

## Modern Architecture in the Promotion of National Tourism, the *Cap Ducal*, an Emblematic Work in *Viña del Mar*

BY MACARENA CORTÉS

This article proposes analyzing the *Cap Ducal* restaurant, a work by architect Roberto Dávila Carson in 1936, as an emblematic construction in Chile's favorite summer resort city, *Viña del Mar*. The proposal is to place the relevance and value of this pioneer work of modernity in a wide context of promotion, in which it represents the changes in social and cultural practices related to the resort. From the realm of architecture where, this work establishes the beginning of a new formal language, as well as a part of the new urban configuration of the city as one of the then new tourist infrastructure works.

The *Restaurante Cap Ducal* was built at the mouth of the Marga-Marga estuary that crosses the city of *Viña del Mar*, in a residual site between the *Avenida Marina* and the sea, on the foundations of an old tea shop originally in that place. Urban development left the construction surrounded by water, like other neighboring buildings on the coast. This condition and the triangular shape of the site determined a volume loaded with naval aesthetics, making it seem a ship stranded on the coastal border.

The building was light and the maritime aesthetics accompanied the sculptural type decisions, by means of various elements; the keel on *Avenida Marina*, a series of bull's eye windows, large picture windows over the terraces and tubular railings. Finally, several trans Atlantic liner-type funnels crowned the back of the building, towards the street.

The building had two entrances, one from the street and the other, by the monumental stairs that led directly to the second level. This would differentiate the first level, formed by a hard base where the services were located, and the second level, where the dining halls extended themselves through the terraces towards the sea horizon. A third level was a wide terrace dominating the environment which allowed access to another smaller terrace on the fourth level.

The *Cap Ducal* was a rather small building, whose terraces were equivalent to the inner space and, through which the whole building could be visited going up the strategically located stairs. Thus, the experience of being on a trans Atlantic liner was dramatized, generating a continuous and peripheral walk on the sea.

### Assessment and Valuation of the Modern Project, Innovation of the *Cap Ducal*

The building was undoubtedly an important work in construction and technical terms for various reasons: the use of reinforced concrete that allowed important projections at the second and third levels, the fact that the foundation was directly on the rock and also used the footings of an old mansion.

On the other hand, the *Cap Ducal* was an emblematic construction at the time precisely because it generated, together with other works, spaces for social encounter in the city of *Viña del Mar*, which aspired to become a resort and tourist destination at an international level.

In 1928, Law 4,283 for the development and progress of tourism in the city was passed, after which a Pro-resort Committee was formed that was in charge of managing the work to be done.

Among the most important works is the *Casino de Viña* (inaugurated on 31 December 1930), which greatly upset the most conservative social classes, but represented a work created to complement summer activities, create a source of income for the municipality and a focus of tourist and social attractions. *Hotel O'Higgins* was built with the same aspirations and, in addition to that, it had to accommodate tourists offering maximum comfort.

Another relevant work was the Presidential Palace of Chile (inaugurated by President Carlos Ibáñez del Campo on 19 February 1930), which in some way honored *Viña del Mar*, giving the President a space for summer vacations and leisure in the city.

These three buildings described above were complemented by the swimming pools of 8 Norte Street (1929) and the one in *Recreo* (1930), as well as the implementation of various beaches: *Recreo* (1924), *Las Salinas* (1929), *Caleta Abarca* and *Cochoa* (1935). These works embraced the new relationship with the beach, the sea and the sun, turning the city of *Viña del Mar* into the main urban summer resort in the country.

In this context of city promotion, the *Cap Ducal* was a building that, from the private sector, complemented the social activities typical of the resort, by means of a bar-restaurant program. Moreover, due to its formal expressivity and clear naval reference, it fitted perfectly the festive imagery of the neighboring port of *Valparaíso*.

From the formal and spatial point of view, the *Cap Ducal* was a work that considered exceptional spatial conditions, and related to the public and dynamic nature of the space.

The plan clearly suggests a horizontal spatial sequence, in the relationship between the interior and the exterior, through three types of spaces: a rigid nucleus towards the street, spaces of continuity developed horizontally that were open towards the exterior through a transparency created by the use of a structure of pillars and windows, and, finally, areas of extension by means of projections over the sea.

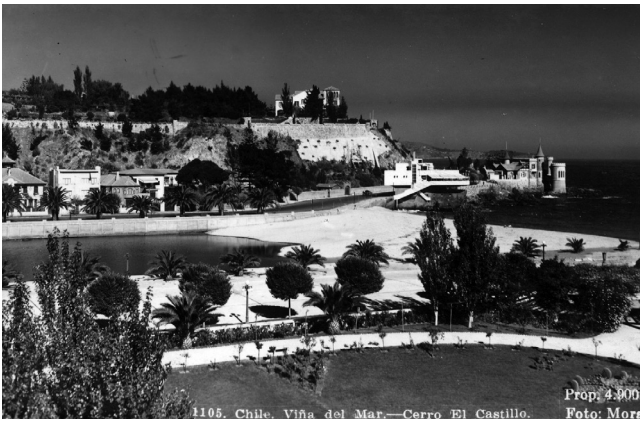
This spatial sequence was reinforced by the building's programs: a hard service border that separated the restaurant from the street, a large dining room spaces and bar and, lastly, the terraces that established a relationship with the view and the sea.

The opening up of the spatial sequence of the building to the exterior horizontally was also reflected in the building's vertical section, through the concrete slabs which were decreasing in size as they got higher, opening up to generate a completely open-air space. Thus, these slabs accommodated more and more extension spaces but smaller in size.

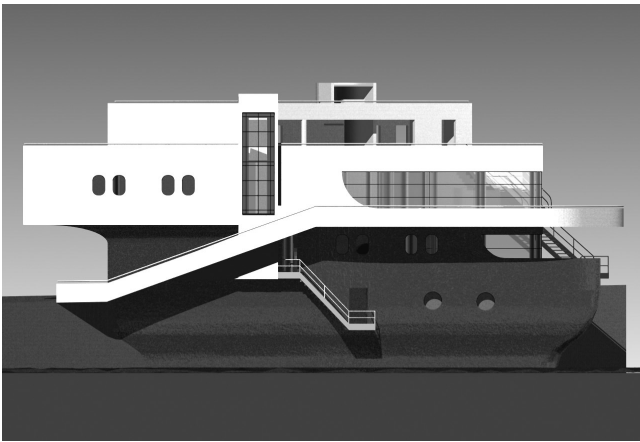
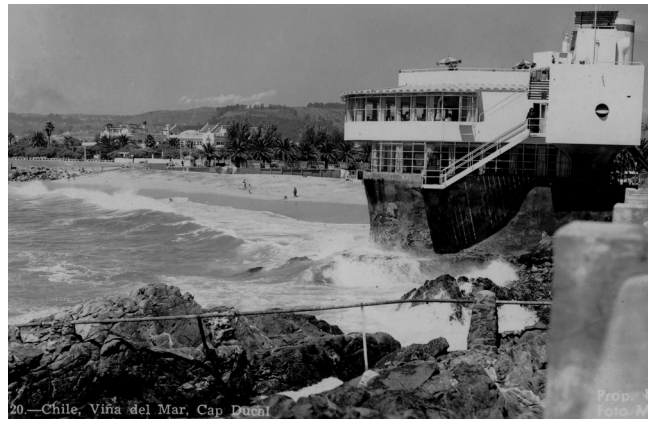
The spaces were connected by means of stairs, which configured a system of continuous routes, ascending and peripheral to the sea. These stairs were placed at the ends of the terraces to force the pedestrian routes through them and give priority to the experience from the exterior of the building.

The project operations of vertical and horizontal spatial reduction, supported by the external pedestrian routes, defined the perimeter of the building and its relationship with the views, configuring a set of complex interventions based on the space and program of the building.

**01** Roberto Dávila, Restaurant *Cap Ducal*, *Viña del Mar*, Chile, 1936. © CENFOTO – Universidad Diego Portales. Archivo Mora, Centro del Patrimonio Fotográfico. Photo by Enrique Mora, 1940.



**02** Roberto Dávila, Restaurant *Cap Ducal*, *Viña del Mar*, Chile, 1936. © CENFOTO – Universidad Diego Portales. Archivo Mora, Centro del Patrimonio Fotográfico. Photo by Enrique Mora, 1940.



**03** Roberto Dávila, Restaurant *Cap Ducal*, *Viña del Mar*, Chile, 1936. Drawing of the original north facade by Francisco Barahona. © *Archivo de Obras, Ilustre Municipalidad de Viña del Mar*.



**04** Roberto Dávila, Restaurant *Cap Ducal*, *Viña del Mar*, Chile, 1936. © *Guía del Veranete, Sección de propaganda de Ferrocarriles del Estado de Chile. Talleres Gráficos*, 1940, p. 37.



**05** Roberto Dávila, Restaurant *Cap Ducal*, *Viña del Mar*, Chile, 1936. Image of the present condition of the building. © Macarena Cortés, 2015.



06 Roberto Dávila, Restaurant *Cap Ducal*, *Viña del Mar*, Chile, 1936. Advertising © *Guía del Veranente*, Sección de propaganda de Ferrocarriles del Estado de Chile. Talleres Gráficos, 1939. p. 27.

## Historical Conditions of the Assignment

The site where the *Cap Ducal* was located belonged to Dr. Teodoro Von Schroeders, who, in 1884 set up the first public seaside resort, Miramar. At the end of 1907, the land was given to the municipality to build *Avenida Marina* and in 1912, the tea house called *Palacio Ducal* was built there. Later, Mr. Domingo Tocornal Matte purchased the tea house and called upon architects Roberto Dávila, Jorge Arteaga, and Costabal & Garafulic, to participate in a private competition for the building of a new restaurant on the foundations of the old tea house.

In 1936, the competition was won by Roberto Dávila, who presented four proposals with these names: *Vauberge Du Duc*, *Palacio Ducal*, *Il Ducale*, and *Cap Ducal*, of which there are two sketches. Roberto Dávila had returned from Europe after an important stay of two years of study and work, with an outstanding participation in the workshop of Le Corbusier and Peter Behrens in Vienna. Thus, it is not only one of the first modern works of interest in Chile, but also one of the first developed by Davila. Afterwards, he built a number of houses in *Viña del Mar*, where it is possible to observe a discourse towards validating neo-colonial expressions.

The way in which the project was presented, by means of several sketches in different styles and then the production of the architect, reflect a great contradiction typical of the time. On the other hand, the formal, expressive and spatial clarity of the work makes it present itself as an unexpected paradigm in the context of the architectural field of the time and in the production of Davila himself.

## The Meaning of the *Cap Ducal* as an Emblematic Work of National Modernity

It can be said that the *Cap Ducal* has an architectural value that may be synthesized in three points of view:

- The project strategy that created a route inside the building that was continuous, ascending and peripheral to the sea, decomposed the volume in the vertical as well as the horizontal sense. This project operation created a spatial sequence that embraced the programs and qualified them spatially. In addition, it established a relationship with the scenery in which the building was inserted, from the movement of the spectator through the route system, comparable to the feeling of a vessel's crew member.

- The fact that during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a few years before the construction of the *Cap Ducal*, the development of the modern seaside resort was strongly consolidated in the world and in *Viña del Mar* in particular. This is a fact of radical importance because it implied the generalised emergence of new programme requirements and, therefore, new types of municipalities adapted to the social relationships brought by the summer. The *Cap Ducal* represented one of the architectural ways that tried to satisfy these new spaces for socializing, stimulating the conditions of the resort through its architectural proposal.

- Lastly, the iconographic value acquired by the vessel imagery in modernity is used in the building as a significant and qualifying metaphor. First, because it is an element present in the context of the port of Valparaíso and, second, because it establishes relationships between the playful image represented by the vessel and summer holidays.

## Conclusions

The *Cap Ducal* has canonical status as it can be considered one of the first modern buildings in Chile, which formally synthesized the renovations raised in modernity referring to: new leisure time, social encounter, contact with nature and expressivity of resort needs. Thus, the proposal was exceptional since it gave a value to the dynamic space, organized by a perimeter route emphasized by the condition of public space through the extended exterior areas. The formal resolution of such spatial

conditions used maritime imagery as utilitarian for its representation, and through a complex geometrical resolution given by the triangular condition of the site. Thus, the possibilities of hierarchies and symmetries were annulled, choosing a free model that collected the conditions of the context through the building's modes of access and views of the sea.

The present condition of the building is very different from its original condition. The enclosed part of the small building is now double its original area, completely discarding the terraces and exterior pedestrian routes by means of an insensitive transformation that turned the restaurant into a hotel, subdividing its generous interior into smaller rooms. Recent actions of entities such as the College of Architects of Chile did not succeed in stopping the changes. This, added to its strategic location have maintained it as a recurrent image of the city of *Viña del Mar* until now. ■

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