

The L.A./L.A. – *Latin America / Los Angeles* – Workshop:

An Exploration of the Changing Boundaries of the Americas and Architectural Education

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During six weeks in L.A., the flight of Icarus and the dreams of Peter Pan released us from architecture as it is traditionally known – the art of domination – and recovered its reconciliatory mission in the accessible realm of poetics. Architecturing became the mediator in which we were able to bridge personal meanings with global identities. Architecture was explored as a process that celebrates a belief in the instinctive "here and now" of human experience. A process that transformed L.A. into a canvas, collaging the unmarriageable in chance encounters of images and objects.

- Marcos Barinas, LA/LA 1995 student participant from Dominican Republic.

A ten-foot-high steel wall separates and demarcates the border between the United States and Mexico. The presence of this opaque and solid wall magnifies the modern divorce between our thoughts and our actions, the separation between our imagination and our reality. The border condition can serve as a lens to magnify issues of great concern to our current architectural thinking. It presents a particularly relevant challenge to all of us: "how to digest the diversity and mutation of the world while retaining the mind's power for analogy and unity;" "how to interpret the implicit tensions existing in the confrontation of the local and the global, the individual and society.

These conditions provoke radical social and cultural changes that should be the inspiration to modify the institutions of representation, such as schools of architecture. How do we filter the dialectic of these forces into a pedagogy so that our design studios become active theaters in which new narratives are invented? The L.A./L.A. studio attempts to insert itself in the middle of these tensions, between the remapping of the possible and the reading of the real, in order to pierce at the homogeneous mantle of standardization and specialization which permeates our education. The search is for an architectural educa-



tion that includes other stories which can lift the veil that obscures the potential of our diversity.

The L.A./L.A. workshop originates with the desire to open a pedagogy based on cross-cultural communication and interdisciplinary contact. The design studio is transformed into a "forum" where different narratives, identities and histories are exchanged through images and words. By searching for a language seen not as a way of speaking but of being, the students begin to construct a sense of identity not as a deterministic "state of mind" but as a process. An artistic process which allows them to read, rather than classify the world; constructing an identity based on the interpretation of their own acts of making. Ultimately, the L.A./L.A. workshop is shaped by the pedagogical questions arising from the visual topography of narratives that students from North, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Iberia, and the U.S. generate annually at SCI-Arc in Los Angeles.

NOTES

¹ Carlos Fuentes, *Myself with others*. (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1988), p. 27.

