

CAZÚ ZEGERS

Honorable Mention

“ *The firm suggests a different take on Chilean architecture, searching for an expressive architecture closely related to Chile, its territory, landscape and vernacular building traditions. Hence, the work developed by the firm is a “work in progress”, which involves a poetic reflection on the way we inhabit the territory, to find new forms.*

The firm’s unique way of undertaking the design process through the relationship between poetry and architecture comes from the Amereida Thesis. The thesis states that on his way to India, Christopher Columbus found America as a gift, thus inviting us, the inhabitants of America, to build a new language with shapes that correspond to our “Latino” heritage, accepting ourselves as a new culture, and to dialogue with global paradigms from this source.*

Cazú responds to this invitation with a “light and precarious inhabitance”, meaning low-tech architecture with high expressive impact, which understands that the greatest asset of Chile and Latin America lies in its territory: “before being a country, Chile is landscape” (N. Parra, Chilean poet). Therefore, she believes that the development of Chile should be based in sustainable tourism, driven by the “original indigenous inhabitants”.

Cazú’s work is based on this premise: “Territory is to America, as monuments are to Europe”. Hence, her architecture is not looking to take the lead, but to be a gentle and loving addition to nature.

**Epic collective poem, published by the School of Architecture UCV 1967.*

”



BIOGRAPHY

Santiago de Chile (CHILE), November 18th 1958

Since 1990, Cazú has worked as an independent architect. The character of the Cazú Zegers studio is defined by the varying scales of her projects: from the object (micro) to the territory (macro) or from the territory to the object. She has explored different areas of architectonic design, from designing objects – lighting and furniture – to territorial planning and cultural management through the “El Observatorio Lastarria Foundation”, where she developed investigative projects in different artistic fields. She is a renowned lecturer, in Chile and abroad.

Her artistic method focuses on the crossover between poetry and the territory, which generates a gesture, a figure, and a form, setting a new cultural landscape through architecture. This has been a legacy in her teaching. Her ideas remain imprinted in the minds of her students. She has taught at the University of Talca, also in workshops at The Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (PUC) and at the University del Desarrollo.

Cazú Zegers’ projects create distinctive architecture, expressed mainly in residential projects and others such as the Capilla del Espíritu Santo (Holy Spirit Chapel), the Centro Cultural Alcalde Juan Estay (Major Juan Estay Cultural Center), ruralization projects such as Kawelluco, multicultural projects such as the Arenales Ski Center and the Pewenche Route, where she works with local indigenous communities to create projects based on their world vision. Her work also includes hotels: the Tierra Patagonia Hotel project is the best known example of how she develops a contemporary language with the curves of the wood, looking for new architectonic shapes based on the relationship between poetry and architecture in the South American territory.

HOTEL OF THE WIND / HOTEL TIERRA PATAGONIA

Location: Sarmiento lake, XII Región, Chile

Use of the Building: Hotel & Spa

Construction Period: September 2010 - October 2011

The hotel is located at the entrance of “Torres del Paine” National Park, on the shore of Lake Sarmiento, on the border of the National Park. The water acts as a supporting plane for the splendid Paine massif. Its magnificence makes one think of an extended project in a dialogue with the vast territory.

The form seeks to merge with the metaphysical landscape, not to interrupt it. The shape of the hotel is reminiscent of an old fossil, a prehistoric animal beached on the shore of the lake, similar to those found and studied by Charles Darwin. The building seems to have been born from the land, like a fold in the terrain that the wind has carved in the sand. It is anchored to the ground with stone slopes and is completely covered in washed Lenga wood paneling. This finish gives the hotel a silvery sheen, typical of old local wooden barns used to dry wool, worn away by winter. The spatial solution aims for warm, cozy spaces structured by internal pathways, allowing the building to inhabit its extension.

This spatial continuity is also reflected in the structural principles of the building: the base is a 200m monolithic structure of reinforced concrete, where the application of contraction joints enables the presence of a single structural element. Another technological innovation is the rigid diaphragm, which is embodied in the roof of the building, linking all the vertical elements and avoiding diagonal elements in the ceiling.

Tierra Patagonia presents a sustainable vision. Its design achieves thermal efficiency in order to reduce energy consumption and heating levels. In addition, to minimize the impact on the surrounding environment, the native flora was preserved during the construction. The hotel also includes technological solutions to reduce water consumption and has its own processing facilities to reuse water for irrigation. It encourages the local economy by buying as much as possible from local suppliers.



Main façade, exterior, daytime. The natural vegetation of the site has been preserved

Hotel of the wind / Hotel Tierra Patagonia

CAZÚ ZEGERS - Chile

arcVision Prize
Women and Architecture



Façade with the lenga cladding

Hotel of the wind / Hotel Tierra Patagonia



Topography, textures and colors, everything blends together

CAZÚ ZEGERS - Chile

arcVision Prize
Women and Architecture



Typical bedroom

Hotel of the wind / Hotel Tierra Patagonia



Outside view from the roof structure

CAZÚ ZEGERS - Chile

arcVision Prize
Women and Architecture

HOLY SPIRIT CHAPEL / CAPILLA DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO

Location: Puente Alto, Santiago, Chile

Use of the Building: Religious

Construction Period: 2006

The chapel is designed for a poor community in a peripheral neighborhood of Santiago. This community is joyful, generous and hard working; as a young theologian told Cazú: “The church is the shape of the community”. This particular community wanted the building to have the appearance of a temple, with a circular space where the altar is close to the people and with wide aisles to meet and chat.

A single ascending wall generates the architectonic gesture that shapes the church; it revolves around itself without closing completely, to envelop us and connect us with the divine, opening towards the light with a central skylight, a symbol of the light of Christ. The walls come together until a small expansion lets the light enter, like the hands of God welcoming the community.

In terms of construction technology, the molding that shapes the concrete required a high level of technical knowledge in order to achieve the continuous curves of the design, without changing the true nature of the shapes, given that the finishing material is the concrete itself. The laminated wood beams that define the central skylight structure the roof without vertical columns, which would interrupt the continuity of the church. Structurally, they also divide the building in two, and even though the chapel has a high torque, its behavior in the seismic Chilean territory has been impeccable.

Thermal comfort is achieved by holes in the perimeter of the floor and openings in the skylight, which allow the air to flow during hot summer days. The acoustics were achieved with a simple lattice system, giving the space the comfort necessary for a religious building, where sound should not reverberate, even though the concrete and the shape of the chapel would tend to create reverberation. The silence achieved allows the visitor to enter a state of contemplation, prayer and reverence. This project was constructed with generous resources, which translate into its great spatial quality; as a result it has become an architectonic statement of social transformation, enhancing the self-esteem of an entire community which even now manifests a strong connection with the church, believing it to be miraculous.



Main entrance

Holy Spirit Chapel

CAZÚ ZEGERS - Chile

arcVision Prize
Women and Architecture



The light of Christ. In the floor, a drawing with golden ratio proportions. The framed altar

Holy Spirit Chapel



Side wall, confessional windows



Second entrance, showing the weights, counter-weights and support of the building