

Museography and Performativity: Installing the Space-time of TAIRA's Eave

RODRIGO TISI PAREDES, Adolfo Ibáñez University, Chile

TAIRA's exhibition design not only presented stories of archaeological objects that are significant of the past, it also gave an account of the physical location in which this rock-art is located, at Loa's Valley River, in the north of Chile. The proposed design experience was meant to highlight all the discoveries on the research conducted for more than a decade. The exhibition, through a form of an immersive display, was developed with different specialists to look for different scopes; spaces of participation, spaces of reflection and experience as well as spaces of immersive technologies that somehow enhanced different dimensions to "construct" different moments of performance, in order to gain the spectator's attention who were visiting the museum. The main challenge was to "transport" the space-time of TAIRA's shelter to the exhibit space in Santiago, located at the Chilean Pre-Columbian Art Museum, and vice versa, at the same time, to transport visitors from the rooms of the museum to the spaces of TAIRA's eave in the valley of the Loa River. The exhibition considered a narrative script from three different approaches: ethnographic studies, site documentation and archeological objects. These combined approaches unfolded through the different rooms and permitted to build up the space-time of TAIRA's eave through the spaces of the museum. The data compiled in this exhibition was the result of several years of research done by a group of national and international researchers and professionals.

Key words:

Rock Art, Museum Exhibition, Audiovisual Display, Performance, Technology.

CHNT Reference:

Rodrigo Tisi et al. 2018. Museography and Performativity: Installing the Space-time of TAIRA's Eave.

INTRODUCTION

When the Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art called to devise a way to present the rock art of TAIRA's eave (rock-shelter), the response was to create an immersive space, a temporal environment of experience and reflection, to highlight the location of this eave and its significant role to the local community that lives around the area.¹ The challenge was not only to present significant archaeological objects with their stories, but to give an account of the physical place, where it is located (Fig. 1). The objective was to present a memorable experience where this art, its landscape and its people meet. In a way, the challenge was to "move" the space-time of TAIRA's eave (Fig. 2), from the desert, to the spaces of the museum in Santiago. With this, the exhibition purpose was to transport the viewers, from the spaces of TAIRA's eave located in the valley of the Loa River, to an immersive experience in the museum. The main challenge was to catch the attention of visitors by explaining ancient practices of the Likan-Antai culture. This rock art piece is somehow frozen, and it is a testimony, a ritual on earth's reproduction, linking the deities that govern the earth and the sky.

□

Author's address: Rodrigo Tisi Paredes, DesignLab at the Design School, Adolfo Ibáñez University, Diagonal Las Torres 2640, Peñalolén, 7941169, Santiago, Chile. Email: rodrigo.tisi@uai.cl

¹ The exhibition brought to light certain conditions of the place and the context in which TAIRA is located. It developed an immersive space that used audiovisual resources to provoke a moment of reflective experience, highlighting certain values, related to natural resources and animal reproduction. "TAIRA: el amanecer del Arte en Atacama" ("TAIRA: the dawn of art in Atacama") proposed a moment of enjoyment, of slow contemplation, similar to what can be perceived when someone is in such space-time where the rock-art is located. The space designed was meant to trigger a memorable experience for the visitors, and more than to become an object for cultural consumption (which could be found within the spaces of museums and tourism), the design was meant to commemorate rituals of local ancestral values.

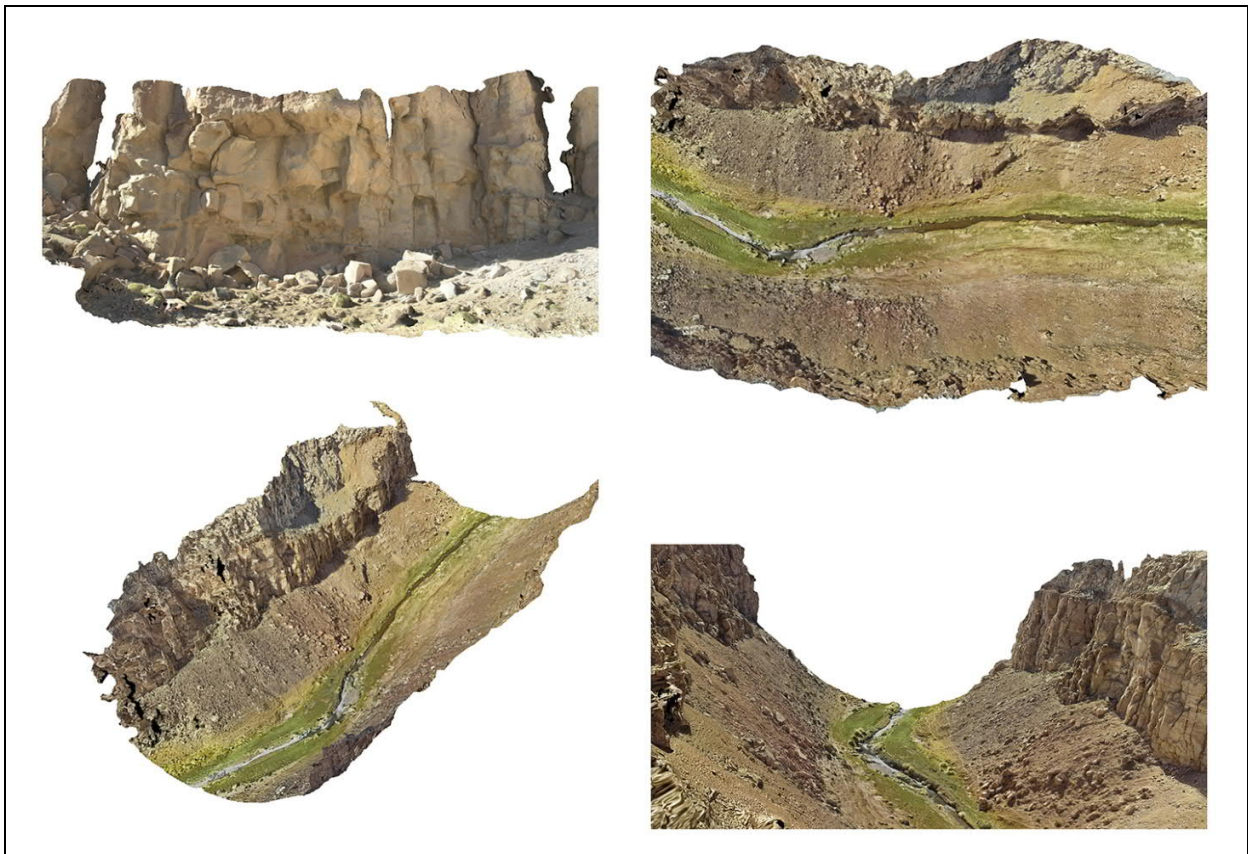


Fig. 1. Series of horizons, panoramic images of the Atacama Desert. Photo credits: Rodrigo Tisi, Simón Gallardo, and Eduardo Pérez



Fig. 2. Panoramic image of TAIRA's eave, a rock shelter on a hillside (rock-wall) of about 60 meters height. Photo credits: Rodrigo Tisi

Throughout the design process, different challenges were incorporated. On one hand, the exhibition was meant to do what is usually required on an exhibit of this nature; this is; to develop a concise narrative out of various objects organized along with historical texts and studies, to compose the script. Those were the archaeological contents that the exhibition was displaying to the visitors. This approach highlighted a rigorous scientific scope done through the research of many archeologists, among them, José Berenguer, chief curator at the museum in Santiago who was also the main curator of the exhibition. In Chile, his contribution has been recognized also because of the work done along with the local *atacameño* (ethnicity of South America that inhabited the interior of the Atacama Desert, also called Likan-Antai culture). Berenguer has been the author of several contributions about TAIRA's eave.² This project demanded the incorporation of a series of ethnographic records that gave an account of the human and symbolic dimension of what is in TAIRA. This ethnographic dimension constituted a greater challenge as to devise the form on how to unfold the story through different spaces (steps on how and what should be displayed). The interviews conducted and the meticulous study of all the material of years of research lead to incorporate the use of different media; video and video mapping, sound, series of photographs and a 3D animation made with techniques of photogrammetry done by Diego Pinochet at the Design Lab UAI (Fig. 3).³ The audiovisual media accomplished in the exhibition the intention to build a "realistic" experience, on "high definition", for the viewer's final perception. These resources improved the show and contributed to make the exhibit 'dynamic' and 'intriguing' as described by some visitors during the exhibition show.⁴



*Fig. 3. Series of photogrammetric images: interactive 3D model displayed for the spectators on a touch screen.
Image credits: Diego Pinochet, Design Lab, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez*

² For more information refer to "TAIRA: the dawn of Art in Atacama" (2017), a catalogue of the exhibition, in which José Berenguer expands ideas about heritage, landscape and rock art of the Atacama Desert, and north of Chile.

³ Photogrammetry determines geometric characteristics of objects by using photography. The project used a drone camera to do an exhaustive survey of the hillside and the canyon of the Loa River. With these images the project was able to re-construct the topological characteristics of the site. This technology is highly accurate, and together with a special software, a very accurate model of TAIRA's eave was built for the spectators.

⁴ The exhibition took place at the museum of Pre-Columbian Art between November 2017 and May 2018 and then from September 2018 to January 2019, at SFME in Antofagasta (sala Fundación Minera Escondida Antofagasta).

From the point of view of what was required to build this experience, the material aspects of the project, and the mechanisms used to communicate the content were key factors to consider throughout the whole design process [Hannah and Harslof 2008]. TAIRA was a construction journey in time and space, which in addition had the goal to invite people to “perform” a certain reflection. The idea was to provoke some kind of connection between the viewers (that are off site) with the site itself where TAIRA is. The exhibition generated awareness among other things about water issues that should be considered with the environment we all share (Figs. 4 and 5). In this sense, by combining technological resources (digital) with conventional materials (physical construction organizing the spaces of the exhibition), the project was able to “balance” content requirements to enhance communication transmission that the show had as a challenge. There were several iterations to decide as what should be the minimum amount of information and how this information should be told and displayed. With these decisions we had the opportunity to build “experiences”, and therefore to transfer the issues and concerns described above (general public). The narrative was redefined several times throughout the process and in order to avoid overwhelming experiences, a lot of material was re-organized, simplified and edited, several times.

The exhibition spaces considered building panoramic as well as intimate places in order to situate the viewer in those unique conditions of the space-time of TAIRA. The museography liberated the storytelling structure to a much less linear development of the script. The navigation considered singular moments, some of them with ‘surprises’ that were not necessarily designed in a linear path, or only in one direction. In this way, the narrative was organized with texts and graphics in three levels:

1. Section title
2. First explanatory downgrade that described an explanation of what was presented
3. Second explanatory downgrade that described specific and technical details of what was presented.

The graphic panels were built by using “Medium Density Fibreboard” (MDF) processed wood and light cardboard cover that included a plastic layer finished with digital prints (heat sealed; thermo-layered film). These folded and re-folded panels were placed along the archaeological section to construct a series of corners and small eaves or “shelters” in the space of the exhibition. These spaces highlighted objects, diagrams, drawings and photographs (all of them as the result of the scientific research conducted by Berenguer et Martinez [1989]). The showcases built were literally observation niches, that on one hand solved the pause and contemplation required to understand each piece (as if the contemplation was performed on a similar topography of the existing place of TAIRA’s rock art). In the other hand, they served to control de lighting issues of the exhibition (warm and cold LED lights were used). The material used for the niches (MDF processed wood and light cardboard) was very similar to the color of existing rocks, on the slopes of the Loa’s River Canyon. Each one of them served to exalt a scientific narration of the TAIRA period (Figs. 6 and 7).

The museography of TAIRA articulated different spaces and objects (or the representation of them) in order to complete “the trip” that the exhibition enabled. This was the main challenge of it, to find simple but eloquent ways to show the content of the rock art (Figs. 8 and 9). The organization of all those significant elements that were part of the display was fundamental to articulate the different moments of this symbolic transfer under the curatorial view.

With this, the occasion became an opportunity to explore different possibilities of expression, devising new forms of communication between what is exposed and the viewer (of different age range and diverse cultural origins). For this same reason, a universal audiovisual language was required. The standard technology used, along with communicational media, represented a unique opportunity to stimulate the senses of those who visited the exhibition. The idea was basically to let the viewer go home with a unique experience [Dernie 2006].⁵ The challenges of this design considered multiple dimensions of the Likan-Antai territory and its culture, to capture moments of the Loa Valley, its immensity, its rocky slopes and the art engraved on the stones (in pictographs and petroglyphs); an art about the sky, the land, the animals and the practices of the native peoples [Sinclair and Martinez 2018].⁶ With all this, the highlighted dimension design of the desert, its horizon, together with the

⁵ See ideas of “experience” proposed by David Dernie in his Exhibition Design book. What stands out most is to explore new ways of approaching material and content, to see, and literally feel, the message. The strategy of ‘experience’ also tends to relate to the operations that are done to capture the attention of a less scholarly crowd.

⁶ The curatorial contents of this exhibition are also presented on the third publication of ArtEncuentro, edited by Carole Sinclair (2018), Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art. For further information see references at the end of the text.

movement of its sky, suggests ideas of the past, present and future. This is a unique feature of the Atacama Desert, time seemed to be frozen. The challenge of the exhibition design had to combine dimmed ambiences to emphasize technological devices. Lighting details were fundamental to conceive the atmospheres of the interior spaces of the show (Figs. 10, 11, and 12).



Fig. 4. Series of images of TAIRA's rock-shelter (zoom-in of the eave). Photo credits: Rodrigo Tisi



Fig. 5. Main panel of the rock art of TAIRA's eave (detail). Photo credits: Rodrigo Tisi



Figs. 6 and 7. Niches built to display two sections of the exhibition: “People in the times of TAIRA” and “TAIRA under the magnifying glass”. Photo credits: Pablo Blanco



Fig. 8. Rock art panel situation (first prototype) of TAIRA's eave. Photo credits: Rodrigo Tisi



Fig. 9. Rock art panel of TAIRA's eave with layers of research drawings. This layered drawings enabled the construction of the wall placed at the museum. Render credits: Eduardo Pérez



Fig. 10. Panorama 360° in section: Pachamama "Santa Tierra". Render Credits: Eduardo Pérez



Fig. 11. TAIRA's eave during the day (detail). Render credits: Eduardo Pérez

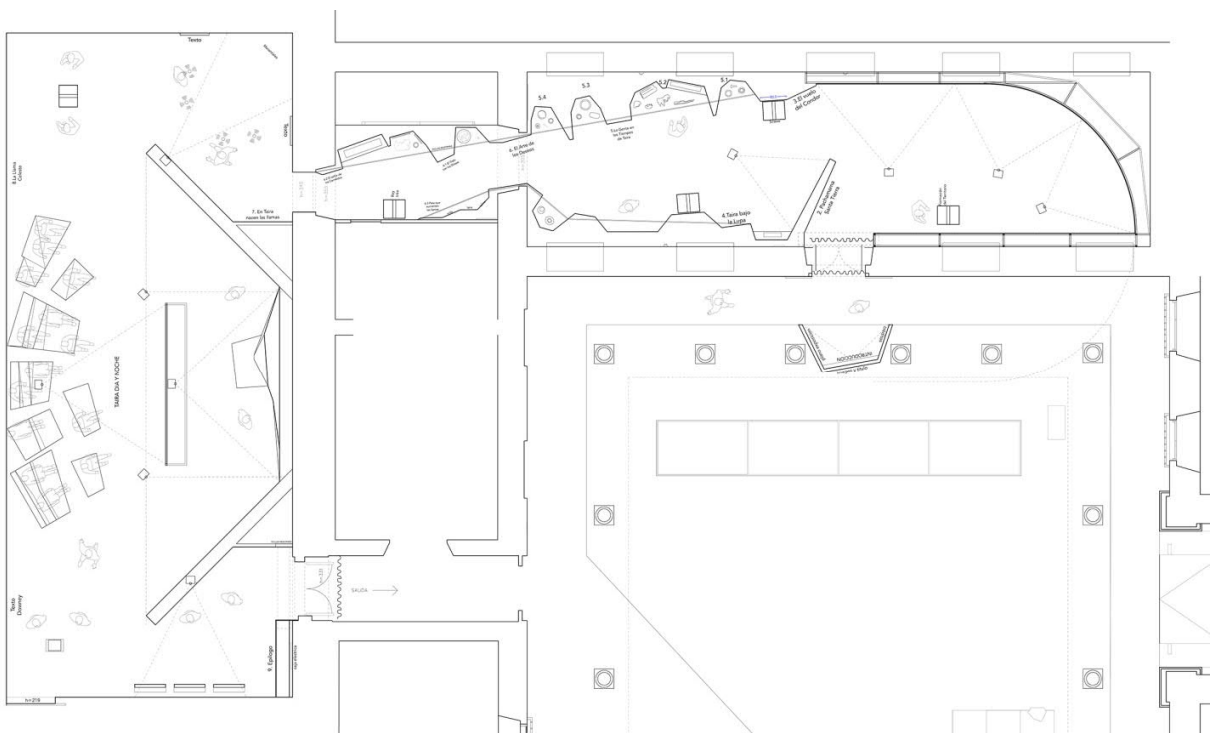


Fig. 12. TAIRA's exhibition design plan view, CAD drawing. Image credits: Rodrigo Tisi and Eduardo Pérez

But an exhibition could not only be just a form of presentation, and of representation. It could also be understood in more complex dimensions, with an open and active approach to interact with it, as a form *of* and *as* performance [Schechner 2002].⁷ In this sense, the project not only dealt with the organization of elements and contents to 'act' with them, but also used certain communication and language resources of theatrical characteristics [Tisi 2008].⁸ These situations lead the team to think of staging the moment of experience, by freezing it, while taking selfies for example. The exhibition allowed selfies as a mechanism of participation, a concrete "interaction" with the landscape of the desert described (Fig. 13). What is suggested here is that this form of exhibition plus the active participation of the viewer leads to different situations of performativity.⁹ This explains the designed 'outcome' of all the elements that were 'in action'. The conscious design of all these characteristics constituted in itself an act of performance, since there was some implicit communication between the 'image' of the exhibition and the museum visitors. The readings obtained from what was installed are relevant not only to think and revise certain experiences, but also, to connect with what the show wanted to transmit. This performativity depends on the performed dialogues that the visitors enacted with the installation. That unique moment granted both by the space of exhibition along with the technological pieces that were built as part of it, along with the complementary TAIRA app, constitute the packet to embrace the 'trip' projected, which is neither in TAIRA nor in the museum.



Fig. 13. Visitor's selfie on panorama 360°, in section: Pachamama "Santa Tierra". The viewer freezes a moment "in the desert" while having an experience in the museum room in Santiago. Photo credits: Carole Sinclair

The exhibition was developed in the following eight units:

"Pachamama Santa Tierra" which considered the idea of the panoramic landscape as the Holy Land. A series of 48 photographs were projected on a large format screen, showing the incommensurable landscapes of the desert. This space introduced the viewer into the desolate world of the desert and immediately transported it to the ground,

⁷ Performance can be defined in the 'doing', in the 'present' and through the 're-presentation' of something on an effective manner. In Richard Schechner's introduction to performance studies, certain parameters are established, to describe when something is performance (doing something) or when something could be understood as 'performance' (when something re-presents something else). The author explains that something is performance when the audience (viewer) understands it and receives it as such, although it cannot define it. If the audience manages to understand it, that action, causes an effect. For Schechner, that outcome of the action, the effect can be understood *as* performance, then, that act, in fact, *is* performance.

⁸ For architecture these elements are translated into materiality: light, program, time and anything that involves the physical configuration of a space, whether temporary or permanent. To expand further in these ideas see Tisi, R. "*B + S + P + T + PL + M: Six Ways to Approach Architecture through the Lens of Performance*" in JAE: Journal of Architecture Education 61, 4 (2008): 69-75.

⁹ The definition of performativity has been explored in several disciplines, but mainly in the world of theater, anthropology and sociology. In his book "The presentation of the self in everyday life", Erwin Goffman talks about what is performative and how language plays a fundamental role in constructing temporary situations of performativity, which is nothing else than the effects of language and communication on people, often understood as decrees. One could say that the performativity of an exhibition is in the effects that such show produces, in the context where the work is located, and consequently, in the receiver eye/ear, the 'spectator' of the work. Certainly, there must be a cultural context that gives parameters to understand this performativity. Exhibition design needs to understand these parameters to actually design that effect.

its land, and the sky. To solve the design challenge, this space considered a perimeter that articulated a curved surface, a vision of about 270 degrees. Half of this amplitude is achieved by projecting an HD movie of about 10 minutes into a wall. The rest of the panorama is constructed with the reflection of the same image on a reflecting surface (black mirror in the opposite wall). This moment emulates the landscape of the place and puts the viewer in a visual state almost as if it were the desert environment [Sinclair 2017]. The 'mirrored' surface in front of the perimeter projection of about 12.0 x 3.0 m high allows and creates the illusion of the horizon, of being in an open space. The eye can thus go through the details of the landscape that stands out (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14. 360° mirror assembly in section: Pachamama “Santa Tierra”. Photo credits: Pablo Blanco

“**The Cóndor’s flight**” presents the place from a bird’s eye fly. This moment changed the point of view of the spectator and invited him/her to recognize the territory as if it were from the eye of a flying bird, in an HD movie of about 3.5 minutes. The position of TAIRA’s eave was described with respect to geographical landmarks of the Loa Valley, such as the *Sirawe* hill, the river bed itself, the water springs, the scarce vegetation of its contour, the rocky configurations and the stones of the slope where the eave is. And as if it were a condor, the flight was sometimes very high and slow, and sometimes lower and faster (closer to the ground). A camera of a drone was used to find this point of view. Through the capture of multiple aerial shots and after a meticulous work of postproduction, the film manages to construct a narrative that presented the context of the eave from the sky, an impossible perspective for the human eye. Along with this aerial route, a representation of the TAIRA’s eave, located on the slope of the Loa River Canyon, both in plan and in perspective/axonometry, was presented below the flight. This photogrammetric representation in 3D animation was achieved through an interactive screen that invited the viewer to navigate and explore the archeological site. The exhibition incorporated QR codes to download TAIRA’s 3D app, allowing this representation of the eave to be taken as a souvenir.¹⁰

“**TAIRA under the magnifying glass**” and “**People in the times of TAIRA**” presented the most scientific moment of the exhibition, it took the viewer to the path of various archaeological researches made by a team which started around 1984. Through the contemplation of twenty-two archaeological objects, photographs of rock art, diagrams, analytical drawings and infographics, important aspects of the rock art of TAIRA and its archaeological context were explained. It described the techniques of painting and engraving used by the artisans that lived in the Atacama region during the time when this rock art was made. It ended with a timeline and a map of the region that related the style of TAIRA with other styles developed before -Kalina- and after -Milla- (Fig. 15). The museography of these sections was displayed in a corridor that simulated the Loa River Canyon (rock wall as on the hill side). At the same time, there were cases displayed which built a linear ethnographic story with different videos that told stories about the people that live there and its land. (Fig. 16).

¹⁰ You can download the 3D version of TAIRA for Android or Iphone from the online app stores.

It can also be downloaded from the museum’s website at: <http://www.precolombino.cl/exposiciones/exposiciones-temporales/taira-el-amanecer-del-arte-en-atacama-2017/el-vuelo-del-condor/fotogrametria-del-alero-taira/>

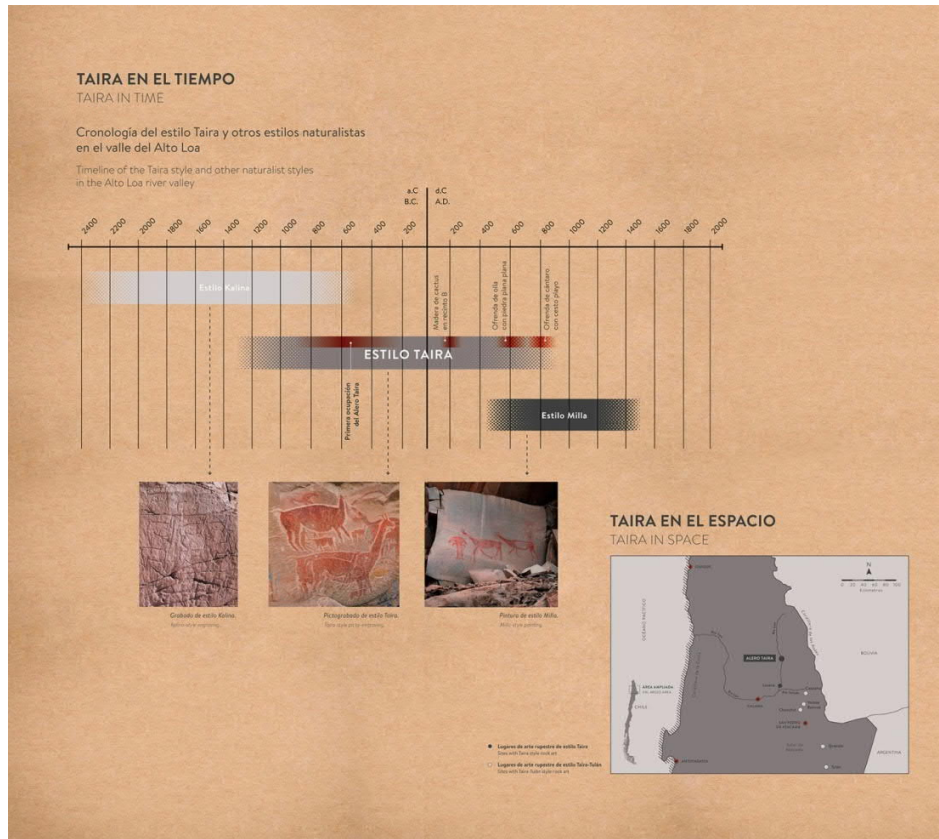


Fig. 15. "TAIRA in time" and "TAIRA in space". Diagram credits: Antonieta López



Fig. 16. Assemblies of units "TAIRA under the magnifying glass" and "People in times of TAIRA". In the background, the units "The condor's flight" and "Pachamama Santa Tierra". Photo credits: Pablo Blanco

“**The art of desires**” showed the context that explained the role that the rock art of the TAIRA’s eave would have had. It organized a field of content that was linked to the relationship between heaven and earth. Here various cycles of life were described; they explained the importance of heaven and earth. This section highlighted a tradition of a territorial and celestial organization of earth and sky, which enabled fertility and reproduction. The exhibition in this part recalled symbolic elements and characters that intervene in the rites of art desires. Explanatory panels with texts, photographs and archaeological pieces installed, showed the cycles and systems of reproduction of the Llamas, and the beliefs that could exist in relation to the rock art that was represented at different times in the valley of the Loa River (natural reproduction and water importance).

“**In TAIRA, Llamas are born**” the beliefs and the connection of the animals with the earth and the spring are presented. This section highlighted how the Llamas reproduced and how certain configurations of the stellar universe were related to the place of TAIRA. This myth described and stimulated the cycles of life for native people. In here, the exhibition presented a projected corner of two planes of about 1.8 m x 3.6 m each side. Sometimes, both planes merge into a single continuous image which highlighted the horizon and the landscape of the place, and at other times, the projection was divided in two, making the center of both images coincide with the vertex of the room. This resource was used to present an ethnographic video in parallel to the landscape and the animals living there. This projection is complemented by a continuous audio, a description of the river made by a local farmer, Nicolás Aimani (Fig. 17).



Fig. 17. View of section “In TAIRA llamas are born”. This video and the story told by Nicolás Aimani explain water importance and the Loa River’s stream. Photo credits: Pablo Blanco

“The Celestial Llama” described in a monumental way the dimension of the Loa Canyon, the river and TAIRA’s eave. The viewer encountered an 8-minute film that was installed on a triangular wall of about 3.0 m x 18.0 m, which simulated the existing rocky wall of the site (just like the side of the Loa River where TAIRA’s shelter is located). On this ‘rock wall’ a mapping projection was displayed to see in full detail the beautiful drawings of TAIRA done 2.500 years ago. This is one of the culminating and most powerful moments of the exhibition. Moments of day

and night were staged by means of a time-lapse projection. The same one alludes to the myth of the Celestial Llama that descends from the sky to connect with the Llamas represented in the drawings of TAIRA's the rock-art (Figs. 18 and 19).



Figs. 18 and 19. Unit assembly "The Celestial Flame": Photo credits: Pablo Blanco

The **"Epilogue"** presented, in a metaphorical way, the problems that TAIRA's eave is currently facing: one regarding the patrimonial value and the preservation of its art (tourism will soon arrive), and the other, regarding the native peoples that are descendants of the ancient Likan Antai inhabitants. Three full HD screens silently emit images of the landscape and the TAIRA people. On top of them the most significant words expressed in this exhibition (taken out of the ethnographic videos) were projected; they flow like a spring of words that construct the metaphor of noncommunication (Fig. 20). The water is crucial in the Atacama Desert and exploitation and climate change is putting this on risk. But just before the Epilogue, a quote of the architect and visual artist Juan Downey, who visited TAIRA in 1984, completes the show with a fragment of a video called "Information Withheld". This video is one of his early video works and was projected on a conventional 14" TV screen. Downey's eye on TAIRA's eave is fused then, with his vision about a contemporary world of consumption.

It can be said that in terms of performativity this exhibition was relevant not only to talk about education and the transmission of certain local concerns about resources. There is a need to preserve both tangible and intangible heritage. Perhaps the exhibition highlighted certain aspects that would make our own local culture more robust, by displaying the relevance to preserve our own backgrounds. The exhibition contributed not only to instruct those who visited it, but also to generate consciousness about the conditions and the "value" of our heritage in the north of the country. The exhibition was meant to transmit universal values beyond the spaces of the museum, to different audiences both in Chile and abroad.

CONCLUSIONS

As an academic that is interested in both theory and practice by means of design and design processes (as well as performance and performance studies methodologies), I can say that TAIRA served as an innovative mechanism to present and re-present content. Its display highlighted issues of heritage of local traditions and of cultural local scope that needed to be faced. The TAIRA exhibition, as a tool of communication, described concerns not only about rock art of 2.500 years ago but also about concerns that are around this zone, in relation to local communities, water and animal reproduction. The exhibition reached a great amount of people, more than 74.000 visitors in total, as explained by the communication specialist at the Pre-Colombian Art Museum.¹¹ TAIRA is a contribution towards innovation in research as it can be considered as a "research product" of high impact that not only reached experts of different disciplines and academic backgrounds but also, and most importantly, cause awareness on regular people (diverse groups: from kids, to students, to adults to old people). The exhibition served as a tool to teach and

¹¹ TAIRA was very successful to bring and important amount of people to the museum spaces (in its three versions). In Santiago the exhibition space received 71.401 visitors, in Sala Fundación Minera Escondida in Antofagasta received 2.508 visitors and, in exhibition space of San Pedro de Atacama, it received 790 visitors.

highlight certain values that are still there, left, to preserve the traditions and beliefs of a community and its heritage. After its success (exhibition presented in the late 2017, during 2018 and early 2019), the local community of TAIRA is doing efforts to try to bring the exhibition to a permanent display. With this same aim, to extend its life, the Pre-Colombian Art Museum has demonstrated interest to try to tour TAIRA to reach an international audience.



Fig. 20. Assembly of the “Epilogue” unit. Photo credits: Pablo Blanco

REFERENCES

- José Berenguer and José Luis Martínez. 1989. “Camelids in the Andes: rock art, environment and myths” in *Animals into Art*, H. Morphy Ed., Unwin Hyman/One World Archaeology, London (1989): 390-416.
- David Dernie. 2006. *Exhibition Design*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 192 p.
- Ervin Goffman. 1956. *The presentation of the self in everyday life*. New York: Random House, 251 p.
- Dorita Hannah and Olav Harslof eds. 2008. *Performance Design*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 336 p.
- Richard Schechner. 2002. *Performance Studies an Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 288 p.
- Carole Sinclair (Ed.). 2017. *TAIRA, the dawn of art in Atacama*. Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino. Santiago: Ograma, 120 p.
- Carole Sinclair and Paula Martínez (Eds.). 2018. “La exposición de arte rupestre de TAIRA tras bambalinas: seis ensayos y un guion” in *ArteEncuentro #3* Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino. Santiago, 206 p.
- Rodrigo Tisi. 2008. “B + S + P + T + PL + M: Six Ways to Approach Architecture through the Lens of Performance” In *JAE: Journal of Architecture Education* 61, 4 (2008): 69-75.

Imprint:

Proceedings of the 23rd International Conference on Cultural Heritage and New Technologies 2018. CHNT 23, 2018 (Vienna 2019). <http://www.chnt.at/proceedings-chnt-23/> ISBN 978-3-200-06576-5

Editor/Publisher: Museen der Stadt Wien – Stadtarchäologie

Editorial Team: Wolfgang Börner, Susanne Uhlirz

The editor's office is not responsible for the linguistic correctness of the manuscripts.

Authors are responsible for the contents and copyrights of the illustrations/photographs.