

OCHOQUEBRADAS HOUSE

Design Against Civilization

ELEMENTAL

OchoQuebradas (8 ravines) is a private development on the Pacific Ocean, 250 km north from Santiago, that brings together 8 Japanese (Sejima, Nishizawa, Kuma, Fujimoto, Ishigami, Atelier Bow-Wow among others) and 8 Chilean architects, each building a week-end house. There is no concrete client yet; just the developer defining a built area (250 m²), a program (4 bedrooms, living and dining area, kitchen, bathrooms and a wine cellar) and an overall budget (1/2 million dollars) that each architect has to respond to in complete freedom.

We saw the site and the fact of being a weekend house as an opportunity to explore a certain primitiveness. The geography was so brutal, that only a strong and manly set of elements was appropriate. The Pacific Ocean here is not pacific at all; the water is white due to the violence while meeting the earth.

On the other hand, a week-end house is ultimately a retreat where people allow themselves to go back to a more essential living. We used the void on the other

side of the table (the absence of a client) as an alibi to eliminate the conventions of domestic living, exploring instead the more irreducible dimensions of life. We chose to move backwards towards the archaic, not as a nostalgic escape but as a natural filter against the clichés. In an era where the hunger for novelty is threatening architecture to become immediately obsolete, we looked for timelessness.

So, we thought of 3 volumes: a horizontal one, slightly cantilevering on top of the cliff and self sufficient for the main couple to use it without having to open the rest of the house. Then a vertical one, containing all the other rooms required by the client plus a terrace on top, allowed us to reduce the footprint on the site and expand the horizon in front of the ocean vastness. And in between these two, a slightly leaning and hollowed one containing a fire; not a chimney (which is already something civilized), but a fire (which is one of the most revolutionary and most ancient achievements of man). 5 sides of the pieces are made of poured concrete; the 6th one is made out of the same wood used as a formwork for the concrete. We expect these pieces to age as a stone, acquiring some of the brutality of the place but still being gentle for people to enjoy nature and life in general.









