

Acts of Symbiosis

A Literary Analysis of the Work of Rogelio Salmona and Alvar Aalto

Havik, Klaske

Publication date

2017

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Montreal Architectural Review

Citation (APA)

Havik, K. (2017). Acts of Symbiosis: A Literary Analysis of the Work of Rogelio Salmona and Alvar Aalto. *Montreal Architectural Review*, 4, 41-60. <http://mar.mcgill.ca/article/view/31>

Important note

To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable). Please check the document version above.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download, forward or distribute the text or part of it, without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license such as Creative Commons.

Takedown policy

Please contact us and provide details if you believe this document breaches copyrights. We will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Acts of Symbiosis: A Literary Analysis of the Work of Rogelio Salmons and Alvar Aalto

Klaske Havik

Delft University of Technology

Abstract

Presenting a double reading of architectural spaces, this article aims to bring together works of the architects Alvar Aalto and Rogelio Salmons and identify some shared themes in their architectural approaches. While using literary description as a mode of architectural investigation, it shows how the use of writing in architectural analysis can bring to the surface some of the more ephemeral aspects of architecture, such as embodied perception, memory and use - aspects that contribute to the very meaning of architecture but that are hard to describe in purely factual terms.

By experiential descriptions, the article will give an account of two projects of each architect, based on my own repeated visits to these buildings over the past two decades. The projects include *Centro Gaitan* in Bogotá, the *Virgilio Barco Library* in Bogotá, Colombia (Rogelio Salmons, 2001), *Helsinki University of Technology* and the *Viipuri City Library* of Alvar Aalto. The comparative descriptions will show that the resonances between the work of both architects goes beyond their similar use of brick and their preferences for certain geometries, but rather concern the humanism that lay at the basis of both their architectural practices, a human interest translated into form, materiality and light.

Despite having operated their practices in the very different cultural, geographical and climatological conditions of Finland and Colombia, the approaches of Aalto and Salmons in regard to the experiential, material and social aspects of architecture seem rather similar.

The Colombian architect Rogelio Salmons had worked in Europe with Le Corbusier and, as a young architect, had met Alvar Aalto in the post-war years. A first glance of his impressive brick buildings in Bogotá, Colombia, built between the late 1960's and the early years of the 21st century, evokes a reverberance of some of the architectural features of Aalto's architecture, which seem to have adapted to the Colombian climate and landscape in a natural way. The brick walls, along with almost woven textures that at times allow sound and light to move between spaces, so present in many of Salmons's works, project a strong resonance with Aalto's brick explorations such as in his experimental house in Muuratsalo, Finland, while the fan-shaped auditoriums and the circular roof-lights of Salmons's public buildings indeed remind of Aalto's most prominent institutional works. Despite having operated their practice in very different cultural, geographical and climatological conditions in Finland and Colombia, the approaches of Aalto and Salmons in regard to the experiential, material and social aspects of architecture seem rather similar. I will give an account of two projects of each architect, based on my own repeated visits to these buildings over the past two decades. The projects include *Centro Gaitán* and the *Virgilio Barco* Library in Bogotá by Rogelio Salmons and the *Helsinki University of Technology* and the *Viipuri City Library* of Alvar Aalto.

In Summer 2003, on the occasion of being awarded the prestigious Alvar Aalto Medal, the Colombian architect Rogelio Salmons presented a lecture at the Aalto symposium in Jyväskylä, Finland. His was a plea for an architecture that “must establish a symbiotic relationship between its existential, cultural, geographic and historic needs”¹. Especially facing the large societal problems of war and poverty that have been challenged Colombia in the past decades, the responsibility of architecture to provide meaning to the everyday life of people becomes all an “absolute necessity”. As one of the attendants of the lecture at the time, I was particularly struck by the strong conviction that architecture as “the most useful of trades and the most humane of arts”², has the task of providing a meaningful environment for people's lives, even in severe conditions. Suddenly, the design of architectural details, the choice of materiality, and the working with light were not just artistic explorations but real and important contributions to a meaningful appreciation of life, despite everything else. And I understood that the resonances between the work of both architects went beyond their similar use of brick and their preferences for certain geometries: it was the humanism that formed the basis of both their architectural practices, a human interest translated into form, materiality and light.

While being embedded in modern discussions and aware of the avant-garde of their time - Aalto as a rising international figure with his contributions to the world fair in New York in 1930, Salmons as apprentice of Le Corbusier in the 1950's, and in Colombia in the 1960's, a key figure in the architectural scene—both architects sought a deep relationship with their local geography, climate and traditions. Salmons, in his before-mentioned lecture, regarded architecture as a social responsibility; Aalto similarly considered architecture a service providing qualitative space to residents. As Finnish architect Kristian Gullichsen (who, as son of Aalto's clients for Villa Mairea, grew up in the midst of Aalto's architecture) stated, empathy was at stake in Aalto's work in multiple ways: "an emphasis on the physical and psychological comfort of the occupants, the ambition to balance the abstract with familiar motifs, and a tactile sensitivity for materials and textures"³.

While the approaches of Salmons and Aalto have many aspects in common, and the acknowledgement of the Aalto medal witnesses a recognition of the familiarity between the architects at least from the side of the Finnish jury,⁴ the links between their work have never been thoroughly studied—at least I have not found any scholarly articles about their mutual influence.⁵ Strangely enough, even in the writing of key architectural historian Kenneth Frampton who knew the work of both architects, the resonances between their works was not mentioned. In Frampton's article about the legacy of Aalto, Salmons is not mentioned at all,⁶ while in his later article about the work of Salmons, Aalto was absent as well.⁷ With this contribution, I will identify some of their common threads, which go beyond the mere similarity of their formal and material language, and will do so by merging architectural analysis and literary writing.

Comparative Literary Description as a Mode of Architectural Investigation

In his address at the Aalto Symposium, held in Jyväskylä's university auditorium designed by Alvar Aalto, Rogelio Salmons spoke about the symbiotic relationship between architecture and its existential, cultural and geographical environment. He pondered as well a number of more concrete symbioses that he as architect tried to address: architecture-landscape, silhouettes- transparencies, stone – water, the rain- the sun..."⁸ Such pairs of notions, related to the perception of architecture, and sometimes to specific temporalities of experience (the rain-the sun, for instance) different but in relation to one another and are hard to express in conventional analytical terms. As I argued earlier⁹, the traditional tools of architectural research, often foregrounding rational and formal modes of thinking, fail to address the fundamental ambiguities of architecture, such as the seemingly opposite notions subject-object, author-reader and reality-imagination; fields of tension which relate to the questions of how architecture is experienced, used and imagined. By developing a literary way of writing as a mode of architectural investigation, such ambiguities can be addressed. Literary writing deals almost by definition with subjective experience and may give objects

identity; it experiments with the interactivity between the writer who initiates a story and the reader who co-produces it; it balances between a given reality and the imagination of other possible situations. Therefore, in this investigation of the work of two architects who sought to offer through their buildings a heightened perception of places and an active symbiosis between different phenomena, I will seek to use literary language to highlight aspects of embodied perception, memory and everyday spatial practice.

Two pairs of projects of Aalto and Salmona will be described from an experiential perspective, from my personal recollection of repeated visits to the buildings. First, I will discuss the role of time in the architectural experience of the Aalto's City Library in Viipuri, Russia, and Salmona's Centro Gaitán in Bogotá. Both buildings were in a state of ruin at the time of my visits. Having considered the embodied experience of these works, I will move to the second set of projects: the main building of Helsinki University of Technology by Aalto and the Virgilio Barco library by Salmona, again in Bogotá. From these projects, the social dimension of their works will be highlighted, and I will discuss the role of craftsmanship in their works. Finally, the interrelationship between the social and the experiential will come to the fore, and it will lead us back to the first symbiosis proposed by Salmona: architecture and landscape.

The Experience of Time Past: The Ruins of the Viipuri Library and Centro Gaitán.

I: Viipuri City Library, Viipuri / Vyborg, Russia (Alvar Aalto 1927-35)

I visited the Viipuri library in 1998, when I was a student of architecture in Helsinki. It was probably early March, and the landscape we crossed by bus was still partly covered in snow. We first visited Aalto's Vuoksenniska church in Imatra, at the Eastern border of Finland. A silent setting, trees in snow, the white church with its roof as heavy wings. Inside: the light, the white, the harmony of repeating shapes. When approaching the border of Russia, the landscape changed and the temperature rose, the snow became brownish, partly melting. Viipuri is a town that used to belong to Finland before the second World War and became part of Russia afterwards. In the 1930's, when Viipuri was a Finnish thriving harbour town with green esplanades and a museum at the seaside, Alvar Aalto built its city library. It marked Aalto's transition from a classicist architecture (still visible in the competition entry) to modern architecture with his already recognisable own signature; the wooden details, such as the curved ceiling of the auditorium, and the circular roof lights illuminating the reading room from above. But in 1998, the library had not seen any maintenance for decades and was almost falling apart, though still in use.

City after war, after silence or cold
nothing remains but all reminds
of what was, still is present, but old.
Stones remain, the streets,
and people still walk along the esplanade
sell apples at the market, stare over frozen sea.

In this old world: the library.
She enters the slender doors
in glass and steel. Her boots
leave meltwater on the floor.

She climbs the stair towards the reading room
her hand on the wooden railing
following its bends. She enters.

Three buckets in corners, the books still on shelves.
The ceiling leaks water and abundant light
falls on the reading tables
and the trodden floor.

Though damp and cold embraces her,
leads her eyes, her steps
to the next flight of stairs
and invites her to sit down
and read, alone.

II: Cultural Center Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in Bogotá (Rogelio Salmons, 1980-1989, unfinished)

Near the historical city center of Bogotá, in a residential neighborhood, lies a modern ruin. Built as a place for remembrance, the memorial for the local politician Gaitán was never finished due to a disagreement between the architect and the client. The building was conceived as a cultural center, archive and memorial for Gaitán, who was assassinated in 1948, an event which ignited violence in Colombia for decades to come. The building was designed as brick volume, embracing a series of diagonal courtyards. The series of connected patios and the roof terrace at the eastern edge of the building frame the mountains as if the densely built urban fabric around it does not exist. The geometry of the building, with triangular shapes and steps, bears resemblance to pre-Hispanic architectural figures.¹⁰

I remembered the junction between the busy Caracas road and the Arzobispo river from my first visit to Bogota in 2001. At that time the road was still full of colorful busses and their dark grey exhaust fumes. At the junction, a patch of green on the slopes of the small river—a creek, rather—some vendors had displayed cow skins, trying to sell them to pedestrians crossing the street. By the time of my next visit, some 14 years later, the buses had been replaced by modern ones, the Transmilenio transport system, which while first having greatly improved mobility in the city, had become exhausted within the fast-growing city.

One vendor used the same spot as before, the small oasis in the hectic city life. I had arrived with a group of international students from TU Delft, searching to understand Colombian architecture as well as the specific conditions for architectural practice in this particular cultural, political and geological environment.

We turn left from the big street and follow the creek. And immediately we are away from the rush: the lush green river bedding, trees, on the side two- to three-storey buildings. Turn right again. A quiet street, small single-family houses with woodcut balconies, some with graffiti, not all of them in use. Then the brick wall, and a steel fence around it. We wait in front of the fence until a guard comes and opens. We enter. A few steps, then the small, well maintained garden below us, at the very center of the building. Carefully manicured, intense green ivy plants climb over the half-high brick walls embracing the court, in the middle the circular grave with a red rose shrub, in blossom. Around this small well-maintained glimpse of human care, the bare concrete arcades offer a grey and dilapidated decor, and behind them, the brick structure with its large openings offers views to other spaces, all open to the elements. A sad and uncanny atmosphere, merging carefulness and decay, monumentality and uncertainty.

We move up the ramps and stairs, obliquely crossing the building, and find ourselves between the city and the mountain, in something simultaneously old and new. Some floors and stairs cannot be accessed because of missing parts and railings; furniture is stored in corners, a cupboard, a pile of chairs, lying as a colorful work of disorderly art in the monochrome building. Light enters though the absent roof and through the finely detailed circular openings in the wall, connecting rooms in visual axes. And with our visual perspectives, temporalities start to merge: we are here, today in 2015, we are here, connected by the small court below to a life that ended in 1948. Between these moments lie the painful decades of war and poverty, and we see the resilience of the city, the mountains that remained the same. We are here, and we seem to be connected to much older landscapes, through the shapes, squares, stairs, axes, through the stone rising from the land. We move, diagonally, up to the roof, across the courtyards, across time.

Moving towards and through both buildings, touched by the passing of time, stripped from the conventional layer of maintenance, cleanliness and—in the case of the Gaitán center—daily use, arises an awareness of the one very essential aspect of architectural experience: the sheer movement through space, in time. The experience recalls Bernard Tschumi's reading of the Villa Savoye in Paris in a similar state, arguing that perhaps the most architectural aspect about the building was the state of decay it was in. In "Architecture and Transgression", Tschumi describes how his visit, as a student in 1965, to the dilapidated near-ruin of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoy revealed for him the essence of architecture¹¹. For Tschumi, the state of the building revealed the power of decay, the vulnerability of architecture, the naked essence of the project. For me, these moments when the poor condition of the buildings of Aalto and Salmona was paired with a sense of presence that the spaces still seemed to transpire, were equally impressive.

In my description of the buildings I chose a poetic approach, bringing into play phenomenological aspects such as bodily perception and memory. This way of writing foregrounds sensory-perception bodily movement through space, and evokes some kind of melancholy. In Viipuri, the details came very prominently to the fore: the staircase with the hand railing, the stairs in the reading room, the light falling through the roof lights. Further, the movement through space was clearly a vertical movement, the different levels connected by open stairs. In Bogotá, the composition of the courtyards and the framing of the views were most prominent in the description, while the geometry and the use of brick generated the association of being in history. Indeed, as Ricardo Castro eloquently brought to the fore in his text *Mnemosina*, referring to the ancient Greek goddess of memory, mother of all arts, Salmona never stopped to stress the importance of history in his projects¹². In both projects, the architects have established a contrast between a rather simple exterior form and a more complex routing through the building. In Aalto's case, the section with the different interconnected floors gives way to an inviting experience, and one room leads in a natural way to the other. In Salmona's Centro Gaitán, the diagonal composition of the sequence of courtyards, paired with the ramps and stairs, creates a more complex, oblique movement through the building than one would expect from the exterior volume.

Of course, as argued by Böhme, atmospheric experience requires both subject and object, and is influenced by external conditions.¹³In Centro Gaitán, the fact that we were with a group may have generated the powerful experience of the movement through the building, as the moving figures started to populate the otherwise empty built landscape in a scenic way. In Viipuri, the general state of decay of the city was amplified by the dirt of melting snow, and by the recognition of spatial figures (the esplanade, the market square), that evoked images of a vibrant, 'Fin de Siècle' urbanity. The Viipuri Library has recently been fully renovated on the initiative of the Alvar Aalto foundation. I have not visited it since, but cherish the memory of the power of its architecture, despite or maybe because of its state of decay.

Textured Social Scenes: Craftsmanship and Commonality in Buildings of Knowledge

III: Main Building of Helsinki University of Technology in Otaniemi (Alvar Aalto 1965-1969)

It was winter when I first arrived in Otaniemi in 1998 as a student of architecture. Red brick buildings in snow on a forested peninsula surrounded by endless ice. My legs threw long shadows in the snow, projected by the low winter sun. The entrance to the architecture school had a small canopy where some students and staff stood smoking, despite the cold. The doors were steel frames with glass, and double door handles, a high and a low one, of curved copper. The architecture department was in a low rectangular volume, one of a series that lead to the main building where the auditorium and the student restaurant were located. In between the volumes, always a half-open courtyard with snow. Inside, walls were partly covered with battens, painted white. The columns were covered with smooth white tiles, and a stair led up to the offices and the department library. The voices of students, of ourselves, discussing our projects, chatting over tasteless coffee from the machine, a small lecture room on the right where the architecture lectures were given. I recall lectures by the Danish office Vandkunsten about collective spaces, and by William Curtis, whom I admired for his capacity to establish connections between art and architecture, linking different geographies and cultures in architectural analysis.¹⁴

We would walk towards the main building, indoors, moving from volume to volume through the corridors. Passing the rooms of the engineering students, and entering the main hall. Again, the copper door handles, and double doors to keep the cold outside. The same columns, a similar stair, but larger. The curved white counter of the wardrobe, then the stair, bending upwards, to the auditorium. Leaving the classrooms, the offices, the corridors behind, we opened the big doors and entered the lecture hall. I don't recall what we learned in this room, or who spoke to us, but I learned how the light falls and bends through the curves, and how the technologically most advanced room of the University of Technology, was also the most natural one, simultaneously opaque and crystal clear, silent and moving.

It is summer when I step out of the bus again, and stand again on the open green in front of the university. The main auditorium in front of me, the lower brick volumes on my right-hand side. The courtyard's green, the field sparsely populated with some students and staff, walking towards the buildings. The landscape steps up to the main buildings in low, wide terraces. In our approaching the building, the terraces become shorter, the steps a bit higher, turning to stone. Students are sitting on the steps in small groups, eating their lunch, faces in the sun. The landscape becomes building, from field into an amphitheater, and then the building rises, the steps get steeper, stonier, grow into the roof of the auditorium and start to open, providing slits for the sunlight to get in.

IV: Virgilio Barco Public Library, Bogotá, Colombia (Rogelio Salmons 1999-2001)

The Virgilio Barco library is part of a series of big urban transformation projects that took place in Bogotá around the turn of the 21st century, in an attempt to overcome some of the serious socio-economic challenges that had haunted the South American city for decades. First, an ambitious infrastructural program was set up, the new transport system of Transmilenio providing quick bus connections which made large parts of the city accessible also for the large part of the population who could not afford private transport. Second, a number of urban neighborhoods was given new impulse by providing parks and cultural programs such as cultural centers and libraries. Thirdly, attention was given to the “furnishing” of public space. The library was one of the largest projects within the second line of initiatives. At a former building-material dump, a large park had been given shape, with the library as physical and programmatic centerpiece, and the green Andes mountain range as a backdrop.

Taking a walk around the library¹⁵

Take 1. Saturday, around noon. After heavy rain.

Character: Heka, Jack Russell, 2 years old

Heka gets out of the car and takes the first hill as a crazy rocket might, not minding the wet grass streaking her belly. Immediately, she disappears out of sight. Catalina climbs the steep hill, moving the camera upwards, (next frame: overlooking part of the park) and finds her, provoking another dog to play. A couple, probably belonging to the other dog, walk on one of the lower grounds.

Take 2. 12:45, the pond.

Characters: 6 photography students.

In the circular concrete pit below, the pond. A class of photography students tries to find the right perspective to capture the long lines, the concrete cuts in the landscape, from the pond to the library in the distance. Another focuses on the reflection of the long bamboo grass in the water. Catalina chooses the higher edge and follows the line of the bending concrete wall. Serenity of the geometrical shapes. . . broken by (or enlivened by) graffiti on all plain parts of concretes. The sounds of students talking amplified by the enclosing walls, carried over water to her spot, above.

Take 3. 13:30, the pond next to the library

Characters: Heka, library visitors.

Chasing her toy, Heka jumps around in the low water of the linear pond, shaking her skin when she gets out, splashing drops around. A repeating sequence—she moves through the water, back and forth, tireless. Passing people stop to watch, laugh, walk on. In the background, the closed brick wall of the

library, rising high up from the ground as an ancient, pre-Hispanic clay cylinder. On one side, the cylinder opens; between the wall and the water a small terrace, people drinking coffee, a glass door, people entering the library, a concrete bridge in the sky connecting the cylinder with another, lower volume, fan-shaped. Here, the same bricks, but in another pattern, opened; sounds of instruments and children's singing voices come through.

Take 4. 14:00, on the roof

Characters: guard, children, a couple.

The roof of the circular volume is made of bricks, curving brick dikes lead the eye to the mountains. A path on the roof, along the curve. A girl, about 20 years old, black and white dotted dress, takes poses at the railing. Her boyfriend makes photographs, of her, with the sunlit mountain in the background. The sound of running feet. Slowly, Catalina moves the camera from the landscape view back to the center of the circle, the middle of the roof. Children, chasing each other on the roof, to the steps of the open-air theater. A guard comes after them, tells them to slow down. She moves the lens, continues slowly, focusing again on the landscape. A full circle: enclosed space of the roof dikes, then the mountain, the couple, back inside, the children, and then landscape again.

Take 5. 15:00 The reading room.

She stands outside the reading room, before the curved glass wall. The roof-lights in the ceiling reflect in the curve, the shadows, lights and reflections play a game before her lens. Layers. The glass, the light, the people, reading, moving through space, slowly. The colors and layers fade, it all becomes one.

The descriptions of the two buildings of knowledge - a university building and a library - have been written from the user perspective, bringing to the fore the interrelationship between the social and the experiential. They seek to evoke the spatial and material manifestation of practices of the "commons": where do people meet, which place, practice and activities do they share? And what is the role of architectural details in this perspective? The University building of Aalto has been described from the point of view of a student arriving at the architecture department, using the building in daily practice in winter time, walking its corridors, sitting in its lecture rooms; and revisiting it again, later, in summer, having a more distant look, seeing the building less in terms of its daily practice but seeing it as it takes part in the landscape from which it arises. The Virgilio Barco library has been described from the perspective of a filmmaker, framing the scenes of everyday life in and around the library. The text highlights the role of activities, movements and moments in the experience of architecture, by describing different scenes outside and inside the library, first wandering through the park on a Saturday morning, then approaching the building, and eventually being on the roof and in the reading room. It shows how the library has become more than its program, more than a collection of books: it has become a social place in the city, a place to spend time, walk your dog, have an ice-cream, make photographs, lie in the grass, sit on the terrace, meet friends and, eventually, visit the library.

In both descriptions, the depicted social scenes are textured: there is a strong sense of material and texture in each of the architectural experiences. In Aalto's university, the contrast between the brick and the snow outside is the first image that comes across, while in the transition to the interior and to the auditorium, other materials and textures are introduced: the copper door handles, the curved counter, the rounded tiles on the columns. In Salmona's case, brick plays a more interactive role in the relationship between inside and outside, as the half-open brick walls at the outside of the building transmit the sounds of the indoor activities. Different patterns of brick appear in different places: the outer walls, the edges, the roof. At first sight, the use of brick in Salmona's work might be taken straight from Aalto's abundant examples, not only the university in Helsinki but most likely Aalto's own "experimental house" in Muuratsalo, Finland, where Aalto ventured into multiple brick patterns and tiles. However, even if Aalto's buildings might have been a source of inspiration, there are more locally and socially grounded explanations for Salmona's material choices. In an interview in 2007—just a year before he passed away—he stated that "in the savanna of Bogotá ... brick is a material common to the region, and its manufacture employs a great number of people. It is an economic and efficient material that has created an identity for the city."¹⁶ Salmona, learning from and working with local craftsmen, took the development of brick patterns and details as a serious part of his architectural practice.

Finally, the university building in Helsinki and the library in Bogotá lead us back to the first symbiosis proposed by Salmona: architecture and landscape. In both projects, the building is in symbiosis with the landscape: growing from it, framing it, coping with the climate and serving as a mediator between people and the world around them. Here are buildings that grow from the landscape and interact with it. Perhaps this is what Salmona meant when referring to a "terratemporal" architecture: an architecture of the earth, and of time. It was in this context that he also referred to the influence of Aalto upon his work, while simultaneously acknowledging the importance of the vernacular traditions: "I consciously try to make a "terratemporal" architecture to support myself in a tradition. This includes the great masters of architecture—Le Corbusier, Aalto, and Kahn—as well as local traditions that all have their respective presence in each project".¹⁷ From my own readings of the works of both architects, as I have tried to convey in the brief fragments above, the resonance between their works goes beyond the mere formal and material similarity. The true symbiosis of their approaches is that between humans and nature, between architecture as a social service and architecture as a response to local landscapes, climates and material traditions.

Images



Figure 1. Alvar Aalto, Viipuri City Library, Entrance hall. (Photo by author, 1998)



Figure 2. Alvar Aalto, Viipuri City Library, Staircase. (Photo by author, 1998)



Figure 3. Alvar Aalto, Viipuri City Library, Reading room. (Photo by author, 1998)

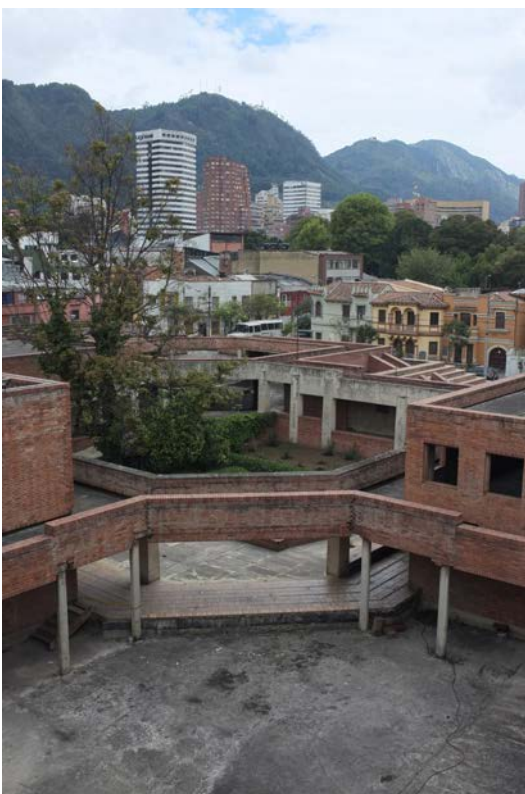


Figure 4. View of the Centro Gaitán in Bogotá, three courtyards in the diagonal axis. (Photo by author, 2015)



Figure 5. Rogelio Salmona, Centro Gaitán, crossing the building obliquely. (Photo by author, 2015)



Figure 6. Centro Gaitán, the well-maintained courtyard with the grave of Gaitán. (Photo by author, 2015)



Figure 7. Rogelio Salmons, Centro Gaitán, Detail. (Photo by author, 2015)



Figure 8. Alvar Aalto, University Campus Otaniemi, Helsinki. Landscape, stepping up to the main auditorium. (Courtesy of the Alvar Aalto Foundation)



Figure 9. Alvar Aalto, University Campus, Main auditorium, interior. (Courtesy of the Alvar Aalto Foundation)



Figure 10. Alvar Aalto, University main building, interior hall. (Courtesy of the Alvar Aalto Foundation)



Figure 11. Rogelio Salmona, Virgilio Barco Park, Bogotá, the circular pond. (Photo by Sebastiaan Veldhuisen, 2016)



Figure 12. Rogelio Salmona, Virgilio Barco Library, side of the library. (Photo by Sebastiaan Veldhuisen, 2016)



Figure 13. Rogelio Salmona, Virgilio Barco Library, roof and view of the Andes. (Photo by Sebastiaan Veldhuisen, 2016)



Figure 14. Rogelio Salmona, Virgilio Barco Library, reflections: the reading room. (Photo by Sebastiaan Veldhuisen, 2016)

Notes

- 1 Rogelio Salmona, "Between the Butterfly and the Elephant" in Mikko Heikkinen (ed.) *Elephant & Butterfly, Permanence and Chance in Architecture*. Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2004, p. 17.
- 2 Ibidem.
- 3 Kristian Gullichsen, Preface to Peter Reed (ed.) *Alvar Aalto. Between Humanism and Materialism*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1998, p. 10.
- 4 The jury of the Alvar Aalto Medal 2003 consisted of Kristian Gullichsen, Harri Hautajärvi, Aimo Murtomäki, Pekka Pakkala, Peter Zumthor, and Louisa Hutton.
- 5 At the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá and Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, students have reflected on the relationship between the two architects.
- 6 Kenneth Frampton, "The Legacy of Alvar Aalto: Evolution and Influence" in *Alvar Aalto. Between Humanism and Materialism*, Peter Reed (ed.), New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1998, pp. 118-140.
- 7 Kenneth Frampton, in *A+U 450 Special Feature: Rogelio Salmona*, Tokyo: A+U Publishing, 2008.
- 8 Ibid, p. 20.
- 9 See for a more extensive discussion: Klaske Havik *Urban Literacy, Reading and Writing Architecture* (Rotterdam: NAI010 publishers, 2014).
- 10 The relationship between the composition of the building and the role of memory was explored in the master's thesis of Mauricio Salazar Valenzuela, *Lugarers dentro de lugares. El rito de la Memoria en la composición arquitectónica. Cultural Center Jorge Eliécer Gaitán: Rogelio Salmona*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, 2012.
- 11 Bernard Tschumi, "Advertisements for Architecture" / "Architecture and Transgression", in Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1996) pp. 64, 73.
- 12 Ricardo L. Castro, *Rogelio Salmona*, Bogotá: Villegas Editoriales 1998, p. 18.
- 13 Gernot Böhme *Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space*, in Klaske Havik, Gus Tielens et. al. OASE#91 *Building Atmosphere with Peter Zumthor and Juhani Pallasmaa*, Rotterdam: nai010, 2013, pp. 21-32.
- 14 Lectures in Otaniemi, Spring 1998. Curtis was also present in Jyväskylä at the event in 2003 in which Salmona received his Aalto medal. There, Curtis made a heartfelt address to all the international architects present, to engage politically and to take responsibility for our changing society.
- 15 Written after two subsequent visits to the building in October 2015 and April 2016 (and previous visits to many of Salmona's works in Colombia). Character inspired by filmmaker Catalina Maria Sandoval and her dog Heka.

- 16 Ken Tadashi Oshima and Oscar Arenales-Vergara, *Interview with Rogelio Salmona, April 2007, Bogotá, Colombia*. in *A+U 450 Special Feature: Rogelio Salmona*, Tokyo: A+U Publishing, 2008, p. 14.
- 17 Ken Tadashi Oshima and Oscar Arenales-Vergara, *Interview with Rogelio Salmona, April 2007, Bogotá, Colombia*. in *A+U 450 Special Feature: Rogelio Salmona*, Tokyo: A+U Publishing, 2008, p. 13.

About the Author

Dr. Klaske Havik is Associate Professor of Architecture, at Delft University of Technology and Visiting Professor of Architecture in Tampere, Finland. Her work relates architectural and urban questions to literary language. Her book *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture* (2014) proposes a literary approach to architecture and urbanism. Other publications include the edited volumes *Writingplace: Investigations in Architecture and Literature* (2016) and *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (2009). As editor of architecture journal OASE, she published issues such as OASE#98 *Narrating Urban Landscapes*, OASE#91 *Building Atmosphere* (2013), and OASE#70 *Architecture and Literature* (2007). Havik's literary work has appeared in Dutch poetry collections and literary magazines.