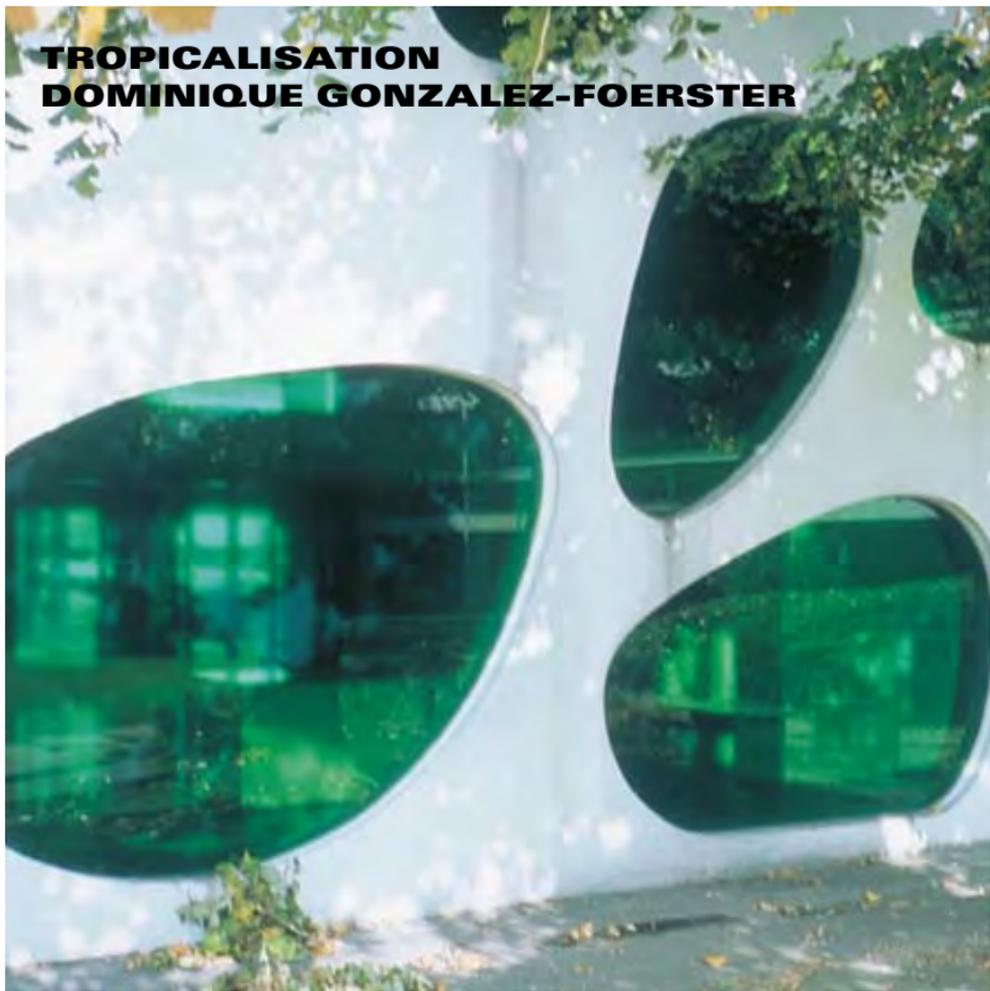
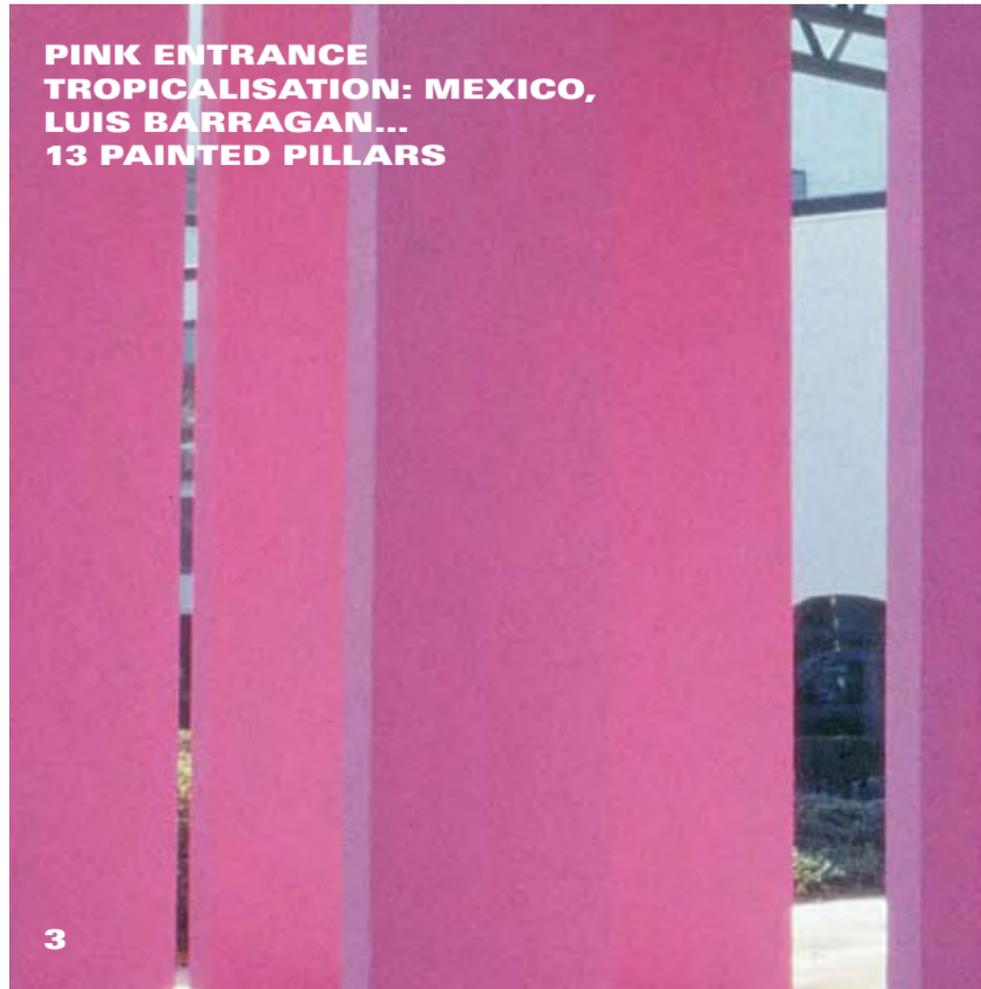


TROPICALISATION
DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER



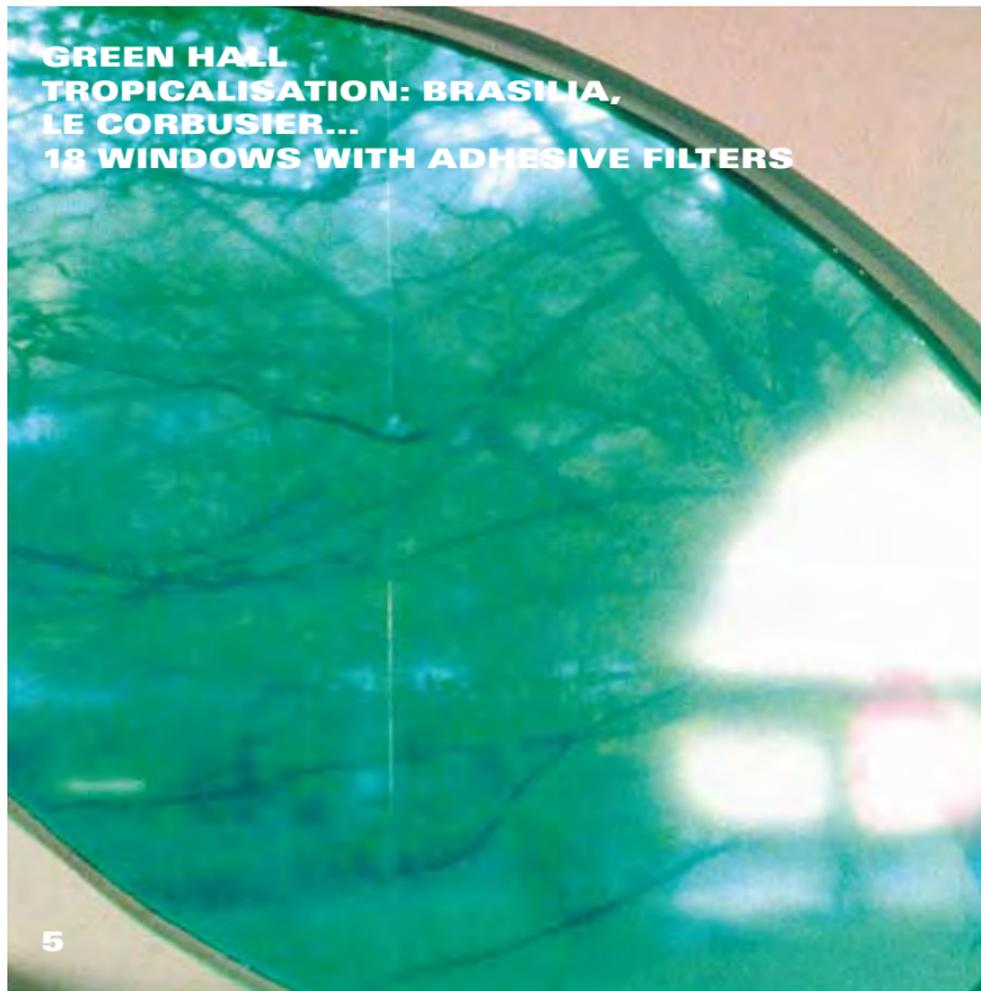
TROPICALISATION
DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER
DESINGEL, ANTWERP
14.10 - 19.12.2004

PINK ENTRANCE
TROPICALISATION: MEXICO,
LUIS BARRAGAN...
13 PAINTED PILLARS



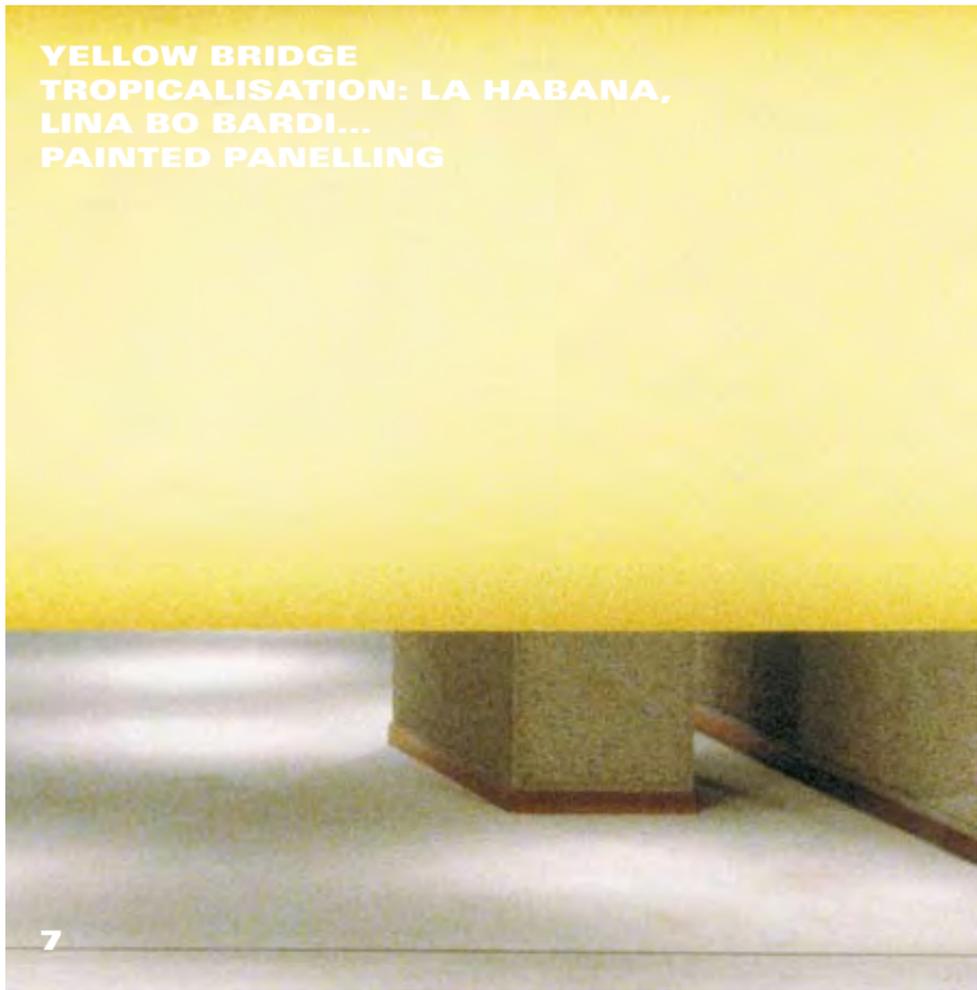


**GREEN HALL
TROPICALISATION: BRASÍLIA,
LE CORBUSIER...
18 WINDOWS WITH ADHESIVE FILTERS**





**YELLOW BRIDGE
TROPICALISATION: LA HABANA,
LINA BO BARDI...
PAINTED PANELLING**



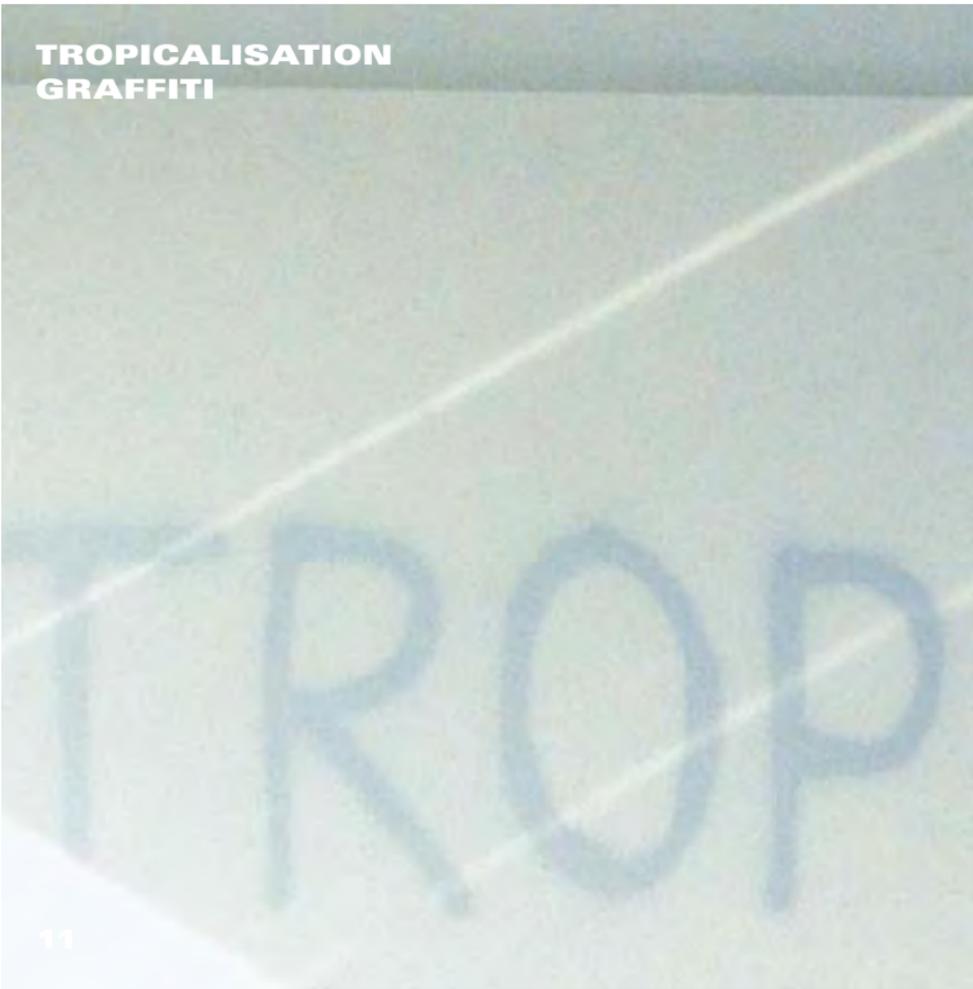


**ORANGE PASSAGE
TROPICALISATION: IBIRAPUERA,
OSCAR NIEMEYER...
NEON**



IBIRAPUERA

TROPICALISATION
GRAFFITI



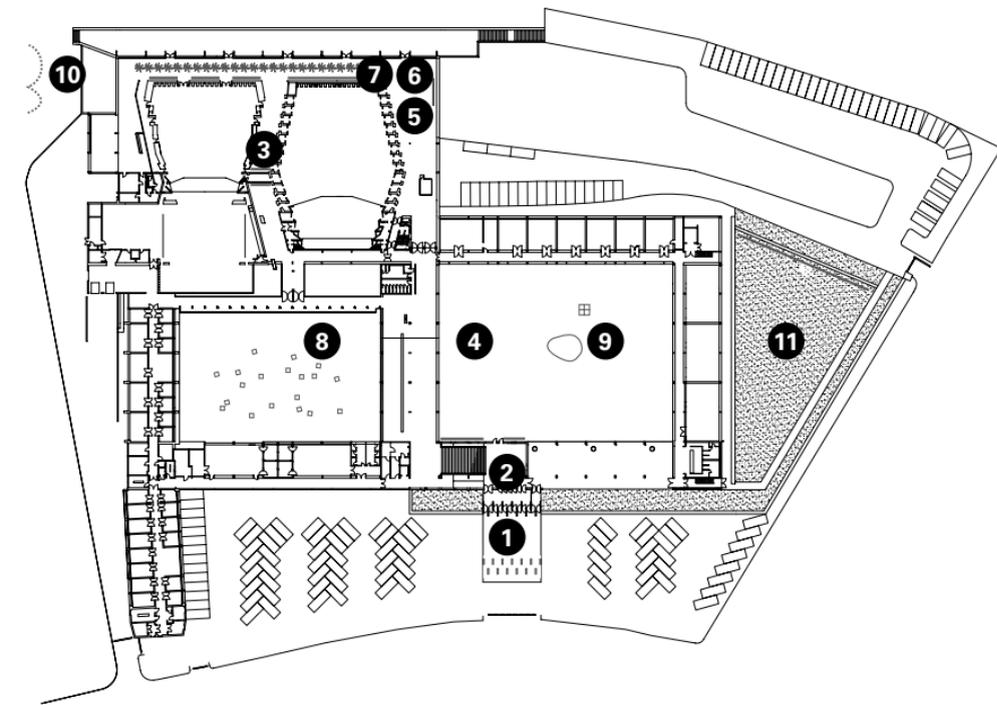


**TROPICAL PLANTS
TROPICALISATION: PALM SPRINGS,
33 LOW-ENERGY LIGHT BULBS
26 PLANTS**

**AGAVE NEOMIXICANA, ALOCASIA, BAMBOE,
CANNA PRETORIA, CANNA TROPICANA,
CHAMEAROPS HUMILLIS, COLOCASIA
ESCULANTÉ, COLOCASIA FONTANESIE,
CYATHEA DEALBATA, CYCAS REVOLUTA,
DASYLIRIUM, DICKSONIA FIBROSA,
ENSETÉ VERTRICOSUM MAURELLII,
ENSETÉ VERTRICOSUM, EUPHORBIA,
FATSIA JAPONICA, HEDYCHIUM GREENEI,
PHORNIUM TENAX PURPUREA, SYAGRUS
ROMANZOFFIANA, TRACHYCARPUS
FORTUNEI, YUCCA CARNEROSA, YUCCA
ELEPHANTINUS, YUCCA ROSTRATA, YUCCA
TOMPSONIANA.**



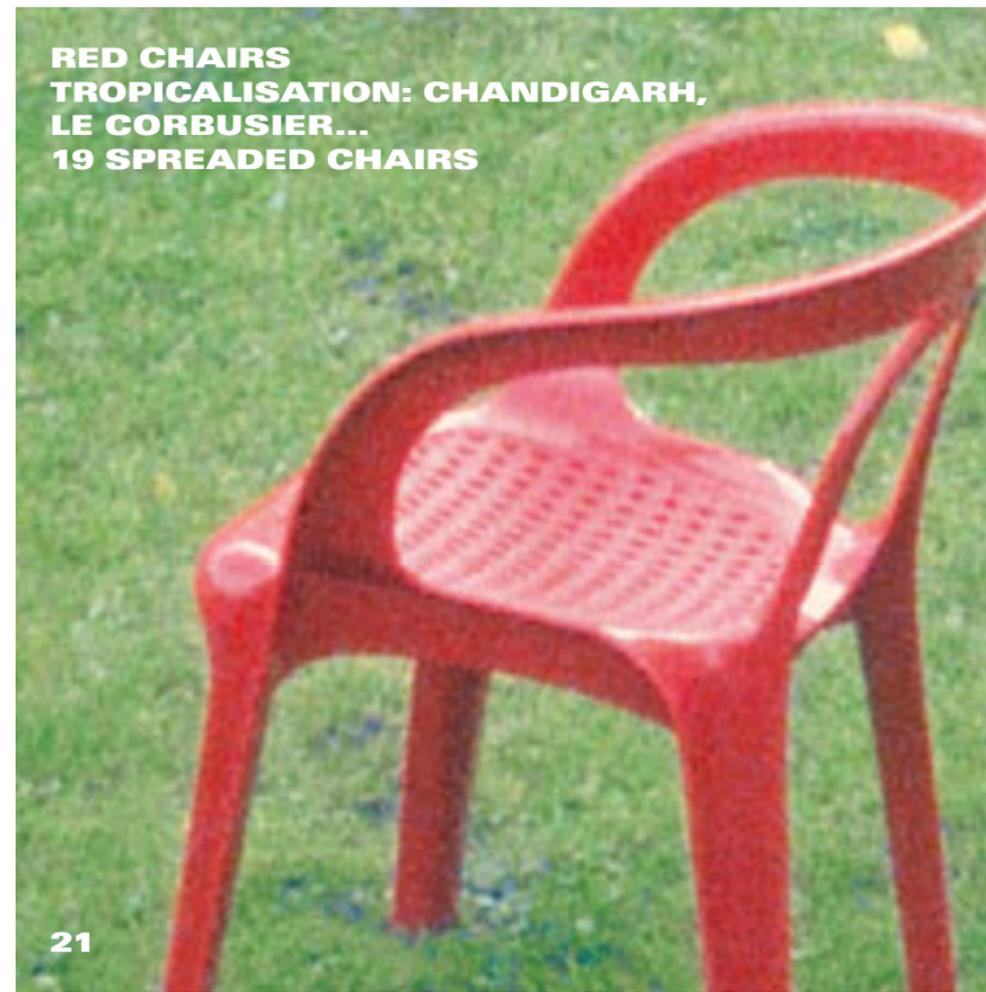




- DESINGEL, ANTWERP**
- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1) PINK ENTRANCE | 6) TROPICAL PLANTS |
| 2) GREEN HALL | 7) POSTERS (A-Z) |
| 3) YELLOW BRIDGE | 8) RED CHAIRS |
| 4) ORANGE PASSAGE | 9) BLUE COURT |
| 5) TROPICALISATION | 10) PURPLE FOREST |
| | 11) GOLDEN POND |









**BLUE COURT
TROPICALISATION: RIO,
GARRETT ECKBO...
MOSAIC POND, ANATOLIA STONE, LAMPPOST**



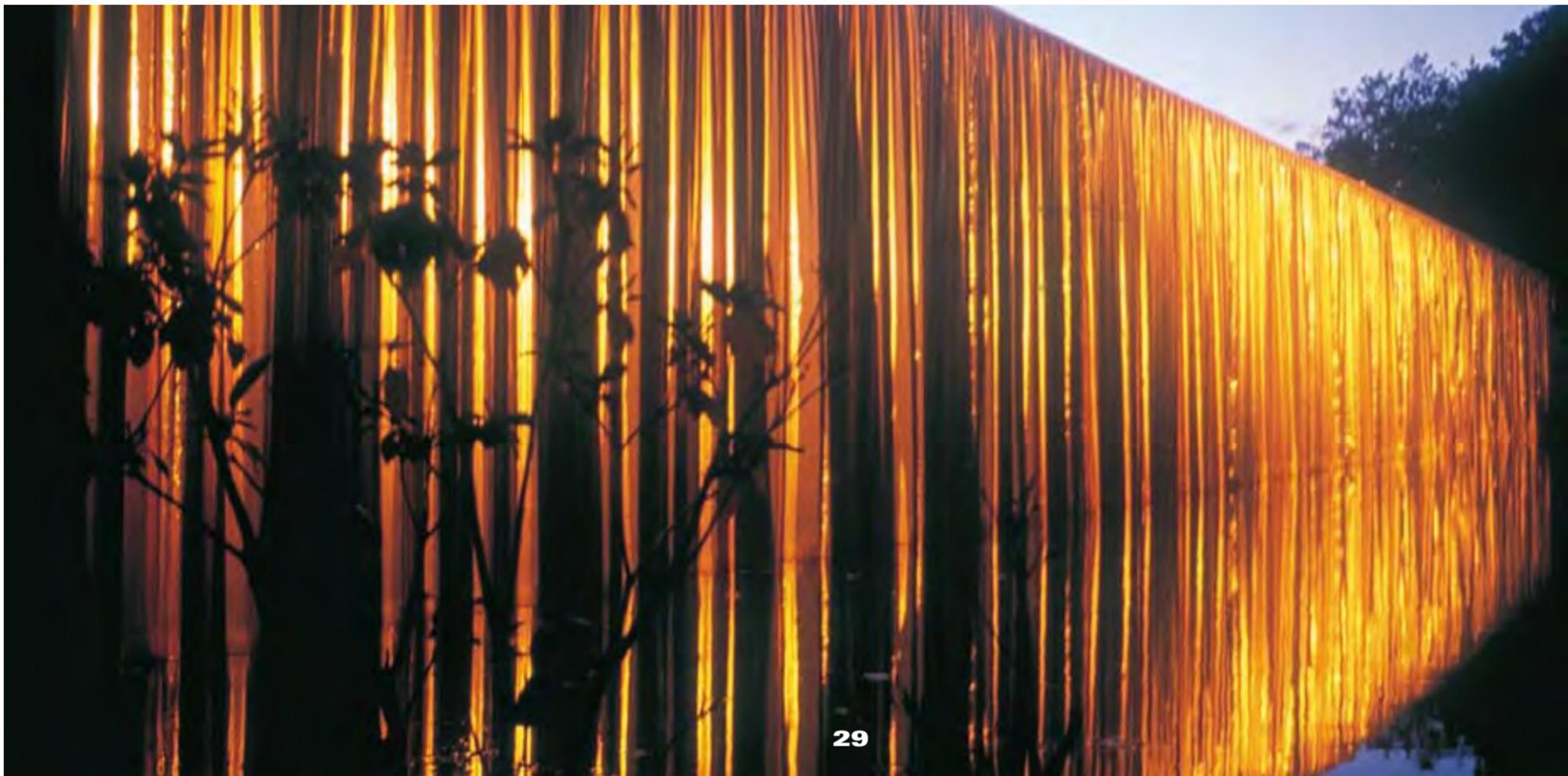


**PURPLE FOREST
TROPICALISATION: ISTANBUL,
FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES...
LIGHT BULB CHAIN**





**GOLDEN POND
TROPICALISATION: KYOTO,
ISAMU NOGUCHI...
LUREXVOILE**



ALPHAVILLES? TROPICALISATION!

It is maybe ten years ago that I first saw a piece by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster without really realising it. In the then old building of the Kunstmuseum Lucerne (demolished in 1998 and replaced by a much-debated new building by Jean Nouvel) she showed *Intérieur/Musée* from her series of installations of so-called *Chambres* in an oblong side gallery with a view across the Lake of Four Forest Cantons¹⁾. The existing parquet flooring was covered by a blue carpet – a blue reminiscent of the ‘Chromkey’ colour of television recordings – on which a nonchalantly discarded white cloth was lying next to a Noguchi lamp

in a corner. The spare austerity of the modernist architecture with tall but narrow windows and vertically placed heating tubes was somewhat reminiscent of the Wittgenstein house in Vienna. These are however thoughts after the event. When I saw this space in Lucerne, it looked like the objects of some gathering that had accidentally not been tidied away.

Five years later I perceived a work of hers more consciously, although in this case I have never actually seen the piece for real. What I saw were illustrations in the small publication *Tropical Modernité*, which prefigures the one you are holding in your hands.

The photos were taken from a work with the same title that she produced in 1999 for her solo show at the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion in Barcelona²⁾. In the pavilion she presented some eight small in-situ works – among others, an aquarium, a sound-scape, a video, a light situation – which reflected the architecture in a subtle light but nonetheless insistent way. One such intervention, which burned an afterimage into my memory after seeing the documentation, was *Plage Parallèle*; two white bath towels laid out on a pavement next to the smaller of the two ponds. What appeared to be a scarcely present addition should in fact have had an immense impact on this place. After all, this building – that was built as the German Pavilion for the World Fair in 1929, and then demolished only to be

reconstructed on the same spot between 1983 and 1986 – is one of the most emblematic icons of the 20th Century. His taut geometry, which leads the visitor through the open structure in a self-evident but persistent way, the ‘pure’ materials employed (glass, chrome steel, Roman travertine, golden onyx from the Atlas mountains and two different green marbles from the Alps and from Greece) and the slightly elevated location on an oblong pedestal, elicits a respectful approach through its static authority.

And then there were two bath towels, which suddenly dislocate this sparse architecture and this perfect staging without appearing the least bit blasphemous. On the contrary, the bath towels opened a wholly new associative frame of reference and with it a re-reading of

the architecture. The two sheets not only hinted at the two ponds and in so doing at two beaches but also contrasted sharply with the other, stark materials. Their white virginity not only introduced something feminine but also acted as a projection plane. In a certain sense the artist monumentalised this already imposing architecture, but also undermined its authoritarian aspect with ordinary looking everyday objects.

Three years later Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster produced a similar project on the occasion of her participation in documenta XI in Kassel *Park - Plan d'évasion* in the city park³. For this work she regrouped several elements from various geographic contexts in one location into a temporary, unreal landscape. A telephone cell from Rio stood beside a lava rock from

Mexico, beside a rosebush from Le Corbusier's garden in Chandigarh and a lamp post from Grenoble. It is while writing these brief thoughts that a parallel occurs to me with Mies van der Rohe's use of materials in Barcelona that also came from various places in the world (Italy, Greece, and Morocco).

With her exhibition *Alphavilles?* at deSingel in Antwerp⁴, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster not only referred to the well-known film by Jean-Luc Goddard (1965) in which he describes a computer-run city, but also to a model of a high security urban enclave that was built in 1974 by a contractor in Brazil. The artist seems fascinated by the global urbanisation through which the earth is gradually becoming covered by 'Alphavilles', a world in which the climate, modern life, regionalism, and

tourism make up a cocktail that sometimes bores and sometimes amazes. To this effect there is the New York neighbourhood *Alphabet City* in which the streets only have letters as names. In Shanghai and Buenos Aires the streets are systematically named after other cities, thus making spaces which are normally distant from each other seem almost like 'neighbours'.

In Antwerp, with eleven – partially large-scale – 'environments' in the building and on the campus of architect Léon Stynen, a onetime student of Le Corbusier, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster once more elaborated her intentions of a 'tropicalisation'. The in-situ works not only formed a sometimes ironic commentary on the modernist architecture of the West, which she perceives as

grey and colourless, but through the associative reading and the atmosphere they evoked, the totality of the eleven architectural interventions created a geographic dislocation. The entrance columns painted bright pink, which opened the exhibition, were a good and efficient example of this. Not only did this specific colour refer to the work of the Mexican architect Luis Barragan, it also undermined the architectonic severity of the complex. It's subtitle *Pink Entrance* evoked a wide range of different interpretations. The ten other interventions throughout the campus (in spaces such as halls, pond, gardens, walkways, foyer and the forest in the immediate neighbourhood) have been determined according to various colour applications (pink, green, yellow, orange, silver, red, purple,

gold) that again referred to other places (Brasilia, La Habana, Chandigarh, Rio, Istanbul, Kyoto) and architects (Le Corbusier, Lina Bo Bardi, Oscar Niemeyer, Garret Eckbo or Isamu Noguchi).

In an international arts centre for performing arts (dance, theatre and concerts) with an exhibition programme focussing on contemporary architecture, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster succeeded as an artist with her now subtle and then imposing transformations in making one aware of the existing architecture. In that sense *Alphavilles?* was not an exhibition but rather a glance at a 'Tropical Moment'.

Moritz Küng

Notes

- ¹⁾ Kunstmuseum Luzern, Intérieur / Musée, 1994, see publication Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, 88:88/Moment, Kunstmuseum Krefeld, 1998, p. 51.
- ²⁾ see publication Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Tropical Modernité, Fundació Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona, on invitation by Jens Hoffmann and Hilde Teerlinck; JRP Editions, Genève, 1999.
- ³⁾ see publication Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Park - Plan d'évasion, Imschoot uitgevers, Ghent, 2002.
- ⁴⁾ see publication Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Alphavilles?, Kunsthalle Zürich & deSingel, Antwerp, Les presses du réel, Dijon & JRP Ringier, Zürich, 2004.

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

(born in 1965, Strasbourg, France) studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Grenoble, Ecole du Magasin of the Centre National d'art Contemporain in Grenoble and at the Institut des Hautes Etudes en Arts Plastiques in Paris. Since the early nineties she has produced a greatly varied body of work. Beside films, photography and spatial installations, she also entered into a wide variety of joint ventures. She has developed scripts for concerts, created designs for the Balenciaga fashion stores in New York and Paris, transformed a métro station in the French capital and planned a house for a collector in Tokyo. In 2002 she was awarded the prestigious 'Prix Marcel Duchamp'.

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