

Press Release

Solano Benítez and his architectural values at Cersaie 2016

Paraguayan architect and university lecturer Solano Benítez, founder of the professional association Gabinete de Arquitectura, will speak at a conference to be held in the **Architecture Gallery** on **Wednesday 28 September**.

Gabinete de Arquitectura – where Solano Benítez works together with his partners Gloria Cabral and Solanito Benítez – won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for best participant in the 15th International Exhibition *Reporting From The Front* curated by Alejandro Aravena. Their exhibit, consisting of a large low-tech brick and mortar archway, harnessed simple materials, structural ingenuity and unskilled labour to bring architecture to underserved communities.

Born in Asunción in 1963, Solano Benítez graduated in architecture from the National University of Asunción in 1986 and founded Gabinete de Arquitectura in 1987. He distinguished himself in the field of contemporary architecture from an early age, winning several awards and accolades during his thirty-year career.

In 1999, Solano Benítez received an Outstanding Youth award from the Junior Chamber of Paraguay for contributions to national culture. This award was followed by many others, including in 2008 the BSI Swiss Architectural Award, an international recognition for architects under the age of fifty who have done significant work in the field of contemporary architecture. In 2011, Benítez won an honourable mention from the National Congress of Paraguay for his contribution to the nation. In 2011 he was elected Arquitecto del Bicentenario by the Paraguayan Architects' Association and in 2012 became an honorary member of the American Institute of Architects.

Benítez's architectural style reflects his preference for the use of brick as the main construction material in keeping with Paraguay's building traditions. His close ties with his homeland are also reflected in his consistent use of local labour, which he considers a source of innovation. In particular, he views the lack of specialisation of the local workforce as an opportunity rather than a hurdle.

Along with the Golden Lion in 2016, Gabinete de Arquitectura has won various awards, including in 1999 the Work of the Decade Award for the period 1989-1999 from the Paraguay College of Architects. The same year it was a finalist in the Mies van der Rohe award for Latin America and in 1994 represented Paraguay in the Venice Biennale, in the São Paulo biennial and in Lisbon during its stint as the Ibero-American Capital of Culture.

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Solano Benítez's major works include: the Ytú tourist village in Paraguay (finalist in the Mies van der Rohe Award); the Piribebuy Grave (Paraguay), 2000-2001; the Unilever site in Villa Elisa (winning project in the BSI Swiss Architectural Award), 2000-2001; Casa Esmeraldina, in his native city of Asunción in 2002; Casa Fanego, also in Asunción, in 2003 with Sergio Fanego; Casa Abu & Font in Asunción, between 2005 and 2006; Casa Las Anitas in San Pedro, 2007-2008; Edificio Alambra in San Lorenzo, currently under construction.

Attendees are eligible for two Professional Training Credits after registering on the website www.proviaggiarchitettura.com.

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