



Torre David: Informal Vertical Communities

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Torre David is an incomplete skyscraper in the center of the Venezuelan capital Caracas that has been occupied and reconstructed by local residents. Work on the building, named after the financial investor David Brillembourg, who died in 1993, was suspended during the Venezuelan financial crisis of 1994. After the office tower-- the third highest in Venezuela--had stood empty for many years, it was taken over by the local population in 2008. The occupants made the building their own with improvisation and skill--it is a "vertical favela," now containing not just housing but also other everyday facilities such as an improvised doctor's office, shops, and more. Photographer Iwan Baan has documented Torre David and its occupants, creating a portrait that captures the contradictions of the place while at the same time revealing urban structures that have emerged dynamically and without planning. Alfredo Brillembourg was born in New York in 1961. In 1993 he founded Urban-Think Tank in Caracas, Venezuela. Since May 2010, Brillembourg holds a chair in architecture and urban design at the Swiss Institute of Technology, Zürich. Hubert Klumpner was born in Salzburg in 1965. In 1998 he joined Alfredo Brillembourg as director of Urban-Think Tank in Caracas. Since 2010, Klumpner holds a chair in architecture and urban design at the Swiss Institute of Technology, Zürich. Iwan Baan, born in Alkmaar, Netherlands, in 1975, is an architecture and documentary photographer. His photographs feature regularly in such journals as Domus, A+U, The New Yorker, The New York Times, and others.

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