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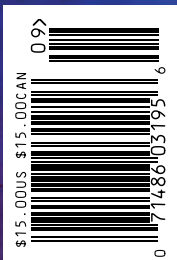
SEPTEMBER 2019

DIGITAL ARTS
ALL THE WORLD'S
A SCREEN IN VENICE



**CURIOSITIES,
CAVE PAINTINGS &
PICASSO THE POET!**

**CAO FEI & HONGXIA:
WHEN REALITY MEETS FANTASY**



Exhibition view of "Eduardo Chillida, Ecos" at the Museo Chillida-Leku, Estate of Eduardo Chillida and Hauser & Wirth.

LUIS LAPLACE: A PASSION FOR SPACE

In his Parisian showroom on the Place Saint-Georges, Laplace spoke about his aesthetics, his inspirations, and an exciting new project with Hauser & Wirth

BY DAISY SAINSBURY

©ZABALAGA LEKU. SAN SEBASTIÁN. VEGAP. 2019. PHOTO: GONZALO MACHADO







Installation view of
 "Alexander Calder. From
 the Stony River to the Sky,"
 Hauser & Wirth Somerset 2018.

PHOTO: KEN ADLARD © 2018 CALDER FOUNDATION, NEW YORK / DACS LONDON

Portrait of
Luis Laplace

The Argentinian architect Luis Laplace has brought his own inimitable touch to the world of architecture and interior design over the past 15 years.

Art is the guiding theme in a wide-ranging portfolio, which includes the reopening of the Museo Chillida-Leku in San Sebastián, Casa Michelena in Morelia, Mexico, and collaborations with Hauser & Wirth in Somerset and St Moritz. Here is Laplace's edited conversation with Modern Painters.

What inspired you to become an architect?

I tried so many things before becoming an architect, so it was almost by chance! I have always had this passion for space. When I was a kid, I would change around the layout of the rooms in my house. I would change my bedroom all the time, then my sister's room, the living room... One time I went to the hardware store and bought some paint and painted the kitchen. My mother thought it was natural that this 10-year-old was constantly rearranging her living room!

Who or what have been the biggest inspirations over your career?

My grandfather was a frustrated architect — it wasn't his profession, he was a pilot, but he liked architecture and he liked doing things. He built for everyone, for himself and his friends, and then he built an airport in Buenos Aires. It was very unusual. His offices were very contemporary, very modern for the time. Even going to the control tower was fun. I was always fascinated by those aesthetics.

It was really artists who inspired me. There was a bookstore in front of my secondary school, ran by this rather mad guy — exactly what you'd imagine of a bookstore owner, with books everywhere! I don't recall seeing anyone else in the store except me, but

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I would go and spend hours there. I discovered artists like Louise Bourgeois, Eduardo Chillida, Karl Friedrich Schinkel... There was a book of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs and on the cover was the famous picture he took of Louise Bourgeois, where she's carrying a bronze dick. She has this very naughty face — the book immediately caught my attention! At the time I was also discovering my sexuality, and it was a way to see things that were more edgy. It felt like a forbidden environment in a way, but at the same time it was art. So that's how I discovered a lot of artists and many of the classics.

Can you tell us more about this new project with Hauser & Wirth for an arts center in Menorca?

The project arose in a very natural way. I built Manuela and Iwan [Wirth, the founding directors of Hauser & Wirth] a home on the island, and so we looked for a space there. We wanted to do something similar to the project we did in Somerset, but in an environment where people are on vacation.

There is a lot of beautiful architecture in Menorca that's just waiting for something to happen. We saw this magnificent building, on an island within the island, in the Port of Mahón. There is this really beautiful

hospital, divided into two parts. There's the very old part, the Hospital de la Isla del Rey, which is now a foundation showing the history of the hospital, and the stories of the sailors and people who ended up there. In front of the hospital, there's another big building, an old operating theater built to accommodate more patients.

Menorca is the eastern point of Spain, and it's a very strategic island in the Mediterranean. People coming from Africa or Italy would go through Menorca to get to France or Spain. They would stop in the ports to restock. Menorca was one of the first places in Spain to have an opera house, because Italian musicians travelling via Menorca would stop and spend a few days there. The musicians would leave the boat to rehearse, and the locals developed this taste for music. So there's a strong music culture in Menorca. Hauser & Wirth believe that art should be for everyone. They are commercial galleries obviously, but they run programs that integrate the community — on all sorts of subjects, not just art but food, agriculture, architecture... That's what we did in Somerset, which is an art gallery but also a restaurant, a Bed & Breakfast, and an educational center, because it's close to lots of schools. Here we are looking for something similar, but adapted to the local needs.



Casa Michelena in
Morelia, Mexico.

Isla del Rey,
Menorca.





Casa Michelena in
Morelia, Mexico.

How does the function of the space, as an art gallery and community space, shape the project's conception?

Before Iwan and Manuela purchase a place, we brainstorm together and work out what the good ideas are. Today with all our experience working together, I know a lot about what they need and want, and about what the communities want in general. The basic principle changes according to the different locations, because each space has to adapt to the local needs.

In Menorca, we'd like to reinforce the idea of the community via its agriculture and food. We're going to have a little restaurant and the idea is to try to use seasonal, local produce. We'll use fish caught locally that day and avoid fish from the north of Spain. The program will evolve with the needs. Mar Rescalvo was appointed director more than a year ago, and she's already been working with local museums and institutions to see what their needs are. We'd like to bring artists to the island for art residencies, this could be from the visual arts, literature, or it could be something else entirely.

What's your vision for the spaces themselves?

When you invite artists to a space they all have different needs. So, the best is always to bring flexibility to a space. There will be a big, neutral space; it will have the character of the building, but remain quite neutral. One of my challenges is to keep the integrity of



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the space, so that when you're there you know you're in Menorca and not in Somerset or Paris. Context is always fundamental. We have to respect the environment, and as humans we all adapt to the spaces around us. There will be another space that's less neutral, where you see a stronger identity. It's a very long building and there's a part where we want to accentuate its identity as a port and its rough architecture. I want the artists to make an extra effort to respond to the building, so that it's not just them alone in a neutral space, but them responding to the space and to the nature of the environment.

If every building leaves some trace behind it — as a reflection of a society at a particular moment in time — what would you like this new arts center in Menorca to say about us today?

I think the most representative thing of today is community. The sharing of information. The gallery is a commercial gallery — that's a fact. But it's a high-end gallery with incredible artists, which then allows them to do things for the community and create these rich environments. For example, in the restaurant in Somerset, you'll have a very wealthy man next to a

farmer, and everyone is comfortable with one other. There's something for everyone: you can have a local cider, an expensive wine, a less expensive one... They very much encourage communities to merge and get together.

What has shaped your own particular style as an architect?

For me, it's not really an aesthetic result but rather a way of thinking. I like everyone in my team to participate in the design process and to throw out ideas. If you tell me that we should do something, and you justify it in a way that is rational and corresponds with the need, then I'll pursue the idea. I like to think that it's the way we think — we resolve design problems, and then the result comes afterwards. There's a famous phrase: "Form follows function." I like to think that's still the case. Beauty should come after, naturally. I'm obsessed that a thing has to work. We can make a dining table beautiful, but it has to work. I don't compromise beauty with functionality. Most of our clientele is art-related — either collectors, gallerists or artists — so I know that I have to put myself to one side, and to focus on displaying the collection and valorizing the art.**MP**