**Building Mountains. Architecture, replicas and an alternative history of modern architecture.**

*Josep-Maria Garcia-Fuentes & Aldric Rodriguez Iborra (Fuentes+Iborra Architects)*

Newcastle University

The construction of replicas and simulacra built for and by tourism and modern pilgrimages are usually analysed through the opposition of the “real” or “original” and the “fake”, as well as according to the ways the replica embodies and represents the key characteristics of the original architecture, or according to the impact that these entangled relations have upon the interpretation of this buildings or site that inspired them. Furthermore, it is also explored the ways in which these replicas are closely related to the production of souvenirs and *kitsch* buildings during modernity until nowadays. However, little attention has been paid to the influence of these constructions upon the development of their contemporary architectural debates through time.

Indeed, this is an influence that can be explored through the construction of popular replicas in World Fairs and Theme Parks, inheritors of picturesque landscape gardens and follies built in them, and their entangled relation with academic and professional contemporary architectural debates since at least mid 19th century. The construction of simulacra in these thematic parks became very intense as modern industrialization and new techniques for construction were quickly spread and the academic crisis on the origins of architecture lead to the emergence of modern architecture. In these lines, though with a very specific purpose, for example, the architect Rem Koolhaas has analysed how World Fairs and Theme Parks (*Coney Island*) served as a showroom and laboratory for the exploration of new constructive techniques and design solutions for the shaping of skyscrapers as a new building typology.

However, beyond these relatively well-known appreciations, a wider analysis of these constructions in World Fairs and early Theme Parks (like *Coney Island* or *Black Pool*) reveals that between all the innovations and explorations that took place –and still take place– in these sites, there is a unique and intense search for the construction of artificial mountains, in a quest that runs parallel to the emergence and raise of the modern fondness for mountain excursions and tourism, but also to the shaping of modern architectural debates.

Grounding on these considerations this paper proposes to make an exploration of the simulacra of artificial mountains built in Theme Parks during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the aim of discussing the entangled relations between these popular architectures and the shaping of modern architectural debates placed in the margins of the most spread and conventional histories of modern architecture. Ultimately the goal of this paper is to argue that it is possible to connect these popular constructions of artificial mountains in Theme Parks to their contemporary architectural explorations or counterparts by architects that are often left aside in traditional histories. Reunited together these examples reveal a unique continuity and consistency throughout all modernity that define an alternative mountainous history of modern architecture beyond the failures and contradictions of current established architectural narratives that deals with the core of political, cultural and ecological debates of modernity.

**CV**

Dr Josep-Maria Garcia-Fuentes is an architect and Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Architecture at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University (UK), Fellow at the London School of Economics – Catalan Observatory (UK) and Adjunct Professor at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya-BarcelonaTECH (Spain). He holds a PhD in Architecture and has published extensively on architectural history, heritage-making processes and preservation.

Aldric Rodriguez Iborra is an architect, PhD Candidate and a member of the Design Office at Newcastle University (UK). He has been visiting scholar at Tongji University (China) and at the Universidad de Concepción (Chile) and contributes regularly at international conferences.

Josep-Maria and Aldric Rodriguez Iborra combine their professional work with the academic one, research and teaching in Spain and the United Kingdom. They lead together the graduation studio *Building upon Building* at Newcastle University (UK) exploring and discussing theirs professional and research interests, as they lead together their own professional studio *Fuentes+Iborra* *Architects.* This is an architectural office founded in 2010 working on the practice of architecture and design, and on their academic and teaching confrontation, and researching on the emergent fields of technique, design, politics and publication as related with architectural practice. The studio works on different projects on architecture, landscape, design and installations for both private clients and prestigious institutions, nationally and internationally, often in collaboration with professional teams from Spain, United Kingdom, the USA and China (<http://fuentesiborra.com>).