



About the Sculptural Space

*I think many sensitive people perceive a ritual halo when they're here.
It is not the contemplation of beauty; it is not surprise at perfection or at a work
of art, but the presence of a collective spirit that reminds you of the great ceremonial spaces.*

FEDERICO SILVA

The Sculptural Space is built around an impressive base of lava, intentionally devoid of soil and vegetation, with a platform on which 64 many-sided cement modules sit. Their rectangular bases measure 9 x 3 meters and are 4 meters high. The modules' visible planes were finished with rough marte-line hammer blows to give them texture. They are arranged in a circle by quadrants, with 16 modules in each quadrant, separated by streets oriented toward the four points of the compass. The platform surface is finished in pressed *tezontle* rock to make it permeable and give it a touch of color. The diameter of the interior ring is 92.78 meters and the exterior one is 120 meters.

Information taken from *El espacio escultórico* (Mexico City: MUCA/Coordinación de Humanidades/Centro de Investigación y Servicios Museológicos-UNAM, 1980), pp. 7 and 27.

Photos by Elsie Montiel

Manifesto of the Sculptural Space

A precondition for reaching concrete proposals for the conception and design of the Espacio Escultórico was to overcome the contradictions inherent in our varied cultural formation and esthetic experience.

It is unusual today for personalities in the field of art to be able to subordinate their particular formal vision and corresponding doctrine to the general interest.

Public art is always a collective issue; but the complexity of society and rapid growth of the community requires that artists hoping to undertake public art follow a scientific methodology free from any impositions.

Multidisciplinary teamwork is one way, with a sense of responsibility, to approach an understanding of what art in its relationship to the life of urban man should mean to us, art which should not only recapture its testimonial value but also achieve a role as a cultural instrument to transform our sensibilities.

The panorama of public art is depressing due to negative commercial influences and to a lack of criteria; it is art commissioned in offices of politicians with influence over its development who treat it like private property. In its realization, artists seeking public praise, with the complicity of architects and "urbanists," copy and unscrupulously deform what others explore.

These forms of aggression toward the city and its inhabitants, which are a kind of corruption, are generating serious new types of contamination which, in addition to confounding and forestalling any attempts toward advancement by corrupting judgment and a sense of beauty and equilibrium, harm man in his basic structure.

We participants in the university Espacio Escultórico Project have attempted to put into practice principles forgotten for centuries: to try to make art a great event for everyone and forever, overcoming, at least on this occasion, the selfish and false individual will.

Even were no other work of the artists forming this working team to survive, the Espacio Escultórico, even though hidden and anonymous, must remain as the most important collective undertaking in public art in recent years.

*Helen Escobedo, Manuel Felguérez, Mathías Goeritz,
Hersúa, Sebastián, Federico Silva*

1980

