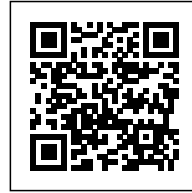




DJEMMA EL-FNA. CARTS, SNAKES & STORYTELLERS

Posted on April 18, 2017 by Urban UrbanNext



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A rich and austere space.

The Jemma el Fna Square has been a fundamental example for the development of this work on public catalysts. Its singularity and difference with regard to the classic European squares has served us to find out which are the necessary conditions for a public space to be vivacious. To study an urban place constructed from austerity, without material or architectural resources, has all lead us to discover the essence of the public space.

The experience of visiting the Jemma el Fna Square has been essential to understand a public space that is characterized by its spatial informality.

During the first visits, you get shocked by the frenetic movements of the people, the noise, the yelling, the intense smells, the smoke and heat; you discover a disordered and spontaneous public space, one that has been built freely and stimulating imagination. It is a place that has always wanted to preserve the mixture and difference as urban conditions; as its essential vocation. It is a fascinating public space, formed by the mixture of different cultures, ethnic groups, generations and social classes.

A dissonant environment, confined by the chaos of images, rich and poor together, both country and cosmopolitan people, active and idle, old and young; all this mixture without minding about their origin, social condition, age, political color, either religion or social condition.

Once you are able to leave behind Jemma el Fna's atmospheric charm, you start to realize that there's a total absence of architecture in the space of the square.

The fortune of having met with Marrakech's city exactly on the day of the sacred holiday of the slaughter of the Lamb was crucial. It was a key moment, because it is the only day of the year that you are able to visit the square totally empty, without people or activity, and to discover the importance of the minor scale to construct the public space. The absence of cars, stops, stalls, storytellers, snake charmers, etc.; It was suddenly exhibiting a totally naked public space. A raw, ordinary and marginal place.

Goytisolo proposes the oral patrimony.

The writer Juan Goytisolo moved to Marrakech in the 70's seduced by the poetic charm of this peculiar square; and became the promoter of its new heritage category.

His long walks around the square helped him understand the oral and intangible value of the space, while he observed the jugglers, the snake charmers, the musicians, the singers and dancers, etc.

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In 1997, Goytisolo convinced the UNESCO to create a new program that would define the Spaces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The aim of this new category consisted of protecting some activities that were ancestral traditions, in continuous renovation, and very tied to the city. On the 18th of May of 2001, the UNESCO declared the Jemma el Fna Square the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

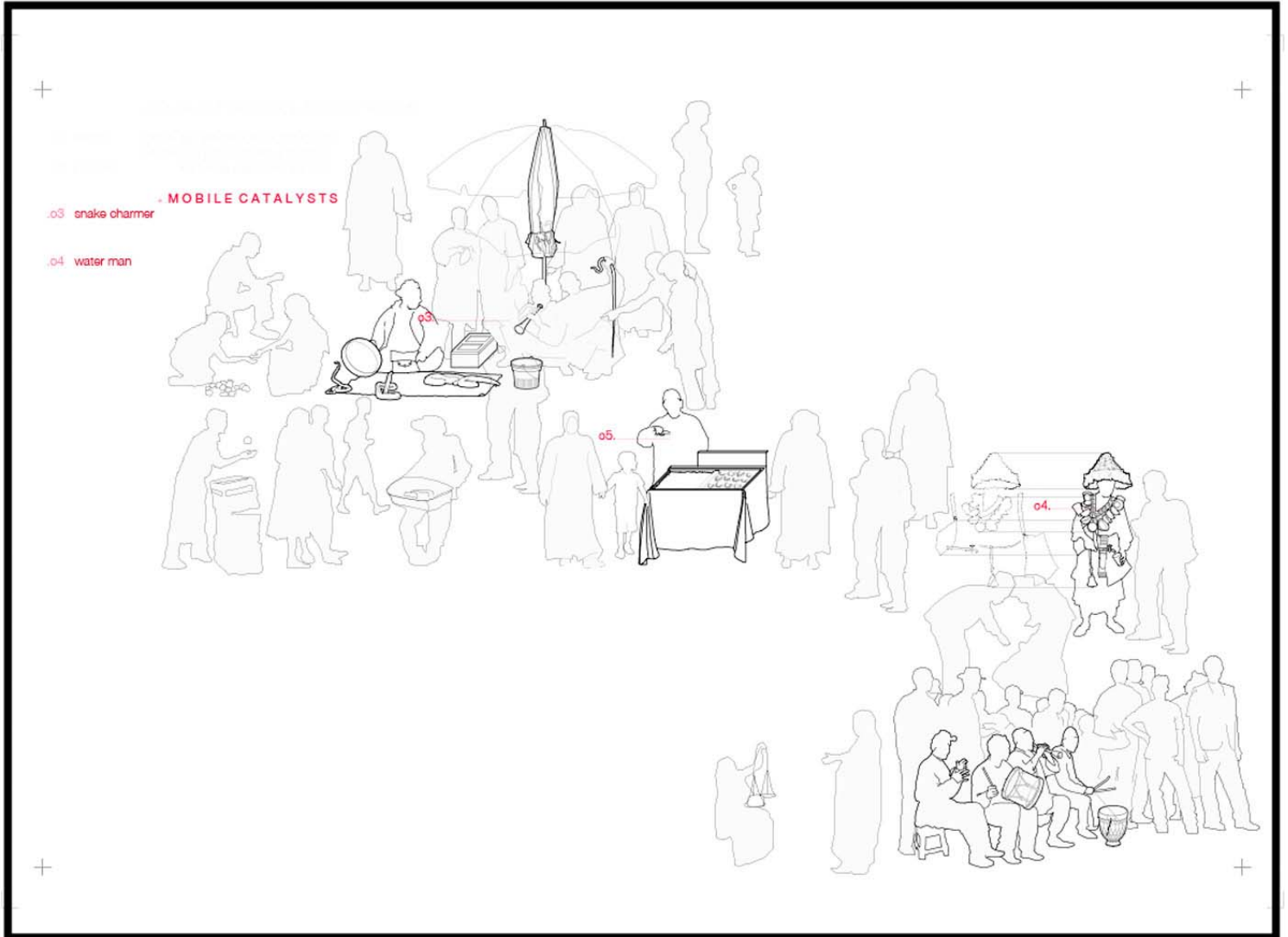


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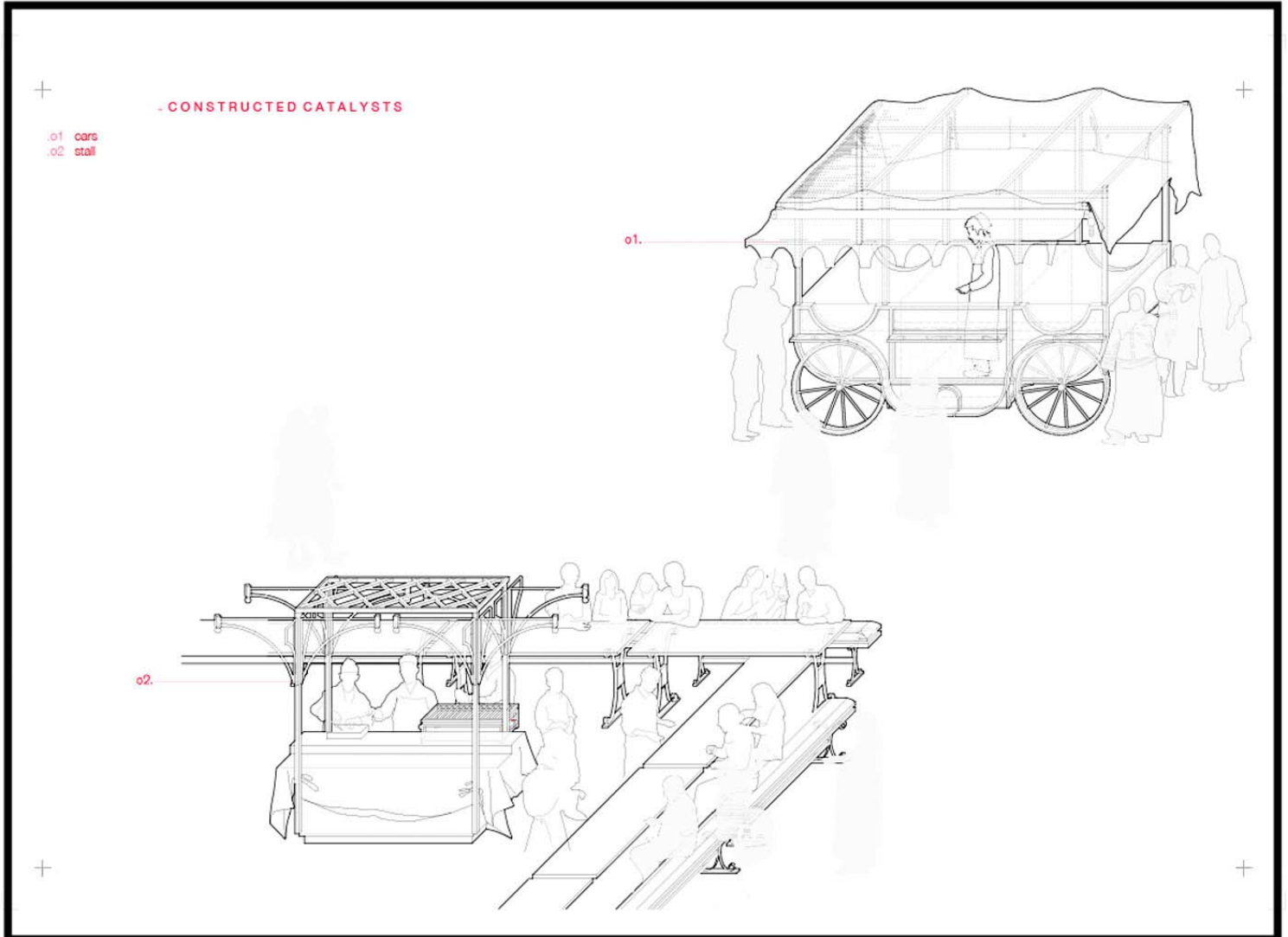


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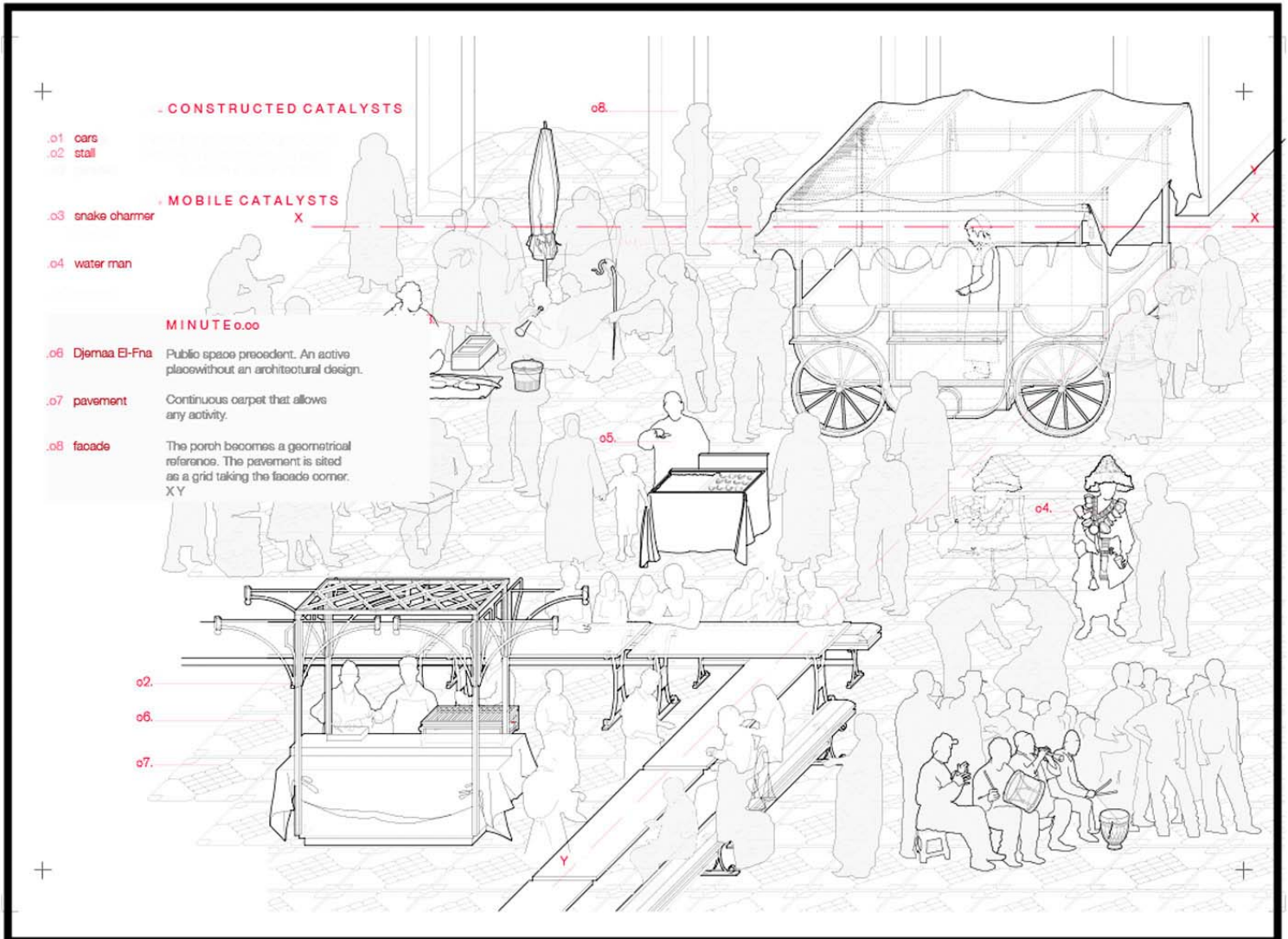
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Carts, Snakes and Storytellers

The fortuitous visit to the square on the day of the Lamb let us recognize the value that Goytisolo was announcing and demanding.

The strength of this public space does not rely on its shape or on its architectural project, but on the oral and immaterial aspects of the place.

Through the drawing of the transitory spaces of these catalysts, we have been able to distinguish

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between two types of activities. Some catalysts are of reduced mobility and are placed with precision on the paving that is traced following the "Zoco el Bahja" façade. And some others, more nomadic, circulate around the square without a precise or fixed position.

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