

EARTHLY EMERGENCES: SPONTANEOUS ENTITIES

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Masses of trees, rocks, leaves, and trunks are involved and overwhelmed in the same motion, in the most vital and miraculous *continuum* of the human story: the place of living' acts as the landing place of a millennial journey. The house, in its broadest sense of the term, in this narration seems to allude to a double tendency: on the one hand it expresses its empathy with the landscape, in which man slows down to such an extent as to contrast the rhythms of contemporary society; on the other, it seems to alter the balance of nature to submit it to our needs. The house's theme is, of all themes, perhaps the most complex: we can come to think that everything is a house, even a forest, a museum or a place of worship. Just as happens in the Islamic religion where the word "mosque" derives from the Arabic *masjid*, with a literal meaning "place where one prostrates oneself" (before God); this word is recurrent in the Koran but in no case does it seem to refer to a new type of specifically Muslim building. The Koran states a rule addressed to all Muslims, of crucial importance for the architectural history of the mosque: the obligation of prayer as a private act, to such an extent that tradition states that there is a *masjid* wherever there is someone who prays.

In an editorial of *Domus* magazine, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, in the opening issue of the management writes:

I want to have a house that looks like me (in beauty). A house that resembles my humanity. [...] Let us all help each other find harmony between human measure and divine proportion (Rogers 1946, p. 3).

With the term "humanity," Rogers suggests everything that belongs to nature, to the origins of man, therefore alluding to an undefined, uncontaminated place that coincides with the ideal of paradise on earth. By applying to the theme of the "house" the same principle previously mentioned for the "mosque", *mutatis mutandis*, it can therefore be said that there is a house wherever there is a place that reflects one's soul, one's nature, ultimately a space that ennobles the man. Between the 1960s and 1970s, the union between the natural and the man-made landscape was brought into focus by the Spanish architect Miguel Fisac through twelve architectural episodes in the Balearic Islands in Mallorca. He explored the *Costa de los Pinos* following the Hotel Costa de la Luz commissioning in Santa Ponça in 1959, the first of the large complex of urbanization works. The main objective is to trace and stage the relationships that link the resources of the surrounding environment with the authorial narration that the creative process puts into shape. The numerous watercolors by Fisac – which portray Mallorca – show the attraction that

Miguel Fisac, *Earthly emergences*, photograph of the project area – seen from the water – of the single-family house for Antonio García Hidalgo in the Punta Rotja area along the Costa de los Pinos, Son Servera, Mallorca 1969.
Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac.



this landscape exerts on the designer's thinking. It is a landscape that coincides in all respects with the poetics of the "wilderness": a portion of territory, in a wild state, in which natural forces predominate.

He is convinced, like Thoreau, that the concept of *wilderness* is a treasure to be safeguarded rather than plundered. This is how nature is reflected in the drawing as a preparatory exercise to fully understand the roots of the place, even before giving shape to the project. In this panorama, the soil – custodian of experiences that time has left to settle – represents the first resource for the transformative action of the area. The single-family houses built in the municipality of Son Servera are divided into individual independent volumes arranged along the rocky edge of the coast, in favor of the pre-existing orography.

Each has a different privileged view that overlooks the sea.

The set of houses designed and built in the urbanization of *Costa de los Pinos* constitutes a suggestive field of experimentation for Fisac. Every single house embodies the form, the technique, and the rigorous limits of the topography and climate of the place (Ferrer Forés 2009, p. 17).

The supporting structure, for example, is made of *marés*, a limestone typical of the Balearic Islands historically used to construct both public and private buildings. The object of investigation of this complex reflection is the design – in the Punta Rotja area – of the house for Antonio García Hidalgo, an entrepreneur in the naval sector. Miguel Fisac in 1969, develops a singular idea that differs from the formal characteristics of the previous projects. The latter represents a "dreamed fantasy" by the architect, it is an idea of an "other space" that emerges from the earth, set among native crops. The project (which has never seen the light) abandons various unedited visions before assuming the physiognomy of *Terrarium*. Among the many design proposals by Fisac, two antithetical solutions emerge: the first, from 1966, corresponds to a rectangular plan rotated with respect to the orientation of the lot. An access leads to the small entrance that overlooks an internal square patio which leads to the living area and the dining room, separate from each other and slightly set back in front. In the second version, a few years later, the project takes on a radically different form with curved spaces and environments that revolve around elliptical patios. While maintaining the previous distribution and organization, Fisac proposes a completely new project. Borrowing the words of Bruno Zevi, it could represent a work of "intuitive imagination" (Zevi 1945, p. 66). The main element – from which the idea springs – is the large, pre-existing monumental staircase that leads from the area where the house should have been built to the beach below (Peris Sánchez 2016, p. 236). As can be seen from the project drawings, the wall delimits nature, closes,

Miguel Fisac, *Underlying sign, substratum*, detail photograph of the access ramp to the beach below the project area, Son Servera, Mallorca 1969.

Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac.



Miguel Fisac, *Terrarium*, *spontaneous entities*, photograph of Aleppo pine trunks and native vegetation of the Balearic Islands, Son Servera, Mallorca 1969. Courtesy Fundación Miguel Fisac.



becomes the primary act of architecture, content and container of the landscape and human life. To all intents and purposes, it constitutes a threshold, sometimes impenetrable, which arises as a sense of protection from everything that takes place outside it. There are no more volumes, facades, perspective hierarchies, privileged points of view, detachments between an “inside” and an “outside.”

The internal spaces of the house are projected, and the external ones are magnetized and absorbed.

The forms of the ground, intended as original data, orient the planimetric system and establish the trajectories of the routes. The curved walls, orchestrated according to a geometry bound by the position of the pre-existing trees, tangle the plant elements evoking that imaginary that refers to the formal synthesis of a *terrarium*. The latter is intended as a protective shell of an ecosystem that often feeds on itself. The proposal envisages that one day, through the systematization of the signs that emerge from the earth, if the natural traces had been erased, it would have been possible to go back to the invisible, as well as to the design process and to what has been buried for some time now. Many years earlier, Paul Klee’s reflections in the book *Theory of Form and Figuration*, reopened the study of the curve and its formal characteristics. They have, therefore, made it possible to reformulate the importance of large curvilinear organisms with new meaning through the character of stillness of the figures of the circle and the ellipse very often present in this design proposal. Each “vegetable room” corresponds to a view or a different tree species, spontaneous or artificial. In this place, building and nature integrate into a total magnetic field. The house-*terrarium* is destined to be “consumed” one day by its gardens and by the vegetation that surrounds it.

The natural landscape along the *Costa de los Pinos*, meant as a “blank sheet,” is actually imbued with the millenary traces, folds and perhaps even lacerations that Miguel Fisac - through the design of single-family houses intended as a pretext - has tried to mend. At the conclusion of the entire urbanization and retracing his entire career, he claims to be prouder of his unbuilt projects than of the completed works (Fernández-Galiano 2022, p. 10). Finally, within this horizon, a narrative potential could be drawn that helps to outline new imaginaries and new forms of living.

Miguel Fisac, *Invisible signs and constellations of trees*, single-family house for Antonio García Hidalgo, Mallorca 1969. Ground floor-plan. Image elaborated by Damiano Di Mele and Olga Barbulat.

