

Contemporary
Architecture in
Arquitectura
Contemporánea en
Puerto Rico

1993 | 2010

Francisco Javier Rodríguez, AIA
with Darwin J. Marrero

Foreword by Lars Lerup

Casa Urbana

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Equipo de Diseño / Design Team

Víctor Díaz, Juan Carlos García

Adlin Castro

Consultores / Consultants

Roberto Agramonte

Cliente / Client

Dra. Santini y Dr. Rolón

Díaz Paunetto Arquitectos



2005

Descripción de Proyecto / Project Description

Diseñado para una pareja de médicos, el proyecto ubica en un lote urbano de escasamente 150 m² en un área deprimida de Condado. El cliente requería 4,000 p² de espacio estableciendo la seguridad, luz natural y comunicación visual como factores indispensables. Se desarrolló un esquema dividido que permite una sala de 2 niveles y salón familiar y comedor de 1.5 niveles abriendo al patio posterior. Las habitaciones ubican en un nivel, mientras que la biblioteca y gimnasio se encuentran en el nivel superior, abriendo ambos a una terraza abierta con visuales del entorno costero. Escaleras con escalones, descansos y techos de cristal resuelven la circulación vertical, a la vez que se convierten en una principal fuente de luz. Formalmente la casa se compone de volúmenes yuxtapuestos a otros volúmenes y planos en un esfuerzo por romper la masiva escala del proyecto a consecuencia del programa.

Designed for a pair of physicians, the project is located in an urban lot with scarcely 150 m² of land on a neglected area of Condado. The client required 4,000 ft² of space with privacy, security, natural light and visual communication between floors, as important conditions. The split-leveled scheme proposed allows a 2 story living room and a 1.5 story family/dining room opening to the back patio. The primary and guest bedrooms share one level while supporting spaces like the library and gymnasium are located on the uppermost floor with an open terrace overlooking the beachfront skyline. Vertical circulation is managed by a staircase with translucent glass landings and steps showered with clarity by a skylight used as a primary source of light. Formally, the house employs simple volumes juxtaposed by other volumes and planes in an attempt to breakdown the massive building scale resulted by the client's program.

When scanning the images in Francisco Javier Rodríguez' book on contemporary architecture in Puerto Rico, the architectural ontology is not exactly obscure, but strangely in and out of sync with its milieu [...] The sturdy, if in the new highly articulated white box is at home on this Island; its heritage is fundamentally Spanish and maybe more deeply Arab, rediscovered by Le Corbusier in cities like Algiers.

Lars Lerup, author: After the City, former Dean at Rice University School of Architecture

In all conventional histories, we have been led to understand how modernism has been transformed with its arrival in the Caribbean, essentially subservient to some ideal from some far off land. It is a rare case where we witness how architecture in the Caribbean transformed the culture of modernism and injected an ethos of speculation, invention and experimentation into modern life. Lerup's reading of architecture in Puerto Rico and its protagonists gives light to the latter interpretation, and opens up new avenues for re-reading modernism.

Nader Tehrani, principal at Office dA, Professor and Head of Department, Architectural Design at MIT

Puerto Rico has one of the oldest urban traditions of the Western Hemisphere and because of its unique history, it is the place where the various contemporary architecture cultures of the Americas collide most dramatically. This book provides evidence of the island's significant contribution to tropical modernism.

Rafael Longoria, ACSA Distinguished Professor at University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture

The combined volumes of Contemporary Architecture in Puerto Rico 1976 | 1992 & 1993 | 2010, along with its predecessor, Architecture in Puerto Rico, by José Fernández, constitute an indispensable reference and research tool for architects, scholars, and students of architecture. For the general public it will open a window into the world of architecture in our Caribbean island.

Andrés Mignucci, FAIA, editor: Contemporary Architecture in Puerto Rico 1976 | 1992

That focus on the quality and importance of design is magnificently captured in this volume celebrating the honor award designs of the architects of Puerto Rico. The special qualities of the island and its peoples have inspired Puerto Rican architects to deliver the exceptional architecture that is celebrated in this publication.

George Miller, 2010 President: American Institute of Architects

Architectural practice in the 1990's and 2000's shifted from the earlier obsession with theory and representation to an emphasis on performance - be it tectonic, digital, urban, or environmental. There is much to learn from the ways the designers shown here have manifested these diverse interests. The skillful articulation of responses to climate and landscape in particular refreshingly reveal continuity of the Puerto Rican legacy of intelligent placemaking.

Ellen Dunham-Jones, author: Retrofitting Suburbia, Professor and former Chair at Georgia Institute of Technology College of Architecture

