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Shade Between Rings of Air: architecture, sculpture, replication: Carlo Scarpa/Gabriel Orozco, 1952/2003

In 2003, the Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco produced a sculpture entitled *Shade Between Rings of Air* for the 50th Venice Biennale (fig. 1). The work was a full-scale replica of *La Pensilina* (1952), an architectural structure that functioned as a pergola, designed by the Italian modernist architect Carlo Scarpa (fig. 2). Scarpa's construction was part of his sculpture garden situated in the inner courtyard of the Italian Pavilion in Venice. *La Pensilina*, however, was itself deemed to be so sculptural in its form, according to Orozco, that it proved difficult to exhibit other sculpture there, and as a result the sculpture garden project was abandoned soon after its completion (it was, however, completely restored in 2004). Orozco's *Shade Between Rings of Air*, described by the artist as a 'platonian pavilion', was fabricated in birchwood and placed in an interior space adjacent to the patio where *La Pensilina* was situated. It was thus presented in contrast to Scarpa's concrete structure, which stood outdoors like a 'modern ruin' already deteriorated by time and weather (fig. 3).¹ Orozco's *Shade Between Rings of Air* was subsequently exhibited at diverse sites as an independent sculpture, raising issues about site-specificity, cultural memory and replication, as well as the dialectical relationship between architecture and sculpture.

This article explores, first, how Orozco's work negotiates ideas related to architectural sculpture while drawing attention on the role of the replica (including its spatiotemporal relation to the original). In particular, it argues that with *Shade Between Rings of Air*, Orozco probes the relationship between the original and the replica by introducing a deliberate anachronism, thus putting into question the idea of history as a linear process, while at the same time interrogating the mechanisms for the construction of cultural memory. Both the designation of Scarpa's *Pensilina* as a 'modern ruin' and Orozco's replica as a 'platonian pavilion' introduce significant anachronisms; the phrase 'modern ruin' because it entails a temporal contradiction between the term 'modern', usually understood to be present and future-orientated, and 'ruin' referring to the past; while in the second instance, envisioning the replica as a 'platonian pavilion' denotes both a platonic, ideal model predating the original and, simultaneously, a replica constructed after the original. This deliberate anachronism entrenched in Orozco's sculptural replica and the relationship it sets up between architecture and sculpture, as well as its subversion of a linear chronological order between the past, the present and the future, will drive my discussion of the work and set up the terms of the central argument in this article.

Secondly, the article examines how Orozco internalizes with this work, and by using replication, aspects of modernist architecture in order to recast his own identity as a sculptor at the turn of the twenty-first century, at a time when the category of sculpture had become largely obsolete. The notions of replication and anachronism also resonate here with ideas of authorship and artistic identity, since Orozco negotiates his identity as a sculptor by replicating, in this case, the work of a modernist architect. Finally, I suggest that the best way to address these intricately intertwined issues is to discuss Orozco's replica, conceived and initially presented as it was in the context of Scarpa's sculpture garden in the Italian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, by focusing on the history of the modernist pavilion and the sculpture garden where the intersection between architecture, sculpture, replication, anachronism and their concomitance with the construction of cultural memory is particularly fertile, even if little researched.

Gabriel Orozco's *Shade Between Rings of Air*

Orozco made *Shade Between Rings of Air* (2003) for the 50th Venice Biennale art exhibition entitled *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer* (2003), under the artistic direction of Francesco Bonami. Orozco's work was presented as part of the exhibition *Delays and Revolutions*, co-curated by Bonami and Daniel Birnbaum. In his catalogue essay, Birnbaum explores issues of temporality in art, writing in defence of a temporality that is not linear or simply forward-moving but is characterized instead by 'repetition and syncopation, detours and delays'.² Orozco's 'platonian' pavilion made of wood and metal, a pristine yet anachronic 'model' of Scarpa's architectural structure standing in the patio with visible signs of erosion from time and weather, reverses the temporal order between the architectural model, the built structure and its replica.

In its original installation at the Biennale, Orozco's sculptural replica was situated in a room next to the patio, albeit rotated 90 degrees in relation to Scarpa's pergola. It was thus rendered visible through the door that connects the two spaces, the interior gallery room and the exterior sculpture garden, so that the viewer could make immediate comparisons between the two structures. In Orozco's replica, according to Birnbaum, 'nothing seems given over to chance, everything is essential: we enter a matrix, a three-dimensional model, which lays out the basic proportions and principles of an architectural structure to be built'.³ Challenging, however, linear, chronological time, the replica is a 'late arrival' that potentially turns the copy into a form of origin, an anachronic 'three-dimensional simulacrum making that which it duplicates retroactively possible'.⁴ Birnbaum makes reference here to Jorge Luis Borges, one of Orozco's favourite authors, and his celebrated anachronism, the notion that 'every writer creates his own precursors'.⁵

Emphasizing the temporal and spatial distance between Scarpa's



1. Gabriel Orozco, *Shade Between Rings of Air*, 2003, birchwood and metal, 280 × 800 × 1400 cm (9 feet 2¼ in. × 26 feet 2 15/16 in. × 45 feet 11 3/16 in.). Installation view at the 50th International Art Exhibition, *Dreams and Conflicts – The Dictatorship of the Viewer*, Venice Biennale, 2003 (photo: courtesy of the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris)

construction and his own sculpture, Orozco notes that what interested him in making the replica was

the experience of walking between the two, between the ruin of the dusty, open-air pavilion and the wooden replica inside – one to one, almost like a model, which stood in a white room that was very pristine and clean [fig. 4]. It was about the time between the platonic pavilion and the pavilion eroded by weather. It was a shiny new idea that was immediately eroded and accidented by reality.⁶

Orozco thus implicates this remarkable anachronism in the form of his replica, not only to demonstrate the passage of time, or to offer alternatives to a linear art history, but also to reflect on the discrepancy between the utopia of modernist design and his notion of ‘reality’ (social, environmental, historical) that incorporates accident and chance.

As with his use of Scarpa’s pergola, Orozco often works with found objects in order to develop and redefine his sculptural practice. Another instance where the artist critically addresses the aspirations of modernist design is *La DS* (1993), one of Orozco’s best-known and most spectacular works, which involved the remodelling of an iconic French car, the 1950s Citroën *DS* (fig. 5). For this work, the artist modified the vehicle by splitting it vertically lengthways, removing a portion from the centre of the car, and then putting the remaining parts together again to generate a new shape and a new experience. Even though part of the body of the car is missing, the

artist contends that it is still present ‘in our bodily-cultural memory of the object’.⁷ Orozco here combines his concerns with bodily presence, memory and absence with the mass-produced industrial object, in this case a cultural symbol and an example of modern design utopia. Art historian Benjamin Buchloh, who has been Orozco’s long-term interlocutor, remarks that by cutting through the *déesse* (which translates from French as ‘goddess’), the artist not only enacts ‘a classical sculptural procedure onto the body of the commercially designed object’, but with this destructive gesture and by then putting together the two halves he also renders the iconic object a ‘carcass of promises’, revealing ‘the inherent betrayal of desire of all design culture’.⁸ In other words, Orozco’s *La DS* deconstructs the utopian ambitions of modernist design, while at the same time intimating how such aspirations, as well as their frustration, might be ingrained in our cultural memory, especially in relation to certain iconic objects.

Similarly, for *Elevator* (1994) (fig. 6), a work that was commissioned for an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago, the artist managed to acquire a used elevator cabin by requesting to have it extracted intact from a building that was being demolished. Orozco had the cabin cut horizontally and reassembled to his height. With works such as *Elevator* and *La DS*, Orozco literally opens up sculpture and places the body so as to inhabit it from within, like architecture, inverting the traditional perspective of the visitor who looks at an object situated vis-à-vis himself or herself in the exhibition space. In these works, however, the experience of sculpture as a container and empty space is further punctuated by another void, a missing part. In both *Elevator* and *La DS*, the missing volume that has been removed from these objects is retained in the memory of the spectator, occupying that familiar space. The idea of sculpture as architectural container and as empty space thus figures both formally and conceptually on different levels in the works, both phenomenological and semantic, crucially involving the experience of the physical body in a space whose absence is actively inscribed in the memory of the body that inhabits it.⁹ Orozco’s *Shade Between Rings of Air* similarly operates in this gap created by the distance (temporal and spatial) between the sculptural replica and the architecture, which effectively activates memory and imagination, but also opens up a space that triggers critical reflection and enables the construction of meaning.

Carlo Scarpa’s sculpture garden and Venice Biennale projects

The Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa’s long collaboration with the Venice Biennale began in 1942 with a sculpture-related project, when he was commissioned to design an exhibition with works by his friend, the sculptor Arturo Martini. Throughout the next two decades, his numerous commissions for the Biennale included exhibition designs and new buildings, as well as modifications of existing ones. In 1948, he designed the display for a retrospective exhibition of Paul Klee, while in 1958 he realized the design

for an exhibition of sculptures by Alberto Viani. He further designed around forty other rooms in 1960, and made several modifications to the interior of the Italian Pavilion in 1962, 1964, 1966 and 1968.¹⁰ The first of his realized buildings for the Biennale was the Art Book Pavilion at the *Il Cavallino* modern art gallery, situated outside the entrance of the Italian Pavilion in the Giardini di Castello. The structure, built in 1950, was made of iron, wood and glass and employed elements from the architectural language of Frank Lloyd Wright, who was an important influence for Scarpa (this work draws in particular on Wright's Ocatilla Camp [1929] and Taliesin West [1937–40]). The Art Book Pavilion, of which all that survives today are its concrete permanent sections, was a remarkably open and disjointed structure that 'felt like an open air shelter' with panoramic views over the surrounding Giardini.¹¹

2. Partial view of Carlo Scarpa's *Pensilina* made for the 26th Venice Biennale (1952), and installation view of Walead Beshty, *¡La Voz de Jalisco El Periodico Que Dice Lo Que Otros Callan Más Noticias Más Deportes!* (Thursday, August 22nd 2013: *Metro, La Prensa Jalisco, Express Guadalajara*), 2013 at the 56th International Art Exhibition, *All the World's Futures*, Venice Biennale, 2015 (photo: Natasha Adamou)

In the following two years, between 1951 and 1952, Scarpa designed and built two more projects for the Biennale: the Italian Pavilion courtyard and sculpture garden, where *La Pensilina* is situated, and a new ticket office at the entrance of the Giardini di Castello. Other projects included the Venezuelan Pavilion (1953–56), whose interior has now been heavily remodelled but which preserves its original exterior and façade intact. Demonstrating Scarpa's unwavering commitment to the visual arts which repeatedly served as a source of inspiration in his work, the original spatial arrangement in the



interior of the building, characterized by two slightly offset sections along the gallery, drew its inspiration from the paintings of Paul Klee. In the external section, the patio of the pavilion is sealed off from the Biennale gardens, which it overlooks, by rotating wooden panels, creating a modifiable space reminiscent of Japanese architecture.¹² Another of his collaborations with the Biennale, particularly important in my discussion about architecture and sculpture, was Scarpa's only exhibition to feature his own sculptures in 1968, which I discuss at more length in the following section of this article.

Scarpa's sculpture garden at the Italian Pavilion was an intervention in the existing building, renamed the Central Pavilion in 2009, which is the main and largest building at the Biennale. To create this patio, Scarpa modified an existing room by demolishing the roof and turning it into an open garden, thus creating a transition space between two of the pavilion's indoor galleries where visitors could rest between the exhibits. First, he stripped the plaster from the surrounding walls to reveal the brick structure underneath. There he placed *La Pensilina*, a free-standing reinforced concrete canopy made up of three eye-shaped (*vesica piscis*) pillars orientated in three different directions, which support a curved cantilevered roof that appears to hover above the columns (fig. 7). This effect was achieved by placing each pillar halfway under the edge of the roof canopy, with the roof's full weight resting on small steel spheres that sit on pyramid-shaped stands placed on the top of each pillar.

Orozco's wooden replica carried on this effect of lightness, whereby a viewer looking at the sculpture at first glance 'could easily mistake [it] for an over-refined balancing act – small balls carrying a roof on curved walls'.¹³ Only after walking all the way around the gallery space and alongside the structure could one discern, by looking through the open door, that this was an exact replica of Scarpa's pergola situated in the garden outside. Scarpa's canopy is moreover shaped into three elegant curves, each one of a different diameter, that give the construction its defining character, poignantly reflected in the title of Orozco's own work: *Shade Between Rings of Air*. Orozco's title is thus an accurate description of the formal qualities of Scarpa's structure, while also conveying the poetics of this unique architectural piece, the wooden replica being both a study and an homage.

Scarpa's patio further includes four pools of water of varying sizes and depths, which appear to cover an equal amount of space as the concrete paving, 'so that we experience the space as half-land, half-water, and thus in this way reconnecting this inner court to Venice, even when the city is not visible'.¹⁴ In this elaborate landscape comprising different planes of paved surfaces, planting beds and reflecting pools laid out on several horizontal levels, the sculptures are situated both on land and water. Sergio Los, an architect, scholar and occasional collaborator with Scarpa, remarks that 'the presence of Japanese culture can be detected in the treatment of the garden-patio, in the materials, and in the use of water'.¹⁵ Indeed, while conducting research for his replica, Orozco pondered in one of his working notebooks, below a photograph of Scarpa's sculpture garden, on the distinctly

oriental features of Scarpa's architecture, his notes accompanied by a Japanese haiku:

So long as the old pond remains a container of a certain volume of water quietly reflecting the thing around it, there is no life in it. To assert itself as reality, a sound must come out of it; a frog jumps into it, the old pond then proves to be dynamic, to be full of vitality, to be of significance to us sentient beings. It becomes an object of interest, of value.

But there is one more important observation we have to make, that is that the value of the old pond to Basho, the poet and seer (or mystic), did not come from any particular source outside the pond but from the pond itself. The pond did not become significant to Basho because of his finding the value in the pond's relationship to anything outside the pond as a pond.

¡Oh! Ancient pond!
A frog leaps in
The water's sound
Basho¹⁶

In this dialogue, which traverses different historical periods and cultures, Orozco's own interest in Zen philosophy meets Scarpa's fascination with a Europe that looks towards the East – indeed, Scarpa has explicitly expressed his interest in 'characteristics that involve a Europe that turns towards the East', explaining that he sees himself as 'slightly Byzantine'.¹⁷ Furthermore, in light of his notes, Orozco's replica can also be thought of as a reflection or echo of Scarpa's canopy which it brings to life, not by highlighting any context exterior to it but by acting as an agent (like the frog in the haiku poem) that resonates with the structure's own particular qualities. In other words, Orozco's *Shade Between Rings of Air* does not simply revisit or reinterpret Scarpa's modernist project, maintaining a critical distance, but in effect 'awakens' and sheds (critical) light on its inherently modernist values: its simple and elegant lines; the lightness of the structure; the technology and properties of concrete (a modern material *par excellence*); the relationship it establishes with the city through the use of water; and its function as a social, intermediary, public space.

These qualities, moreover, as Orozco has implied in an interview, are both architectural and sculptural: in his view, the sculpture garden was 'a difficult space to show sculpture in, because Scarpa's pavilion is itself very sculptural'.¹⁸ While Orozco highlights the sculptural qualities already present in Scarpa's work, the intricacies of this relationship materialize fully in his own intervention: Orozco's much lighter wooden replica of Scarpa's concrete architectural structure was subsequently exhibited in different sites as a free-standing, autonomous sculpture independently of its original site-specific context at the Biennale. More specifically, *Shade Between Rings of*



3. The door between the inner courtyard and the gallery space of the Italian Pavilion, with partial view of Gabriel Orozco, *Shade Between Rings of Air*, and partial view of Carlo Scarpa's *Pensilina* made for the 26th Venice Biennale (1952), 2003 (photo: courtesy of the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris)

Air has been presented at the Palacio de Cristal in Madrid, as well as at the Marian Goodman gallery in Paris (figs. 8, 9). The art curator Jessica Morgan observes that despite the work's site-specific point of departure in Venice, the 'vast, luminous space' of the Palacio de Cristal provided an ideal situation for the work, 'its elegant white curvilinear ceiling creating a respite from the otherwise exposed space of the glass and steel structure'.¹⁹ Moreover, removed as it was from the original Scarpa building and 'as a sculpture dwarfed in a much

larger space than in Venice', the work's linear, curved shapes, 'suggesting a thin slab out of which two circles had been cut', echoed the characteristic circular forms of other work by Orozco, becoming more comprehensively integrated within the artist's oeuvre: 'Like so many of Orozco's appropriations, it was fluidly absorbed into the artist's vernacular, becoming a sculptural drawing in space.'²⁰ In other words, Orozco's architectural appropriation became fully ingrained in the domain of art and more specifically in that of sculpture.

This transition from architecture to sculpture enacted by Orozco's *Shade* also resonates with the close relationship between architecture and sculpture that informed Scarpa's own work. This central preoccupation is best demonstrated with *Ambiente*, a unique moment in his practice when Scarpa exhibited his own sculptural work – at which point he claimed: 'I am, too, a sculptor.'²¹ In 1968, Scarpa was invited to participate in the 34th International Biennale of Art in Venice with an exhibition of his works, alongside three other architects: Louis Kahn, Paul Rudolph and Franco Albini. For the exhibition, rather than showing his architectural work, Scarpa made his own sculptures and presented them in an installation entitled *Ambiente* (Environment). The installation was part of the exhibition *Linee della ricerca contemporanea: dall'informale alle nuove strutture* (Lines of contemporary research: from informal to new structures), which was dedicated to the 'new abstraction'. For *Ambiente*, Scarpa made three sculptures, *Asta* (Beam), *Contafile* (Counting glass) and *Crestia* (Growth), which were complemented by *Erme*, a structure consisting of three marble L-shaped supports. The architect presented these works in a display of his own design, set against three free-standing semi-transparent textile panels set in iron frames. The panels functioned both as spatial partitions and as backdrops to the works, while they were also used in order to modulate the light between the sculptures. The exhibition demonstrates the degree of Scarpa's engagement with sculpture, its modes of display, and its relation to the architectural and natural environment, ever present in his work since his earlier projects such as the sculpture garden.

For the 1968 edition of the Biennale, besides presenting his sculptures at the exhibition, Scarpa redesigned the interior of the Italian Pavilion where he doubled the exhibition space by constructing a raised area that functioned



4. Gabriel Orozco, *Shade Between Rings of Air*, and partial view of Carlo Scarpa's *Pensilina* made for the 2nd Venice Biennale (1952), 2003
 (photo: courtesy of the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris)

as a loft which was connected to the main hall by stairways.²² The *Ambiente* installation was situated below the loft, right at the centre of the Italian Pavilion in the midst of the exhibition. *Ambiente* thus served as a place of transition between the different exhibition sections, while also designating an interdisciplinary space between architecture and sculpture. In *Ambiente*, Scarpa developed some of the ideas he had initially explored in his sculpture garden where the distinctly sculptural *Pensilina* was situated. In the

recently published volume *Carlo Scarpa e la scultura del '900 (Carlo Scarpa and the Sculpture of the 1900s)*, which explores the role of sculpture in Scarpa's work, it is noted that these two projects, the sculpture garden at the Italian Pavilion and his sculpture exhibition *Ambiente*, have several features in common, including formal characteristics, such as their rectangular plan, but also the fact that they contained sculpture, that they were both conceived as places of transition (*Ambiente* was accessible via the staircases that connected various parts of the exhibition, while the sculpture garden was a place of transition and repose between two of the Italian Pavilion galleries), as well as the presence of nature (the sculpture garden featured water and plants, while in *Ambiente* there were plants in containers).²³ Unlike the other two participating architects who showed segments, drawings and photographic samples of their work (Rudolf displayed the model of his Graphics Art Centre, while Albini showed part of the façade of the superstore La Rinascente di Roma), Scarpa's treatment of the exhibition space and its interaction with the sculptures highlighted his desire to participate 'in a creative way, [rather] than just display his sculptures as documents'.²⁴ In other words, Scarpa finds in sculpture a field of experimentation that allows him to think through and to resolve in new and imaginative ways certain spatial issues related to his architectural practice.

George Kolbe's *Morning* (1925) in Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion

It is particularly elucidating at this point to consider the close relationship between architecture and sculpture in the rich historical context of modernist pavilions and sculpture gardens. In May 1929, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's (1886–1969) Barcelona Pavilion, one of the most iconic modernist buildings, was inaugurated as the German National Pavilion for that year's Barcelona International Exhibition. The pavilion, which was pulled down in 1930 and reconstructed in 1986, has become paradigmatic of twentieth-century architecture. It has been widely celebrated for introducing a groundbreaking modernist vocabulary with its distinctive use of large glass panes, straight lines, simple rectangular shapes and open spaces, promoting the principles of

transparency and clarity, and materializing the concomitance between form and function. Inside the pavilion, however, Mies selected to put on display a little-known figurative sculpture by George Kolbe, *Morning* (1925). The choice of this particular sculpture has often been deemed incidental; its traditional figurative form was not seen to conform to modernist values. Yet the architect's deep familiarity with the sculpture of his time is indicative of an informed personal vision with regard to his choice of the work.²⁵ As Penelope Curtis eloquently argues in her book *Patio and Pavilion: The Place of Sculpture in Modern Architecture*, Mies's employment of sculpture surpasses a merely decorative or functional role (to demonstrate scale, for example), in order to encapsulate the viewer's very experience of the architecture itself.²⁶

Whether Mies considered the sculpture to be modern, albeit in a different way to the pavilion, or saw it as a contrast to his modern architecture is open to debate. Certainly, Kolbe's *Morning* is contemporaneous with Mies's architecture; however, the work's contemporaneity does not necessarily make it a modern sculpture.²⁷ The sculpture represents a female nude standing on a plinth with knees slightly bent and arms extending upwards, slowly unfolding over her head. In an elegant circular movement, almost like a dancer's, her left palm is turned towards the face, while the right palm is stretching up towards the sun as if she were slowly waking up to the new day. The head is looking downwards and diagonally to the left, engaging the whole body in a slightly spiral movement. Mies placed the sculpture on a plinth in the outdoor pool, as if it were emerging from the water. The figure's gaze falls towards the glistening still water surface, as if looking at her own reflection. Curtis brings attention to the centrifugal movement of the figure, as 'it opens outwards, rippling, in a manner suggestive of the pool where it stands, and the building around it'; in this way the sculpture's formal characteristics make it responsive to its distinctly modernist architectural surroundings.²⁸



5. Gabriel Orozco, *La DS*, 1993, modified Citroën DS, 140.1 × 482.5 × 115.1 cm (55 3/16 in. × 15 feet 9 15/16 in. × 45 5/16 in.) (photo: courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery)

6. Gabriel Orozco, *Elevator*, 1994, modified elevator cabin, 243.8 x 243.8 x 152.4 cm (8 feet x 8 feet x 5 feet)
(photo: courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery)



In terms of its placement in relation to its architectural environment, the sculpture can be seen as residing both inside and outside the pavilion. Mies used transparency to achieve the effect of bringing the sculpture inside the building in the same way that his architecture typically brings nature (the garden) inside the house.²⁹ In this setting, according to Curtis, Kolbe's sculpture provides, in formal terms and in the way that classical sculpture does, the 'focal point for the viewer, leading the eye and telling it where to rest' in this 'house of mirrors'. Moreover, Mies situated the sculpture against a backdrop of travertine marble walls. Curtis argues persuasively in favour of the modern qualities of Kolbe's sculpture, noting that it was 'echoing or paraphrasing [Mies's] architecture', acting 'like a reprise of the visitor's dream-like passage around the travertine pedestal, with its variously transparent or reflective panels of water, glass and coloured marble'.³⁰ The author concludes that, besides acting as a focal point as well as a 'moving target, which continually reappears in this transparent, reflective building', Kolbe's sculpture is also 'a component that is crucial to the architecture's meaning: The sculpture not only gives the building human quality, but illuminates its architectural ones too. It encapsulates the journey we have just taken, and promises its endless repetition, inside or out.'³¹ It could be argued that the classically figurative sculpture itself does not strictly belong in the tradition of modernist sculpture as Curtis suggests, yet Mies's treatment of the sculpture is undoubtedly modern in the way he positions it in order to reflect and accentuate the meaning of its architectural surroundings.

With a different approach to constructing a compelling modern vision,



7. Partial view of Carlo Scarpa's *Pensilina* made for the 26th Venice Biennale (1952) and installation view of Walead Beshty, *¡La Voz de Jalisco El Periodico Que Dice Lo Que Otros Callan Más Noticias Más Deportes!* (Thursday, August 22nd 2013: Metro, La Prensa Jalisco, Express Guadalajara), 2013 at the 56th International Art Exhibition, *All the World's Futures*, Venice Biennale, 2015 (photo: Natasha Adamou)

Scarpa designed in 1967 one of the three sections for the Italian Pavilion at the Exposition Universelle de Montreal, alongside the artist and designer Bruno Munari and the architect Leonardo Ricci. Scarpa's section, entitled 'Poetry', included a reproduction of the groundbreaking perspectival floor design from Piero della Francesca's small-scale painting *The Flagellation of Christ* (c.1455–60). The floor pattern was painted on a raised platform upon which the architect placed a copy of Donatello's bronze *David* (c.1440). At the entrance of the pavilion, greeting the visitors, Scarpa presented another of Donatello's small-scale sculptures, the playful *Athys* (Little

Eros, c.1440). While both Mies in his Barcelona Pavilion and Scarpa in Montreal used figurative sculpture, Scarpa engaged with decisively historical material in order to carve out his own brand of modernist sensibility, one that engages the past as much as it looks forward to the future. Rather than employing exclusively contemporaneous or modern elements, Scarpa's national pavilion thus dynamically incorporates the celebrated historical tradition of the fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance, bringing it to play a decisive role in the construction of modern Italian cultural identity in the late 1960s. The emphatic implementation of a glorious past, then, becomes instrumental in promoting a distinctly modernist vision, while reinventing a sense of cultural continuity triggered by significant technological innovations (i.e. della Francesca's linear perspective) and artistic achievements carried on from the past into the present. The replication of elements that could not have been otherwise physically included in the pavilion, such as the translation in three-dimensional space of the perspectival floor from della Francesca's painting and the copy of Donatello's *David*, is crucial in creating the impression of cultural continuity, or at least in evoking a strong correspondence with the past.

Indeed, during his career, Scarpa had undertaken many projects that involved the preservation of the past, with the restoration of several historical buildings. In one of his most acclaimed renovations, at the Castelvecchio Museum in Verona, the architect significantly positioned a centrepiece of sculpture, the historic equestrian statue of Cangrande, in such a way that its placement made sense of the complex architectural structure of the building. Curtis remarks that

this sculpture gives human body to the bewildering array of shapes and textures of the space around it ... The sculpture thus provides the concentration which synthesises the space around it. In offering itself in the traditional role of 'focal point' it in fact serves to make sense of the multiple spatial experiences by which it is surrounded.³²

While Mies's use of sculpture in the Barcelona Pavilion stands for the experience that the viewer has of the architecture, Scarpa's placement of Cangrande's statue at the Castelvecchio provides the spectator with

a key to grasping the spatial complexity of the entire building. In both cases, sculpture, and its placement in relation to architecture, becomes a hermeneutic device regarding the function of architecture. Overall, while Curtis's analysis of the role and significance of sculpture in advancing a modern architectural vision, in the context of modernist pavilions and patios, is extremely pertinent, her overarching narrative might support the idea of a linear historical trajectory where the close interrelation between architecture and sculpture eventually leads to the point where architecture becomes entirely autonomous aesthetically, precisely like sculpture. The final stage of this transition becomes apparent, for example, with the artwork of Dan Graham which Curtis discusses in detail in the concluding chapter of her book, and which I introduce in the section that follows.

Dan Graham's pavilions

The 1976 Venice Biennale included an exhibition entitled *Ambiente* (Environment), incidentally recalling Scarpa's 1968 Biennale contribution, which showcased recent developments in art. The general theme of the 1976 Biennale was the 'environment', and architecture in particular. Dan Graham was one of the artists who participated in *Ambiente*, with a work entitled *Public Space/Two Audiences* (1976) (fig. 10). This was a site-specific installation designed to fit into a container, an empty space where the artist placed a mirror so that visitors to the exhibition could observe themselves as they moved across the space. As Graham writes in his 1978 essay 'Notes on *Public Space/Two Audiences*', he intended the work 'to function doubly as art and as simply an exhibition pavilion (for itself), following the examples of Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion or El Lissitzky's two exhibition rooms'.³³ With his intervention, however, Graham took those earlier modernist formulations further not only by presenting the architectural container itself, 'its own material structure', as the artwork, but also by turning the viewers into the subject matter of the display. Graham thus set up his pavilions as sculptures, while at the same time with the use of the mirror-image the spectator himself or herself effectively becomes the display. In comparison to Kolbe's figurative sculpture in Mies's Barcelona Pavilion which, according to Curtis, 'replicates the viewer's experience of architecture', in Graham's *Public Space/Two Audiences*, 'the spectator replaces sculpture'.³⁴

Graham has been working on his pavilions, these structures that stand between architecture and sculpture, since the mid-1970s. By that time, the idea of the modernist art gallery as a neutral container for the artwork had already come under scrutiny from minimalism in the 1960s. The minimalists investigated the 'white cube' gallery as part of the structure of the artwork itself and not simply as a seemingly 'neutral' spatial container, exploring the ideological context and implications of modernist institutional spaces. With his work, Graham went beyond the main task of minimalism – which he considered to be concerned with the compositional and formal structure

8. Gabriel Orozco, *Shade Between Rings of Air*, 2003. Installation view at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Palacio de Cristal, Madrid, 2005 (photo: courtesy of the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris)



9. Gabriel Orozco, *Shade Between Rings of Air*, 2003. Installation view at Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris, 2012 (photo: courtesy of the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris)



of art-institutional spaces that became absorbed into the formal structure of the artwork itself – in a literal way by making the gallery (the architectural container) part of the artwork. Rather than simply focusing on formal aspects, Graham's pavilions further fused the container (the gallery space) and the contained (the viewer), drawing attention to the social experience of the viewer who is looking at himself or herself looking at the artwork (via his or her own reflection in the mirror). At the same time, while minimalism was exploring the phenomenological experience of the viewer in the present

10. Dan Graham, *Public Space/ Two Audiences*, 1976. Installation view at *Ambiente Arte*, 37th Venice Biennale
(photo: courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery)



moment, 'here-and-now', Graham was investigating new theories of viewing involving the body of the spectator and overlapping timeframes, with emphasis on the 'just past' experience, the recent past, thus highlighting and heightening transience and the experience of *time passing*.

As Daniel Birnbaum writes in his exhibition catalogue essay 'Delays and revolutions', as early as 1974 Graham had produced a large number of works involving delays and delayed renderings of already delayed imagery.³⁵ In the 2003 edition of the Biennale (which also presented Orozco's *Shade Between Rings of Air*), Birnbaum and his co-curator Francesco Bonami included Graham's 1974 installation *Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay*, which consists of two mirrors, two video cameras and two monitors with time delay. In a statement about the temporal complexities of this work, Graham states that the viewer encounters, when looking in the direction of the mirror, the following elements: '1. A continuous present-time reflection of his surrounding space. 2. Himself as an observer. 3. On the reflected monitor image, 5 seconds in the past, his area as seen by the mirror of the opposite area.'³⁶ Birnbaum notes that on the first level, perception is seen as the trustworthy rendering of our surroundings, immediately available to our senses. On the second and third levels, however, perception becomes problematized, as we enter first 'the level of self-reflection traditionally described with the mirror image', and second the impression that 'the system is equipped with a memory, i.e. things don't just disappear once they are no longer perceived. Instead, they are given a second run, five seconds later.'³⁷

Birnbaum brings these examples of extra-perspectival renderings of delay into his wider discussion about the temporality of a work of art, involving repetition, replication and the notion of the 'original' (referring, for example, to criticisms of the neo-avant-garde art as mere repetition by Peter Bürger)³⁸ to claim, following Borges's celebrated anachronisms, that 'The neo-avant-garde

is no mechanical copy of some once-and-for-all-given original, but must be said instead to retroactively give new significance to that which no longer can be seen as unquestionable origin.³⁹ However, while in Graham's pavilions the viewer becomes aware of the immediately preceding time, the focus is still on the present moment, which somehow becomes accentuated by rendering evident the very passage of time. While also interested in the phenomenological experience of the spectator on the exhibition site, Orozco and Scarpa are most crucially concerned with engaging historical time within the phenomenology of the present moment. Orozco evidently does this with his replica of Scarpa, as does Scarpa with his numerous architectural renovation projects and with the use of historical sculpture, even in the case of his modernist pavilion in Montreal. Furthermore, as Sergio Los has argued, Scarpa's idiosyncratic modernism, the 'figurative complexity of his compositional system' which engages with a historical and cultural 'pluralism', including classicism, can be seen as a forerunner of deconstructionism:

Scarpa's resistance to the bans and restrictions of modern design, his radical non-conformity, and likewise his marginal status – all these allowed him to be well ahead of the curve in dealing with the problems we now face and in indicating some possible solutions. Who could deny that those of his compositions that work through dissociation are in some sense forerunners of the disjoint creations of the deconstructionists?⁴⁰

Conclusion: replication and anachronism

The question that remains to be addressed is: what is the specific role of replication in this discussion about the relationship between architecture and sculpture? And what is the role of replication in the construction of cultural identity and historical memory in modern times and beyond? In 2007, Tate Modern organized a workshop on the subject of replication entitled *Inherent Vice: The Replica and its Implications in Modern Sculpture*, followed by the publication of a special issue of *Tate Papers*.⁴¹ The project emerged from pressing concerns related to the impending conservation of Naum Gabo's sculptures in Tate Gallery's collection. Gabo's works, made in early plastic, had deteriorated significantly and any decision with regard to their restoration immediately raised legal, ethical and aesthetic issues about the limits of conservation, restoration and the use of replication. In order to address these issues, the art historians, conservators and artists who participated in the workshop investigated the different roles of the replica, including ideas of replication as conservation, artists' editions, mass reproduction, as well as related issues of originality and authorship in art.

Shade Between Rings of Air touches upon many of these issues. It can be seen, for example, as an initial impulse to recuperate something from Scarpa's pergola, which had deteriorated dramatically as a result of time and weather. At

the same time, Orozco's *Shade* deeply resonates with Scarpa's own engagement with the historical past, as demonstrated by his architectural renovation projects. Orozco's replica thus engages with a unique strand of modernism that is represented by Scarpa which, while inclined towards material and conceptual innovation, is also committed to incorporating the past into the present. Furthermore, replication is extremely significant in the historical context of several key modernist pavilions which, because of their initial function as temporary structures, had either been taken down after the end of the exposition or had deteriorated over time, and were subsequently reconstructed – Mies's Barcelona Pavilion, for example, was built in May 1929, was pulled down in 1930 and was reconstructed in 1986.⁴² These temporary pavilions were thus made permanent and exhibited as exemplary cases of modernist architecture and, in a sense, as autonomous artworks in their own right.

In their book *Anachronic Renaissance*, Christopher Wood and Alexander Nagel describe the architectural model, in its usual sense, as a 'maquette or mock-up that helps patrons and architects visualise a structure during the building process'.⁴³ However, the authors crucially explore a different notion of the model that is 'not necessarily linked to a particular building, nor pointing forward in time, nor being small', explaining, for example, that 'a real functional non-miniature building can also model an idea about how buildings are made'.⁴⁴ In this context, the authors further link the function of the model with the practice of replication. They recount, for example, that around the time the Romans were beginning to construct buildings in marble in the second century BC, they made a model of the city's first building, the Casa Romuli. This building was a wooden hut situated on the Palatine hill, which purportedly served as the dwelling of Romulus, the city's founder. Apparently, the hut was reconstructed based on the post holes found in that location in the second century BC, yet Wood and Nagel argue that the whole idea that remnants of the original hut were found on the site was in fact an invention of the late Republican period: 'The huts were artificial relics of an archaic wooden architecture embedded in a city of stone', and as such they created 'the fiction of a building chain leading back to the original hut'.⁴⁵ According to the authors, 'the hut of Romulus was the construction of an increasingly sophisticated, rationalized culture inventing pride in its humble origins'.⁴⁶ The model, then, in its anachronic sense as replica, serves as a means by which to preserve cultural identity and to promote certain cultural values by fabricating a fictional sense of cultural order and historical continuity. A similar logic of fabricated continuity can be detected in the history of the replication of modernist pavilions whose replicas stand as paradigmatic models, expressing and preserving the core values of modernist architecture. Examined in this context, Orozco's replica further illuminates the role that replication plays in constructing modernist narratives, while critically exposing their *modus operandi*.

Additionally, while Orozco's *Shade* is situated in a convoluted relationship to modernism by means of anachronism – conceived as a platonic, idealized model for a modernist structure, while in fact it is a replica of Scarpa's

deteriorating architecture – the artist treats both modernity *and* sculpture as anachronic objects. Orozco, that is, finds a way to address the problem of contemporary sculpture as an obsolete artistic medium and to redefine it in his practice through the use of the replica. His replica thus becomes an apt metaphor for contemporary sculpture's own anachronism, while re-examining its conditions of possibility today. On this point, Orozco has argued that, unlike painting, there has never been a proclaimed 'end of sculpture'. However, he indicates that sculpture has occupied an uncertain place in the history of twentieth-century modernism, implying that it had long become obsolete. In his own words:

The problem with sculpture is that it always has been an inconvenient object. I would say that in the twentieth century, they didn't even know where to put sculpture. It has been so uncomfortable that it needs a special place, but it is not intriguing enough to make its own room. So I think that probably it is because sculpture was long gone that we don't even need to say that it is now finished.⁴⁷

However, despite this problematic status of sculpture throughout the twentieth century Orozco insists on defining himself predominantly as a sculptor. In a discussion with the artist in 2004, Benjamin Buchloh inquired about Orozco's decision to engage with a sculptural vocabulary since the early 1990s, at a time when the practice of sculpture had long been devalorized. Buchloh remarked: 'All of a sudden you make sculpture; in the 1960s and 1970s nobody thought sculpture would ever be possible.'⁴⁸ Orozco confirmed that his sculptural concerns were not simply symptomatic but fundamental in defining his identity as an artist. He declared: 'I'm a sculptor, I'm into gravity and I perceive the world in volumes, even though I use photography, drawing, or painting.'⁴⁹ Importantly, as I mentioned at the beginning of this article, Orozco internalizes with *Shade Between Rings of Air*, and by using replication and anachronism, aspects of modernist architecture in order to recast his own identity as a sculptor at the turn of the twenty-first century. *Shade Between Rings of Air* further highlights aspects of modernism's engagement with the past and the role of sculpture as well as replication in this process. It reveals anachronisms already inherent in the modernist canon – in the case of Scarpa, as well as in the context of modernist pavilions. At the turn of the twenty-first century, while particularly attentive to and critical of the utopian aspirations of modernist projects, with *Shade Between Rings of Air*, Orozco reimagines contemporary sculpture as a historically reflexive medium that opens up a space for the re-evaluation of the past and for the critical consideration of the present.

To conclude, by engaging replication and anachronism Orozco's replica deconstructs notions of historicism and historical determinism, the idea of history as a linear and causal sequence of events. In her book *The Usable Past: The Imagination of History in Recent Fiction of the Americas*, Lois Parkinson Zamora writes about Borges's use of 'deliberate anachronism' in developing his notion of a 'circumstantial rather than ideal' history:

In accordance to the Latin American antipositivism ... Borges' history is circumstantial rather than ideal, subject to many minor adjustments and many readings: The loci of culture are numerous and widespread. Borges' history operates by means of small shifts in a world where historical interactions are eccentric, not progressive or causal; such history can be understood in terms of Borges' philosophical anachronism and narrated by means of 'new techniques' of 'deliberate anachronism and erroneous attribution.' This is not cause for disillusion but for imaginative recuperation and revitalisation.⁵⁰

While Scarpa employed sculpture as a means of experimentation that enabled him to reinvent and enrich his architectural work, Orozco uses Scarpa's sculptural architecture in order to redefine contemporary sculpture as a historically reflexive medium. Finally, with *Shade Between Rings of Air*, Orozco critically examines different aspects of replication, problematizing issues of originality and questioning the role of the replica in preserving cultural identity and constructing a sense of historical continuity.

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1. One of Gabriel Orozco's first and relatively unknown artworks, made in collaboration with Mauricio Maillé and Mauricio Rocha, was the installation *Scaffolding for Our Modern Ruins* in 1987 at the Biennale of Alternative Spaces, Museum of Modern Art, Mexico City. With this work, we can trace his concerns with addressing modernity, the architectural environment and ruins back to the early days of his artistic career.

2. F. Bonami (ed.), *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer*, Venice Biennale, 2003, p. 3. Other works in the exhibition addressing questions about temporality, origins and genealogies included Tacita Dean's film about Mario Merz (2002) and Felix Gmelin's *Color Test, The Red Flag II* (2002).

3. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

5. Jorge Luis Borges, 'Kafka and his precursors', in *Everything and Nothing*, New York, New Directions, 1999, p. 70.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 177. [AQ Orozco not Borges]

7. B. Buchloh and G. Orozco, 'Gabriel Orozco in conversation

with Benjamin Buchloh' (2004), in Y. A. Bois and B. H. D. Buchloh (eds), *Gabriel Orozco*, October Files 9, Boston, MA, MIT Press, 2009, p. 111. [AQ check details] This public conversation took place at the Sackler Museum at Harvard University on 18 April 2007, [AQ] under the auspices of the M. Victor Leventritt Lectures on Latin American Art.

8. B. Buchloh, 'Gabriel Orozco: the sculpture of everyday life' (1996), in Bois and Buchloh (eds), as at note 7, p. 44.

9. Natasha Adamou, 'Impossible objects: Gabriel Orozco's *Empty Shoe Box* and *Yielding Stone*', in S. Halart and M. Polgovsky (eds), *Sabotage Art: Politics and Iconoclasm in Contemporary Latin America*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2016.

10. <http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/history/scarpa.html?back=true>

11. R. McCarter, *Carlo Scarpa*, London, Phaidon, 2013, p. 41.

12. S. Los, *Carlo Scarpa: An Architectural Guide*, Verona, Arsenale, 1996, p. 42.

13. J. Heiser, '50th Venice Biennale', *Frieze*, 77, September 2003, http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/joerg_heiser/

14. McCarter, as at note 11, p. 45.

15. Los, as at note 12, p. 34.

16. O. T. Suzuki, *The Awakening of Zen*, pp. 71–72, quoted in Orozco's Notebook 13, p. 46. Reproduced in Ann Temkin, *Gabriel Orozco*, London, Tate, 2011, p. 180. [AQ]

17. L. Le Feuvre (ed.), *Carol Bove/Carlo Scarpa*, Henry Moore Institute,

Leeds, Museum, Bolzano and Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, 2014, p. 72.

18. Bois and Buchloh (eds), as at note 7, p. 177. [AQ title]

19. J. Morgan, *Gabriel Orozco*, London, Tate, 2011, p. 105.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

21. G. Beltrami (ed.), *Carlo Scarpa e la scultura del '900*, Marsilio, 2008, p. 19. Selected excerpts from the book were kindly translated from Italian to English by Federico Casari.

22. In addition, Scarpa redesigned the exterior of the Italian Pavilion, where he built a temporary screen-like structure on its façade.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 281. [AQ]

24. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

25. His brother was a sculptor, and he was friends with several sculptors including Wilhelm Lehbruck, Rudolf Belling and Paul Henning. His sketchbooks also include numerous sculpture drawings in relation to his architectural plans. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

26. P. Curtis, *Patio and Pavilion: The Place of Sculpture in Modern Architecture*, London, Ridinghouse, 2006, p. 11.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

33. Dan Graham, *Two-Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2000, p. 155. Graham's essay 'Notes on Public Space/Two Audiences' was originally published in *Aspects*, 5, Winter 1978.

34. Curtis, as at note 26, p. 138.

35. D. Birnbaum, 'Delays and revolutions', in Bonami (ed.), as at note 2, p. 3.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

38. P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1974.

39. Birnbaum, as at note 35, p. 3.

40. Los, as at note 12, p. 20.

41. 'Inherent vice: the replica and its implications in modern sculpture', *Tate Papers*, 8, Autumn 2007, special issue.

42. Other notable examples of pavilion reconstructions include Gerrit Rietveld's 1955 pavilion for the Third International Sculpture Exhibition in Arnhem's Sonsbeek Park, reconstructed in 1965 by Aldo Van Eyck, and Aldo Van Eyck's Sonsbeek Pavilion, reconstructed in 2006 in Otterlo, The Netherlands.

43. C. S. Wood and A. Nagel, *Anachronic Renaissance*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2010, p. 51.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

47. B. H. D. Buchloh et al. (eds),

[AQ] 'To make an inner time: a conversation with Gabriel Orozco', *October*, 130, Autumn 2009, p. 183.

48. Buchloh and Orozco, as at note 7, p. 105.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

50. Lois Parkinson Zamora, *The Usable Past: The Imagination of History in Recent Fiction of the Americas*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 39.