



#Hiloselii

Hilos, cajas negras y fetiches urbanos

(Wires, black boxes and
urban fetishes)

The Palace as seen by
elii [architecture office]

6th February 2020 - 31st January 2021

CENTRO | elii



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Coordination and Production
CentroCentro

Graphic and museographic design
elii [oficina de arquitectura]

Architects
elii – Uriel Fogué + Eva Gil + Carlos Palacios

Architect coordinating the team
elii – Lucía Fernández

Collaborators
elii - Ana López, Raquel García, Marta Vaquero

Texts
elii - Uriel Fogué + Eva Gil + Carlos Palacios

Setting up
Santiago Santiago

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Hilos, cajas negras y fetiches urbanos

Wires, black boxes and urban fetishes

Since its foundation as a Communications Palace a hundred years ago, Cibeles Palace has served as the setting for many different lives and has often been the focus of gazes. This series of exhibitions, *El Palacio visto por...* (*The Palace as Seen by...*) arises from that idea of gazing, of reading from different points of view. Every year, we invite different artists and architects to create an exhibition that includes an informative tour through the archives and history of the building, and to propose a personal reading of the palace. The architecture office elii has participated in this edition of *El Palacio visto por...*

After studying the tender and construction documents for the Palace of Communications, elii has been able to confirm the disappearance, during the building process, of a fundamental element: the *wires* that were drawn on the plans that architects Antonio Palacios and Joaquín Otamendi submitted for the tender in 1904; a network of cables that started from the central tower of the Palace and ran towards the city, passing through the pinnacles that crown the façades of the building. For elii, these *wires* provide evidence of the fact that, from the very beginning, the building was conceived as one of the city's infrastructure nodes. And they were eliminated precisely to hide the technological processes for the domination of nature that took place in modern cities. Following the trail of those *wires*, we will access the urban *black box*, an invisible city that exists beneath our feet, populated by a kind of "technological inhabitants": *wires*, cables, pipes, channels, device networks, infrastructures, structures, installations, wells, cisterns, tubes, tunnels, pipelines, sanitary conduits, sewers, drains, culverts, galleries, communications, etc., which tirelessly and silently function so that everything works on "this side," so that everything can be "normal."

The exhibition is arranged as an array of texts and images supported by a series of tensile structures, formed by two main elements. First, a matrix of pinnacles; a contemporary scaled version of the pinnacles that adorn the façades of the Palace. And secondly, a tensile, continuous and lightweight network of *wires*, that reminds us of the *wires* of the original sketch of the proposal. The pinnacles and the *wires* merge in the exhibition space just as two overlapping structures are blended in the Communications Palace. On the one hand, the heavy, monumental, historicist and allegoric structure of the façades and the fetishised spaces of the Palace. And on the other hand, superimposed on this, the lightweight, ethereal and almost imperceptible structure of the network of *wires*, that technological web, today invisible and turned into a *black box*, through which the Palace was connected with the world.

101 years after the opening of this iconic landmark, one of Madrid's true architectural fetishes, we will cross the spaces of the Palace, guided by this group of architects, to get to the heart of the urban *black box*: the place where cities make a pact with nature.

**wires
black boxes
urban fetishes**

elii is an architecture office, founded in Madrid in 2006 by Uriel Fogué, Eva Gil and Carlos Palacios. Their professional practice also includes the fields of teaching and research. Elii was part of the Spanish Pavilion during the 15th Venice Biennial of Architecture (it was awarded the 2016 Golden Lion). Two of their works have been selected for the European Union Prize For Contemporary Architecture - the Mies Van Der Rohe Award (2015, 2019); they have obtained the First Prize of the College of Architects of Madrid (2017); and they have also won the COAM Prize on five occasions (2018, 2017, 2016, 2013, 2011, 2006). They are the authors of the book: *What is Home Without a Mother* (HIAP – Matadero Madrid, 2015), which won an award at the 13th Biennial of Spanish Architecture and Urbanism in 2015, and they are the co-editors of *UHF*, a publication included in the Creators Archive of Madrid.