



September 2009

We are in Pondicherry this month, more precisely Auroville, the future city which hasn't yet been built, to consider what may be a bus stop, or simply a shady place to rest the feet. It stands in a clearing not far from the road, a little too far for a bus shelter you might think. It's an assembly of cylindrical concrete castings which together form a satisfying whole with combined functions. The roof is wide enough to provide a bit of shade and shelter from the rain. A supporting column runs from the ground up, passing through two conic cylinders which together form a circular bench with an angled back rest. I wonder what a structural engineer would say about the connection of the roof to the supporting column, but otherwise I admire its sculptural quality and the generosity of the idea.

There was no one near it when I stopped to take the picture, but one can imagine besides its conceptual elegance, an uneasy functional aspect. No problem if you're the first to arrive, you take your seat wherever you like, but for the second there's a difficult choice to be made. Too close and the first will feel you're crowding him and too far round, he'll think you're ignoring him. Wherever you sit it will be difficult to have any conversation without some physical contortions. But maybe there's a completely different reason for this shaded roto-bench to be here.