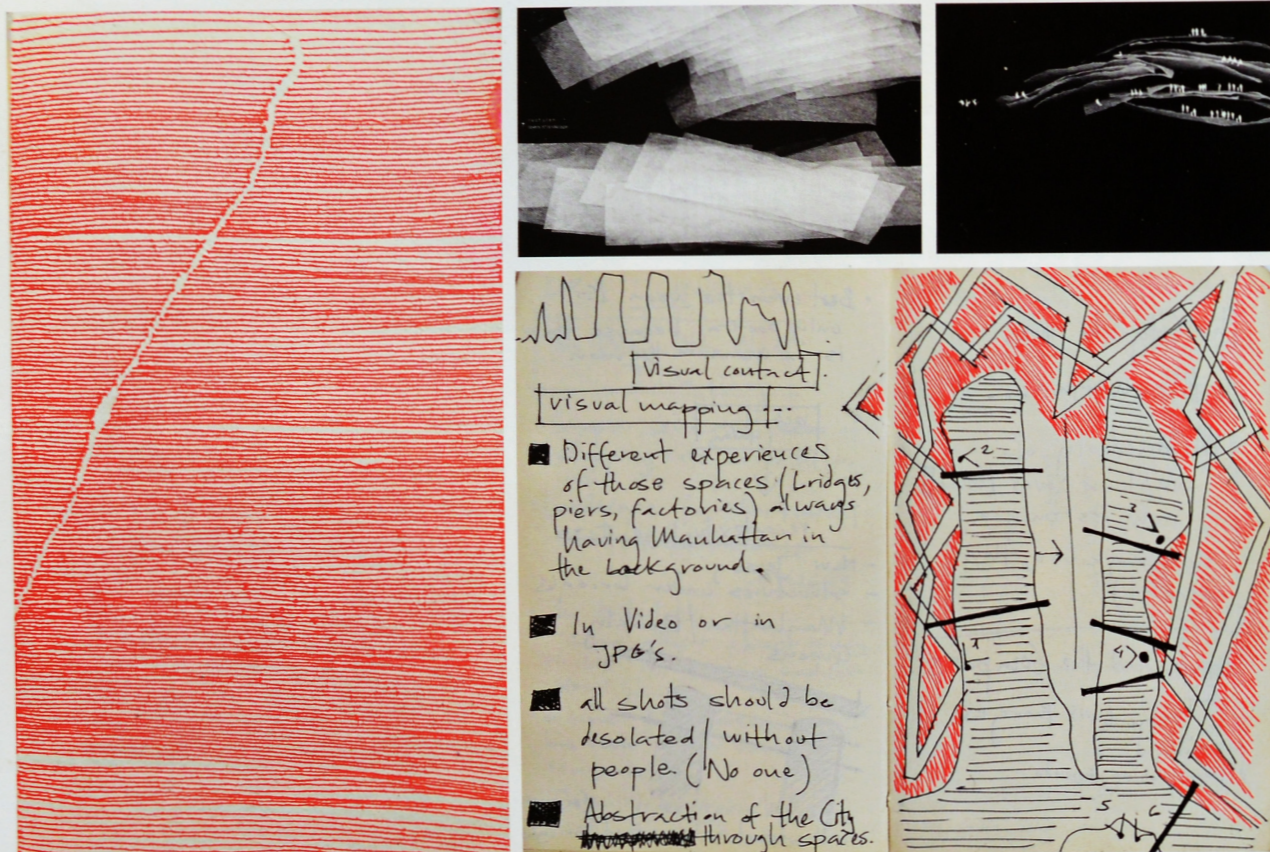


DESIGN DIALOGUE

INSIDE MY SKETCHBOOK +ADD

Architect and artist Laura Gonzalez Fierro of +ADD explains how watercolor creations inspire her glass-and-steel skyscrapers



BY ALYSSA MEZA
PORTRAIT BY MATTHEW WILLIAMS

AT THE INTERSECTION OF FINE ART AND architecture is Laura Gonzalez Fierro. The founder and principal of New York firm +ADD, Fierro says her watercolor works are at the root of her architectural design process.

Her colorful sketch work is initially what led her to this career at an early age. "In 12th grade, I decided to take this class called architectural drawing. [There], it hit me that technical drawings could be very beautiful. That was the moment when I decided to go into architecture."

She posts the sketches on +ADD's website as a way to show the artistic side of her personality. Some of her drawings have evolved into built projects, while others are just a part of the creative process. "I don't really draw exactly as I see. It's more the echo that is left in my mind."

Even though complex computer design programs dominate the field, Fierro still believes in the romance of the craft. "I think schools should keep sketching and manual techniques very present in the curriculum." She acknowledges that working by hand might be intimidating to young designers, but insists it's a worthwhile practice. "It is hard to sit down and take the time to sketch, but it's like a muscle. You have to train it and keep trying."

Fierro admits that she still sees her sketches as an ever-evolving part of her own work. "When you see the sketches, they are all different, but somehow a single thread weaves through them. Through the years you see a difference, but some things don't change. That's the intriguing part. I'm very curious to see what my sketches will look like in 20 years."

▲ RANDOM IDEAS FOR AND FROM NYC

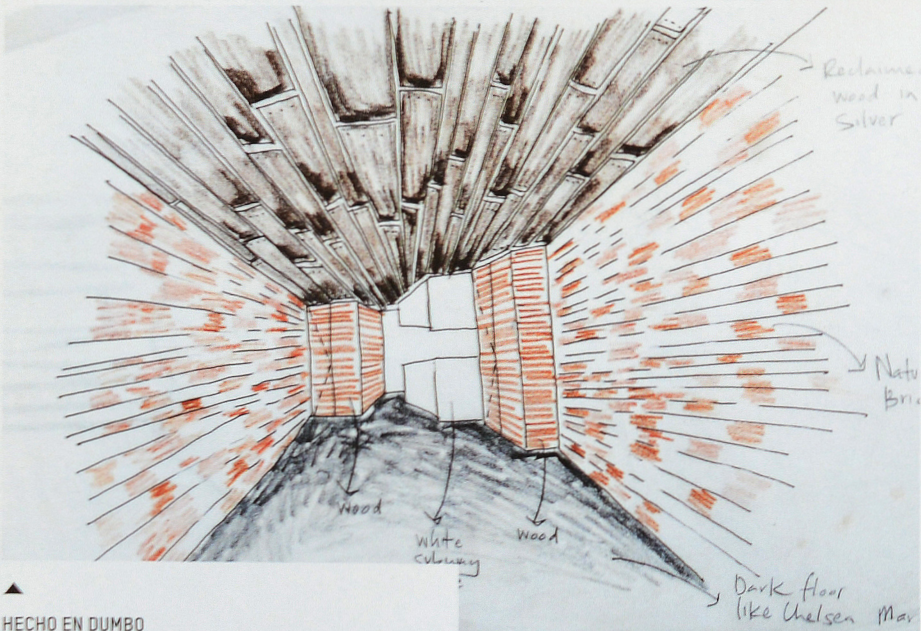
"I like writing in English because it's like a detachment. Things I do in Spanish are very intimate and personal."

Also pictured: Photocopie Machine Studies; Maquette and sketches in a photocopy machine



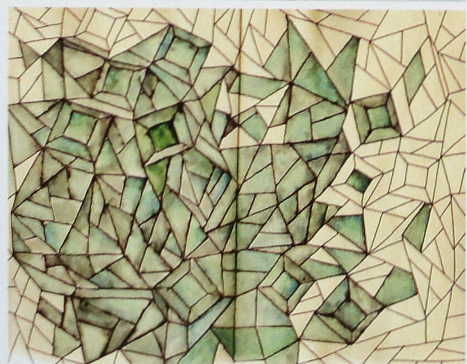
FROM SKETCH BOOK TO STREET CORNER

Fierro shows us how her hand-drawn designs transform into built projects



HECHO EN DUMBO
Location: New York

Instead of using staid symbols like sombreros and maracas in the restaurant, Fierro wanted to recreate the dynamic vibe of today's Mexico City. "The Mexican elements are there but in a fresh and different way," Fierro says. "We chose a cobalt blue hexagon, which alludes to the vibrant and colorful Mexican spirit, but instead of mixing it with a whole variety of colors to create an ornamental motif, we decided to go with a more abstract version and intensify the cobalt blue. There is a new reading of what Mexico City is: a dynamic city full of striving artists, chefs, architects, designers, photographers, and more that are looking for fresh and novel ideas using their history. It is a place located in NYC but with a Mexico City vibe—a perfect marriage of both identities."



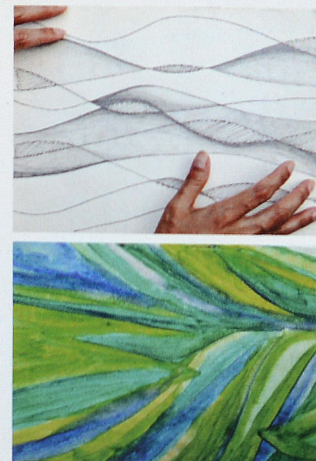
"It's hard to sit down and take the time to sketch, but it's like a muscle. You have to train it and keep trying."

—LAURA GONZALEZ FIERRO, +ADD

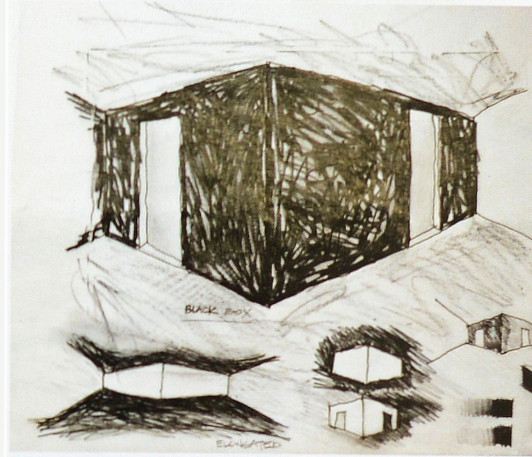
KOREA URBIA

Location: Seoul, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On a walk through Xochimilco, an area in Mexico City etched with winding canals and trees, Fierro was struck by the flora, a breath of fresh air amongst the chaos of the city. Inspired, she decided to sketch. Years later, she returned to those sketches for a residential-design competition in South Korea. "The urbanization is based on this intermingled concept of vegetation and architecture," Fierro says. "The background of green waves is directly based on the sketches of Selva 01 and Selva 02. I wanted to create a residential compound that would involve a green path intermingled into the residences in a very natural way, where all the paths were surrounded and shaped by the local trees."



CARRICO RESIDENCE
Inspiration for Carrico residence, taken by Fierro on a trip to Normandy, France. Carrico residence photos by Philippe Petalas



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