

INFORME TÉCNICO ARTÍSTICO

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Informe técnico artístico sobre el parque de las Cabañas de Josep Pujiula, que haga referencia a:

1. Clasificación artística de la obra de Josep Pujiula. Tipo de arte que realiza.

Josep Pujiula has created one of the most important **art environments** known in the world. This term is customarily used to refer to immobile constructions or decorative assemblages, monumental in scale or number of components, typically constructed by self-taught creator-builders with no academic training in art, engineering, or architecture. Art environments may be interior or exterior, and typically include elements of sculpture, architecture, bas-relief assemblage, and/or landscape architecture. Such composite works, produced additively and organically without formal architectural designs or engineering plans, owe less allegiance to folk, popular, or mainstream art traditions and the desire to produce anything functional or marketable, and more to personal and cultural experiences, availability of materials, and a desire for personal creative expression. They are generally intended to be viewed in their entirety, rather than as a grouping of discrete works.

2. Importancia de este tipo de arte en el mundo artístico.

In the mainstream art world concepts of "environment" emerged as a generally accepted genre only since the 1950s, despite heralded earlier experiments such as artist Kurt Schwitters' celebrated *Merzbau* of 1923. Nevertheless, it was not really until the 1970s that the contemporary art world began to take serious notice of environments created by self-taught artists. Since that time, however, there has been increasing interest, particularly since art historians have often asserted that the quintessential Modernist work is the assemblage or montage, created improvisationally and from materials at hand.

3. Que estudios o carreras de las universidades del mundo tratan este tipo de arte.

Individual students at universities and specialized art academies in the United States, France, Spain, Canada, and elsewhere have written Master's theses or Doctoral dissertations on art environments, typically within the rubric of the Art History department. Others, however, have done their work within departments of Historic Preservation, Folklore, Anthropology, or Architecture.

4. Importancia de la obra de Josep Pujiula:

The work of Josep Pujiula is one of the most important examples of art environments in the world. This is due to a number of factors:

- Although most creator-builder of art environments rely on locally-available materials, this has typically resulted in assemblages of found objects made from durable materials. The fact that Pujiula's primary medium has been thin wooden branches, weaving them together to create fantastic forms, is unique in the field.
- As Pujiula has been forced to dismantle his constructions three times, he has had the opportunity to approach each iteration not only with creativity, but with expanded technical skills. As such, we have been able to chart his artistic growth across time, and his increasingly refined sense of aesthetics.
- Pujiula's work is monumental, one of the largest art environments known world-wide. While others may have created more individual components, the scale of his single work is generally unmatched around the world.
- Although at the beginning of his constructions Pujiula kept them hidden, within a short time he was able to encourage public visitation of his site, and their location, next to a major east-west thoroughfare, ensured that the work would be seen by passersby, locals, and tourists. Enthused at the response of the increasing number of visitors, he began creating components simply to please them, and to make their visits more enjoyable. Soon, the interaction with the public became one of the most important inspirations for his continued work.
- The ability of visitors to interact with his constructions, by physically climbing the towers and exploring the labyrinth, increased the impact on both an educational and an emotional level. "*Gracias por hacernos sentir niños* [Thanks for making us feel like children]," read a note one visitor left in his donation box, a liberating sense that is rarely achieved by adults, although often desired.

5. Interés que ha suscitado la obra de Josep Pujiula en el mundo artístico.

The more people in the art world learn of Pujiula's work, the more impressed they are by the design, the monumentality of the construction, and his formidable tenacity, working for so many years in the face of such repeated challenges. Not only has his work begun to appear in such organs of contemporary art and thought as *Outer Horizons*, but his work has been a specific source of inspiration for several contemporary artists, including Jordi Mitjà, whose work was recently shown at the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona. The catalog produced for Mitjà's exhibition specifically referenced Pujiula's art as one of his most important sources. Although it can certainly stand on its own in terms of importance, the fact that Pujiula's work has also become an important source for mainstream contemporary artists underscores its value on another level.

6. Breve explicación de proyectos parecidos en el mundo. Que supuso conservar aquellas obras para las ciudades, pueblos, vecinos.

SPACES – Saving and Preserving Art and Cultural Environments (www.spacesarchives.org) has documented at least 1500 art environment sites around the world, but most are not of the caliber—in terms of design or monumentality—of

Pujiua's works. Not all of the 1500 sites are still extant; sometimes this means that the creator-builder died and the site degraded by itself, little by little, but other times this means that the site was actively destroyed, usually as a result of governmental intervention. However, there are also significant cases where the local, regional, and even national governments have recognized the importance of these sites; have honored them with landmark status; have supported them financially; and have incorporated them into activities and programs for their communities.

Among these are Sabato Rodia's *Towers* in the Watts section of Los Angeles; the City wanted to pull them down in 1959, but after a test proving their strength, they were preserved. Now they are the property of the State of California, and both the City and the State have invested millions of dollars to ensure their survival. An arts center has been built next to the Towers, and it serves as an important community center, with exhibitions and all kinds of art programs, for children and adults.

Another is Fred Smith's *Concrete Park* in Phillips, Wisconsin, in the north Midwest of the United States. Smith, a bartender, created several hundred figures out of concrete, ornamented with bottles that he scavenged from his tavern. The site was purchased by a local foundation and given to the county; now it serves as an important community cultural center, and is the locus for many community events, parades, classes, and programs, particularly in the summer. Funding for conservation and maintenance have come from a consortium of private foundations, individuals, and government.

The *Palais Idéal* in Hauterives, France has become one of France's registered national landmarks, and it has become the major source of income for this small town near Lyon. The thousands of people who visit the site each year not only pay to enter the site (funds which are used to provide for its upkeep), but also leave their tourist money in town, eating at the restaurants, drinking at the bars, staying in the hotels. When we first visited in 1976, the town was somewhat ashamed of the site, but now they have embraced it wholeheartedly. This summer, for the first time, the staff members have mounted an exhibition celebrating the work of a dozen of the best art environment builders around the world; Josep Pujiula is included among this grouping of masters.

7. Importancia de proteger y divulgar la obra de Josep Pujiula.

The various constructions of Pujiula have become tied to the identity of Argelaguer not only for locals but for the broader community as well, and if they are completely destroyed, it will be a loss of worldwide proportions. Rather than fighting Pujiula's artwork, the governmental agencies must recognize that at times variances have to be made to be able to conserve works of such great importance.

Spain has a history of artistic geniuses who were born and raised in small towns, far from the mainstream of art history; among these are the painter Francisco Goya, the filmmaker Luis Buñuel, and the art environment builder Josep Pujiula. Let us not wait until after his death to celebrate Pujiula's works; instead, let us work as hard as possible to preserve what remains, to devote space in the town to memorialize and honor his efforts—perhaps a section of the Ayuntamiento could be so developed—and to support his creativity in whichever direction he next decides to explore.