

The man who joined a band and came back an architect

 By [Luise Allemann](#)

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Not many conference speakers begin their presentation playing the drums, but world renowned Mexican architect Michel Rojkind ([@rojkind_arg](#)), who is currently ranked as one of the 50 Mexican names on global creative stage did just that on the second day of the 2014 Design Indaba.

Joking that; "we all have a dark past!" Michel explained that in a former life he was the drummer in a band that was signed to Virgin Records for four years. "That experience helped me understand that I needed more than one interest or activity to allow me to be more creative in terms of the things I was doing."



Now a multi-talented architect based in Mexico City, Michel currently engages in architecture and product design. He described his surroundings as "chaotic yet highly stimulating. This wonderful world of chaos is indicative of our generation of flux."

This environment is also perfectly in line with Michel's dislike of attempts to pigeon hole the design process. "I find it disingenuous the way society is always trying to pin people down to a particular discipline. When I was a musician people would always ask; "what type of music do you play?" and now that I'm an architect they always ask; "What type of buildings do you design". I consider myself a contemporary thinker who is open to all possibilities."

If you are not aware of your surroundings you're not able to fully live

Michel said that unfortunately, modern society is obsessed with selection and selective sampling but often fails to answer the big question: What is the output? "It all depends on the context, so we need to focus more on creating the context and we need to talk more about the selection process that creates the context.

"For example in terms of materiality and local fabrication we need to understand which tools to bring to the table to learn how to design better.

"We collaborate not because we can't do something, but to be contaminated by other ideas."

Michel said that a big question he always asks is: What are we paying attention to? "I enjoy being contaminated by other ideas because I believe collaboration results in far better outputs. Each of us has a different reaction to different stimuli - it's not about sensitivity, it's about what an individual sees."

To stimulate this process Michel employs the concept of Adaptive Diagnostic Design or ADD which seems fitting given Michel's rapid fire style of speech. "When we told clients about our design research they often didn't take it seriously. So we came up with ADD which is vital in providing a view of ideas that they're perhaps not seeing and how these can add value to the entire design process."

The Liverpool Department Store

An excellent example of the fruits of this approach was a recent project centred on the expansion of the Liverpool Department Store in Mexico City that saw the development of a "deep wall system" or habitable facade that could house the new programmatic requirements.



Michel said despite initial reservations from the client the ADD process played an integral role and allowed [Rojkind Arquitectos](#) to design a beehive-like, porous facade made of different sized hexagons in fiberglass, steel, aluminium and glass that would expand the envelope of the building to create the space required.

The design breaks away from the traditional retail "big box" model that is primarily inward facing and gives it a permeable and animated envelope creating an inside-outside connection with the urban context.

The success of the design was evident when Rojkind Arquitectos became only the second Mexican firm to receive recognition at this year's 61st annual [Progressive Architecture Awards](#).

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ABOUT LUISE ALLEMANN

Luise Allemann is a communications specialist with more than 20 years experience in the media and marketing industries including her time as a newspaper and magazine journalist and editor. She founded Medialnk Communications in 2004 with a primary focus on content generation with a subsequent specialisation in PR & social media and has worked with iconic South African brands such as FNB, MTN and Hollard Insurance and most recently @NelsenAfrica and @Sassda_sa.

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