Clearwater Revival
Public baths and sewage treatment plant, Cerro de Pasco, Peru

Main author
Boris Lefevre, architect, Marseille, France

Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury

Located in a contaminated body of water – formerly known as “the lake to drink” – in the city of Cerro de Pasco in Peru, the new construction offers the unprecedented need to inhabitants for washing themselves in clean, potable water. Combining a sewage treatment plant with baths and 400 shower cabins, the design is treated as a well-crafted and beautifully designed monument in the lake, albeit one satisfying basic functions desperately needed by the city population. The project’s ambition to provide both clean water as well as a place to bathe is a response to the wasteful use of an existing resource by ruthless industrial exploitation. Though poetic in its architectural expression, the design’s political message cannot be overlooked, namely, to treat both the natural environment and humans with greatest respect.

The project’s multiple agendas caught the attention of the jury, namely, to provide a municipal facility for the treatment of polluted water as well as one for people to simply wash themselves. The jury furthermore appreciated the idea to use residual solid waste – a byproduct of sewage treatment – as an energy source to heat the water used in the public bath. Although conceived as a machine in the midst of an environment under threat, the building nonetheless aspires to be more than a piece of infrastructure, for it offers as much of a social gathering space within the city as it valorizes water as a collective good – an architecture giving tribute the value of water as a collective resource to be cherished.

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Boris Lefevre, architect, Marseille, France

Project data
Project group: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: City of Cerro de Pasco
Project background: Research project

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