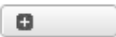
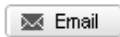


Q&A: Sculptural Architect Carlito Carolhosa



Carlito Carolhosa in front of his work "Sala de Espera"

by Ines Min

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SEOUL — Fifty-one-year-old Brazilian artist Carlito Carolhosa is best known for transforming vast spaces with his installation work. Hesitant to use the term "site-specific," the artist instead presents a philosophy of working to capture moments, right before they past.

Working between a range of lightweight, ephemeral materials and physically overwhelming weight, Carolhosa adeptly captures time in the instance of evolution. For his South Korean debut at Kukje Gallery, he recreated "Sala de Espera (Waiting Room)", a piece that first showed at the Oscar Niemeyer-designed Museum of Contemporary Art in São Paulo.

"The first feeling I had when I saw photos of this gallery is that it's a kind of infinite space," the artist said ahead of the exhibition opening October 12. The work of nine wooden beams is installed into K3, designed by architect firm SO-IL and the newest addition to the gallery opened in 2012.

Carolhosa's work is another addition to that endless quality. While the beams are no longer trees, not just poles, and not exactly refuse, it's not certain what they are or what they will become. "That's why it's called a 'waiting room,' because you're waiting to see what's going to happen."

How much did the local version of “Sala de Espera” change between the planning stages and the execution?

It changed a lot. For instance, I usually work in different approaches, using models and then also drawings to make plans. And it's always different. I mean, you bring the model, we start to build it, and then you realize the space is telling you something. So the result is a connection between the model and the experience here. It's never the same. And it can't be, because the poles themselves also have specific conditions, balance, size, and weight. So it's really a confrontation between an idea or a desire, and the experience.

And possibly because I started as a painter, I give a lot of weight to the process itself, like holding back the project so that the experience of doing things can form you, which is basically the reason to come here and make something, so that you're going to learn something. So we had a different set of poles from the model, a different number of poles also. The first time I came into the gallery with the first pole, I realized it had a very strong presence in the space. It was radiating more than I imagined. That means we have to change slightly the relationship between them, so you don't get cramped, stuck too much.

It's also interesting because you have to decide where things are, but on the other hand you're not composing. It's not supposed to be beautiful, it's supposed to be something that has happened. So it's a kind of contradiction. It's not a design in the sense it has to be like that, but of course you can't say it could be anywhere, so how do you decide? What is the turning point between these two conditions? This is one of the main questions, understanding that each of those groups has a specific voice.

You have a background in architecture and urbanism; how did you get into the art world?

Well I never worked with architecture, I just have a degree. But even as I was in school, I was already doing art and I was doing exhibitions. Of course there are connections between my work and the fact that I have an interest in architecture and space, generally speaking, but I really don't have training in it. I did some things for friends, but I never worked professionally in the field.

You said before that each item has a specific history to it. Do you know the history of each piece in “Sala de Espera”?

I have no idea, I just found them thrown away. But you know that something has happened to them, because of the marks and everything that they have. So that's the point, I'm not telling the history or telling a story, but there is or there might be some type of story that you can tell to yourself, you can invent.

What project are you working on now?

I'm working on an exhibition for Sao Paolo, an exhibition for the biennale in Cartagena, Colombia, an exhibition in Rwanda in Africa, and an exhibition in New York, at Sonnabend Gallery.

What's the last show that you saw?

That I saw? The show at the [Leeum] Samsung museum yesterday. The Alexander Calder and the potteries, which was amazing. I was very much impressed.

What's the last show that surprised you? Why?

This one, the celadon. The body of work was incredible. I liked the Calder a lot, and it was a beautiful show, but I know his work already.

Describe a typical day in your life as an artist.

I go to the studio usually in the afternoon. The mornings I spend at home. I walk a lot in the morning,

usually early. So I wake at 6.30 or 7am and go for a long walk in the Botanical Gardens. I come back home and then I do lots of work in my house, and then I go to the studio at 2pm in the afternoon and stay there till 8pm or something like that.

Do you make a living off your art?

Yes.

What's the most indispensable item in your studio?

The hammock.

Where are you finding ideas for your work these days?

Walking.

Do you collect anything?

Yes, Brazilian artists and things that I find on trips, objects that interest me. Like here in Korea, I bought brushes and some small pottery, sculptures in stone.

What is your karaoke song?

That's a good question. Well, the samba. It could be "Alvorada" by Cartola, for instance.

What's the last artwork you purchased?

It was a photograph by Mario Honda, he's a Brazilian-Japanese photographer.

What's the first artwork you ever sold?

A painting, a long time ago.

What's the weirdest thing you ever saw happen in a museum or gallery?

I wouldn't say the weirdest, but I just saw at the Tate, a group of deaf people. A very big group talking in the Mira Schendel exhibition, talking to each other in the crowd — it was beautiful. And Mira Schendel's work is a lot about emptiness, so you have this big group of people, old, new, young, back, white, oriental, all of them were very happy communicating with each other. It was incredible.

What's your art-world pet peeve?

The vanity and the politics. But, you know, it's part of it.

What's the last great book you read?

Well I just read a Coetzee book, which was the early life of Christ [The Childhood of Jesus]. And then I read a book that I liked a lot, which is called Brooklyn by Colm Tóibín.

Who's your favorite living artist?

That's a tough question. I would say my favorite living artist is Cildo Meireles.

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