found several settlements. Almost a month after they had set out from the Pacific Coast, they reached Lake General Carrera. From Bahia Murta they sailed for two days to Chile Chico, where they resumed their trail north, via Argentina, to again cross the border. The expedition ended at Coyhaique Balmaceda, Chile.

A little further south, there are the remains of tracks and other traces left behind by gold miners (of various nationalities) who in the late nineteenth century and for the first 40 years of the twentieth century, worked in Tierra del Fuego and came to be an important part of the local landscape.

The miners had to situate their homes and work stations close to the mines and the basins... in the middle of very hostile climate and topography, whose features were shifting uneven ground, and incessant rain and wind.

Antonio Kusanovic Salamunic, a Croat, remembers: "We bought a mine (about 1940), made a shelter out of soil and sod and started working."

The Chilote Santiago López López, who worked in gold mines between 1936-39, says: "Three partners worked the mine. We had a good camp, with iron walls and roof, a stove..."

Although the accounts are from different periods, they have much in common, although the formal aspects of the shelters are not the same. The "Kusanovic ranch" is actually a 1.2-1.5 meter hole in virgin soil. A weave of fine calafate reeds covered the entrance and the roof was similarly thatched. Kusanovic, unable to find wood to build a vertical volume, buried himself instead. His refuge did not have to face the elements, it has, rather, a small hill that allowed the wind to glide over it unhindered. Its

F5
Semi-burried Yagan hut.

final form did not differ much from Yamana or Qawaskar huts, although the former design often sought to take over an existing depression. [F5]

Some Qawaskar huts, although not buried, often look as though they are because their inhabitants threw shells around them in such great quantities that the huts often appeared to be buried or submerged in the ground. Old photographs of their villages, and others built by the Onas, show the shells piled around their huts, reaching close to the top of the shelter [F6].

In contrast, the Lopez "camp" has no affiliation with nature. The hut confronts the wind with the newest and most civilized of materials: tin. The house closely resembles an iron "Barraquita" [F7] like those built for the Onas when they went to live at the Salesian Mission.

The lack of economic resources did not prevent construction although it did define the form and materiality of the buildings. The greater the poverty, the greater proximity to a vernacular response; to this day, economic resources can define building tradition.

LIVING ON THE ROAD

Of all the tangible traces that mankind leaves behind in Patagonia, perhaps the fisherman's "rancha" (which actually also belong to sealers, loggers, seaweed, 'cholgueros'... all similar techniques) is the most impressive. Its feeble construction—usually a structure covered with branches, canvas or plastic, immediately draws a reaction, even if its behavior in its environment is acceptable. Naturally the drama comes from the contrast between the feeble, mobile earthen structure, and the "firm, finished" constructs of our urban way of living.

On January 19, 1872, Commander Enrique Simpson, who was performing some cartography exercises off the coast of Aysen, offered a severe description: "Overcast weather. Puelma left the estuary and camped in Aau estuary, next to some loggers. These individuals had been here for three months and stockpiled a lot of wood (...) Their only food was potatoes, flour, blood pudding and seafood, and they lived in a poor hut of their own construction." Days later, another of his observations describes one of the most disastrous practices practiced

F6 F7

Leather awnings, branches and tin barricade.

upon the virgin forests: "...came back to find more loggers. Indeed, everywhere traces of them can be seen in the form of burned forest." We know that to get to the heart of the forest, or anywhere where there were cypress trees, chilote loggers burned their way through the dense undergrowth.

We have seen numerous camps (of all types) in the recent history of the Large Island of Chiloe and the Aysen coast. You can often see them on inland beaches, coves or sheltered bays. There are all kinds, depending on the productive activities of its inhabitants. The nature of construction, often reveals that it belongs to one building tradition or another. Usually they are simple structures made of quilas, tied with voqui or different types of nylon, plastic or manila ropes, pieces of clothing... and lined with twigs, plastic, canvas or heavy waxed paper (the materials salmon feeding sacks are made of). Generally, these types of shelters belonged to seaweed mongers, and are only used for a couple of days' sleep. Shelters for smokers or seafood cholgueros, meanwhile, are usually constructed of hewn planks, with their facades or surfaces cut by an axe. These planks—about three or four per side—are arranged in an A shape on a structure, leaving ridges with gaps, so as to let out the smoke. Usually they are about 7 m long by 3 m wide and between 2 to 3 m high. Both sleeping and seafood smoking is performed in these buildings.

In both cases these constructions are temporary, intended for use for a few days or a few months, in the case of cholgueros. And even when they are built by people who also, presumably, are part of an existing building tradition surrounded by timber, in the eyes of a traveler they can often appear "pathetic" in their lack of construction details or carpentry. However, when a sailor or a pedestrian traveler comes across one of these shelters, they are an auspicious sign and often represent salvation. Ricardo Vasquez, a young kayaker who in the summer of 1984 paddled from Melinka to San Rafael Lagoon, noted in his diary: "The ranchas chilotas (cholgueros) in the summer, were very useful. Eventually we were able to predict where they might appear. They are strategically located at difficult sections of sea and oriented so that they can withstand severe storms."

FROM POLITICS TO LOCAL CULTURE

Aysen's formal recognition was due more to political motives than economic or geographic ones. First, it occurred while the border between Chile and Argentina was being drawn. However this recognition, which began in the last decade of the nineteenth century, led to exploration and records of valleys and plains on the western slope of the boundary range.

So, in the beginning, the great territory was open to the odd settler or isolated colonist, such as Colonia Palena, which failed shortly after it was founded.

Soon afterward, a statewide initiative granted 110,000 Km2 of territory in the Aysen region to three "exploitative companies". Among the clauses in the contract, there is one that stipulates that companies must hire foreign settlers and married workers and that these, in time, should receive titles to land. This clause was not honored and would be the reason that the companies were not a significant factor in settlements.

However, at the same time that the land was being used by large ranches, Chilean settlers (circa 1890) began to venture into the solitary area from the Argentine pampas at great risk and hardship to themselves, and began to populate nearby valleys of the Andes.

While the land, already fenced and marked out with barbed wire, belonged to large cattle companies, there were other ways of "colonizing" that, unorthodox s they were, yielded quite significant results. It was the occupation of a site called "casasbrujas" that led the state to recognize settlements prior to the arrival of the companies, granting settlers the right to stay as well as ownership of the surrounding lands. So, hidden in the bush, on dark nights, the Chileans crossed furtively from the Argentinian side, and prepared the necessary wood for the shelter. When it was ready, they built a makeshift bridge over the company fences and quickly moved the materials. The house had to be built very quickly, at night, and needed to have its flag flying by morning. There were famous settlers—Mr. Juan Foitzick for example—who never stopped using the ruse of building bridges over the fences, so as not to interrupt the tradition of complete freedom of the territory.

In 1928 the province of Aysen was created. Regularization of land, the establishment of new settlers, the opening of roads and the founding and formalization of new towns brought with them administrative and commercial roles. After Balmaceda (1917), came Puerto Aysen, Chile Chico, Baquedano (today Coyhaique), Puerto Ibañez... by the early 1950 the town as wwe know it today was well-established.

The terms "unknown land", Indian territory, "uncharted" and other similar ones that could be found on maps of Patagonia from around 1880 disappeared and later the Carretera Austral, and its longitudinal paths that insist on reaching places where no-one lives with no productive land appeared.

However, Patagonia was never as lonely as the world assumed. In Aysen, vestiges of humanity and the memories of a few men and women are enough to fill the territory with a human presence.

In March 1981, Jamie Holmes, a young Englishman, travelled to Patagonia by horse.

At one point, on the road between Cochrane and Villa O'Higgins, he came across a resident. As he says in his travel diary: "He invited me to unsaddle and drink mate. He is tall, thin and quiet. We talked about horses and tracks."

ARCHITECTS, CARPENTERS AND BAQUEANOS

This text is clearly interested in architecture and land use.

A place like Patagonia, which did not experience periods of conquest, colonies or republics, or colonial period at the time of its settlement, had to be solicitous and very eclectic towards humanity. A place without a building tradition allowed its inhabitants to build from memory, to be inventive and extremely adaptable.

The first traces of settlement in Aysen are of German descent—German colonies date back to 1846—in Puerto Montt and the surrounding villages.

One of the major routes of entry for this architecture was Chiloe, where it underwent significant appropriation and reinterpretation in the unprejudiced hands of carpenters.

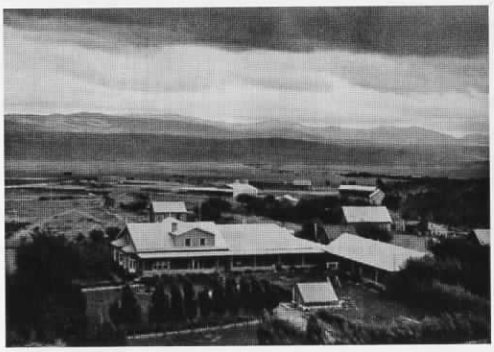
Another path, perhaps more direct, was the one undertaken by people from Llanquihue, Osorno, and Valdivia. They did not come from the west but directly from the eastern Argentinian pampas, connecting with the valleys of the western slope.

New paths or foci for the penetration of architectural models and carpenters into the territory came from the operators, livestock and timber stays, mostly foreign-owned and backed by administrative staff of different nationalities. For instance, one can still find remnants of formal English architecture and carpentry (via Punta Arenas), especially in the frames of barns, cellars and homesteads, some descending from European prefabricated building systems. [F8]

However, it is important to emphasize that the traditional chilota construction and other native styles (ranches) do not disappear but endured and developed within the new building paradigm. With single interior spaces with a Posteria perimeter (sheds on a log structure), central beams and trusses on the coastal, covered with bundles of straw or sheaves of wild plants, the chilota house is generally the most advanced within the settlements. It was the first house, and in many places still remains as an eloquent testimony to the early days of the territory and its humble origins. Moreover, we must not forget that chilote peasants built their houses with technical guidance from their employers.

A beautiful example of the pioneering nature of the thatched chilota house can be seen in photographs of "Puyuhuapi..." (2011) taken by Louise Ludwig, where the "ranchos" (1935) [F9] [F10] that preceded it provided a contrast to those of the German settlers. In any case, one has to acknowledge the association between the European settler and the local peasantry.

Major change in the structural and formal development of this "Patagonian architecture" undoubtedly came about after the introduction of sawmills. In the early days when there was little local commerce, the mills worked mainly for the large companies for their own buildings. Later, when the Province was incorporated into the national government and its colonies were formalized (1928), sawmills came to



F8
Houses from the Swan Estancia.

F9
Precolonial Ranch in Puyuhuapi (1935).

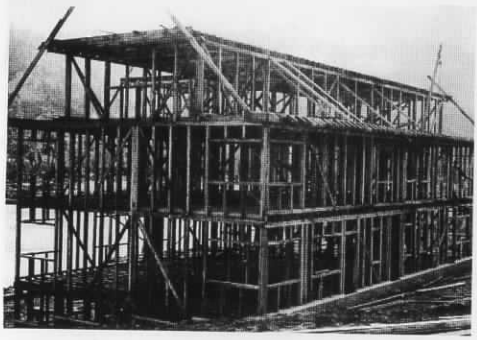
have a stable presence in Puerto Aysen and some of the new settlements. This allowed for a major change in building and perhaps the consolidation of a new architectural image. For starters, the production of regularly-sized, varied lumber, especially smaller pieces, which allowed for greater structural complexity, speed of construction and solidity. Using partitions achieved a compact structure which was suitable for mezzanines and other levels, gazebos, separate indoor galleries and spaces... This was the construction building system known as Balloon Frame which was booming in North America from 1840, and reached this region in the early twentieth century.

One would not refer to another building system, this one from northern Europe, the Fachwerk, if it weren't for the precarious buildings built by Puyuhuapi settlers since 1940. The Fachwerk structure was based on a large number of wooden partition walls, whose strength lay in the profusion of joints, ties and bindings. The house was raised off the ground, sometimes on foundations of stone or brick. A mezzanine joist made it possible to build a second level or the roof structure. It's not clear whether the spaces between studs, partitions, ridges, were filled with some other material (a kind of organic mortar) that was not wood.... which is a defining element in the Fachwerk system. In any case, this is a stylistic equivalent to Fachwerk, and can clearly be seen in "Uebel House" (1946), which, by the end of the century was the tallest building in Puyuhuapi, [F11] according to Luisa Ludwig.

But it wasn't all major construction or architecture. The pastoral economy, long distances, and movement towards totally uninhabited areas in Patagonia has always encouraged the use of a "staging post". Although small settlers tend towards a sedentary lifestyle and architecture, the mobility of livestock and work requirements on the outskirts of the estate mean that shepherds and cowboys require shelters for the duration of the season, for a few days or just a single night.

The staging post is the only type of building, since the early days, that can be found on both sides of the ridge and thus lacks a unique national identity. It is without doubt a "child" of

F10
Puyuhuapi, "the first house" (1935).



F11
Structure of the Uebel House (1946).

context and local culture fostered by tradition and the local economy. Regular destinations for an owner or a frequent user, the harshness of the territory makes them available to every traveler. They may the most generous constructions in Patagonia.

So far, the function and form of the staging post has have not changed. Their materials might undergo changes (They've been made of tuft, stones, wood, leather, panels (lids), and lately, zinc and plastic sheets...) but even the re-use of industrial materials does not alter its purpose, which is to provide temporary shelter. Urgent or dramatic, the post is a device that offers a brilliant, reliable way to experience the territory. The Trapananda Project revisits this architecture through the work of the artists Sebastián Preece and Olaf Holzapfel.

TRACES OF ART

About 12,500 years ago in Western Patagonia, in Monteverde, a small group of people lived on the banks of the Chinchihuapi estuary. We know that they were hunters and gatherers, and that they were "atoldados"; passing through. From the remains left behind, we know that they had deep knowledge of the environment. Preserved in the sandy mud, next to a fire, was the imprint of a foot, a footprint.

A footprint! We exclaim, then immediately think about the foot that produced it. Now we have a greater understanding of the words 'print," "mark" and "trace", they become a symbol, a metaphor or even a poem...

One can follow a trail in Patagonia; a signal, indication, a scent, or beat... of one who walks and one who works.

If a footprint makes us pause and a mark impresses us, a trail, as a sign, guides us.

Patagonia is filled with tracks, trails and signs. This is what we have tried to communicate with this text. We wanted to help, too, by speculating on the foundation of memory and historical continuity, the concerns of two artists in Patagonia. We wanted to restore the impression that preceded it, as these also belong to a greater, noble, respectable, material world; that of aesthetics and art.

For several months the artists Olaf Holzapfel and Sebastián Preece walked through Patagonia. Their main task was to observe the ways of living and construction in the territory, with its inhabitants. Research trips have led them to assess and stop at various shelters, especially those meant for herders, shepherds and travelers. It was essential to include conversations with riders, woodcutters, and living beings...

From here onwards, the collecting, sorting and recording of what is seen and heard, make countless habitable structures, gadgets and utensils of daily life legible, emphasizing the close bond between man and his environment.

Finally, documenting these temporary facilities has led to the construction of new residential structures that were later taken apart and "lifted"to other places and in tune with their nomadic origins, thus articulating human essentials with art.

In particular, the components of Sebastián Preece's work revolve around "the mark inscribed on the floor", the construction of the shelter and the act of living. Its focus is on the mix of building systems and contrasting the various materials that link the site to the construction. Traditional materials such as leather and wood coexist, and enhance others of manufactured or industrial origins that the traveler or tourist usually brings with them...

It is not only the relationship between materials but also the technologies that surprise; the continuities that have been established, for example: leather + strings + skins or remnants of plastic sheeting. That is, a contrast of technologies, materiality, colors... generating new expressions in construction and where the Hybrid Characteristics do not – according to Sebastian, detract from their efficiency. It is at these junctions and systems like epochal recycling, that Preece proposes defining his working parameters.

It is through collecting parts and pieces picked up "in situ" that he proposes, with a display, to construct a final installation. Finally, an ensemble of elements from Patagonian culture will interact with the potential criticisms that can arise from a new spatial context. The nomadic life of shepherds and cattlemen, adventure tourism... visiting the city and city life.

Olaf Holzapfel is interested in forms of nomadic buildings, and this in turn provides for a contemporary approach, critical of our way of living, that is made or founded on a fixed, immovable (urban) structure, where it challenges ownership of the ground.

Exploring "residential nomadism" he is not interested in the possession of land and focuses on the possibility of a flexible structure that is capable of returning to a dwelling in transit.

He thinks about the legitimacy of "using, resuming and incorporating" other examples or types of nomadic dwellings capable of adapting to the urban center.

"The landscape is independent of human beings", says Holzapfel, and therefore human beings, in nature, should look only for shelter, warmth, and then continue on with their journey. Concentrating on the temporary nature of our existence in secure and free spaces, he

conceives of a modular shelter that suits the landscape, while describing the origins of other settlements and their versatility.

Regarding the Patagonian shelter, he is interested in their mobility, how they blend in with the surrounding terrain and, above all, their potential to be used by many people without being owned by anyone in particular.

In its flexible installation, Holzapfel legitimately combines natural materials with industrial ones, typical of contemporary nomads (backpackers). Finally he tries to recreate the different types of temporary shelters and their transformations into a dense, flexible module, that can express territorial mobility, even if its destiny is as a planned city.

Preece and Holzapfel have been travellers in Patagonia. While there, they have tried to elucidate basic key concepts about land use and material infrastructure. Just as local myths can reveal the primeval and individuality of place; the endurance of Patagonian inventions becomes a symbol of what will remain essential to man, even when they are forgotten.

During the artists' journeys and their intermittent stays in Aysen, throughout their search and as they transferred their findings to present them outside of Patagonia, there was always a sense of aesthetic learning.

From this aesthetic, we not only identify Patagonians, but also ourselves, because we recognize not just a vital space, but an ethical one too. (a kind of alphabet for human survival).

Patagonia plays a foundational role for the human condition and preservation of life. Within it these artists are inspired and recreated.

Perhaps Holzapfel's pulse quickens at the thought of the youth, autonomy and freedom of Patagonia.

For Preece, such drive—to quote the poet Jorge Teillier—might well be "nostalgia for the future."

—

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