JORGE I. RIGAU
Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico
For decades, Jorge Rigau has led students throughout cities in the Hispanic Caribbean, linking past efforts with contemporary possibilities. His course “History on foot” — walking various neighborhoods of San Juan - is a favorite at Polytechnic University’s School of Architecture.
Discovered by Columbus in 1493 and ruled by the Spanish for 400 years, Puerto Rico is one of the most visited islands in the Caribbean. The capital, San Juan, shows off its rich legacy of Spanish colonial buildings in the old town and the impressive fortifications of “El Morro” at the harbour entrance have become a world heritage site. Around the island increasing efforts are being made to preserve the look and feel of the central plazas of towns like Arecibo, Aguadilla, Vega Baja, Mayagüez, and Ponce—with the church taking one end of the square and city hall the other.

Puerto Rico Then and Now takes a trip round the island, pairing vintage photos with identical views of the sites as they appear today, revealing a rich and distinct architectural heritage.

Research on the architecture of the Antilles has stimulated Rigau to publish his findings in different literary formats: scholarly essays, travel chronicles, photographic compilations, magazine articles... even an award-winning play.
For years, the academic community and professional organizations – local and international - have recognized Rigau’s academic undertakings as significant contributions to the disciplines of pedagogy, history, theory, and design.
Arquitectura y escritura:
las palabras y espacios de Jorge Rigau

Arquitecto Jorge Rigau,
APORTANDO A UN MEJOR PAÍS

Teaching is undertaken customarily by Rigau at diverse levels. He is equally at ease addressing elementary school children, as he is questioning college students, informing tourists and the general public or just sharing one to one.

Innovación
no es ruptura

"Creo que el arquitecto Rigau ha sido muy reconocido en toda la vida, en la que ha trabajado. Su fuerte esfuerzo ha sido público profesional, no en proyectos, en la distinción: la arquitectura escrita y arquitectura. Ha logrado balancear a arquitectos de gran calibre desde la Carreta que hubo. Ha sido un gran educador dentro y fuera de las aulas. Por eso promovemos su existencia."

- Arq. Manuel Ramisola, presidente del Colegio de Arquitectos y Arquitectas Panameños -
Entrusted – from scratch - to develop an ad hoc curriculum for a new school of architecture in Puerto Rico, Rigau fed the 5-year bachelor’s program with myriad sources ranging from history, literature, pedagogy, and landscape.
In 2000, five years after the new school was established, ACSA News presented an illustrated profile highlighting its academic “bent” as conceived and implemented by Jorge Rigau and the faculty he personally recruited for the task.
At the school, Rigau incorporated a Conservation Design Studio and a History of Caribbean Architecture to address the study/potential of ruins and fortifications. Electives in the innovative curriculum included Ceramics, Set Design, Anthropomorphic Awareness.
As both a historian and an architect, Rigau integrated Design into most History courses. In the introductory history survey, students are requested to design and build a contemporary object based on an architectural idea from the past. 

A Rare & Old Architecture Book Pedestal emulating Pianterreno and Piano Nobile

PROBLEM
The vitality of History in an Architecture curriculum is made evident from the start at Politecnico University of Puerto Rico where the initial history course requires the design and construction of an object, using an architectural idea as the basis for the development of a contemporary piece.

PROJECT: A PEDESTAL FOR AN OLD & RARE BOOK ON ARCHITECTURE
New and old book collections include hundreds of volumes written in the past, the chronology of which is of interest to the discipline. Any book or periodical requires its own support structure. A well made book, a transition from the ordinary to the extraordinary. The gates of pyramids were vaults, open up, removing all of its keystones to make the money accessible, not unlike its architectural precedent, the Roman Arch, which fails structurally under similar conditions.

This project constitutes the students first experience at building, shortly after being less than three months at school. History is thus experienced first hand as a tool for creation, while remaining grounded firmly by the possibilities of application.

A Dividing Screen Based on an Eclipse

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PROJECT: A DIVIDING SCREEN
A screen within a room partially hides an object or view from the spectator, very much like an eclipse does. This momentary illusion recalls that experienced inside St. Peter’s, where Bernini’s columns line up to reveal the Vatican City beyond the colonnade. Following this idea, the screen was developed in panels laid out at 45 degrees, providing visibility of the space behind only when standing at a defined location. Color changes emulating a solar eclipse as day turns into night and eventually into light.
Because synthesis plays a significant role when translating historical ideas into design propositions, Rigau’s origami exercise – one that expounds concepts related to Caribbean architecture – has become a signature class project.
Rigau designed and teaches Mid-Career Research, a third-year course requiring a full-term investigation expected to expand the architectural bibliography of the Antillean Region. Rigau’s cut-and-paste review up on the wall constitutes a school event.
Rigau's extended accomplishments in the area of Preservation — with projects in throughout Puerto Rico — have nourished the contents of several courses, as well as the school of architecture's public prestige within the community at large.

Big city problems require big city solutions. It may seem obvious but “we're not doing it.” Jorge Rigau is an architect who means what he says: “We're the only country in the world that seeks to solve a mass transportation problem with a system slower than its present one.”

So much for agua y guagua. Rigau lives fast.

At 21, he had a degree in architecture from Cornell. At 22 he was heading cultural activities for the University of Puerto Rico. At 27 he was executive director of the Engineers Association, and at 37 the president of the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects is opening his own office.

However, he is not for fast living. He looks to the past for the future: “I seek the relevancy in history to my job, as in the organization of space, for instance.”

Prevailing designs, he explains, have people struggling to suit them to their needs by converting spaces into family rooms or back porches. Rigau has an established reputation as a student of the historical architecture and the architectural history of Ponce, Mayaguez, San Germán and now the Spanish Caribbean. The AIA-sponsored project has produced studies, exhibits and films, and books are under preparation. (And Rigau completed requirements for a master's degree in history to do the job better.)

His respect for the past is evident in his restoration projects: El Mundo building, the Arsenal and the Banco Popular in Old San Juan, Teatro Oliver in Arecibo and the customs houses of Mayaguez and Ponce. However, preservation is not his main aim. He scans the past for traditional solutions to present architectural woes.

Rigau has also retained an active interest in Puerto Rico's cultural life as a main collaborator of Taller de Histriones, the Art Students League and sometimes panelist for the National Endowment of the Arts.

(For 1976, Rigau, the 18-year-old Nun, was the only architect to appear on a downtown storefront display promoting the arts. “I think the community and the University are tired of seeing come and go. And the students are tired of seeing come and go.”)

Although enthusiastic in his commitments, he states that “we're in the midst of a serious cultural crisis. There's a lack of exciting works, the type that suggest there'll be new things to come.”

The reason is “lack of conviction.” Government and even big businesses support the arts with "cultural coupons.”

“Money is not the answer. It's not the numbers. It's the way the system is run.”

“What can anyone do with $2,000 these days?” No one takes risks supporting anything different, he feels. “Government and private institutions must act as facilitators of innovative works. Maybe what the whole country needs is more conviction.”

“My hobby is my work.” Indeed, he has managed to incorporate all his interests to his work: photography, writing, art.

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As an educator at Polytechnic University, Jorge Rigau has taught over 20 different architecture courses. Student projects - from basic ones to capstone undertakings – attest to the breadth of his teaching/learning expectations.
Rigau acts as catalytic agent to further student efforts, committed as he is to divulge the results of students’ investigations through different venues: a historical map, an index of subjects researched, or a call-to-action brochure.
DIVERSIFICATION

Finca de viento para Santa Isabel

Pattern producirá allí energía verde

Por Roberto Rosenthal

Contenido del artículo

En el marco del Seminario de Diversificación, el autor presenta su propuesta de una finca de viento para Santa Isabel. La propuesta se basa en la combinación de elementos tradicionales de la zona y tecnología moderna para generar energía renovable. El proyecto incluye una serie de estructuras y componentes para maximizar la eficiencia del sistema.

2. Aquellas propuestas donde se propone implementar las energizaciones han adoptado un lenguaje universal, consagrado, seguido de otros elementos del contexto. La propuesta de Rosenthal se enmarca en este paradigma, pero con un enfoque diferente. Se combinan diferentes estilos de uso posible de la diversificación para generar la energía.

Los cronistas Neumann Gandía y Antonio Gautier coinciden en que para 1844, la "pujante comarca" tenía más de 40 haciendas de caña con equipamiento amplio de molinos de vapor y trapiches melaza. El paisaje de estas planicies del sur ha estado constantemente "salpicado" por piezas características que se han ido sumando con el tiempo y co-existiendo en solape unas con otras, a pesar de que su razón de ser responda a diferentes etapas de desarrollo. Aunque obsoletas muchas de ellas, como conjunto – y en grupos dispares – nutren el paisaje. Mundo natural y mundo construido parecen aquí haber sido siempre uno y de apariencia atemporal.

José David Delgado Colón, en su escrito "Ruina remanente: la capacidad protagónica del fragmento para cualificar un lugar" (2003), articula explicaciones pertinentes al tipo de recurso cultural que predomina en los terrenos de Santa Isabel: "Al día de hoy, lugares históricos se entienden como tal a través de remanentes y residuos de intervenciones previas. En más de las veces, ruina y sitio integran una relación simbiótica. Como resultado de tal dinámica, el fragmento se beneficia de, pero también nutre la topografía. Consecuentemente, paisaje y objeto se apoyan mutuamente." (p. 1)

"… a partir de la relación simbiótica entre objeto y paisaje, se identifica un segundo tipo de condición que incide en la percepción de la ruina en el medioambiente natural. Esta última compete a estructuras remanentes que, en cierto modo, cualifican el lugar a través de su presencia… se reconoce que para darse esta condición, la pieza tiene que encontrarse en lugares donde la presencia de la naturaleza sea más evidente que la del entorno construido…" (p. 6)

Students understand interdisciplinarity through Rigau’s extended expertise: providing historical arguments for locating a wind farm; promoting the use of concrete in the USA, designing a Jesuit Columbary pro bono, or writing a play.
Inspired by a student’s initiative – Rigau has led a campaign to open early 20th-century irrigation channels in Puerto Rico as nature/tourism trails, incorporating high school and university students to the surrounding community in advocacy.

Apertura a lo natural
Camíne por los senderos aledaños a los canales de riego y conozca sobre su historia y funcionamiento

POR CASA DEL VALLE HERNÁNDEZ DE VIAL

Conocer de cerca la historia y funcionamiento de los canales de riego de Isabela, de la mano de expertos guías, será posible el próximo sábado 21 y domingo 22 de febrero. Y es que por primera vez, estos canales que sirven para irrigar los campos y abastecer hogares cercanos a la zona serán abiertos al público general gratuitamente, con el fin de que los interesados conozcan estos terrenos virgenes y la flora y fauna que los circunda.

"El recorrido va a ser realizado con un guía turístico, un arquitecto y un arquitecto paisajista. Se le explicará a los presentes cómo funciona el sistema, de su trasfondo histórico y se les hablará de la flora y fauna que hay en el lugar," sostuvo el arquitecto Miguel Ortiz, de la firma Jorge Rigau FAIA Arquitectos. Esta firma, en conjunto con la Fundación del Colegio de Arquitectos y Arquitectes Paisatgers, la ARE, la Asociación Recreativa Cívico-Cultural Autónoma y el Programa de Maestría en Arquitectura Paisajista de la Universidad Politécnica, se han unido para organizar estos paseos.

En conversación con De Viaje, Ortiz explicó que las personas que lleguen a esta actividad tendrán la oportunidad única de disfrutar de un paisaje que poco conocen y muchos ignoran que existe. El arquitecto señaló que durante el recorrido se podrán observar acacias, almácigos, flamboyanes, celtis, palmers reales y árboles frutales de china y mango.

Como está en una área de observación de aves, los participantes podrán conocer la suerte de observar pitirres, tórtolas cardosantera, raízgueros, reinitas, ranitas mariposeras y grullinas.

Los canales que se recorrerán forman parte de un sistema que se construyó en 1927 a lo largo de montes, valles y comunidades para alimentar sembrados y proveer agua a hogares de los municipios de Isabela, Quebradillas, Moca y Aguadilla. Estos son administrados por la Dirección de Servicios de Riego, Represas y Embalses de la Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE).

Ortiz, director interino del proyecto, explicó que los paseos guiados tomarán 45 minutos en los que se recorrerán 1.25 kilómetros (2345.77 pies). Aseguró que el paseo es apto para toda la familia, pues el área que se recorrerá está pavimentada y es "bastante llana".

Ortiz espera que este tipo de paseos se puedan convertir en un futuro en un proyecto turístico en el que se pueda integrar paisajismo, interpretación cultural, arqueología, arquitectura y conservación del patrimonio.

"La importancia de este proyecto radica en que funcionaría como un complemento al circuito de turismo de ciencias que integran en la costa norte las Cavernas del Río Caruy, el Observatorio de Arecibo, el Bosque del Guajataca y el Parque Nacional del Instituto del Valle del río Tabasqueña", recaló. Ortiz recordó que en países como Hawaií, Portugal o España estos sistemas se mercadean activamente por sus atractivos únicos.

CÓMO FUNCIONAN
El sistema de canales consiste de una línea, a veces recta y otras curva, que se alza o se hunde según las condiciones topográficas del terreno para mover el agua por gravitación. En la construcción de los canales de Isabela se aprovechó al máximo el desnivel, el relieve y la pendiente, para que el agua fluyera casi por sí misma. También se aprovecharon las márgenes de los arroyos que cruzaban el camino que llevaba de Isabela a magníficos.

En cifras 34 kilómetros lineales
Mide en total el canal de Isabela.
Acknowledged by his peers and students as a talented designer, Rigau has earned multiple awards for projects related to preservation and new construction, embracing different programs: houses, housing, institutional, public, private...
After designing the curriculum for Polytechnic University’s School of Architecture, Rigau was entrusted the design for an addition to said school.
Respected as a voice in the community, for years Rigau has written opinion columns as guest critic of Puerto Rico’s most important newspaper. Debating about education, urbanism, and public policies, the professor has underlined the relevance of an architect’s voice in society.
At local, regional, and international symposia, Rigau has always celebrated student projects and their initiatives as works of philosophical and practical consequence, introspective - yet always pertinent for public debate.
As a promoter of “pedagogical sedimentation”, Jorge Rigau’s far-reaching, permanent contributions to architectural education are well grounded in ideas that vertebrate his students’ training and resonate in succeeding years, as many generations have experienced so far.