When circumstances beyond our control completely disrupted our lives, we realized that humans could not control all variables. In a field of knowledge such as architecture – usually reluctant to anything that sounds like uncertainty or indeterminacy –, this floating pavilion without a defined shape reminds us that surrendering to circumstances can also be an architecture project.

“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.”

Heraclitus of Ephesus

Reading and understanding Heraclitus’ phrase today is a tremendously challenging act. Especially when climates, lifestyles, personal relationships, and work and academic environments are blurred in a matter of months. In other words, all the areas that we have considered stable. Architecture, understood as a discipline in which permanence has for centuries constituted one of its main pillars, is no exception.

In this context of deep transformations, 170 years of architecture teaching in Chile were celebrated. In 1849, the French architect Claude Brunet de Baines created the first lecture, which in time would become the School of Architecture and Urbanism of the Universidad de Chile.

In mid-2019, we were commissioned to design a pavilion commemorating this milestone. We wondered how to synthesize, through a space, the history from 1849 to the present while reflecting on the past, present, and future. So, the passage of time and the changes it brought...
DOMINGO ARANCIBIA
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LEYENDA / LEGEND
VENTILADOR / FAN
1. Rejilla metálica 24” / Metallic grid 24”
2. Aspas 20” / Blades 20”
3. Soporte de aspas / Blade support
4. Motor eléctrico / Electric engine
5. Tambor metálico 24” / Metallic cylinder 24”
6. Manillas / Handles
7. Soporte base perfil metálico circular / Circular metallic profile base support
8. Ruedas / Wheels
9. Perfil metálico rectangular / Rectangular metallic profile
10. Cable de alimentación / Power cable
11. Tomacorriente / Outlet
12. Conector USB / USB port
13. Botón Reset / Reset button
14. Alimentación externa / External power supply
15. Pines digitales / Digital pins
16. Microcontrolador / Micro-controller
17. Pines alimentación / Power connectors
18. Pines entrada analógica / Analog input
19. Relé / Relay
20. Entradas / Inputs
21. Salidas / Outputs
22. Tela organza 16 × 30 m / Organza fabric 16 × 30 m
23. Perno acero inoxidable hexagonal 3,2 mm / Hexagonal stainless-steel bolt 3.2 mm
24. Plato esquina 4 mm / Corner plate 4 mm
25. Entretela primera capa / First layer of interlining
26. Entretela segunda capa / Second layer of interlining
27. Tuerca 3,2 mm / 3.2 nut
were the concepts to be transmitted through that space, considering wind as a core element of the pavilion.

The project is a body in constant movement, embodied by a suspended mantle that, when interacting with the wind, shows us the prevalence of change at all times. Placed in the main courtyard of the university’s Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, the pavilion was a space covered by an extraordinarily light fabric imported from Japan: the five hundred square meters weighed approximately two kilograms as a whole. Thirty meters long and sixteen meters wide, the fabric was able to move and alter its shape following two complementary and active sources of air: that in the site itself and another consisting of air masses created through an integrated system of more than twenty electronic fans, coordinated by an artificial intelligence matrix of Arduino plates. The fans are activated every time there is not enough natural wind to move the fabric.

The pavilion was installed as an unstable, empty, almost ghostly volume, reflecting the times in which we are living as a result of the pandemic. In short, a strange architecture that, being unable to receive the public, was inaugurated via streaming 170 years after that first lecture. ARQ
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Arquitecto asociado / Associate architect: Dannery Elizondo
Colaboradores / Contributors: Camila Briceño, Paz Martínez, Camila Osadey, Andrea Rivera, Andrés Silva, Sebastián Sandoval
Ubicación / Location: Facultad de Arquitectura, Universidad de Chile, av. Portugal 84, Santiago, Chile
Cálculo estructural / Structure: ALV Ingenieros, Tomás Yáñez
Tela / Fabric: Organza experimental / Experimental organza
Iluminación / Lighting design: Mauricio Lacrampette
Presupuesto / Budget: 76 U.S.$/m²
Área de intervención / Intervened area: 650 m²
Área de proyecto / Project area: 500 m²
Año de proyecto / Project year: 2019
Año de construcción / Construction year: 2020
Fotografía / Photography: Cristóbal Palma, Roberto González, Sebastián Arriagada
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Architect, Universidad de Chile, 2013. He directs the studio Arquitectura Normal and the Ruta País Foundation. He won the award as the best national graduation project in 2012-2014, and the first prize in the MoMA-sponsored YAP program in Chile, among other honors. His projects have been published in several magazines in Chile and abroad and have been exhibited in biennials in Chile and Venice. He currently is an invited academic at the Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo of Universidad de Chile, where he is an advisor for graduate projects.