An ecological approach to archaeological sites, Pontevedra, Spain

Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury

This project addresses archaeological sites as whole environments far beyond the excavated artifact. A series of fortified Galician settlements in Pontevedra are being redesigned for visitor access. The project proposes the reinstatement of the vegetation from Roman times when the ruins were inhabited. Cruciform posts are set on the same grid used for excavation, the archaeological method. The same posts provide audio tracks telling histories, give written information, and contain lighting. A series of paths leads the visitor through the landscape and between the poles from site to site. These layers of intervention – landscape, grid, and path – produce a rich context for archaeological contemplation.

Creating a simulacrum of the Galician-Roman landscape around the artifacts, the project immerses the visitor in another world. The jury was fascinated by the evocative drawings that clearly articulate the design intention. Instead of focusing on the ruins as objects separated from their context, the project re-embeds them within a whole environment. It creates complexity from simple, easily-achievable means.

Statements on the sustainability of the project by the author

An integral ecological approach to the recovery of the Galician-Roman archaeological sites

The Galician-Roman archaeological sites of Pontevedra have a high scientific, tourism and socioeconomic value whose recovery and revaluation must be addressed in an integral way. Through a public competition, the local authorities together with the government have selected this project, which aims to articulate a scientific understanding of Galica in antiquity, socially recovering patrimonial spaces and helping to reverse depopulation promoting non-seasonal high quality tourism. AGi architects have worked from a strategic point of view that enhances an adequate understanding of each site as fragments of a Galician history, transferring ad hoc knowledge for each of the sites, while integrating them into a unique network for the interpretation of the Galician landscape.

Natural and traditional techniques to restore and maintain an ancient environment

The project understands the human and the natural as a system that works jointly. The sites will follow strategic lines of action that include the cleaning and excavation of the settlements, the establishment of conservation methods, its signalisation, diffusion and promotion, and its incorporation into a museum, both in a virtual plane, and in a physical one, for which a guide system has been proposed.

Slopes, excavations and plant species will be restored, according to the “ways of doing” of the natural and geological native environment together with the building operability and inherited local techniques. A vegetated intervention will help to create a new reading of the different local landscape units: closed forest, open wild pastures, scrublands, and vegetated and rock slopes.

Pikes, Grids, and Quadrant; Sound and Light; Paths and Soils: amplifying experience

Museography is based in an orthogonal mesh similar to the archaeological methodology of excavation by strata. At the vertices of the mesh, the generating element appears: the Pike, which narrates the visitor’s experience as well as to creating an alternative visual landscape closer to the world of the uncertain, the unknown and the buried. The pikes become witnesses that tell the historical story of the past through sound. Pavements consist of natural materials related to the territory, having different densities and harshness, colors and textures enhancing perception. This experience is completed with a lighting proposal organized in two levels: a horizontal plane of lighting displayed on the floor in the form of occasional photo-luminescent paintings and a constellation of spotlights.

Main author

Joaquin Pérez-Goicoechea, architect, AGi architects, Madrid, Spain

Project data

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