

The projects of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (Strasbourg, France, 1965) invite the visitor on a journey through spaces and times where literature becomes a habitual practice of inhabiting the world. The artwork is redefined as a process beyond the concrete significance of objects. Literature and theatre constitute strategies for the configuration of an imaginary where physical space is no more than the tip of an iceberg traced out by the viewer on both real and fictional coordinates.

From her first works of the mid-eighties to her latest creations, the artist has explored the notion of space as a revealing medium, and of time as one of its closest allies. The characteristics of the Palacio de Cristal offer Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster the opportunity for a new exercise that will attempt to revisit the 19th century context in which it was built.

1887 is the year when Ricardo Velázquez Bosco built the greenhouse known today as the Palacio de Cristal, or ‘Crystal Palace’. Its purpose was to house an exhibition of plants and flowers from the Philippines as part of the General Exposition of the Philippine Islands, held that year.

In the same year, Rimbaud was in Aden, Yemen, after the publication the previous year of his *Illuminations*. In the first poem of this compilation, *Après le Déluge*, he gives life to the Splendide Hôtel: “... Et le Splendide Hôtel fut bâti dans le chaos de glaces et de nuit du pôle” (“... And the Splendide Hôtel was built in the chaos of ice and night of the Pole”).

Also inaugurated in 1887 was the Hotel Splendide in Lugano, and the Splendide was furthermore the name of the hotel in Évian-les-Bains where Proust used to summer with his parents. Splendide Hotel is now also this hotel into which Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster has temporarily transformed the Palacio de Cristal in Retiro Park.

A large luminous sign on the main door announces that the visitor is entering the new Splendide in Retiro Park, a hotel with just one impenetrable room that replicates the original architecture of the building. The carpet covering the floor and the mystery reigning inside evoke that distant period when the Palacio was built. Around it are several rocking- chairs surrounded by books, inviting visitors to sit down and transport themselves to the worlds hidden inside the literary selection that the French artist has made for this occasion. Authors like the Philippine José Rizal, Dostoyevsky, Rubén Darío, H.G. Wells and Vila- Matas become companions on the voyage in time that Gonzalez-Foerster encourages us to share.

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