SAN NORBERTO PARISH

From the austerity in its architectural design, the simplicity of its structure through the purity and geometry of the shapes and the usage of concrete and light as construction materials it creates an intimate space, straightforward and unadorned, that invites to the emotion and meditation. A sincere architecture that also seeks to stand up the ideals of the Catholic Church of the 21th Century.

Immersed in a residential area of Northern Bogota, it is located in a urban plot of 900 square metres, the Temple’s volume recedes in order to generate public city space. The entrance thru the ramp promotes a ceremonial and paused walk and invites to peregrinate into the building.

The volume is a big enclosed box with high concrete surfaces that wraps the nave of the temple by a rigorous geometry. The main Façade reveals soberness and respect for the community.

The programme is developed in four stories. It counts with worship areas, oratory, classrooms, choir, offices, the Priest’s house, funerary urns and a parking lot at a semi-basement, with a total constructed area of 2.038 square metres.

The main story -elevated half floor from the public space- is walked at the same level. The choir is a bridge that goes across the nave and distributes music to the whole space. Instead of the typical rose window from old cathedrals, the north façade was marked with representative openings according to the places visited by Jesus over a virtual map.

Natural lighting and a frank expression of concrete are the protagonists.

The ceiling is a big “convex canvas” that covers completely the nave and is suspended in between two longitudinal gaps, where can be found kinetic-art stained glasses, designed and donated by the Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz Diez. The cutting design is arranged in such a way, that natural light goes across the space filtered by the stained glasses, a “*transchromie*” with its geometric shape and the vertical and transparent sections, creating during the day, changing reflections that travel throughout the space as a solar watch and during the night, the use of lighting spread over the inclined surfaces at the ceiling, producing a variety of chromatic combinations that change conforming to the observer’s movement, the hour or the light intensity.

The austerity of the essential avoids shallowness of the accessory. Artistic manifestations such as the lighting Christ at the main altar by the Colombian sculptress Masayo Andrade, the Wooden Christ located at the baptistery by the Ecuadorian woodcarver Fabian Arias and the painting by the Bolivian artist Beatriz Nogales at the funerary urns are not ornaments but integrated elements of the architecture.

Sustainable Architecture.

The project was designed under sustainable parameters. Comfort and wellbeing were sought through the use of passive strategies such as solar radiation and natural lighting control, natural ventilation and rainwater collection in order to improve living conditions with a minimum energy consumption and optimisation of resources.

A major challenge was to solve a simultaneous situation related to the natural ventilation and the acoustic insulation. From the main story, where a large number of people stay, a natural ventilation system moves the air up in an imperceptible speed and then it goes out by sound traps strategic located at the roof and lined with soundproofing materials. The convex ceiling helps to reduce de acoustic reflection. At the same time, during the night, the lighting system counts with different scenarios associated to LED and low energy consumption light bulbs.

Structural conception

The simple and rigorous geometry and the structural use of all architectural walls rendered a harmonious combination with a coherent and constructive economic viability. The structural solution is seismic resistant for the frequent earthquakes in the Andean.

Construction of the walls in height -only 20 centimeters thick- was performed with metal formwork. The structural-architectonic concrete is light-ocher color-self compacting concrete, from the mixture of white cements with natural -yellow hue aggregates.

The Grand Cross of the east façade represents the openness and transparency of the Catholic Church to the world and it is a structural dilatation in the wall to account for thermal volumetric changes caused by the  the morning direct sun exposition.

The light metallic roof structure and the thermal -acoustic isolated roof let a highly efficient assembly process and contributed to the sought light appearance.

The very generous participation of a big number of professionals, artists, entrepreneurs, providers and the congregation, facilitated the construction as a result of a wonderful act of solidarity.

In a world full of tensions, the temple looks to offer a haven of peace and joy, by the delight of silence and natural light, in an intimate environment convenient for reflection.