

Editors, "Sense of Place" with Jose Davila, *LA Forum*, April 23, 2018

L.A. Forum

"SENSE OF PLACE" WITH JOSE DÁVILA



The LA Forum interviewed architecture student-turned-artist Jose Dávila about his current migrating installation in Los Angeles. Jose Dávila originally studied architecture at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente in Guadalajara, Mexico. With a background in architecture, his work pushes the boundaries of form and material to their limit. "Sense of Place" consists of an eight foot square cube sculpture comprised of 40 unique concrete forms. Initially installed in a West Hollywood Park in September 2017, over the course of nine months, the sculpture has slowly disassembled and migrated to far reaching locales in the city. Los Angeles Nomadic Division (LAND) commissioned Dávila's projects as part of the Getty's PST LA/LA triennial exhibition.

What is the intention of the migrating concrete sculptures around L.A.?

I wanted the work to be embedded in the everyday life of the city – of the different parts of the city – and for it to interact with passerby's and inhabitants of Los Angeles.

The scale of each part of the cube or module was planned to have a natural ergonomic measurement, 15" x 15" x 15", in order for them to interact with the people. It is the standard seat or bench height range which enables the pieces to interact more easily in diverse situations. More than looking for a specific feeling or thought, I planned a device that jump starts activities or experiences that were not happening necessarily in certain venues.

The majority of your work features mundane materials assembled in a very extraordinary way. How did you discover your palette and what is your process of composition based on this limiting palette?

I work with the easiest materials I have at hand. All are common construction materials which are also symbolic in many ways – let's say concrete. Concrete is a rock that humans give form to. Glass and metal are symbols of Modernism and an International Style of Architecture. Rocks and boulders are completely

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the opposite. They are the result in shape and form of nature and are completely primitive. The very first elements human kind ever built with.

This palette is all materials you can easily play with, in balance. The decision to work with them has not been always rational, but from an unplanned situation.

The process in which I compose sculpture with these mundane materials is to have them sitting around in my studio, all at hand, and play with them. Sometimes I have the forms in sketches or in my head, other times it is by trial and error. Testing their limits, to see if they break or not, I use them as I need them.

Many of your pieces on display at the Marciano Art Foundation are overtly (and humorously) referential to historical artists. What is the commentary behind this and why?

Art is not an originality contest. It is important obviously, but a work of art is not good just by being original. There is a very long History of Art that as an artist I want to enhance and advance in certain ideas. But that is standing in the shoulders of giants, -paraphrasing Newton-, creating on top of previous artworks. As a self-taught artist, who didn't study art per se, I have used the knowledge contained in books about the work of other artists as a guide for my own creations. I also get my ideas through the work of others, a ball that comes and goes like a ping-pong. By analyzing the work of others and commenting on their work I discover the intentions of my own practice. Apart from being an artist myself, I also enjoy looking and studying the art of others. It emphasizes the dichotomy of my work as an artist but also as an observer.