



**NY. Hydrant, Water always  
Writes in Plural.**  
Manuel Bailo

## NY. HYDRANT, WATER ALWAYS WRITES IN PLURAL

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Monumental fountains.

The monumental fountains are objects to be thoughtfully observed. They are urban elements that furnish the public space and that in many occasions symbolize the moments in which the city has suffered subsequent transformations or important events. Water spouts, sometimes of great height, turn into urban modals that splash and scare away the pedestrians who look at them from far away, avoiding getting wet.

## **Ornamental fountains**

Bernini's fountains in Rome that remind us of the floods that the city suffered, or Salvi's Fontana di Trevi that represents the image of the celebration of the arrival of the water to the city, due to the torn down aqueduct of the Aqua Virgo; are both cases of fountains that are at the same time monumental and ornamental.

These are fountains that propose another scale of relation between water and the people.

In the case of the Barcaza fountain in Rome, Bernini decided to place the water level slightly below the pavement of the street, resolving a technical problem of low water pressure, and at the same time using the different levels of the square to situate a bench around the fountain that gave it a new urban dimension that made the people approach the fountain to have a look at it and to chat around it.

The Fontana di Trevi is not only placed in a public square but it is also a place of public activity in which people toss coins in the water, imagining a better future.

## **Scales and water**

Nowadays, it is not very common to project an urban fountain. Probably, Robert Venturi's projects in Philadelphia and Yago Conde's project in Barcelona must have been the last ones to think about this strange and complex condition that the fountains contain: they are distant objects that can feel close at the same time.

In the case of Venturi's project, it responded to a large scale, placing the dark gray aluminum fountain right on the visual axis of the Parkway Avenue that diagonally crosses the regular streets of the city. This Site plan helped the fountain act like a stretching element that could introduce the Fairmount Park until the Town Hall building. The fountain's shape is like the one of the Town Hall building in Philadelphia, with metallic finishing, similar to a car; and it was not only projected as an

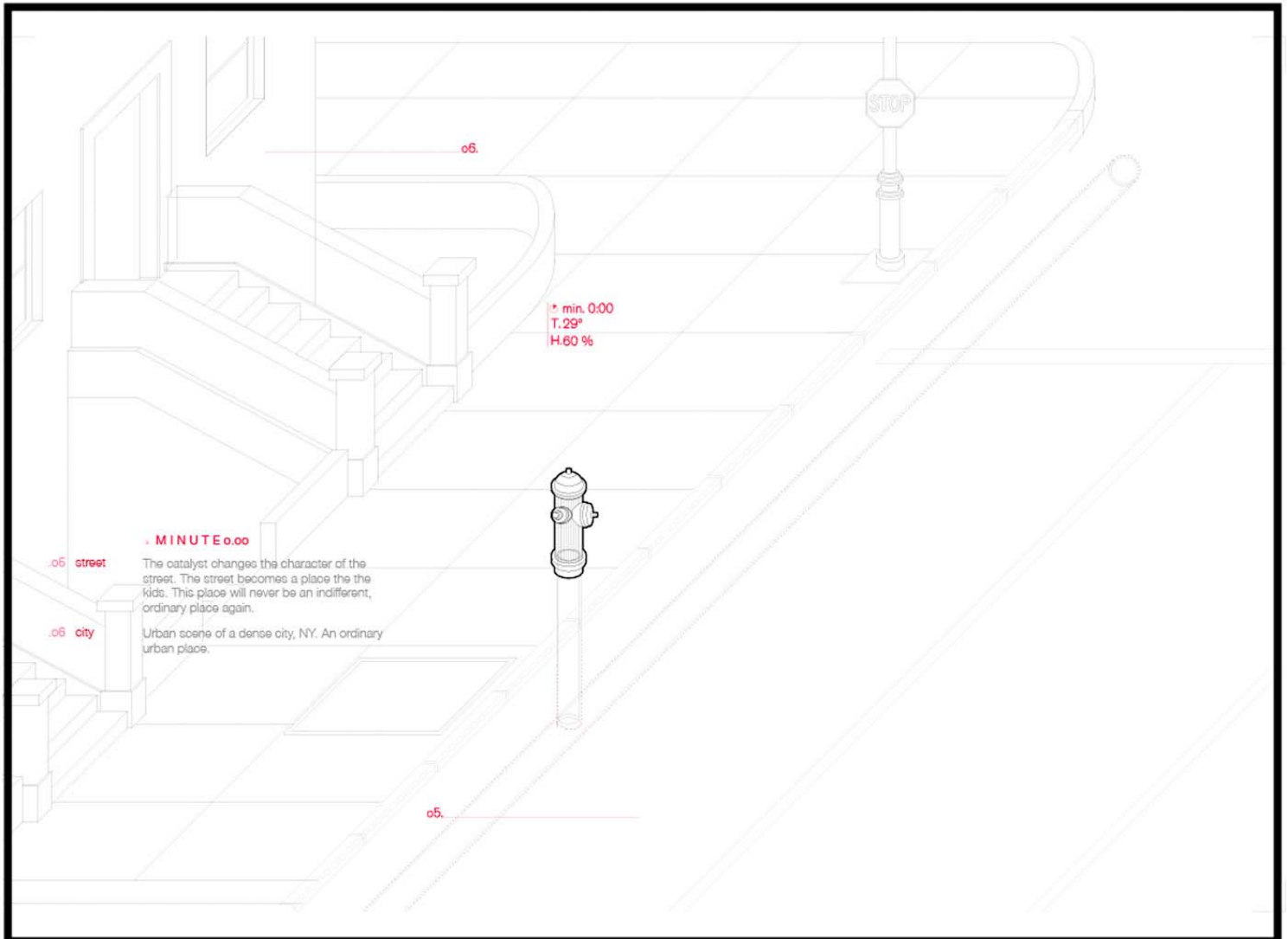
element to be observed from the big buildings surrounding it, but it was also thought in relation to its interior space, where you could hear the sound of the water.

Conde's fountain is an alternative to the monumental fountains that contained a single element and unique aesthetics.

It was proposed as a disperse fountain, capable of creating disseminated places. It is a fountain treated as a "geological score" coming from the "marriage de contours of the shapes of the city of Barcelona and the graphical score of John Cage's Fontana Mix. Therefore, this would provoke different situations, some monumental ones in the central part, and some others at the surface tied to little surprises and games for children".

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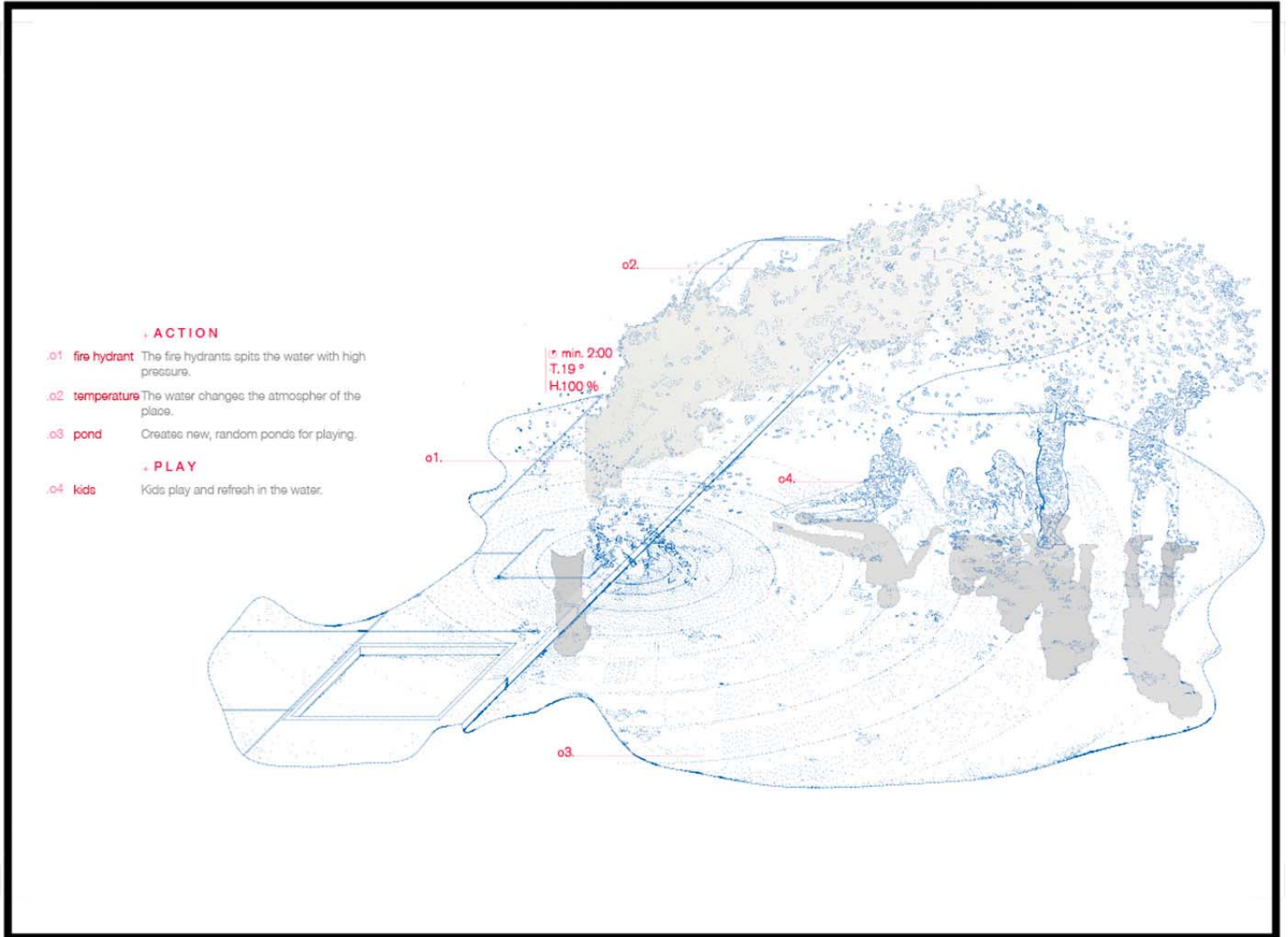
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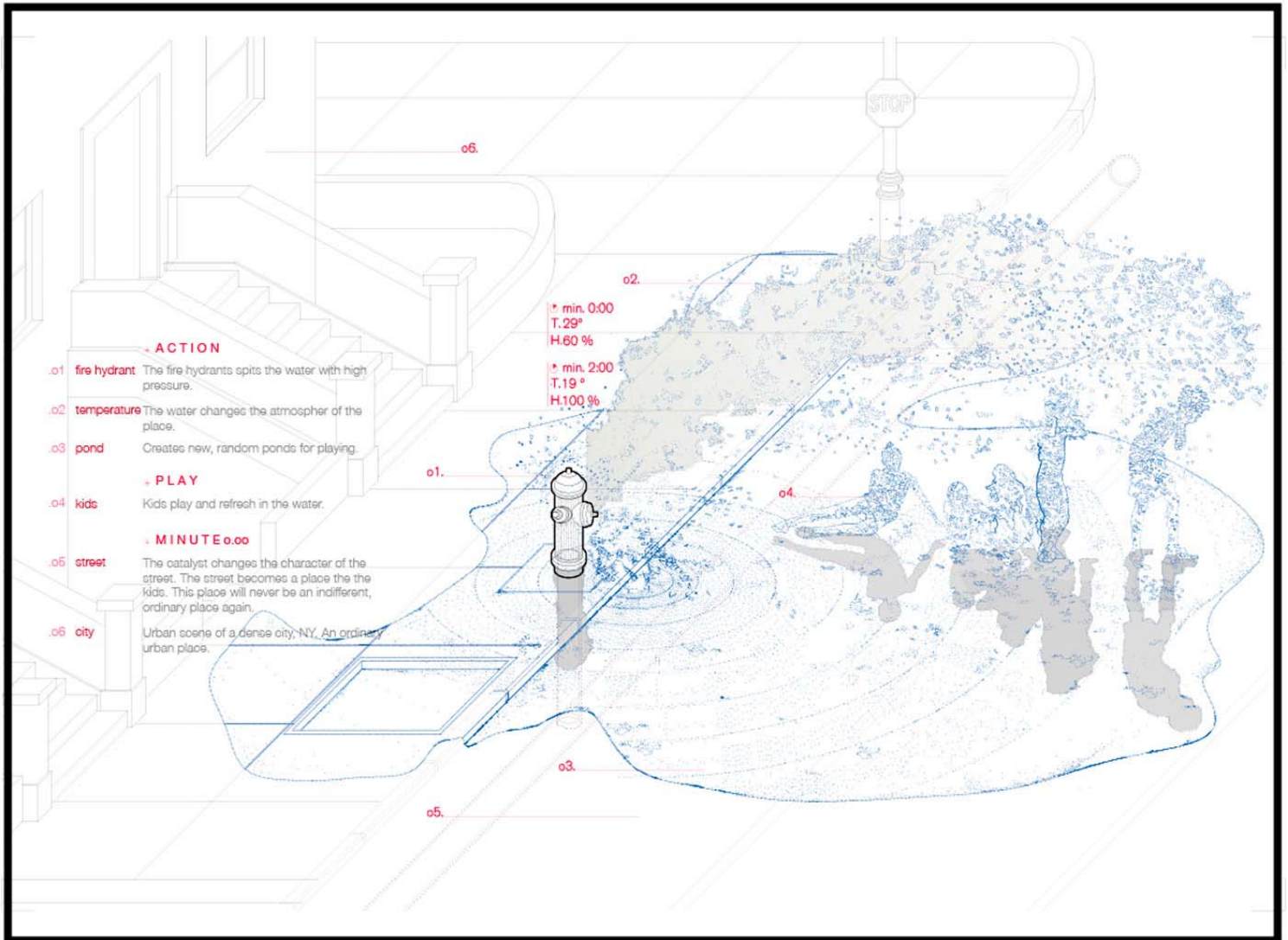
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## Water always writes in plural

New York, it's summer, it's hot, the children don't go to school because they have holidays, and suddenly an unpredicted phenomenon is about to transform an ordinary street of the city. The spontaneous explosion of a firemen water hose coincidentally becomes the urban catalyst that is capable of changing this place that was ordinary until then. The children, without prejudices, got naked and knew how to take profit of such a surprising situation. The water escaped out of control

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and offered the possibility to identify the body with the city. The children played and got wet. Suddenly, the city had become a place for leisure and games. A spontaneous water hose is not only a clear example of how the ephemeral strength of a catalyst is capable of modifying a city, but it also offers a modal that is able to easily prove the contextual value of the catalysts in the urbanity.

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