

Josep-María Martín

*Made in Chile*

Fernando Balcells

Over the course of two years, Josep-María Martín brought together and mobilized dozens of Chilean professionals, artists, businesspeople, charitable and governmental organizations, students, and passersby. After that period of intense work, which had yielded considerable progress in designing and reaching agreements for the construction of a new habitat in Chipana Bay, his major partner, Un Techo para Chile, withdrew its support from the project, rendering it unfeasible. In the context of *Dislocación*, the materials that document the project—videos, blueprints, photographs, e-mails, and an extensive timeline—are exhaustively displayed in the exhibition spaces and façade of the Gabriela Mistral gallery. The number, determination, and perseverance of the participants in this project speak of the magnitude of a work that cannot be explained away by the grandeur of its aim—designing and constructing a model of social housing—or by the multidisciplinary nature of its formulation. Josep-María Martín sets out to do what he does from the space and in the name of art. His vision appeals to the dissolution of formal customs and the reformulation of the borders between disciplines. The synthesis he seeks is neither religious nor economic; it is a poetic of local space.

Josep-María Martín is an artist of passage, an expert in the crossing of borders, who at every stopover delves into the unknown and dares to be touched and transformed by the forces to which he opens himself up, forces that cross through him. The degree of his receptiveness and innocence is the degree to which he activates and rearticulates local relations.

The artist becomes a part of the landscape by deploying a methodology of encounters that does not privilege a utopia or a model, but rather stages a mechanism and an atmosphere of productive relations that linger under cultural customs with no apparent anchor or ensured fate. His work can only exist in relation to the double impossibility of judicial and artistic foreignness that enables him to articulate the unlikely promise of an identity to come.

Art opens a dialogue on the basis of the ambush of innocence. Its paradox is the inoffensive-offensive nature of the innocent gaze that sees and hears for the first time. In the explorer's composition, the polytechnician, the binding agent, and the juggler, the figure of the artist, moves between institutions and authorities for the sake of the tolerance, immunity, and expectations surrounding his or her figure. The relationship endures until the stability of the place of the institution is put at risk. It lasts until untranslatability is manifest as the transference of property. At that point, the institution either attempts to recover difference in order to broadly reaffirm its identity or expulses the initial effort as impertinent and insignificant.

In this work, the artist is neither a therapist nor a decorator but rather an explorer of unmarked territory and an enabler of unprecedented encounters. He does not consume culture but generates friction and formulates relations never before conceived. The artist is someone who necessarily thinks in motion and carries a flexible space in his toolbox.

This work focuses on the community of Chipana Bay, which both hosts it, in all its situations and tacit agreements, and resists it, vacillating about its development. If at a certain point it seemed that the inertia of institutional forces could be overcome, that limit only served to heighten the risk, revealing the instability of the connection and the impossibility of continuing, as well as accentuating the frustration that defines the space of art and that makes imbalance and risk the crucial characteristics of the body of the artist of passage.

The design of *Made in Chile*, which had been approved by the local population, was criticized by architects, technicians, and all sorts of institutions on the basis of their notion of commonsense. The idea of building octagonal housing units was seen as a waste of space. The yard the project proposed should be eliminated, it was said, because it would end up becoming a trash dump. Recreational spaces and angles greater than ninety degrees were called excessive and wasteful.

The lesson in the economy of space that Josep-María Martín was given reveals an architecture of poverty that obeys the laws of asceticism, of strict functionality, and of scarcity as opposed to an architecture of wealth that obeys the laws of pleasure and excess. In response to this offensive separation, the foundations of Joseph María Martín's social housing design affirm, from an ethical position, an aesthetic of excess.

Josep-María Martín does not formulate a conflict between the ethical and the aesthetic, but rather a negotiation between two aesthetics that contain opposing ethical inclinations. His proposal takes root in the ethical requirements of housing by opposing a minimal ethic to a lavish one. The work exposes the opposition between a creative life and a life barely worthy of that word.

*Made in Chile* made visible a monopolistic alliance—between charitable institutions, the corporate social responsibility of large companies, and the social subsidiarity of state institutions—based on a common adherence to the logic of an economy of scarcity harbored in the principle of least resistance. And hence, the formal commonsense imposed on us—the straight line and the cube—means the shortest line and the greatest stackable volume.

In an era when space is ravished by speed and economics, for those whose history entails a process of lowering expectations, inhabiting is an unyielding challenge. It is only possible to make a relevant and beloved space by sharing imagination. And that is what Josep-María Martín proposes. The expansive power unleashed by the work and its process opposes inertia,

inhibition, and resignation, fostering instead the construction of an associative imaginary open to the creation of mobile horizons. The history of Chipana Bay is still open.