



## Santo Domingo

Panamá

Santo Domingo served as the church of the Dominican Order in Panama from the 1670's until it was destroyed by fire in 1747. It contains the 350 year old Arco Chato, the flat arch used as "proof" of the area's seismic stability, thus, justifying its suitability as the location of the future transoceanic canal. The Arco Chato is the most famous ruin in Panamá. The apse of Santo Domingo was demolished in the early 20th century. Only the façade and first two bays, including the Arco Chato, remain of the original construction. In the 1970's the construction over the apse area was demolished and the form of the apse was delineated with a low rubble wall. Between 2008 and 2010 the convent adjoining Santo Domingo was restored to provide a public orientation center for the Old City. In 2008, OPA was contracted by the United Nation Development Program to develop strategies that would allow the ruins of Santo Domingo to be utilized for performance of music, dance and oratory. OPA engaged in significant research into the original form of the ruined structure through study of historic record, early photographs and documenting related structures in Bogotá and Cartagena. Based on the research, OPA develop a structure that interprets the historic form and provide shelter from sun and rain for the performance area. The new construction describes the lofty scale of the original space. It interprets the historic for precisely in organic materials where the form is known and abstractly in contemporary materials where the form is not speculative. The performance space can be used in either direction of the nave, seating and audience of 400 for performances staged in the old apse and 650 for performances located beneath the Arco Chato.

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