Facing a relatively chaotic context, formed by a series of historical influences, and offering a certain creative freedom, the Chilean studio Pezo Von Ellrichshausen responds with an object architecture, within which the notion of concept is prevailing. Working mainly in rural areas, how far can this type of architecture be implemented, especially in cities?

It’s on fairly exceptional sites that the architects set their autonomous, almost sculptural, shapes, such as the Cien House or the Poli House. They act as remarkable elements and sublimate the landscape. Therefore, in a dense context, this approach becomes harder to integrate. Although it can create landmarks, it can also break up the existing urban fabric, too rigid to absorb it.

In most of their projects, the architects use the principle of repetition as their guideline: an idea with which they play endlessly, creating a continuous dialogue between this concept and the program.

This repetition is developed through different perspectives. From basic two-dimensional form inside a inverted T-shaped volume, the same unit is implemented twelve times: a square asymmetrically subdivided in four parts, characterized by a main space and secondary spaces located on either side. It is in these secondary spaces that Pezo and Von Ellrichshausen integrate the staircases: one is for the living part of the project while the other provides access to the offices.

This repetitive process decreases the number of visual cues in a given space. For instance, the “120-door pavilion” (a pavilion solely consisting of a structure containing 120 doors in a park), disturbs our understanding of the limits of a place. This is the approach Pezo Von Ellrichshausen use in their projects in order to widen the spaces they create.

Repetition can also be created by occasional elements. This is the case with the Lamp Art Museum where the structure comes from a grid of columns, defining how to use the space. The lack of visual cues produced by such a project leads the users to wander randomly or according to the exhibitions presented in the museum. This is an ingenious system for this type of program as it allows to use the columns as fixing points to place partitions and to organize the space in different ways. Nevertheless, the convertibility of such a building could be questioned.

How could a building like the Lamp Art Museum get a second life? How could a plan made by a grid of columns spaced at 1.5m centres be modified to receive other functions than a museum. And so, what program can this type of architecture absorb?

In the case of the Meri House, composed of two rows of 5 identical squares, no circulation space is planned: one row is reserved for the night, private, spaces and the other for the day spaces, or collective spaces. So, what are the limits of this approach? Because circulation is not only a way to move from a point to another but also a way to compose and to offer transition zones between rooms with different uses. How do you move from very private areas to collective places in this type of projects? How does it feel to move directly from a bedroom to a kitchen or from a bathroom to a living room?

Therefore, we realize that architecture dictated by a concept may have its limits, whether these come from its program and from the evolution of the buildings in time.