A Signature Approach

After a soul-searching, cross-country motorcycle ride, Francisco González-Pulido established a visionary new practice in Chicago. Keeping his ideas "to feel and to plan," FGP Atelier raises the bar by providing iconic projects that establish legacies far richer than the buildings themselves.

If you could call leadership styles from a signature, the notable horizontal strokes of Francisco González-Pulido’s handwriting reveal a passion for collaborative practices that create equitable environments.

You may think that a firm organization relies only on personal leadership to do the work, but when González-Pulido established he firm’s practice with its identity in mind, he thoughtfully assembled a capable team of 24, and everyone in the office contributes to a unique talent integral to the success of every project. "My team knows that their role is key to the success of the organization, and their contributions will make a difference in the performance of the entire project," says González-Pulido — a good thing, since the firm’s first project out of the gate was the winning entry for the Guangzhou International Cultural Center, a $320MM tower in China.

The inclusive nature of his philosophy spills over into every facet of the firm’s designs, which consider not only clients, but locations, carefully evaluating context in terms of ecology, economy and history, as well as how the building evokes and honors each.

Stadium as a Temple?

FGP Atelier’s design of a major league Mexican baseball stadium project — Diablos Rojos — takes into account the layered history of Mexico City. Its iconic form is symbolic of native culture, the program honors the site as witnessed to controversy during the 1968 Olympic games, and considers the cyclical nature of protest — as now a Formula One track snakes through its neighborhoods — as a constant reminder of gross inequality.

The multifunctional stadium weaves itself into the local community in a unique way. It provides fresh drinking water — coming online just as Mexico City’s water infrastructure is on the brink of collapse — and offers a designated green spaces for urban farming, which provides a bit of urban green space and adds air-cleaning capabilities to the surrounding plaza, which forms a foundation for a daily open-air market and social hub.

Despite its sleekly glowing, angular PTFE form, the Diablos Rojos stadium is highly approachable, says González-Pulido. Volcanic rock aggregates, and dark pigments mixed into the stadium’s concrete pavilions, are reminiscent of ancient construction methods and materials, the walls’ irregularity and natural flaws make for a highly tactile experience. He wanted to create the feeling of pragmatic architecture, almost like an ancient temple manufactured with modern methods of construction.

FGP Atelier investigates and maximizes the capabilities of materials, sometimes applying them in unconventional ways. Coupled with a tight aluminum frame, the PTFE on the Diablos stadium project forms iconic roof geometry. The roof system conceals the light sources that illuminate the playing field while the PTFE roof material interacts with stadium lighting, emitting approximately 65% to 75% reflective glowing light to activate the surrounding public spaces and places. "Investigating new materials, the idea always is to apply new technology in a way that makes sense and fulfills the goals of a project most efficiently," says González-Pulido. "Materials are a passport to think about the way we design space with increased performance and value."

Modern Methods

Despite its sleekly glowing PTFE, the Diablos Rojos stadium is highly approachable due to the volanic rock and pigment materials. The irregularity and natural flaws make for a highly tactile experience. "I want to create a feeling of pragmatic architecture, almost like an ancient temple that’s manufactured with modern methods of construction," says González-Pulido.

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