

robert stone

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plants bling in the desert

Just east of Joshua Tree National Park is the location for not one, but two of architect Robert Stone's latest historical reincarnations of modernist pavilions. Last May, I visited the first completed pavilion – Rosa Muerta (*Mark #21*) – a 'stripped down' black structure barely dressed in hearts, wrought-iron, roses and rope, sandwiched between a mirrored ceiling and as many chrome columns as Stone's wild fantasy marriage of references (Mies meets Mongoose BMX bikes) could accommodate. While at Rosa Muerta, I took an 'off-the-record' tour of Stone's neighbouring project – the Acido Dorado. At the time, this gold pavilion's furnishing still consisted of Stone's sleeping bag (evidence of his hyper hands-on method), but its spatial signals were already triggering an immediate physiological response in me. The front steps, for example – 46 cm deep in one direction, 61 cm in the other – physically slow a person down. 'Acido Dorado really engages your body,' says Stone. It also screws with your mind. 'It will confuse people who like Rosa Muerta,' Stone continued as he was standing against a backdrop of gold-coloured twisted wrought iron dividing him from the hot, naked desert context. The Dorado project, however, is an improvement over the Muerta project in terms of having more navigational cues; like where to sit and where to eat. When we talk again in November, Stone discusses some of the details of Acido Dorado. For instance, the abundance of gold. 'The ultimate symbol of luxury,' Stone says. 'But, the house: it's just gold paint! It contains its own undermining principle! The other detail he explains are the mirror tinted windows: 'Corporate office towers.' 'Slick *American Psycho* avarice.' 'Surveillant stare through mirrored sunglasses.' Stone says: 'I feel I'm going behind the giant architecture machine, picking up trash it throws out its windows, and holding it up to say "Check *this* out!'. He insists comparing Muerta and Dorado is 'like comparing your children': unfair. Stone designed Dorado before Muerta, and built the two simultaneously, but I tell Stone, Dorado will be received as the second child anyway. 'I'm completely fucking ready for the scrutiny,' the architect responds. 'I believe this house can stand up to anything anybody throws at it!'

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