PIN–UP

POWER

OFFICES!

BATHROOMS!

BRUTALISM!

MAGAZINE FOR
ARCHITECTURAL
ENTERTAINMENT
ISSUE 21

FEATURING
RICHARD ROGERS, AMALE
ANDRAOS, ALEXANDRE DE
BETAK, MOS ARCHITECTS,
BERNARD KHOURY, ROBIN
MIDDLETON, PHYLLIS LAMBERT,
GCC, ZAHA HADID,
VALERIA NAPOLEONE,
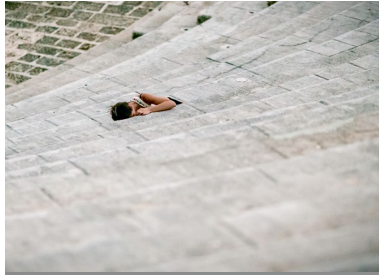EYAL WEIZMAN,
AND MUCH
MORE...

NEW POWER
GENERATION:
FAMILY, BURO
KORAY DUMAN,
CHARLAP
HYMAN &
HERRERO, EZE
ERIBO, FOAM,
HUSBAND WIFE,
ONLY IF SPACE
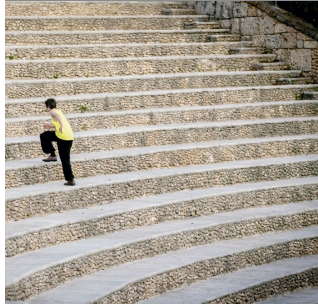EXPLORATION,
AND YOUNG
PROJECTS

Fall Winter 2016/17

USD 20.00

Artist Jimmy Robert leads a group of students from the Altos de Chavón School of Design and the Universität der Künste Berlin at the amphitheater of the Dominican resort Altos de Chavón.

"What is this? What am I getting myself into?", thought artist Jimmy Robert on his way to the Dominican Republic for a residency financed by the Davidoff Art Initiative, the cultural wing of the Swiss-owned tobacco giant, whose sought-after cigars are produced exclusively in the small Caribbean nation. But when Robert arrived in Altos de Chavón, which would be his home for the next few months, his uncertainties gave way. Perched on a bluff overlooking a quiet river, the small stone settlement purports to be a 16th-century Mediterranean village, but has somewhat newer origins. Planned by Italian set designer Roberto Coppa (who worked with Fellini and Visconti) in the 1970s as part of the larger gated community of Casa de Campo, Altos de Chavón was built for the billionaire chairman of American conglomerate Gulf+Western, Charles Bluhdorn. When, during the village's construction, Bluhdorn found himself overstocked with stone after blasting for a nearby bridge, he decided to crown his community of invented relics with a tourist-favorite — a Roman amphitheater, which was inaugurated in 1982 with *The Concert of the Hemispheres* by none other than Frank Sinatra. "When I saw this space," Robert asserts, "I knew I had to do something there." Born in the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, raised in Paris, educated in London, and currently living in Bucharest, Robert challenges notions of assigned identities in his oeuvre, which often resists easy interpretation and is not confined to a single medium, combining works on paper with sculpture and dance. His proposal to the Davidoff Art Initiative was to organize, in collaboration with students from Altos de Chavón's renowned School of Design and from Berlin's Universität der Künste, a performance "to think about what it means to bring one's body somewhere else, and what it confronts, not just in terms of material, but also in terms of context. How do you still manage to work if language is not the currency?" The solution was *Transeúnte* — Spanish for "passerby" or "temporary resident" — as the students decided to title it. A mass of bodies slowly affixes itself to various surfaces and passageways, spilling from the stage into the stands and flowing out into the interstices. "I see performance as a kind of activism, in terms of how actions can speak louder than words. You embody a certain idea, and you materialize it through bodies," Robert explains. While his Berlin students were used to such methods, their more classically-trained Dominican counterparts had yet to confront such a bold disregard for narrative and genre. "They would ask: 'But what is the subject? What is the theme?'", Robert remembers. "And my answer was that the theme was us being in that space, on that stage." A few weeks after the residency ended, Robert crowd-funded a trip for the Dominican students to perform in Berlin, where they recreated from memory their motions through the amphitheater in the galleries and stairways of the Universität der Künste. Transcribing the architecture of Altos de Chavón into the movements of their bodies, the students exchanged a sense of place wherein the distinction between the political and the private, the collective and the personal, and the physical and the cultural, started to blur. "After coming to Berlin," concludes Robert, "the students started to see that there isn't just one context for artistic engagement."

BODY LANGUAGE

— MAXWELL DONNEWALD