

INFORMALITY AND DISSENT.

Architectures of self-sufficiency in rural America

David Franco, Associate Professor Clemson University

The aspirational domesticity that characterizes rich societies—with its cultural uniformity, its oversized houses, and its material excesses—, not only determines how we build and manage our built environment now. It also contains the ideals that will probably shape the post-urbanity triggered by the pandemic fall-out. One of the most common features of any alternative—and more sustainable—lifestyle includes a DIY ethos that many see as a position of resistance. The ‘countercultural bricoleur’ from the hippie culture of the 60’s 70’s—maybe the most influential figure of its kind—, embraced such ethos as part of a larger utopian aspiration. In contrast, this paper studies a cultural streak of dissentive self-sufficiency that emanates from the rural poor in the US, being shaped by social class and inequality rather than cultural identity. The American rural poor embrace informality and scarcity within a society of abundance and consumption, which automatically forces them into a position of dissent. Spatial practices such as informal farming, junk accumulation, or unregulated self-construction, follow a radical principle of resource efficiency but, also are perceived as social markers of poverty. This paper explores the ugliness and disorder of rural informality as architectural qualities from two parallel perspectives. First, as a deromanticized reinterpretation of the rural vernacular, which finds its expression in different ways, from the traditional recycled gardens built by Southern African Americans to the messy material culture of the rural trailer trash. Second, as a renewed look at domesticity as the main stage for sustainable practices, reclaiming the home as a unit of production—not consumption— towards a life-serving, rather than extractive, economy. Both perspectives constitute expressions of dissent against the established order that, as I will explore in this paper, may broaden, and possibly complicate, our current understanding about the politics of informality in architecture.

Keywords: Informal Housing, Domesticity, Rural Poor, Dissent, Self-Sufficiency

Curriculum Vitae

David Franco, PhD.

Associate Professor. Clemson University School of Architecture, Lee Hall 2-311 francos@clemson.edu

Academic Degrees

- 2016 PhD in Architectural Theory. Escuela Politécnica Superior USP CEU, Madrid.
- 2010 Master of Advanced Studies on Architectural Research ETSAM, Univ. Politécnica, Madrid.
- 2001 MArch. Master's Degree in Architecture ETSAM, Universidad Politécnica, Madrid

Academic Appointments and Administration Positions

- 2020 Associate Professor of Architecture *School of Architecture, Clemson University.*
- 2014 Assistant Professor of Architecture. *School of Architecture, Clemson University.*
- 2013 Assistant Professor of Architecture *College of Art & Architecture, University of Idaho.*
- 2012 Visiting Professor of Architecture. *Escuela de Arquitectura Universidad Europea de Madrid*
- 2009 Director of the Architecture Thesis Program. *Escuela Politécnica Superior USP CEU, Madrid.*
- 2008 Coordinator Third Year Arch. Design Studios. *Escuela Politécnica Superior USP CEU, Madrid.*
- 2006 Associate Professor of Architectural Design. *Escuela Politécnica Superior USP CEU, Madrid.*

Book Chapters

- 2020 'Rethinking Social Housing in Rural America', *Urban Histories: Cambridge Scholars Pub.*
- 2020 'Informality and Dissent', *Informality & Dissent. Routledge, New York, 2020.*
- 2018 'Architectural Pedagogy and Critique in the American Rural South', *ESNE, Madrid, 2018*
- 2018 'Tactical Urbanism and Social Authenticity', *Planning for AuthenticITY. Routledge, NY, 2017*
- 2016 'Details And Infiltrations of the Everyday', *Everyday Life/ Vida Cotidiana. ESNE, 2016.*
- 2014 'The Expanded Field of Fuctionalism', *Arquitectura Diez Lecciones Fundamentales, CEU, 2014.*
- 2012 'Connecting through shared spaces', *Ideas Changing. European Editions, Paris, 2012*
- 2012 'Explosion of new urban enclaves into multiple scales', *Inventing Urbanity. European Ed. 2012.*

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles (Selection)

- 2018 'The Brief Repoliticization of European Modern Architecture', *Bac Journal*, Univ. La Coruna.
- 2018 'The architect as political mediator', *Constelaciones #6 Academic Journal. Universidad SPCEU.*
- 2017 'Realism, Tactics and Spectacle', *RA International journal, 19th issue, Universidad de Navarra.*
- 2015 'Simulated scenography of the collective', *VLC Research Journal, vol2 nr1. Valencia, 2015.*
- 2014 'Everydayness, Subversion or Utopia', *Constelaciones Journal, nr 2, Madrid, 2014.*
- 2010 'Fiction, Mimetics and Landscape', *La Construcción del Paisaje. Academic Texts. ETSAM.*
- 2010 'The Architecture of Small Differences', *Academic Texts. ETSAM. Madrid, 2010.*

Peer-Reviewed Conference Papers (Recent Selection)

- 2018 'The transition between the formal and the informal'. *AMPS/Univ. Arizona, Tucson.*
- 2018 'Spatial informality and unhealthy lifestyles in the American rural south'. *Univ. of West England*
- 2018 'Dissent and Informal Occupation in the Rural South'. *SPSA Meeting, New Orleans.*
- 2017 'Unfolding the Spatial Politics of Rural America', *IAFOR International Conf. Barcelona.*
- 2017 'The Politics of Formal Complexity on Residential Architecture', *S.ARCH. Hong Kong.*
- 2017 'Pedagogy and Critical Research within the American Rural Suburbia', *ESNE, Madrid.*
- 2017 'The Spatial Politics of Scarcity in the Rural South', *SPSA Meeting, New Orleans*
- 2016 'Backyard Junk and Big Boxes', *ACSA Conference, Honolulu.*
- 2016 'The Architectural Invention of Working Class Memory' *Conf. Critical Heritage, Montreal.*

- 2016 'Suburban domesticity as a form of resistance', Arch., Media Politics and Society, Cyprus.
- 2016 'Architecture facing the real: Between trauma and the everyday', Arch. Research Center.
- 2015 'Constructing the Political Image of the Everyday', ACSA 'The Expanding Periphery', Toronto.
- 2015 'Propaganda, Reclamation or Critique', International Research Symp. Univ. Navarra, Feb'15
- 2014 'The Simulation of The Everyday as a Political Expression'. AMPS/ Woodbury Univ. LA.

Published Invited Journal Articles (Selection)

- 2013 *Collective Derives through a vast Waste-ground in Madrid.* in The UAW Book about Urban Awareness. Damdi Academic Series Seoul, 2013.
- 2012 *A mosaic of small utopies*, in 'Proyectar la Urbanidad'. Europan ESP.
- 2012 *Linking with uses.* Reconnections. Europan Publication. Paris.
- 2010 *The Byker Game* in Byker: Trust and Future. Newcastle University. Newcastle (UK), 2012.
- 2010 *La arquitectura de las pequeñas diferencias.* Arquitectos Magazine 188.
- 2008 David Franco and Pablo Martínez. *New Hybrid models for Madrid.* Hybrids II, A+T.
- 2005 *Survival Techniques.* Europan Norway Catalogue. Oslo, 2005.

Grants, Prizes, and Awards (Selection)

- 2017 *Robert Mills Professorship.* Clemson School of Architecture (\$12000)
- 2016 Completion Grant. URG. Clemson University (\$3000)
- 2016 *Grant Award.* Richard Pennell Research Program. 'Backyard Yard and Big Boxes' (\$5000)
- 2012 *Third Prize.* International Competition Auditorium and Arts Centre (EUR 3000).
- 2009 *Third Prize.* International Competition Accesible Sports Centre in Madrid (EUR 15000).
- 2006 *First Prize.* (Built). Ideas Competition for a Youth House Center. Santoña (EUR 25000).
- 2006 *Honorable Mention.* International Planning Competition Valleseco Coastal Area, Tenerife.
- 2006 *Iakov Chernikhov Award nomination.* Best Architecture Conceptual Practice.
- 2005 *Third Prize.* Two-Phase International Ideas Competition Palmones River (EUR 12000).
- 2003 *First Prize.* Europan 7: International Ideas Competition in Norway (EUR 12000).
- 2002 *Urban Scheme Prize.* International Competition 'Ciudad Levante', Cordoba (EUR 4000).
- 2001 *Second prize.* Europan 6: International Ideas Competition in Santander (EUR 12000).
- 1995 *First Prize.* International Ideas Competition Kulturbrücke'. Ponto Stiftung (EUR 10000)
- 1994 *Tempus Scholarship.* European Union funded International Exchange Program (EUR 8000)

Academic and Professional Service (Selection)

- 2016 Member of the Editorial Committee. Architecture_MPS Journal, UCL Press.
- 2015 Member of the Editorial Committee. Academic Journal Constelaciones Univ. San Pablo CEU.
- 2015 Graduate Fellowship Committee. Clemson University
- 2013 Tenure and Promotion Committee. Department of Architecture, University of Idaho
- 2012 Masters Exam Assessment juror. Bergen Arkitektthogskole. Norway. September 10-15, 2012.
- 2012 Bachelor Exam Assessment juror. Bergen Arkitektthogskole. Norway. August 27-31, 2012.
- 2012 Member of the Sustainability Lab. Dept. Architecture USPCEU Madrid.
- 2010 Scientific Committee Member. Europan Spain, Madrid.
- 2008 Master's Exam Assessment juror. Bergen Arkitektthogskole. Norway.
- 2007 Jury Member. International Competition. Europan Spain Session 9. (8 Sites).
- 2005 Technical Committee Me